WRITING AND CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH LITERATURE



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Writing and Critical Thinking Through Literature (Ringo and Kashyap)

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Licensing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Introduction

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to:

- identify some of the defining qualities of literature.
- begin analyzing how they would categorize works within the literary spectrum.
- challenge the historical ways in which works have or have not been classified as literature.
- discuss the benefits of reading and writing about literature.

1.1: What is Literature?

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1.1: What is Literature?

Defining Literature

In order for us to study literature with any kind of depth, first we must decide what constitutes literature. While works like William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* are almost universally accepted as literature, other works are hotly debated, or included or excluded based on the context. For example, some debate whether more recent publications such as David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* or Rupi Kaur's Instagram poetry constitute literature. And what about the stories told through tweets, like Jennifer Egan's "Black Box"? What about video games, like *Spiritfarer*, or memes, like Grumpy Cat?

Students often throw their hands up in the air over such distinctions, arguing literature is subjective. Isn't it up to individual opinion? Anything can be literature, such students argue. At first glance, it could seem such distinctions are, at best, arbitrary. At worst, such definitions function as a means of enforcing cultural erasure.

However, consider a story speculating about Kim Kardashian's plastic surgery in *People Magazine*. Can this be considered on the same level of literary achievement as *Hamlet*? Most would concede there is a difference in quality between these two texts. A blurb about Kim Kardashian's latest plastic surgery, most would agree, does not constitute literature. So how can we differentiate between such works?

Literature vs. literature

As illustrated in the somewhat silly example above, one way we can define what constitutes literature is by identifying what is definitely *not* literature. In terms of defining most terms in this textbook, we will use the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definitions. Some professors who teach Literature use the concept of Big L Literature vs. little l literature (Rollison).

Literature	literature
"written work valued for superior or lasting artistic merit" ("Literature" - OED)	"Printed matter of any kind; esp. leaflets, brochures, etc., used to advertise products or provide information and advice" ("literature" -OED)

While the definition of little l literature is fairly easy to understand and apply, the definition of Big L Literature remains amorphous. What makes a work "artistic"? How do we classify what constitutes "superior" or "lasting"?

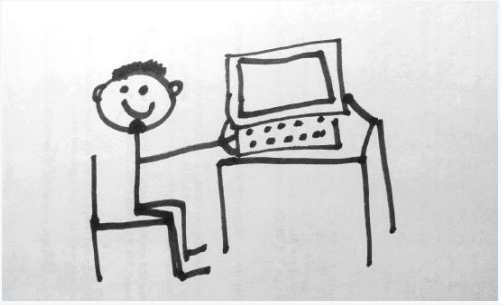
Let's break down some of the defining qualities of literature in a bit more detail, starting with the word "artistic."

Exercise 1.1.1

Consider the following works of art. Which of these images do you feel is higher quality or more "artistic"? Which is lower-quality or less artistic? Why? Justify your position by analyzing the elements of each artwork.



"Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog" by Caspar David Friedrich (1818) is in the public domain



"stick figure self portrait" by marco on flickr (2019) is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Answer

While there may be some debate, most students usually respond that Friedrich's painting is more artistic. This is due to several composition differences between the two works:

- **Artist's skill:** it certainly appears as if the first image was produced by an artist with superior skill
- **Fame:** for anyone who knows art history, the first image is famous while the other is not
- **Lasting quality:** the first image has survived the test of time, remaining popular over two hundred years!
- **Meaning:** the first image likely conjures deeper feelings, themes, or ideas, such as isolation and the primacy of nature. This is why this image has become the face of Romanticism.

But what *about* the images demonstrate the artists' superior skills? While the second image appears to be

produced with a simple doodle, and quickly composed, the first indicates more complexity, attention-to-detail, and craft. Freidrich leverages different colors, textures, shapes, and symbols to evoke a feeling in the viewer. Skilled artists will use different techniques, like the way they move the paintbrush, how they mix the paints, the pressure they exert or the direction of the brush. They will use textured paintbrushes for a specific effect, such as the difference between the light fluffy clouds and dark mountain rocks. They will use different color pallets to project, as accurately as possible, the feelings they are trying to evoke. In short, while anyone can paint, true artists leverage many different skills, techniques, and materials to render what is in their imagination into a real-life product.

So how does this relate to our attempts to define literature?

Literature is art, but with words.

While the artist uses different colors, paintbrushes, mediums, canvases, and techniques, the writer uses different genres and literary techniques called **literary devices**. Just like different types of paint, paintbrushes, and artistic tools, there are literally hundreds of literary devices, but some of the most common are metaphor, simile, personification, and imagery. **Genre** is the type or style of literature. Each genre has its own conventions. Literary genres include **creative nonfiction, fiction, drama,** and **poetry**. Works that are literary tend to expertly use genre conventions and literary devices to create a world in the mind of the reader. Works that are less literary tend to be for practical and/or entertainment purposes, and the writer dedicates less focused energy towards artfully employing literary devices.

However, just because a work is not as literary as another does not mean it cannot be enjoyed or analyzed. Just like a stick figure or cartoon character might be perfectly fine if intended for a particular audience or purpose, readers can still enjoy *People Magazine* even though it is not of the same literary quality as *Hamlet*.

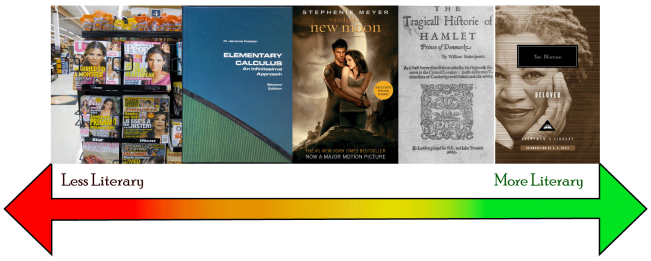
So, to use an example from earlier:

Hamlet by William Shakespeare	*People Magazine*
• Has lasted hundreds of years • Is written by an expert of craft • Covers deep, meaningful concepts like love, loss, war & political corruption • Uses many literary devices such as metaphors	• Is often forgotten by the next issue • Is written by a pop culture writer • Covers shallow issues like what plastic surgeries a starlet has had • Usually does not use literary devices in a meaningful way, but merely to capture the attention of an audience

While some literature falls into clear designations of literature or not literature, most works are open to debate. Given the sometimes difficult task of determining whether a work falls into one camp or the other, it may be more helpful to think of Literature less as a dichotomy than a spectrum, with popular magazines on one end and works like *Beloved* on the other, and most written works falling somewhere between the two extremes.

The Literary Spectrum

This spectrum can be a helpful way to think about literature because it provides a more open-ended way to discuss writing as art than simply labeling works as literary or not. After viewing the chart, why do you think popular magazines and a Calculus textbook are considered "less literary"? In terms of popular magazines, they do not fit the definition of literature as "lasting" in the sense that they usually fade from relevancy quickly after publication. Additionally, the authors of such magazines are striving for quick entertainment rather than leaving a meaningful impression on the reader. They tend not to use literary devices, such as metaphor, in an impactful way. These works tend to fade from memory. As for textbooks, their purpose is to impart accurate information, not to necessarily shift a reader's perspective or make them feel a certain way. Textbooks are often reprinted, former editions fading into the past as more accurate current editions take their place. On the other end, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* definitely fits the definition of "lasting," in that it has survived hundreds of years. It is full of literary devices used for rhetorical effect and, one would argue, it touches upon deep themes such as death, the afterlife, murder, vengeance, and love, rather than trifling issues such as a starlet's most recent plastic surgery.



What makes certain literary works survive the test of time? What makes a story, poem, or drama "good"? While literary scholars are less interested in proving a certain work is "good" or not -- and more focused on analyzing the ways to illuminate a given work -- it can be helpful for you to consider what kinds of literature you like and why you like them. What *about the way it was written* causes you to feel the way you do about it? What makes for meaningful literature?

Who Decides What is Literature?

Now that we have at least somewhat clarified the definition of literature, who decides what works are or are not literature? Historically speaking, kings, queens, publishers, literary critics, professors, colleges, and readers (like you!) have decided which works survive and which works do not.

Aristotle was one of the first writers to attempt to decide what works fall into the category of literature, and what works do not. While Aristotle was most famous for his contributions to science and philosophy, he is also considered one of the first literary critics. A **literary critic** is a person who studies and analyzes literature. A literary critic produces scholarship called **literary criticism**. An example of this would be Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which he identifies the defining qualities of a "good" Tragedy. Aristotle's analysis of the tragic genre was so influential that it is still used today, over two thousand years later!

When a work is officially determined to constitute literature, it enters something called **the Canon.** Not to be confused with the large metal tube that shoots explosives (cannon), the Literary Canon is a collection of works that are considered by the powers that be to constitute literature worth reading, or as representative of a given time, place, or genre. A work that falls into this designation is called **canonical.** So, to use an example from Aristotle's *Poetics*, Aristotle defined Sophocles' Oedipus Trilogy as the pinnacle of its genre. From there, in part due to Aristotle's influence, Greek society valued *Oedipus* so much that they kept discussing, reading, referencing, and teaching it. Thus, it became a kind of shining example of the Tragic Canon, one which has lasted thousands of years and continues to be read and lauded to this day. Other tragedies, fairly or not, are often judged on their quality in comparison to Sophocles' works.

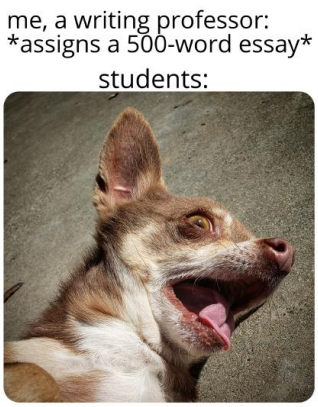
Interesting to think that someone who died thousands of years ago still influences what we consider literature today.

One of the most exciting aspects of reading and analyzing literature is that you can take part in canon formation. What you read, write about, and share with your friends can help propel works into the canon that would otherwise fade from history into the canon.

Memes, Social Media, and Video Games: Today's Literature?

All this talk of thousands-of-years-old texts might seem out of touch. A lot of people think "old and boring" and literature are synonymous. Students are often surprised to hear that comic books and video games can arguably be considered literature, too. There are plenty of arguments to be made that comic books, such as *Destroyer* by Victor LaValle (2017), *Maus* by Art Spiegalman (1991) or *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel (2006) are literature. Cutting edge literary scholars argue video games like *Kentucky Route Zero* by Cardboard Computer (2015) can be considered literary. There is also literature that is published in tweets, like Jennifer Egan's "Black Box" (2012). Some might even consider memes literature!

Generative question: do you think memes can be literary?



A **meme** is an image or video containing cultural values or ideas, often represented through **allusion** (implied reference to another work, without naming that work or its author). Memes can spread rapidly spreads through social media. Why? Because the best ones are #relatable; that is, they speak to a common human experience.

Usually memes take the form of text superimposed on an image. For example, the meme above conveys the dramatic reaction students sometimes give when I assign an essay. This is done primarily through a literary device called **hyperbole**, or exaggeration for rhetorical effect. It conveys its message comically through certain conventions that come along with the meme genre, such as the syntactic structure "me, a [insert

noun]" and asterisks, which convey action. Just like in the Shakespearean drama, the colon indicates what each character (me and the students, in this case) is saying or doing. My chihuahua's face looks silly and very dramatic. Through this use of image, text, format, and convention, the meaning I intended to convey was that I was making fun of my students for being over-dramatic about what to me seems like a fairly simple assignment. While some might dismiss memes as shallow, when you start to unravel the layers of meaning, they can actually be very complex and even, dare I say, literary!

Think about a recent meme you have seen, or your favorite meme of all time. Imagine explaining this meme to someone who has no idea what it means. What is the message or idea behind the meme? What cultural reference points does it use to convey its message? In what ways might this meme be considered literature? How might this compare to a short poem, like a haiku?

Not Literature

Let's say you come to the conclusion that a meme, a gossip magazine, or the *Twilight* Series is not literary. Does that mean you have to feel guilty and give up reading it forever? Or that it is not "good"?

No!

Just because a work is not literary does not mean it is "bad," that it does not have value, that one cannot enjoy it, or that it is unsuitable for study as a form of literature. Indeed, there are plenty of examples of written works that are on the less literary side of the spectrum but are still fun and enriching to read, and reveal something interesting about the culture which produced them. *Joe Dirt* is not on the same artistic level of cinema as *Schindler's List*, but my husband still quotes it regularly. Nothing JoJo Siwa has produced is as deep as Tupac Shakur's "Changes" (1992) or Mitski's "Last Words of a Shooting Star" (2014), but her work might be interesting to analyze from a literary studies angle. This is all to say that whether a text is literary or not is not as important as *the methods of analyzing texts*. In fact, texts which were excluded from literature are often argued into the literary canon through such analysis. Part of what makes analyzing literature so fun is that it means the definition of literature is always up for debate! This is especially important given the history of the canon.

The Problem with the Canon

In an ideal world, literature would be celebrated purely based on its artistic merit. Well-written works would last, poorly-written works would wither from public memory. However, that is not always the case. Works often achieve public prominence or survive based on qualities unrelated to skill or aesthetics, such as an author's fame, wealth, connections, or values of the dominant culture. William Wordsworth, for example, was named Poet Laureate of England and has been taught as one of the "Big Six" major Romantic-era authors ever since. Indeed, he is accepted as part of the Romanticism literary canon. One would be hard-pressed to find a Literature anthology that does not feature William Wordsworth. However, how many people have read Dorothy Wordsworth, William Wordsworth's sister, who arguably depicted Romantic themes with equal skill and beauty, albeit in prose form? Or James Hogg, a Scottish contemporary of Wordsworth who was a lower-class shepherd? Similarly, while most readers have encountered F. Scott Fitzgerald or Edgar Allen Poe in their high school literature classes, how many have read Frederick Douglass in these same classes? In short, all artistic skill (arguably) considered equal, why do some authors predominantly feature in the canon while others do not?

Like much of society, systemic inequities plague the publishing industry and the study of literature in English. As time progresses, it seems there is increasing but not proportionate representation on average. For example, while women make up about half of the population, over 80% of the most popular novels were written by men ("Battle"). The publishing industry is overwhelmingly white and non-disabled (Lee & Low). While there are many possible reasons for this discrepancy in representation (which could be the focus of an entire textbook), what does this mean for scholars of literature? For students? For instructors? For society?

As a cultural relic, similar to art, many scholars suggest literature is a reflection of the society which produces it. This includes positive aspects of society (championing values such as love, justice, and good triumphing over evil), but it can also reflect negative aspects of society (such as discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia, historical lack of opportunity for marginalized authors).

For example, prior to abolition in the United States, enslavers prevented enslaved Africans from learning to read and write as a form of control. When Phillis Wheatley published *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773), many doubted she wrote it, due to popularly held racist views that Black people were incapable of writing poetry. Later, abolitionist Frederick Douglass wrote about how those supporting slavery banned him from reading and writing, as they realized "education and slavery were incompatible with each other" (Douglass). He later championed literacy as the means which conveyed him to freedom. However, even when trying to publish *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), anti-abolitionists actively fought to keep Douglass' book from circulation as it threatened the institution

of slavery. Indeed, to this day, Douglass' book continues to be banned in some prisons for its potential to incite revolution (Darby, Gilroy).

How could Black writers enter the canon en masse if they were not allowed to read or write? Or if they were forced to spend all of their waking hours working? And if those who had the means to read and write had to jump through absurd hoops just to have their works published? And if even those texts which were published were banned?

Similarly, throughout much of Western history, women have been discouraged from pursuing reading and writing, as it distracted from society's expectations for women to focus on motherly and household duties. Until the 1700s, women were not allowed to attend college. Even then, very few went: only the extremely wealthy. It was not until the 19th century that women attended college in representative numbers. Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's Own* that if there are fewer works of literature written by women, it is only because society, historically, has not given women the time, education, funding, or space to do so. In this extended essay, she describes an imaginary sister of William Shakespeare who could have been just as great of a writer had she the same opportunities as her brother.

> *I told you in the course of this paper that Shakespeare had a sister; but do not look for her in Sir Sidney Lee's life of the poet. She died young—alas, she never wrote a word. She lies buried where the omnibuses now stop, opposite the Elephant and Castle. Now my belief is that this poet who never wrote a word and was buried at the cross-roads still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh. This opportunity, as I think, it is now coming within your power to give her.*

Woolf argues that in our time those who have been excluded from literature can now join the canon by adding their voices. The inequity of representation in literature -- which has arguably improved, but in many ways persists -- can be remedied if more people from a wide array of backgrounds and walks of life are empowered to study and create Literature. That is one reason why the current study of literature is so exciting. As a student and literary scholar in training, you have the power to influence culture through your reading and analysis of literature!

For one author's perspective on this topic, please watch this the following TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie about why it is important to veer away from the historically parochial canon into what Chinua Achebe calls "a balance of stories" (qtd. Bacon).



- Original video available on TED Talk website
- Transcript of video

What "single stories" do you know? What are the "single stories" people have told about you? What story would you tell if you could? What kinds of stories do you want to read? Throughout this class, you will get the opportunity to encounter many different stories. While we faced hurdles of copyright permissions, the authors of this textbook attempted to embody the values espoused in this TED Talk & Chinua Achebe's conception of the "balance of stories." As you read the textbook, consider the stories which were omitted, why they were omitted, and what literature you would include if you could.

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Why Read Literature?

In the age of TikTok, Twitter, Youtube, and streaming television services, literature might seem like a relic of the past. Indeed, fewer people are reading literature than ever. According to an article published in the Washington Post, "in 2015, 43 percent of adults read at least one work of literature in the previous year. That's the lowest percentage in any year since NEA surveys began tracking reading and arts participation in 1982 when the literature reading rate was 57 percent" (Ingraham). If the decline of literature-reading in adults isn't the death knoll of literature, the decline in teenagers might be. According to NPR, in a recently conducted poll, "nearly half of 17-year-olds say they read for pleasure no more than one or two times a year — if that" (Ludden). How many books have you read this year? How many poems? In this fast-paced dopamine-fueled media landscape, it's difficult for stinky old books to compete.

But this is hardly a new problem if it is even a problem at all.

Consider the words of master-of-clapbacks Sir Philip Sydney, #throwback to the late 1500s and early 1600s. After the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg, many people saw the proliferation of novels and plays as morally poisonous. Talking heads of the time argued that poetry and literature were a waste of time, or "fake news" as some might call it today. They questioned the purpose of fictional works. Poet and diplomat Sir Philip Sydney responded with a scathing literary smack-down to the haters. He argued the poet has a special talent to create new, beautiful worlds that no other professional can claim, and that those who question the purpose of poetry have "earth-creeping" minds and are "momes" (AKA fools, blockheads). He further stated that he hopes these momes never get "favor" (love) because they don't know how to write sonnets to woo their love interests and that they don't get an epitaph on their graves, because that is the poet's job. Ouch, harsh.

In today's world, it seems that Sidney would probably consider most people momes. After all, very few of us read or appreciate poetry regularly. Most of our reading and writing is done on the internet: in the forms of Facebook posts, memes, tweets, snapchats, Tik Tok videos, and viral news. In response to this trend, some claim that literature is dead (Breuklander). Indeed, if we define literature as only printed novels and poetry, perhaps it is, for all intents and purposes, dead. But... what if we were to define literature as Sidney did--a creation made from the "zodiac of [the poet's] own wit," improving upon nature itself through invention? Might some of today's internet media fall into that definition?

What if literature isn't dead after all...but thriving more than ever? What if we radically reconsider the parameters of literature? What if literature has just evolved from sonnets and novels to tweets and memes? In this textbook, we will explore how technology has blurred the lines between Literature and literature. We will question and explore the "usefulness" of literature in a world that encourages split-second attention spans. We will see how literature has solved problems in the past, and explore how it can be used to solve problems in the future. Medicine, a threat to the status quo, entertainment, activism, or boring stinky old piles of pages: what is literature to you?

No matter the reader, no matter the writer, no matter the genre, literature is a cultural relic, a manifestation of the human experience. Thus, it can teach us things about our society and about ourselves we might not be able to learn from other types of media. It enables us to experience and discuss ideas from the safety of our armchairs, to project ourselves onto characters and environments, to explore worlds and lived experiences we otherwise would never have the opportunity to experience.

Additionally, data suggests reading literature benefits us in profound ways.

Benefits of Literature

Studies show reading literature may help

- promote empathy and social skills (Castano and Kidd)
- alleviate symptoms of depression (Billington et al.)
- business leaders succeed (Coleman)
- prevent dementia by stimulating the mind (Thorpe)

These are just a few of the studied benefits of literature. As we continue to gain increasing complexity in terms of measuring brain activity and developing other tools to measure brain function, scientists may find more benefits.

Why Write About Literature?

You might be asking yourself why you should bother writing about something you've read. After all, isn't creative writing more fun, journalistic writing more interesting, and technical writing more useful? Maybe, but consider this: writing about literature will let you exercise your critical thinking skills like no other style of writing will. Even if you don't want to pursue a career involving literature, you can use critical thinking and analysis in any field from philosophy to business to physics. More than being able to think critically, you need to be able to

express those thoughts in a coherent fashion. Writing about literature will allow you to practice this invaluable communication skill.

“Okay,” you say, “that's all good and well. But hasn't anything I have to say about a story already been said? So what's the point, then?” When you write your paper, you might end up saying something that has been discussed, argued over, or proposed by literary critics and students alike. However, when you write something, you present a point of view through your unique voice. Even if something has been said about a book many times, you can add something new to that discussion. Perhaps you can state an idea in simpler terms, or you want to disagree with a popular viewpoint. Even if you're writing to an instructor's prompt, your voice will make the paper unique.

How Do I Start?

To many of us, writing a response to something we've had to read sounds more than a little daunting. There are so many things to examine and analyze in a book, play, or poem. But before you decide that writing about writing just isn't for you, think about this--you already have many of the skills you need to write a good response to literature.

How many times have you heard about someone who watched a horror movie and yelled, “Don't go into the basement!” at the potential victim. Or maybe you've listened to a song and thought about how the lyrics described your life almost perfectly. Perhaps you like to jump up and cheer for your favorite team even if you're watching the game from home. Each time you do one of these things, you are responding to something you've seen or heard. And when you read a book, you likely do the same thing. Have you ever read anything and sympathized with or hated a character? If so, you've already taken your first step in responding to literature.

However, the next steps are a little harder. You need to be able to put your response into writing so other people can understand why you believe one thing or another about a book, play, or poem. In addition, writing an essay based on how a story makes you think or feel is only one of many ways to respond to what you read. In order to write a strong paper, you will need to examine a text both **subjectively** and **objectively**. If you only write about your personal reaction to a book, there won't be much to support your argument except your word alone. Thus, you will need to use some facts from the text to support your argument. Rather than trying to evaluate every nuance of a text all at once, you should start with the basics: character and plot. From there, you can examine the theme of the work and then move on to the finer points such as the writing itself. For instance, when determining how you want to analyze a piece of literature, you might want to ask yourself the following series of questions:

- Who are the characters?
- What are they doing?
- Why and how are they doing it?
- Do their actions relate to any broader topics or issues?
- How does the author convey this through their writing?

Questions to consider when writing about literature

Of course, answering these questions will only start your analysis. However, if you can answer them, you will have a strong grasp of the basic elements of the story. From there, you can go on to more specific questions, such as, “How does symbolism help illustrate the theme?” or “What does the author say about the relationships between characters through the dialogue he gives them?” However, before you can start answering detailed questions like these, you should look at the basic elements of what you're reading. Some of the most common elements in a piece of literature include:

- Setting
- Characters
- Plot (story or play) or structure (poem)
- Tone/Mood
- Themes
- Symbolism and Figurative Language

As you work through each genre in this book, try to examine each of these elements in each piece of literature you read.

Optional, Supplemental Reading: Excerpt from Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy*

"There is no art delivered unto mankind that has not the works of nature for his principal object, without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend as they become actors and players, as it were, of what nature will have set forth. So doth the astronomer look upon the stars, and, by that he sees, set down what order nature has taken therein. So do the geometrician and arithmetician in their divers sorts of quantities. So doth the musician in times tell you which by nature agree, which not. The natural philosopher thereon has his name, and the moral philosopher stands upon the natural virtues, vices, and passions of man; and “follow nature,” says he, “therein, and thou shalt not err.” The lawyer says what men have determined, the historian what men have done. The grammarian speaks only of the rules of speech, and the rhetorician and logician, considering what in nature will soonest prove and persuade, thereon give artificial rules, which still are compassed within the circle of a question, according to the proposed matter. The physician weighs the nature of man’s body, and the nature of things helpful or hurtful unto it. And the metaphysic, though it

be in the second and abstract notions, and therefore be counted supernatural, yet doth he, indeed, build upon the depth of nature.

Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than nature brings forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like; so as he goes hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too-much-loved earth more lovely; her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden...

[...]

But if—fie of such a but!—you be born so near the dull-making cataract of Nilus, that you cannot hear the planet-like music of poetry; if you have so earth-creeping a mind that it cannot lift itself up to look to the sky of poetry, or rather, by a certain rustical disdain, will become such a mome [blockhead—ed.], as to be a Momus of poetry; then, though I will not wish unto you the ass' ears of Midas, nor to be driven by a poet's verses, as Bubonax was, to hang himself; nor to be rimed to death, as is said to be done in Ireland; yet thus much curse. I must send you in the behalf of all poets:—that while you live in love, and never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph." -- Sir Philip Sydney

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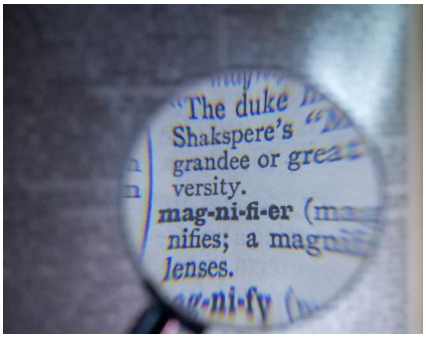
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1.3: What is Literary Analysis?

What is Literary Analysis?



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In the first section of the introduction, we defined Literature as "written work valued for superior or lasting artistic merit" ("literature 3b"). As an adjective, then, literary is defined as "[o]f or relating to the writing, study, or content of literature, esp. of the kind valued for quality of form; of the nature of literature" ("literary A1"). Finally, analysis is essentially the breaking apart of anything into its composite parts for close-examination. Literary analysis, then, is the deep examination of a work of literature. When you think of literary analysis, think of holding up a magnifying glass to the details of language in a work of literature.

Literary Analysis = Close Reading

Students may have encountered previous teachers using the term "close reading." Sometimes you might hear it called **rhetorical analysis.** When teachers use any of these terms, it usually means engaging with a text on a deeper level than when reading for entertainment or information: that is, looking not just at *what* is written (the message, also known as **content**), but *how* it is written (the methods used to shape the message, also known as **form**). Literary Analysis, Close Reading, and Rhetorical Analysis are three critical thinking approaches with, for all intents and purposes, the same meaning. The major difference is that literary analysis is specific to the field of literary studies.

When performing literary analysis, some questions **literary critics**, or scholars of literature, might ask themselves include:

- What is the theme or motif of this text?
- What patterns can I detect across this text, or what patterns can I detect across this genre of literature which are also present in this text? And what might these patterns indicate about the meaning or significance of this text?
- What literary devices are featured in this text? How might an analysis of these formal features deepen understandings of the text?
- What kinds of characters are featured in this text?
- What qualities make literature "good" or of "lasting artistic merit" ("literature 3b")?
- How might the language or diction of the text reflect cultural or historical meanings most common readers miss? How might such meanings deepen or illuminate our understanding of the text?
- What have previous scholars misinterpreted or missed about this work, and how can I bring neglected aspects of this text to light?
- In what ways does this text engage with or elucidate other works of literature, philosophical theories, historical events, or social movements?
- What might this text reveal about what it means to be human? How might it deepen my understanding of my place in the world?

How to Perform Literary Analysis

The previous questions might seem amorphous or overwhelming in their implications. So how can we practice close-reading in a practical way?

1. **Read the text 3 times**: once, for enjoyment. Once, for deep understanding. And, lastly, once for deep analysis. Literary critics often read the same texts many more times! Don't be afraid to read as many times as you need.
2. **Engage with the text.** Highlight, annotate, mark pages with sticky notes or flags, and take notes as you read. Look for anything weird, surprising, confusing, or exciting that jumps out at you. Why do you think this formal feature exists in the text? Don't be afraid to write down any questions which bubble up as you read: it is likely other scholars/students have questions too, and sharing your questions with classmates or your professor might prompt a fascinating discussion! For example, an observant student once asked (his question is paraphrased here): "In *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, I noticed Hamlet and Horatio seem to think the ghost of Old Hamlet is actually a demon. But later Hamlet seems to think the ghost is an actual ghost. Gertrude does not see the ghost, making it seem like it is a figment of Hamlet's troubled mind. What are we as readers meant to believe?" This question prompted other students to share their cultural heritage's perspective on demons, the afterlife, and even to share ghost stories. Eventually, this discussion led students to research Elizabethan perspectives on ghosts and demons. This made for a lively class discussion and

several strong essays all because one student dared to engage with the text by asking a question!

3. **Keep track of any patterns.** Does a certain image keep popping up, like a heart, a rose, or a color? This might be a symbol: a physical object signifying an abstract meaning. What might this repeated image mean in the context of the rest of the story? For example, in Ambrose Bierce's short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," the color gray repeats many times. Why? What might this indicate about the importance of the color gray to the story? What might the color gray have symbolized to Bierce, or to readers alive during the Civil War?
4. **Deeply examine and question literary features** such as titles, characters, settings, figurative language, and dialogue. Constantly ask yourself: why is this here? As readers, we should usually assume authors, as masters of their craft, make choices intentionally. And even if unintentional, what might subconscious slips indicate about meaning? In short, *how does the form or structure of this writing influence my understanding of its message?*

   Other literary features you might examine include: pronouns, active vs. passive voice, verbs (what tense is being used? any tense shifts?), nouns, word order or syntax, rhyme, punctuation, paragraphing, italics, space on the page, text space (how much space or description or lines does a given character receive?), proximity (do similar words, phrases, characters, or ideas often occur in close proximity?). All of these seemingly small details can hold big implications!

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1.4: Language, Misconceptions, and Authorial Intention in Literature

The Language of Literature

One of the problems in reading literature, of course, is that language itself can be so slippery. Let me give two examples to show what I mean. In Shakespeare's *Othello,* Othello is describing how Desdemona loved to hear the tales of his adventures, and he says

She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd

That heaven had made her such a man. (I.3.162-63)

Now what exactly do those lines mean? We must assume that Shakespeare knew what he was doing with language, and yet these lines contain an obvious ambiguity. Do they mean that Desdemona wished that heaven had made a man like Othello for her (reading "her" as an indirect object) or do they mean that she wished she had been made a man so that she could have such adventures (reading "her" as a direct object)? Should Shakespeare have clarified what he meant? Did poor old Shakespeare make a mistake here? As you might expect, the answers to those last two questions are both "no." The ambiguity is intentional, and both readings are "correct." On the one hand, Desdemona is revealing her love for Othello. She admires him and his deeds and wishes that a man like that existed for her. When we consider the kind of circumscribed life that a Renaissance woman of Desdemona's class was forced to live and the poor impression that most of the other men in the play make on us, her wish is even easier to understand.

On the other hand, given that circumscribed life, she also might well wish that she had been male and she reveals that she is not simply a timid, shrinking woman who exists to be used by men in any way they choose. She is someone who rebels against the limits that confront her, and her words here prepare us for her independent actions as the play progresses. So Desdemona's wish is deliberately ambiguous, and both sides of the ambiguity are significant. What we must remember, then, is that writers use words the way artists use paint. In a work of literary artistry, none of the words are accidental or arbitrary, and if they seem ambiguous or out of place, we must try to understand why the writer used them. Yes, occasionally a writer makes a mistake, as Keats did when he identified Cortez as the European discoverer of the Pacific Ocean, but generally we have to assume that writers know what they are doing; and before we attack their use of words, we must try to understand them.

This point leads to the second problem with language, which is that words change their meanings. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (affectionately known as the OED) gives examples of how every word in it has been used over the centuries, and browsing in the OED to see how words have changed can be a lot of fun. Such browsing can also be important. One simple but well-known example will illustrate my point. In the Declaration of Independence we read that "all men are created equal," but we must ask what this important phrase means. If it means that I am as good a baseball player as Stan Musial or as good a singer as Placido Domingo, then it is clearly untrue, but surely that is not what it means. It means rather that all men are equal before the law. Fine. But what about the phrase "all men"? Although Garry Wills has argued that Thomas Jefferson included African-American men in the category of "all men," we can safely assume that many in his audience, including many of the Declaration's signers, certainly did not. And no one would argue that Jefferson or any other signer of the Declaration included American Indians or women in the category of "all men." Thus while we read (or I hope we read) the phrase generically to mean that everyone, of every gender, race, or religion, is equal before the law, the earliest readers of the Declaration understood it to mean that all white males are created equal.

Whose reading is correct? The question itself is almost absurd. Apparently Jefferson may have meant one thing while his audience understood another—both eighteenth-century understandings— while we, from another perspective, understand it in yet another way. So, from an enlightened eighteenth-century point of view, Jefferson was correct. But from a common eighteenth-century point of view, deplorable though we may find it, Jefferson's audience was correct. And from an ideal twenty-first-century point of view, which has not yet become a reality, our reading is correct. While it is essential that we recognize the superiority of our reading of this phrase, we also must, in the interest of historical accuracy, acknowledge at least two eighteenth-century readings of the phrase. As we saw in the example from *Othello*, multiple meanings abound; and even if we can argue that one interpretation has some kind of primacy, we must be sensitive to other possibilities that exist not as alternatives but as complements to the readings we prefer. And to return to our earlier discussion of intention, do we want to read this passage according to what we think Jefferson's intentions might have been or according to the way the language is now understood?

Of course, this approach to reading requires a great deal of flexibility from the reader, who must be open to multiple interpretations and to taking different approaches, an openness that may contradict human nature. This view also runs counter to what we usually learn in school, where the emphasis is so often on finding the single correct answer to a question rather than on asking complex questions and then considering their

complexity. Certainly the latter method cannot be tested with a multiple-choice exam and graded by a computer, but schools are responding to and reinforcing a society that rewards the single correct answer. Consequently, when people read literature, they are afraid that they are not getting what it "really" says. Even if they enjoy the reading, they fear, often quite mistakenly, that they are missing the "message."

Messages and Misconceptions About Reading Literature

Here is another misconception about literature: that it contains messages, hidden or otherwise. Too often people approach literature as though it were all like *Aesop's Fables*. Those fables are wonderful: they tell stories, and each story is followed by a moral, such as "Necessity is the mother of invention." But very little literature works that way. Literature does have a moral dimension, of course, but great works cannot be summed up in pithy moral statements. A person who reads Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and decides that the point of the play is "don't kill your father and marry your mother" has perhaps followed the action of the play but has missed the important points that the play makes. Of course, anyone who needs to read a play to learn that important lesson probably has other, more serious problems. One basis for such misconceptions is our uncertainty about what a work may be saying, which leads us to the easiest answer we can think of, an answer which is often a cliché or a moral truism. (This tendency is obviously related to our desire to get the one "correct" answer.) Another basis is the tendency among teachers to ask what the "theme" of a work is. This question is one that has often puzzled me because any good work contains multiple themes; when we pretend that a work has a single theme, we are likely to reduce a complex work to a single, aphoristic "message." Telegrams convey messages, and if authors wanted to communicate such messages, they would send telegrams (or tweets) or write tracts or publish aphorisms. However authors want to convey some of the complexities and contradictions of human existence, and to reduce those qualities to "messages" or even to "main themes" is to do violence to what an author is trying to accomplish.

For example, the theme of most Renaissance love poetry (most of which was written by men) can be reduced to "I love her. She doesn't love me. Oh rats." We can find this "theme" in Petrarch, in Shakespeare, in Spenser, in Sidney, even in contemporary country-western music. Frankly it does not need to be said all that often, and if this is really all that those poets were saying, we would be foolish to waste our time reading them. But what they were doing was in fact quite different. They were using this stock situation to explore such aspects of the world as religion, the self, the nature of relationships, and the nature of love itself. Focusing only on their usnrequited love is like buying a bicycle because of its color: the color may be interesting, but a person who decides on the basis of the color has missed the whole point of the bicycle.

Furthermore, a good deal of the enjoyment in such poems comes from the clever ways in which poets use that stock situation for their own purposes, often to mock their own speakers, as Sir Thomas Wyatt does in "They Flee from Me," or even to be deeply critical of their speakers, as Sir Philip Sidney does in *Astrophel and Stella* (a point, incidentally, about which many Renaissance scholars might disagree).

The speaker in Wyatt's poem may lament his beloved's apparent lack of faithfulness to him, but the words he uses to describe their relationship make it clear why she has abandoned him. He compares her to birds (or perhaps to squirrels—it's hard to tell), little creatures that come to his window and eat out of his hands. This comparison reveals that he thinks of her as a little domesticated pet, another creature who eats out of his hands; and as the poem continues, he reveals further that he thinks of her only in sexual terms as an object that he can use, not as a real person. Can it be any wonder that she has abandoned him? Part of the fun of this poem comes in watching the doltish speaker reveal himself as a fool while he thinks that he is exposing his lady's unfaithfulness. At the same time, this speaker is completely mystified because he truly believes himself to be a sincere and faithful lover. Similarly, Sidney's Astrophel shows himself to be a shallow, if ardent, lover—a young man who knows the rules of the game of love but who seems incapable of realizing that his beloved Stella does not want to play. On the other hand, Edmund Spenser's lover in the sonnets of the *Amoretti* learns what it means to be a real lover and, in an extraordinary turn of events for a Renaissance sonnet sequence, actually marries the lady.

Can we take three such different poets, all of them writing in the sixteenth century, and talk about the "theme" of their poems? They are exploring human existence by examining the essential human emotion of love, but they are doing so in distinctly different ways and having fun while they do so.

Of course, there are a number of misconceptions about literature that have to be gotten out of the way before anyone can enjoy it. One misconception is that literature is full of hidden meanings. There are certainly occasional works that contain hidden meanings. The biblical book of Revelation, for example, was written in a kind of code, using images that had specific meanings for its early audience but that we can only recover with a great deal of difficulty. Most literary works, however, are not at all like that. Perhaps an analogy will illustrate this point. When I take my car to my mechanic because something is not

working properly, he opens the hood and we both stand there looking at the engine. But after we have looked for a few minutes, he is likely to have seen what the problem is, while I could look for hours and never see it. We are looking at the same thing. The problem is not hidden, nor is it in some secret code. It is right there in the open, accessible to anyone who knows how to "read" it, which my mechanic does and I do not. He has been taught how to "read" automobile engines and he has practiced "reading" them. He is a good "close reader," which is why I continue to take my car to him.

The same thing is true for readers of literature. Generally authors want to communicate with their readers, so they are not likely to hide or disguise what they are saying, but reading literature also requires some training and some practice. Good writers use language very carefully, and readers must learn how to be sensitive to that language, just as the mechanic must learn to be sensitive to the appearances and sounds of the engine. Everything that the writer wants to say, and much that the writer may not be aware of, is there in the words. We simply have to learn how to read them. Another popular misconception is that a literary work has a single "meaning" (and that only English teachers know how to find that meaning). There is an easy way to dispel this misconception. Just go to a college library and find the section that holds books on Shakespeare. Choose one play, Hamlet, for example, and see how many books there are about it, all by scholars who are educated, perceptive readers. Can it be the case that one of these books is correct and all the others are mistaken? And if the correct one has already been written, why would anyone need to write another book about the play? The answer is that there is no single correct way to read a good piece of literature.

Again, let me use an analogy to illustrate this point. Suppose that everyone at a meeting were asked to describe a person who was standing in the middle of the room. Imagine how many different descriptions there would be, depending on where the viewer sat in relation to the person. Furthermore, an optometrist in the crowd might focus on the person's glasses; a hair stylist might focus on the person's haircut; someone who sells clothing might focus on the style of dress; a podiatrist might focus on the person's feet. Would any of these descriptions be incorrect? Not necessarily, but they would be determined by the viewers' perspectives. They might also be determined by such factors as the viewers' ages, genders, or ability to move around the person being viewed, or by their previous acquaintance with the subject. So whose descriptions would be correct? Conceivably all of them, and if we put all of these correct descriptions together, we would be closer to having a full description of the person.

This is most emphatically not to say, however, that all descriptions are correct simply because each person is entitled to his or her opinion. If the podiatrist is of the opinion that the person is five feet, nine inches tall, the podiatrist could be mistaken. And even if the podiatrist actually measures the person, the measurement could be mistaken. Everyone who describes this person, therefore, must offer not only an opinion but also a basis for that opinion. "My feeling is that this person is a teacher" is not enough. "My feeling is that this person is a teacher because the person's clothing is covered with chalk dust and because the person is carrying a stack of papers that look like they need grading" is far better, though even that statement might be mistaken.

So it is with literature. As we read, as we try to understand and interpret, we must deal with the text that is in front of us; but we must also recognize both that language is slippery and that each of us individually deals with it from a different set of perspectives. Not all of these perspectives are necessarily legitimate, and we are always liable to be misreading or misinterpreting what we see. Furthermore, it is possible that contradictory readings of a single work will both be legitimate, because literary works can be as complex and multifaceted as human beings. It is vital, therefore, that in reading literature we abandon both the idea that any individual's reading of a work is the "correct" one and the idea that there is one simple way to read any work. Our interpretations may, and probably should, change according to the way we approach the work. If we read War and Peace as teenagers, then in middle age, and then in old age, we might be said to have read three different books. Thus, multiple interpretations, even contradictory interpretations, can work together to give us a better understanding of a work.

Author's Intent

Intentions are a problem in studying literature. One complication is easily dispensed with. Teachers should never ask, "What was the author trying to say here?" The question, of course, implies that the author was an incompetent who was so unsuccessful in making a point that student readers have to decipher it. The real question is something like "What do these words say?" You may notice the phrasing of that question, which does not ask, "What does the author mean?" or "What does the author intend?"

The reason for that phrasing is that we cannot know (or we have to pretend that we cannot know) what the author intended. When we read literature, our focus has to be on what the words say, not on what the author intended. One reason that we have to take this stance is that an author's words, even an author who is totally in control of those words, inevitably say more than the author intended. It even happens that the words may mean

something that the author did not intend. I once attended a poetry reading, at the end of which someone asked the poet, “Why do you have so many images of flayed animals and animal skins in your poems?” to which the poet replied, “Do I?” After rereading his poems, he said, “Yes, I see that I do,” and he then tried to find a reason for those images, but clearly he was taken by surprise at what he himself had written.

Another reason to avoid focusing on the author’s intention is that if we know (or even think we know) what the author intended, we might cease our own interpretive activities. The author’s understanding of his or her work might be important, but strangely enough, it is only one understanding and might not be the best one. To use an analogy from music, Igor Stravinsky conducted many of his own compositions for recordings. Those versions are good, and they are surely important, but they are not the best interpretations of his own music.

Furthermore, we can never really know what an author intended, even if the author tells us. For one thing, authors are cagey creatures and might lie to us. For another, the author might not always know what his or her intention was. After all, how often do we really know our full intentions when we do or say something? And authors frequently use speakers in their works who are not themselves. If one of Shakespeare’s characters says something, we have to remember that we are listening to a character, not to Shakespeare. So, too, with poets and storytellers. Jonathan Swift’s Lemuel Gulliver tells us many things that Swift himself would never have believed. So focus on the words, not on the author. Furthermore, even if we think we know what the author intended, we must remember that the author’s reading of a work is still only one among many possibilities.

Contributors and Attributions

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1.5: Inferences in Literature

Inference vs. Guess

What is an inference? What's the difference between an inference and a guess? And what does any of this have to do with reading literature? Literature works largely on "showing" rather than "telling." The author shows through literary devices such as imagery, tone, figurative language and leaves it up to the reader to infer the meaning. This allows for active interpretation on the part of the reader and makes the reading dynamic rather than passive.

An **inference** is a conclusion you reach by applying logic to the evidence you are given. Making inferences while reading is a strategy that will help you learn, remember, and apply what you have read. When you make inferences you are "reading between the lines". This tactic is similar to what Sherlock Holmes does when he sees that Dr. Watson has a tan and makes a conclusion about where Watson has recently traveled. You already make inferences all of the time. For example, if you go over to a friend's house and they point at the sofa and say, "Don't sit there; Candy came over with her baby again", what could you logically conclude?

First, you know there must be a reason not to sit where your friend is pointing. Further, you know that the reason to not sit there is related to the fact that Cindy just visited with her baby. You don't know what exactly happened, but you can infer enough and don't need to ask any more questions to know that you do not want to sit there.

Other examples of inferences are when a doctor makes a diagnosis about why you are sick or when a mechanic figures out what is wrong with your car. Try some yourself. Imagine you witness each of the following – what can you infer about each situation?

1. You see a woman pushing a baby stroller down the street.
2. You are at a corner and see two cars stopped at an intersection. The rear car starts honking its horn.
3. You are walking down the street, and all of a sudden a dog comes running out of an opened door with its tail between its legs.

For the first example, you probably came up with something simple, such as that there was a baby in the stroller. For the second, you could infer that the first car should have started moving or was waiting too long at the corner and holding up the second car. For the third, you could reasonably guess that the dog had done something wrong and was afraid of being punished. You do not know for certain that these inferences are true.

Just like Sherlock Holmes, you would have to test your theories. If you checked 100 strollers, 99 times you would find a baby, but maybe one time you would find something else, like groceries.

? Exercise 1.5.1

Write a conclusion you could infer from the following:

1. You see a man running and frantically waving at a bus that is pulling away from a bus stop.
2. You are giving a speech in front of an audience and notice several people laughing and pointing at something on your pants.
3. Your sister comes home from spending the evening with her friends, slams the front door and runs to her room while crying.

Making Inferences from Reading Material

To make inferences from reading material, take two or more details from the reading and see if you can draw a conclusion. Remember, making an inference is not just making a guess, even though the answer is not stated in the reading passage. You need to make a judgment that can be supported, just as you could reasonably infer there is a baby in a stroller, because even though you do not know for certain, it is the most likely possibility. For example, at the end of the story "The Five Orange Pips", you are not told what exactly happened to the Lone Star, but you can infer that it was wrecked in a storm based on the other details provided:

- There was a storm
- The ship did not arrive at its next destination
- Wreckage with the initials L.S. were seen by other sailors

You could claim that the ship was taken by pirates, was sunk by a whale, or even that it landed on a deserted island; however, the only reasonable explanation from the facts is the same one implied by Dr. Watson: the ship was destroyed by the storm.

When you are asked to make an inference, go back over the reading and look for hints within the text, such as words that are directly related to the question. Also check for tone: are there words or phrases that indicate whether something is positive or negative? For example, if someone is referred to as being, sharp, friendly, and loyal,you would know that those are positive attributes; whereas, if they were referred to as being slovenly, dull, and selfish, those are negative attributes.

In order to make reasonable inferences that help you better comprehend what you read, remember to do the following:

Understand the stated information. You don't necessarily have to identify the main ideas to make a reasonable inference. However, you do need to understand the important vocabulary and facts in the text. So ask yourself, "What do these details seem to show? Is there enough evidence to support my inference?" *"Are there any other possible ways to interpret this?"*

Use your prior knowledge of the situation and your common sense. However, do not ignore the facts in favor of your own personal opinions.

Consider the alternatives so you don't "jump to conclusions." Inferences tend to be "reasonable" when they are the result of "reasoned" thinking, not emotional reactions. When you go to a doctor for advice, he or she will think of different possible diagnoses before settling on the one that is most likely, given your symptoms. If the doctor jumped too quickly to one conclusion, he might give you the wrong treatment. If, as a reader, you jump too quickly to one interpretation of the text, you may not understand what the writer intended to convey.

Example: Imagine that it is a sunny day and you decide to go see a movie. After the movie is over, you step back outside and see that the sky is now cloudy and the streets and sidewalks are all wet. What can we reasonably infer happened?

If you said that it rained while you were in the theater, you're right! But what if you said that everything is wet because a water truck driving down the street was hit by a piano falling from an upper story window, causing the water truck to burst open and spill water all? This is a very unlikely scenario.

Questioning/responding (after you read): After you read a text, or part of a book, you will often be asked to respond to questions about the text. Just as you did when you annotated, you will often be asked to write down main ideas from the text as well as your own personal reactions to the text. **Hint: Read these questions BEFORE you read the text as a pre-reading exercise. This will help you build more SCHEMA (representation of a theory in the form of an outline) about the text.**

? Exercise 1.5.2

Hybrid cars are good for the environment, but they may not perform as well as cars that run only on gasoline. The Toyota Prius gets great gas mileage and has low emissions, making it a good "green" option. However, many people think that it is unattractive. The Prius also cannot accelerate as quickly as other models and cannot hold as many passengers as larger gas-fueled SUVs. Although they save money on fuel, hybrid cars cost more up front than gas-fueled cars. A new hybrid car can cost almost $3,500 more than the same car configured to run just on gasoline.

Which of the following can you infer from the passage?

1. Hybrid cars are more dangerous than other options.
2. Toyota is making a lot of money from the Prius.
3. Cars that use gasoline are going to destroy the environment.
4. Hybrid cars may not be the best choice for everyone.

Answer

All four answers are about hybrid cars in some way, but none of the answers can be found directly from the text. Read through and see what hints you can find from the text. You will notice right away that there is nothing about car safety in the passage at all, so you can eliminate choice A. Choice B could be the answer, since the passage mentions that hybrids cost more to purchase. But is it the most reasonable conclusion?

To be sure, you need to go through all of the answers – don't just stop when you find one that looks okay. You may think that choice C is true; after all, many people want hybrid cars because emissions are harmful to the environment. Although this choice seems accurate, it does not follow from anything in the passage. Choice D could be inferred from the text. If a person had a large family, was short on money or needed a car that could accelerate quickly, then a hybrid might not be the best choice for them.

Now compare choice D with the other possible answer, choice B. Choice B might not be as good an answer because you don't know how much it costs Toyota to make the cars, and you don't know how many they sell, so you can't reasonably infer that they are making a lot of money. Choice D is the correct answer.

? Exercise 1.5.3

Redwood trees are rare. They are found only on the coastal slopes of Northern California and Oregon, and in China. Redwoods were thought to be extinct in China, but they were rediscovered by a Chinese forester in 1948. These trees can grow hundreds of feet high and live to be thousands of years old. They are endangered due to logging, pollution, and global warming, which is reducing the amount of fog on the coast. Redwoods get their water from the fog.

Which of the following can you infer from the passage:

1. The Chinese logged the Redwoods almost into extinction.
2. Redwood trees will continue to grow taller throughout their whole lives.
3. Using non-recyclable products will kill Redwood trees.
4. Redwoods can only grow in places that get a lot of fog.

Paragraph 2:

Shannelle is a very good baker. Whenever there is a bake sale to raise money for a cause, Shannelle is always asked to make cupcakes or a pie. People say that they only come to the bake sales if they know that Shannelle is making something. She always agreed to bake things because she hated to say no to anyone. One week, her oven broke and she could not bake, so she decided to go for a hike instead. Shannelle enjoyed it so much that she realized she needed to learn to make time for herself, and not just donate all of her free time to charity.

Which of the following can you infer from the passage:

1. Shannelle is a generous person.
2. Shannelle's mother did a good job teaching her how to bake.
3. The people in the community were taking advantage of Shannelle.
4. Shannelle's brother broke her oven so she would get a day off.

Building on Your Knowledge of Inferences

Previously, we covered the basics of **inferences** and **reasonable conclusions**. Now we are going to look at another strategy to help you make valid inferences: the if-then statement. To use an if-then statement, look at the information presented in the reading and see if you could rephrase it into a statement using the words "if" and "then", which establish a cause-and-effect relationship.

For example:

In the 1800s in England, laws were applied differently depending on the gender of the accused. Women could not own land or vote. Women were barred from receiving a death sentence for crimes that a man could be executed for because people thought it would be too shocking to see a woman hanged publicly. In some places, men could be fined for certain behaviors done in the presence of a woman, such as swearing or spitting.

What **if-then statements** could we make based on the paragraph above? Let's go through sentence-by-sentence.

1. If we were back in England in the 1800's, then the laws would be applied differently for men and women.
2. If we were back in England in the 1800's, then women could not own land or vote.
3. If a woman committed a capital crime ("capital" meaning one that could earn a death sentence), then she would not be executed.
4. If a woman were hung, then the public would be shocked.
5. If a man swore in the presence of a woman, then he could be fined.

Broken down like this you can see how much easier it is to make logical inferences. Suppose you were asked if a woman who murdered her husband would be executed.

If-then statement #3 would tell you that the answer is "no", even though that information is not directly mentioned in the text. If you were asked if women were involved in government, you would say "no" because you know that they could not vote (#2). If you were asked if men could own real estate, you would say "yes" because #2 indicates that the fact that women could NOT own real estate was different from what men could do.

? Exercise 1.5.4

Now do the same thing with the next paragraph. Write your answers first, and then check your work below.

Many people don't realize that our sun is actually a star. Our sun seems very large because it is so close to us; however, some stars are actually much larger than our sun. Betelguese (pronounced beetle-juice), a star located in the constellation Orion, is much larger than our own sun. In fact, if it were located where our sun is located, its surface would engulf both Earth and Mars. Because other stars are so distant, they appear to be fainter, which is why we cannot see them in the daytime. Betelguese is the 8th brightest star in the night sky. To find Betelguese, first locate the constellation Orion. This star forms his left shoulder.

Answer

These are just examples, but your answers should be similar to them.

If something is far away, then it will appear smaller. If something looks smaller, then it may not be smaller if it is far away.

From here, there are dozens of conclusions you could infer. For example, if you were asked why Star A appears smaller than Star B, you would know it might be because it is actually smaller. Then again, it might also be smaller because it is farther away. The if-then

statement is a useful strategy that can help you make inferences and increase your reading comprehension.

- If a star is much larger than the sun, then it could be Betelguese.
- If a star is fainter than the sun, then it cannot be seen during the day.
- If a star is the 8th brightest in the night sky, then it is Betelguese.
- If you know which constellation a star is in, then it is easier to find.

Exercise 1.5.5

Write an if-then statement for each sentence in the following paragraphs.

1. Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America. The population in Nicaragua, hovering at approximately 6 million, is multiethnic. Segments of the population include indigenous native tribes from the Mosquito Coast, Europeans, Africans, Asians, and people of Middle Eastern origin. The main language is Spanish; although, native tribes on the eastern coast speak their native languages, such as Miskito, Sumo, and Rama, as well as English Creole. The mixture of cultural traditions has generated substantial diversity in art, cuisine, literature, and music.
2. Childhood obesity is a condition where excess body fat negatively affects a child's health or well-being. Since methods to directly determine the amount of body fat are difficult, the diagnosis of obesity is often based on the Body Mass Index (BMI). Due to the rising prevalence of obesity in children and its many adverse health effects, obesity is being recognized as a serious public health concern. The term "overweight" is often used instead of "obese" for children because it is less stigmatizing.

Answer

These are just examples, but your answers should be similar to them.

Example 1:

- If a country is the largest in Central America, then it must be Nicaragua.
- If a country is in Central America and it is multiethnic, it might be Nicaragua.
- If someone is of Middle Eastern origin, they might live in Nicaragua.
- If someone lives in Nicaragua and does not speak Spanish, then they may be a member of a native tribe that speaks their native language.
- If a culture has a mixture of cultural traditions, then it is likely to have substantial diversity in art, cuisine, literature, and music.

Example 2

- If a child suffers from obesity, then she has excessive body fat that negatively affects her health or well-being.
- If someone has been diagnosed with obesity, then it is likely that their BMI was used to make this determination as determining the amount of body fat is difficult.
- If condition is rising in prevalence and has many adverse health effects, then it is likely to be recognized as a public health concern.
- If a child is described as being overweight, then it is likely that they are obese.

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1.6: The Rough Guide to Literary Style, a Historical Overview

The Rough Guide to Literary Style, a Historical Overview

Literary style can be defined as how a writer decides to express whatever he wants to say; his choice of words, the sentence structure, syntax, language (figurative or metaphorical). Writing is more than telling a story or coming up with an interesting plot; for the writer it is an essential part of the writing process to select the words and language carefully and to develop his own personal style. In this article we will present some examples of different literary styles throughout history, and briefly discuss their effect on the reader, both at the time they were written and today. When you have studied the article and the examples, follow the link at the bottom for tasks and activities.

The Old Style

Reading old texts, for example from the Renaissance, can be a bit of a challenge for a modern reader. Scholars and writers at the time would often excel in rhetorical devices to show their verbal skills; sentences were long and intricate with many diversions and sub clauses. Many people were illiterate, and reading, let alone writing, was reserved for the cultural elite, and was seen as evidence of intellectual status. The following is a quote from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678):

> *Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the town there is a fair kept, called Vanity Fair, because the town where it is kept is lighter than vanity; and also because all that is there sold, or what cometh thither, is vanity.*

What we note here is that the paragraph is one long sentence, which is made up of clauses linked by connectors (comma, semicolon, and, because). This is called a "periodic sentence" because the conclusion of the sentence is suspended until the end. The style is oratorical and formal, and the immediate effect on the modern reader is most likely impatience, because there are so many subclauses and additional information. The reader may want to find the point of the information, but in renaissance literature the ornamental language was a point on its own.

During the 16th and 17th centuries writers skillfully expressed themselves in a poetic language mainly designed for recital. The theatre was a popular cultural venue, where people came to follow the great works of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlow, two of the great playwrights of the time. Many Shakespearian plots were often traditional or perhaps even stolen from some other source, but Shakespeare was the unchallenged master of language. The following extract is the opening lines of *Twelfth Night (1601)*:

> *If music be the food of love, play on,*
>
> *Give me excess of it; that, surfeiting*
>
> *The appetite may sicken, and so die…*
>
> *That strain again, it had a dying fall:*
>
> *O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south*
>
> *That breathes upon a bank of violets;*
>
> *Stealing and giving odour… (-) Enough,*
>
> *No more!*

The style may seem both theatrical and pompous, but that was the literary ideal during the Renaissance, and the theatre audience loved it. Many modern readers also embrace this musical language; Shakespeare's eloquent style is still recognized as supreme literary craftsmanship.

Science and Facts

The style of the Enlightenment writers was more informative and scientifically to the point. Their choice of words and narrative style were influenced by the predominant ideals of the time – science, facts and lexical information. The following example is from *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe. Robinson has just survived the shipwreck and is on a raft approaching the island that is to become his home for the next 28 years:

> *At length I spy'd a little Cove on the right Shore of the Creek, to which with great Pain and Difficulty I guided my Raft, and at last got so near, as that, reaching Ground with my Oar, I could thrust her directly in, but here I had like to have dipt all my Cargo in the Sea again; for that Shore lying pretty steep, that is to say sloping, there was no Place to land, but where one End of my Float, if it run on Shore, it would endanger my Cargo again.*

This descriptive and rational style is typical of the era. We also see, as with John Bunyan, that the whole paragraph is one long sentence with many clauses. The informative style worked well for contemporary readers who were hungry for accounts about explorations and scientific experiments. The effect on a modern reader may of course be rather tedious as the detailed information is so meticulously laid out. An interesting detail is the capitalization of nouns, which was a common feature of enlightenment literature.

The Romantic Touch

Prose from the Romantic Era is also characterized by a somewhat elevated style, but as the two following examples will show, the style now becomes more accessible for modern readers, with shorter sentences and a more colloquial language. But the choice of words clearly reveals that this is the time of strong emotions and moral reflections. The first example is from *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë (1847):

> *I had forgotten to draw my curtain, which I usually did, and also to let down my window-blind. The consequence was, that when the moon, which was full and bright (for the night was fine), came in her course to that space in the sky opposite my casement, and looked in at me through the unveiled panes, her glorious gaze roused me. Awakening in the dead of night, I opened my eyes on her disc – silver-white and crystal clear. It was beautiful, but not too solemn: I half rose and stretched my arm to draw the curtain.*

The poetic style exemplifies the romantic ideals brilliantly; it is like a lyrical prose text with elements usually associated with poetry. The next example is from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813):

> *The discussion of Mr Collins's offer was now nearly at an end, and Elizabeth had only to suffer from uncomfortable feelings necessarily attending it, and occasionally from some peevish allusion of her mother. As for the gentleman himself, his feelings were chiefly expressed, not by embarrassment, or dejection, or by trying to avoid her, but by stiffness of manner and resentful silence.*

The style here is also purely romantic; Austen's choice of words reflects the morals and the conventions that were predominant with the upper classes at the time. To a modern reader the style may seem a bit formal, but Jane Austen portrayed her time and its virtues in an accurate manner. Austen's popularity clearly shows that her style also goes down well with modern readers.

Realism

During the Victorian Age (or Realism as the era is referred to on the continent) literary style became more diverse as writers now more than before developed their own personal style. Victorian writers wanted to display reality in all its details, for better or worse. If we look at Charles Dickens, who is recognized as the most prominent Victorian novelist, his style is quite unique with its

precise and visual descriptions. People and places are painted for the reader down to the smallest details. The following example is from *Oliver Twist* (1838):

> *It was market morning. The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire; and a thick steam, perpetually rising from the reeking bodies of the cattle, and mingling with the fog, which seemed to rest upon the chimney-tops, hung heavily above. All the pens in the centre of the large area, and as many temporary pens as could be crowded into the vacant space, were filled with sheep; tied up to post by the gutter side were long lines of beasts and oxen, three of four deep. Countrymen, butchers, drovers, hawkers, boys, thieves, idlers, and vagabonds of every low grade were mingled in a mass; the whistling of drovers, the barking of dogs, the bellowing and plunging of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the grunting and squeaking of pigs…*

This is the typical Dickensian style; he paints a picture so vivid and detailed that the reader is able to see, hear and smell the scene. Here, too, the paragraph consists of three long sentences (apart from the brief introduction). Dickens' hang to meticulous descriptions is also reflected in his narrative style; the main plot is intertwined with sub-plots and more or less related side stories that seem to lead in different directions. Reading Dickens is like slow speed skating – you go left and right as you also gradually move forward. To many modern readers Dickens' style may be a bit overwhelming, there is simply too much to take in. On the other hand, few other writers – if any – have been able to paint such an accurate picture of their contemporary society.

The next example of literary style from the mid-19th century is taken from Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* (1874), where Twain writes about his training to become a pilot on the river:

> *Now the engines were stopped altogether, and we drifted with the current. Not that I could see the boat drift, for I could not, the stars being all gone by this time. This drifting was the dismalest work; it held one's heart still. Presently I discovered a blacker gloom than that which surrounded us. It was the head of the island. We were closing right down upon it. We entered it deeper shadow, ad so imminent seemed the peril that I was likely to suffocate; and I had the strongest impulse to do something, anything, to save the vessel. But still Mr Bixby stood by his wheel, silent, intent as a cat, and all the pilots stood shoulder to shoulder at his back. "She'll not make it! Somebody whispered.*

Note how the style here is totally different from Dickens' picturesque description of the market scene. Mark Twain's style is subtler and more subdued, nevertheless he communicates the scene brilliantly; we feel the intensity of the moments before the steamer hits land. This may also be a consequence of Mark Twain's narrative angle, as he relates this in an autobiographical way, from a 1st person angle.

Less is More

During the first half of the 20th century literary style became even more diverse. Many writers now wanted to experiment with their art, and literature became complex and abstract. Some writers took it to the limit and their texts were close to unintelligible for the ordinary reader. Here we will present two examples of a more moderate modernist literary style. James Joyce is probably the prime exponent of the experimental modernist style, but the following example from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), his debut, is quite straightforward – though it carries elements of the style he would develop in his later works:

> *She had passed through the dusk. And therefore the air was silent save for one soft hiss that fell. And therefore the tongues about him had ceased their babble. Darkness was falling.*

The style of these silent and poetic lines has an intriguing effect on the reader. Joyce's choice of words makes the reader reflect: Why was the air silent because "she had passed through the dusk"? Note also: "passed through the dusk" instead of "walked

through the evening". And at the end is a sentence of just three words; it is a brilliant example of minimalist, poetic prose.

Another modernist writer who became famous for his minimalist style was Ernest Hemingway. His literary style was to economize information to the point that what is left unsaid is more important than what is said. A famous example is when Hemingway accepted the challenge of writing a novel in six words, and came up with: "For Sale. Baby Shoes. Never Worn." This example of Hemingway's short-cut style is from the novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926):

> *It was dim and dark and the pillars went high up, and there were people praying, and it smelt of incense, and there were some wonderful big buildings.*

In this very brief and to-the-point description, Hemingway gives the reader as little information as possible, but enough to set the mood or atmosphere of the scene. The sentence consists of five independent clauses connected with "and." In his short story *Indian Camp* (1924) Hemingway takes his minimalist style even further by omitting the connecting "ands":

> *The sun was coming over the hills. A bass jumped, making a circle in the water. Nick trailed his hand in the water. It felt warm in the sharp chill of the morning.*

If we compare this with, for example, Charles Dickens' market scene we see a totally different narrative style that demands more from the reader. We are not given all the details; the full effect of the text depends on what the reader is able to add to it. The Norwegian author Tarjei Vesaas is another prime example of this poetic minimalism; he would often omit all unnecessary connectors ("and," "or," "because"…), and present his narrative like a naked skeleton for the reader to dress up.

The Style is the Trial

Writers at all times have worked with words to develop their own personal style, influenced by their cultural and social environment, and driven by an unstoppable urge to express themselves. They struggle with words and literary devices to get their message across exactly the way they want it. Writing is a remarkable profession; it takes some talent and creativity, certainly some commitment – and a lot of work. The German writer Thomas Mann put it like this: "It is a struggle – spending hour after hour, even days fighting with just one sentence; a good day is when I have completed some lines." Most writers are perfectionists; the bulk of what they write is simply tossed in the bin. American contemporary novelist Paul Auster even said: "Don't do it if you don't have to. It's a curse!" Discouraging advice for aspiring writers!

Contributors and Attributions

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1.7: Discussion Activity - What is Literature To You?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this assignment, students will be able to:

- critically analyze the qualities which differentiate literature from other genres of writing
- question how works of literature have been categorized as literature or not literature
- consider their relationship to literature

Part I

1. What is your favorite book or piece of writing? (If you do not like to read, what is your favorite video game, song, movie, or TV show?)
2. What qualities of this text seem literary? What qualities seem less literary?
3. Where do you think this text should be placed on the literary spectrum? Draw it on your spectrum. Why did you place it where you did?

Part II

1. Think about your past experiences with literature in school. What is a work you think your English teachers in the past would classify as literature?
2. What qualities of this text make it seem literary? What qualities might make it seem less literary?
3. Where do you think this text should be placed on the literary spectrum? Draw it on your spectrum. Why did you place it where you did?

Part III

1. Think about the spectrum you have created. Examine it closely.
2. How might these placements reflect where we come from as a student, as a class, as a campus, or as a society? To rephrase, how might our personal experiences, environment, or beliefs influence the way we approach literature?
3. If in a classroom: do you agree or disagree with your peers' placements on the spectrum? Why or why not?

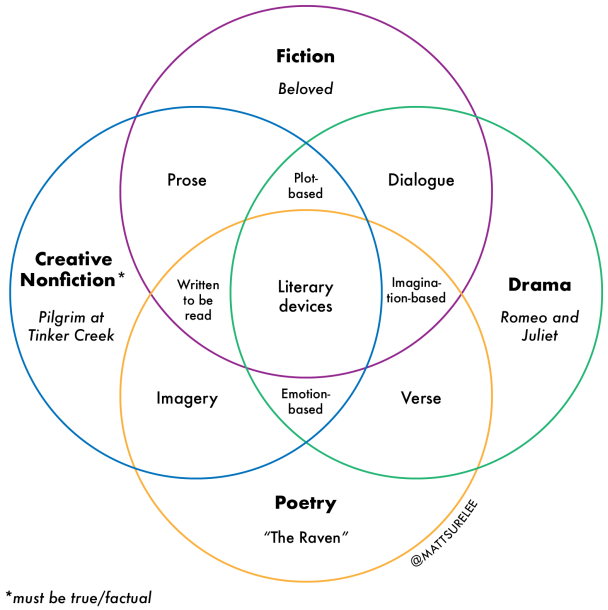
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1.8: The Literary Landscape- Four Major Genres

The Literary Landscape: Four Major Genres

In the landscape of literature, there are four major genres: poetry, drama, fiction, and creative nonfiction. While there are certain key recognizable features of each genre, these are not so much rules as they are tools, or conventions, the author uses. If we think of literature as its own world, it may help to think of genres more as regions with open borders, where there are no walls and that authors can freely move through if they desire. But, like any traveler, it helps you understand your place in the world if you know where you are located (or at least the "lay of the land"). It can also be interesting to analyze how certain texts break genre conventions. These major genres are briefly outlined below.



"Literary Genres Venn Diagram" by Matt Shirley (2021) licensed CC-BY-SA. This image shows some of the differences and overlap between different genres.

Poetry

- Emphasis on image or feeling
- More emphasis on rhythm and meter than other genres (older drama, like Shakespeare, often uses rhythm and meter)
- Sometimes rhymes, but not always
- Organized through stanzas and lines
- Does not require a plot or characters, although it may include them (such as in narrative poetry). Often focuses on single moment or feeling or image
- Meant to be heard as well as read, so there is an emphasis on sound

Example

"I wandered lonely as a cloud" by William Wordsworth (1807)

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees, 5
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay: 10
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company: 15
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude; 20
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

In-Text Citation: Wordsworth personified the daffodils as "dancing" (line 6). The 6 corresponds to the line number.

Works Cited Entry: Wordsworth, William. "I wandered lonely as a cloud." *Poems in Two Volumes.* London: Longman, 1807.

Drama

- Meant to be performed to an audience
- Character List (often); Character names indicate who is speaking (almost always)
- Heavy inclusion of dialogue. Usually not much scene description (compared to other genres)
- Organized by Acts, Scenes, and Line Numbers
- May include stage directions, but may not
- Plot based (it tells a story, usually involving a conflict of some kind)
- May be written in verse
- Types: Comedy, Tragedy, History, and Romance, among others

Example

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde (excerpt)

THE PERSONS IN THE PLAY

John Worthing, J.P.
Algernon Moncrieff
Rev. Canon Chasuble, D.D.
Merriman, Butler
Lane, Manservant
Lady Bracknell
Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax
Cecily Cardew
Miss Prism, Governess

ACT 1 SCENE 1

1 Morning-room in **Algernon's** flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.

2 [**Lane** is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, **Algernon** enters.]

3 **Algernon.** Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

4 **Lane.** I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

5 **Algernon.** I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—any one can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

6 **Lane.** Yes, sir.

7 **Algernon.** And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

8 **Lane.** Yes, sir. [Hands them on a salver.]

9 **Algernon.** [Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.] Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord 10 Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

In-Text Citation: The dynamics of power are indicated by Lane's repeated use of "sir" (Wilde 1.1.4, 6, 8). Here the numbers represent the Act (1), the Scene (1), and the line numbers (4, 6, 8).

Works Cited Entry: Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance of Being Earnest.* London: St. James' Theatre, 1895.

Fiction

- Prose
- Created from the imagination. May be inspired by real events or people, but not chained by the constraints of reality.
- Plot-based
- Character-based
- Usually includes dialogue and scene descriptions
- Organized through paragraphs and sentences
- Types: Short Story, Novella, Novel

Example

From the oval-shaped flower-bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks spreading into heart-shaped or tongue-shaped leaves half way up and unfurling at the tip red or blue or yellow petals marked with spots of colour raised upon the surface; and from the red, blue or yellow gloom of the throat emerged a straight bar, rough with gold dust and slightly clubbed at the end. The petals were voluminous enough to be stirred by the summer breeze, and when they moved, the red, blue and yellow lights passed one over the other, staining an inch of the brown earth beneath with a spot of the most intricate colour. The light fell either upon the smooth, grey back of a pebble, or, the shell of a snail with its brown, circular veins, or falling into a raindrop, it expanded with such intensity of red, blue and yellow the thin walls of water that one expected them to burst and disappear. Instead, the drop was left in a second silver grey once more, and the light now settled upon the flesh of a leaf, revealing the branching thread of fibre beneath the surface, and again it moved on and spread its illumination in the vast green spaces beneath the dome of the heart-shaped and tongue-shaped leaves. Then the breeze stirred rather more briskly overhead and the colour was flashed into the air above, into the eyes of the men and women who walk in Kew Gardens in July.

In-Text Citation: The natural world is described in anatomical language, like dismembered body parts, such as the "heart-shaped or tongue-shaped leaves," the "throat" of the flowers, and the "veins" of the snail shells (Woolf 1). If there are page numbers, the number that goes in the parenthesis is the page number. If there are no page numbers, you can use the paragraph number (Woolf par. 1). If there are not page numbers, and there are too many paragraphs to count, you can just put the author last name (Woolf).

Works Cited Entry: Woolf, Virginia. "Kew Gardens." *Monday or Tuesday.* New York: Harcourt, 1921.

Creative Nonfiction

- Prose
- **True** (not fabricated, not from the imagination). This is a *very important* distinction from the other genres.
- Plot-based
- Character-based

- Usually includes dialogue and scene descriptions
- Organized through paragraphs and sentences
- Types: Narrative, Memoir, and Literary Journalism, among others

Example

I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit. The nearest estimate I can give makes me now between twenty-seven and twenty-eight years of age. I come to this, from hearing my master say, some time during 1835, I was about seventeen years old.

In-Text Citation: Even from the first paragraph of his narrative, Douglass repeatedly notes the power of "knowledge" and "information", and of enslavers' dehumanizing cruelty in withholding knowledge and information, such as birthdays (1). The number here represents the page. Just like in Fiction, if there is no page available, cite the paragraph number (Douglass par. 1). If there no page number, and there are too many paragraphs to count, just cite the last name (Douglass).

Works Cited Entry: Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Boston Anti-Slavery Office, Boston, 1845.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: About Creative Nonfiction

Learning Objectives

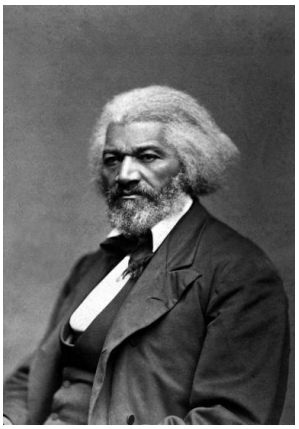
By the end of this chapter, students will be able to:

- define creative nonfiction and understand the basic features of the genre.
- identify basic literary elements (such as setting, plot, character, descriptive imagery, and figurative language).
- perform basic literary analysis.
- craft a personal narrative essay using the elements of creative nonfiction, using MLA-style formatting.

2.1: What is Creative Nonfiction?
2.2: Elements of Creative Nonfiction
2.3: How to Read Creative Nonfiction
2.4: Featured Creative Nonfiction Author- Frederick Douglass
2.5: Creative Nonfiction Reading Discussion Questions
2.6: Descriptive Imagery Worksheets
2.7: The Personal Narrative Essay

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2.1: What is Creative Nonfiction?



"Frederick Douglass" by Frank W. Legg (c. 1879) is in the public domain

Frederick Douglass' creative nonfiction account of the horrors of slavery and his escape from it was so powerfully written that it is largely credited, along with Douglass' speeches, as helping end slavery and empower African-American citizens (Ceasar).

"I shut my ears, averted my eyes, turning instead to what I thought at the time was pain's antidote: silence. I was wrong... Silence feeds pain, allows it to fester and thrive. What starves pain, what forces it to release its grip, is speech, the voice upon which rides the story, this is what happened; this is what I have refused to let claim me."

— Tracy K. Smith, *Ordinary Light*

This textbook begins with creative nonfiction because most students find it the most accessible. Why? Because students encounter nonfiction every day. News stories, some social media posts, and documentaries are all examples of nonfiction. Creative nonfiction is the literary arm of nonfiction.

What is creative nonfiction? Currently, it is currently the most popular literary genre, with such titles as *The Glass Castle* by Jeanette Walls having more than 5 million copies in circulation (Cadden). Indeed, "Creative nonfiction has become the most popular genre in the literary and publishing communities. These days the biggest publishers—HarperCollins, Random House, Norton, and others—are seeking creative nonfiction titles more vigorously than literary fiction and poetry" (Gutkind). While generations past defined literature as poetry, drama, and fiction, Creative Nonfiction has increasingly gained popularity and recognition in the literary world.

According to the literary magazine *Creative Nonfiction*, this fast-growing and increasingly popular genre is defined as: "true stories, well told" (Gutkind). That is, creative nonfiction stories depict real-life events, places, people, and experiences, but do so in a way that is immersive, so readers feel emotionally invested in the writing in a way they probably are not as invested in, say, a textbook or a more formal autobiography. While "nonfiction" (without the creative designation) tells true stories as well, there is less emphasis upon and space for creativity. If regular nonfiction were a person, it might say "just the facts, ma'am." Creative nonfiction, on the other hand, might ask "and what color were her eyes as the moonlight reflected off the ocean into them, and what childhood memories did that moment dredge up?"

The best creative nonfiction tells a true story in an artistic -- or literary -- way. This means that the story has certain elements, such as descriptive imagery, setting, plot, conflict, characters, metaphors, and other literary devices. Usually, a work of creative nonfiction is narrated in first-person, though sometimes it can be written in third-person. It can be more lyric and personal, like Annie Dillard's nature essays, or representing important moments in history, like abolitionist Frederick Douglass' *The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) or Jo Ann Beard's "The Fourth State of Matter." Creative Nonfiction can also include less artistic forms of storytelling, such as investigative journalism.

To summarize the defining characteristics of this genre:

- True stories
- Prose (usually, though sometimes poetry)
- Uses literary devices/is more creative and artistically-oriented than "regular" nonfiction
- Often told in first person
- The narrator is often the author or a persona of the author, but not always

When reading a work of creative nonfiction, it is important to remember the story is true. This means the author does not have as much artistic freedom as a fiction writer or poet might, because they cannot invent events which did not happen. It is worthwhile, then, to pay attention to the literary devices and other artistic choices the narrator makes. Readers should consider: what choices were made here about what to include and what to omit? Are there repeating images or themes? How might the historical context influence this work?

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2.2: Elements of Creative Nonfiction

The main elements of creative nonfiction are **setting, descriptive imagery, figurative language**, **plot**, and **character**. The overarching element or requirement that distinguishes creative nonfiction from any other genre of writing is that while other literary genres can spring from the imagination, **creative nonfiction is, by definition, true.** As you complete the assigned readings in this chapter, keep track of the following elements as they arise in your readings: see if you can identify each of them. Learning these elements now will form a solid foundation for the rest of the class.

Setting

Each story has a setting. The setting is the place where the story takes place. Usually, an effective story establishes its setting early in the story: otherwise readers will have a difficult time visualizing the action of the story. Below is an example of how a writer might establish setting in a way which immerses the reader: by showing rather than telling.

Telling	Showing
I went to the lake. It was cool.	My breath escaped in **ragged bursts**, my quadriceps **burning** as I crested the summit. The lake stretched before me, **aquamarine, glistening** in the **hot August afternoon sun**. Ponderosa pines lined its shores, dropping their **spicy-scented** needles into the clear water. Despite the heat, the Montana mountain air **tasted crisp**.

Which of the above lakes would you want to visit? Which one paints a more immersive picture, making you feel like you are there? When writing a story, our initial instinct is usually to make a list of chronological moments: first I did this, then I did this, then I did that, it was neat-o. That might be factual, but it does not engage the reader or invite them into your world. It bores the reader. Ever been stuck listening to someone tell a story that seems like it will never end? It probably was someone **telling** you a story rather than **using the five senses to immerse you**. In the example above, the writer uses **visual** (sight), **auditory** (sound), **olfactory** (smell), **tactile** (touch), or **gustatory** (taste) imagery to help the reader picture the setting in their mind. By the final draft, the entire story should be compelling and richly detailed. While it's fine to have an outline or first draft that recounts the events of the story, the final draft should include dialogue, immersive description, plot twists, and metaphors to capture your reader's attention as you write.



"Eibsee Lake" by barnyz, 2 August 2011, published on Flickr **CC BY-NC-ND 2.0**

Descriptive Imagery

You have probably encountered **descriptive imagery** before. Basically, it is the way the writer paints the scene, or image, in the mind of the reader. It usually involves descriptions of one or more of the five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste. For example, how would you describe a lemon to a person who has never seen one before?

activity: describe a lemon



"Lemon" by André Karwath (2005) is licensed CC BY-SA 2.5

Imagine you are describing a lemon to someone who has never seen one before. How would you describe it using all five senses?

- Sight
- Sound
- Smell
- Touch
- Taste

One might describe a lemon as yellow, sour-smelling and tasting, and with a smooth, bumpy skin. They might describe the sound of the lemon as a thump on the table if it is dropped, or squelching if it is squished underfoot. By painting a picture in the reader's mind, it immerses them in the story so that they feel they are actually there.

Figurative Language

As a counterpart to descriptive imagery, figurative language is using language in a surprising way to describe a literary moment. Figurative language can take the form of metaphor, such as saying "the lemon tree was heavy with innumerable miniature suns." Since the lemons are not actually suns, this is figurative. Figurative language can also take the form of simile: "aunt Becky's attitude was as sour as a lemon." By comparing an abstract concept (attitude) to an object (lemon), it imparts a feeling/meaning in a more interesting way.

Plot

Plot is one of the basic elements of every story: put simply, plot refers to the actual events that take place within the bounds of your narrative. Using our rhetorical situation vocabulary, we can identify “plot” as the primary subject of a descriptive personal narrative. Three related elements to consider are scope, sequence, and pacing.

Scope

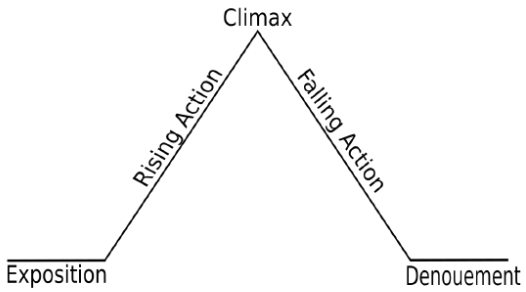
The term scope refers to the boundaries of plot. Where and when does the story begin and end? What is its focus? What background information and details does the story require? I often think about narrative scope as the edges of a photograph: a photo, whether of a vast landscape or a microscopic organism, has boundaries. Those boundaries inform the viewer’s perception.

The way we determine scope varies based on rhetorical situation, but I can say generally that many developing writers struggle with a scope that is too broad: writers often find it challenging to zero in on the events that drive a story and prune out extraneous information.

Consider, as an example, how you might respond if your friend asked what you did last weekend. If you began with, “I woke up on Saturday morning, rolled over, checked my phone, fell back asleep, woke up, pulled my feet out from under the covers, put my feet on the floor, stood up, stretched…” then your friend might have stopped listening by the time you get to the really good stuff. Your scope is too broad, so you’re including details that distract or bore your reader. Instead, focus on the most exciting or meaningful moment(s) of your day: "I woke up face-down to the crunch of shattered glass underneath me. When I wobbled to my feet I realized I was in a large, marble room with large windows overlooking the flashing neon lights of the Las Vegas strip. I had no idea how I got there!" Readers can expect this story will focus on how the storyteller arrived in Las Vegas, and it is much more interesting than including every single detail of the day.

Sequence

The sequence of your plot—the order of the events—will determine your reader's experience. There are an infinite number of ways you might structure your story, and the shape of your story is worth deep consideration. Although the traditional forms for a narrative sequence are not your only options, let's take a look at a few tried-and-true shapes your plot might take.



Freytag's Pyramid is in the public domain

Freytag's Pyramid: Chronological

A. **Exposition**: Here, you're setting the scene, introducing characters, and preparing the reader for the journey.

B. **Rising action**: In this part, things start to happen. You (or your characters) encounter conflict, set out on a journey, meet people, etc.

C. **Climax**: This is the peak of the action, the main showdown, the central event toward which your story has been building.

D. **Falling action**: Now things start to wind down. You (or your characters) come away from the climactic experience changed—at the very least, you are wiser for having had that experience.

E. **Resolution**: Also known as dénouement, this is where all the loose ends get tied up. The central conflict has been resolved, and everything is back to normal, but perhaps a bit different.

In Medias Res

While Freytag's Pyramid tends to follow a linear or chronological structure, a story that begins in medias res begins in the middle of the action. In fact, the Latin translation for this term most literally means "in the middle of things." This is a more exciting way to start a story in that it grabs the readers' attention quickly.

There I was floating in the middle of the ocean, the sharks with laser beams attached to their heads circling hungrily, the red lights bouncing off of the floating disco ball upon which I clung to for dear life, when I thought back to the events which led to this horrifying situation...

The best In Medias Res beginnings make the reader go "WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON HERE?" and want to continue reading. They will usually follow the following inversion of Freytag's Pyramid:

C. **Climax**: This is the peak of the action, the main showdown, the central event of the story where the conflict comes to a head.

A. **Exposition**: Here, you're setting the scene, introducing characters, and preparing the reader for the journey.

B. **Rising action**: In this part, things start to happen. You (or your characters) encounter conflict, set out on a journey, meet people, etc.

C. **Climax**: the story briefly returns to the moment where it started, though usually not in a way which is redundant (not the exact same writing or details)

D. **Falling action**: Now things start to wind down. You (or your characters) come away from the climactic experience changed—at the very least, you are wiser for having had that experience.

E. **Resolution**: Also known as dénouement, this is where all the loose ends get tied up. The central conflict has been resolved, and everything is back to normal, but perhaps a bit different.

Nonlinear Narrative

A nonlinear narrative may be told in a series of flashbacks or vignettes. It might jump back and forth in time. Stories about trauma are often told in this fashion. If using this plot form, be sure to make clear to readers how/why the jumps in time are occurring. A writer might clarify jumps in time by adding time-stamps or dates or by using symbolic images to connect different vignettes.

Pacing

While scope determines the boundaries of plot, and sequencing determines where the plot goes, pacing determines how quickly readers move through the story. In short, it is the amount of time you dedicate to describing each event in the story.

I include *pacing* with *sequence* because a change to one often influences the other. Put simply, pacing refers to the speed and fluidity with which a reader moves through your story. You can play with pacing by moving more quickly through events, or even by experimenting with sentence and paragraph length. Consider how the "flow" of the following examples differ:

The train screeched to a halt. A flock of pigeons took flight as the conductor announced, "We'll be stuck here for a few minutes."	Lost in my thoughts, I shuddered as the train ground to a full stop in the middle of an intersection. I was surprised, jarred by the unannounced and abrupt jerking of the car. I sought clues for our stop outside the window. All I saw were pigeons as startled and clueless as I.

Characters

A major requirement of any story is the use of characters. Characters bring life to the story. Keep in mind that while human characters are most frequently featured in stories, sometimes there are non-human characters in a story such as animals or even the environment itself. Consider, for example, the ways in which the desert itself might be considered a character in "Bajadas" by Francisco Cantú.

Characterization

Whether a story is fiction or nonfiction, writers should spend some time thinking about characterization: the development of characters through actions, descriptions, and dialogue. Your audience will be more engaged with and sympathetic toward your narrative if they can vividly imagine the characters as real people.

Like setting description, characterization relies on specificity. Consider the following contrast in character descriptions:

My mom is great. She is an average-sized brunette with brown eyes. She is very loving and supportive, and I know I can rely on her. She taught me everything I know.	In addition to some of my father's idiosyncrasies, however, he is also one of the most kind-hearted and loving people in my life. One of his signature actions is the 'cry-smile,' in which he simultaneously cries and smiles any time he experiences a strong positive emotion (which is almost daily).

How does the "cry-smile" detail enhance the characterization of the speaker's parent?

To break it down to process, characterization can be accomplished in two ways:

a. **Directly**, through specific description of the character—What kind of clothes do they wear? What do they look, smell, sound like?—or,
b. **Indirectly**, through the behaviors, speech, and thoughts of the character—What kind of language, dialect, or register do they use? What is the tone, inflection, and timbre of their voice? How does their manner of speaking reflect their attitude toward the listener? How do their actions reflect their traits? What's on their mind that they won't share with the world?

Thinking through these questions will help you get a better understanding of each character (often including yourself!). You do not need to include all the details, but they should inform your description, dialogue, and narration.

Round characters	are very detailed, requiring attentive description of their traits and behaviors.	Your most important characters should be round: the added detail will help your reader better visualize, understand, and care about them.
Flat characters	are minimally detailed, only briefly sketched or named.	Less important characters should take up less space and will therefore have less detailed characterization.
Static characters	remain the same throughout the narrative.	Even though all of us are always changing, some people will behave and appear the same throughout the course of your story. Static characters can serve as a reference point for dynamic characters to show the latter's growth.
Dynamic characters	noticeably change within the narrative, typically as a result of the events.	Most likely, you will be a dynamic character in your personal narrative because such stories are centered around an impactful experience, relationship, or place. Dynamic characters learn and grow over time, either gradually or with an epiphany.

Point of View

The position from which your story is told will help shape your reader's experience, the language your narrator and characters use, and even the plot itself. You might recognize this from *Dear White People* Volume 1 or *Arrested Development* Season 4, both Netflix TV series. Typically, each episode in these seasons explores similar plot events, but from a different character's perspective. Because of their unique vantage points, characters can tell different stories about the same realities.

This is, of course, true for our lives more generally. In addition to our differences in knowledge and experiences, we also interpret and understand events differently. In our writing, narrative position is informed by point-of-view and the emotional valences I refer to here as tone and mood.

point-of-view (POV): the perspective from which a story is told.

- This is a grammatical phenomenon—i.e., it decides pronoun use—but, more importantly, it impacts tone, mood, scope, voice, and plot.

Although point-of-view will influence tone and mood, we can also consider what feelings we want to convey and inspire independently as part of our narrative position.

tone: the emotional register of the story's language.

- What emotional state does the narrator of the story (not the author, but the speaker) seem to be in? What emotions are you trying to imbue in your writing?

mood: the emotional register a reader experiences.

- What emotions do you want your reader to experience? Are they the same feelings you experienced at the time?

A Non-Comprehensive Breakdown of POV

1st person	Narrator uses 1st person pronouns (I/me/mine or us/we/ours)	Can include internal monologue (motives, thoughts, feelings) of the narrator. Limited certainty of motives, thoughts, or feelings of other characters.	I tripped on the last stair, preoccupied by what my sister had said, and felt my stomach drop.
2nd person	Narrator uses 2nd person pronouns (you/you/your)	Speaks *to* the reader, as if the reader is the protagonist OR uses apostrophe to speak to an absent or unidentified person	Your breath catches as you feel the phantom step. O, staircase, how you keep me awake at night.
3rd person limited	Narrator uses 3rd person pronouns (he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/they/theirs)	Sometimes called "close" third person. Observes and narrates but sticks near one or two characters, in contrast with 3rd person omniscient.	He was visibly frustrated by his sister's nonchalance and wasn't watching his step.
3rd person omniscient	Narrator uses 3rd person pronouns (he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/they/theirs)	Observes and narrates from an all-knowing perspective. Can include internal monologue (motives, thoughts, feelings) of all characters.	Beneath the surface, his sister felt regretful. *Why did I tell him that?* she wondered.
stream-of-consciousness	Narrator uses inconsistent pronouns, or no pronouns at all	Approximates the digressive, wandering, and ungrammatical thought processes of the narrator.	But now, a thousand empty *where?* and she, with head shake, will be fine AHH!

Typically, you will tell your story from the first-person point-of-view, but personal narratives can also be told from a different perspective; I recommend "Comatose Dreams" to illustrate this at work. As you're developing and revising your writing, try to inhabit different authorial positions: What would change if you used the third person POV instead of first person? What different meanings would your reader find if you told this story with a different tone—bitter instead of nostalgic, proud rather than embarrassed, sarcastic rather than genuine?

Furthermore, there are many rhetorical situations that call for different POVs. (For instance, you may have noticed that this book uses the second-person very frequently.) So, as you evaluate which POV will be most effective for your current rhetorical situation, bear in mind that the same choice might inform your future writing.

Dialogue

dialogue: communication between two or more characters. For example...

"Hate to break it to you, but your story is boring."

"What? Why do you say that?" he stuttered, face reddening.

"Because you did not include any dialogue," she laughed.

Think of the different conversations you've had today, with family, friends, or even classmates. Within each of those conversations, there were likely pre-established relationships that determined how you talked to each other: each is its own rhetorical situation. A dialogue with your friends, for example, may be far different from one with your family. These relationships can influence tone of voice, word choice (such as using slang, jargon, or lingo), what details we share, and even what language we speak.

Effective dialogue often demonstrates the traits of a character or the relationship of characters. From reading or listening to how people talk to one another, we often infer the relationships they have. We can tell if they're having an argument or conflict, if one is experiencing some internal conflict or trauma, if they're friendly acquaintances or cold strangers, even how their emotional or professional attributes align or create opposition.

Often, dialogue does more than just one thing, which makes it a challenging tool to master. When dialogue isn't doing more than one thing, it can feel flat or expositional, like a bad movie or TV show where everyone is saying their feelings or explaining what

just happened. For example, there is a difference between “No thanks, I’m not hungry” and “I’ve told you, I’m not hungry.” The latter shows frustration, and hints at a previous conversation. Exposition can have a place in dialogue, but we should use it deliberately, with an awareness of how natural or unnatural it may sound. We should be aware how dialogue impacts the pacing of the narrative. Dialogue can be musical and create tempo, with either quick back and forth, or long drawn out pauses between two characters. Rhythm of a dialogue can also tell us about the characters’ relationship and emotions.

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2.3: How to Read Creative Nonfiction

How to Read Creative Nonfiction

As described in the introduction of this textbook, literature requires readers to closely examine a story for its artistic quality. Review this introductory chapter ("What is Literary Analysis?") to get an in-depth look into the ways in which one might approach any work of literature.

That being said, there are some critical thinking methods of analysis which will help students gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Creative Nonfiction stories. Remember that creative nonfiction stories are true. That means the authors have less wiggle room than, say, poets, dramatists or fiction writers because they cannot invent scenes. They have an obligation to portray the truth, to be factual. So instead, creative nonfiction authors get creative in *how* they tell the story.

Creative Nonfiction Basic Elements

When reading creative nonfiction, consider the following aspects of the text:

- **Setting** - where does the story takes place? What do we know about this location? How is it described, and to what effect?
- **Plot** - what happens in the story and in what order? How does the order of the events impact their meaning?
- **Characters** - who are the people (or sometimes animals or other entities) in the story? What kinds of characters are they? How are they characterized?
- **Figurative Language** - how does the author effectively use language as an artistic tool to render the story? What metaphors, similes, or descriptive imagery does the author use to make the story immersive, and why?

As you complete the assigned readings in this chapter, try to take notes on each of these aspects of the text.

Let's do a practice analysis together.

Case Study: "April 15th, 1802" by Dorothy Wordsworth



"Yellow Daffodils" by John O'Neill (2004) is licensed CC BY-SA 3.0

Thursday, 15th.

It was a threatening, misty morning, but mild. We set off after dinner from Eusemere. Mrs. Clarkson went a short way with us, but turned back. The wind was furious, and we thought we must have returned. We first rested in the large boathouse, then under a furze bush opposite Mr. Clarkson's. Saw the plough going in the field. The wind seized our breath. The lake was rough. There was a boat by itself floating in the middle of the bay below Water Millock. We rested again in the Water Millock Lane. The hawthorns are black and green, the birches here and there greenish, but there is yet more of purple to be seen on the twigs. We got over into a field to avoid some cows—people working. A few primroses by the roadside—woodsorrel flower, the anemone, scentless violets, strawberries, and that starry, yellow flower which Mrs. C. calls pile wort. When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. We fancied that the sea had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and above them; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway.

We rested again and again. The bays were stormy, and we heard the waves at different distances, and in the middle of the water, like the sea.... All was cheerless and gloomy, so we faced the storm. At Dobson's I was very kindly treated by a young woman. The landlady looked sour, but it is her way.... William was sitting by a good fire when I came downstairs. He soon made his way to the library, piled up in a corner of the window. He brought out a volume of Enfield's Speaker, another miscellany, and an odd volume of Congreve's plays. We had a glass of warm rum and water. We enjoyed ourselves, and wished for Mary. It rained and blew, when we went to bed.

Setting

The setting is established early on in the short story, as a "threatening, misty morning" in someplace called "Eusemere." The term "threatening" is interesting, as it sets the mood with a kind of conflict in terms of the weather. It appears this is a rural area, because there is a farmer with a "plough going in the field." Again we have some threatening imagery, as she states the "wind seized our breath," which again makes the weather seem like it is a kind of personified villain. This is clearly a very beautiful natural setting, full of various flowers like "primroses" and "woodsorrel," violets, and so forth. While the setting feels threatening and suffocating, the setting changes once the "gay" and dancing. The setting is then described again in a threatening way, as "stormy," "cheerless and gloomy." The story's setting at the end appears to be some kind of a hotel or business.

Plot

The plot of the story is kind of simple. It appears to be chronological: it starts with the narrator setting out on a walk from Eusemere. The conflict is that they want to go on a walk but the weather is "threatening." Despite this weather, they continue on their way until they found the daffodils. The climax of the story is when they have to fight their antagonist, the wind ("so we faced the storm"), and finally arrive at what seems to be a hotel called "Dobson's." Dorothy and William sit reading by the fire, missed someone named Mary, and then they went to bed.

Characters

- Dorothy Wordsworth is the narrator. We don't get a description of her, butt we can tell that she knows a lot about botany, as she seems to be able to identify lots of flowers. She seems to "rest" a lot on the walk. Probably the most developed of characters (round and dynamic) because she perseveres through the stormy weather and seems somewhat changed by the happy daffodils.
- Mrs. C. Flat and static character. We don't get a lot of information about this character except that she calls a certain plant "pile wort."
- Wind/stormy weather. Seems to be a personified antagonist, because it is described as "threatening" and that it "seized" their breath
- Daffodils. Personified as dancing, happy flower friends, who "rested their heads" on stones like "pillows" and dance in the stormy weather.
- Sour landlady. Flat & static character, not a lot of description except for being "sour."
- Young woman. Flat & static character. We just know she treated Dorothy "kindly."
- William. Reader. Someone close to narrator. Cozy by fire.
- Mary. Someone close to narrator that apparently they "miss."

Figurative Language

It is interesting how the human characters receive barely any description, but the natural landscape is described in very specific detail. This emphasis bubbles up in the personification of the landscape. As described in the section on setting, it seems interesting how the weather and flowers are **personified** or **anthropomorphized** (that is, non human entities described with human characteristics). The weather is described as a kind of antagonist, "threatening," "cheerless and gloomy." It even seems violent, in the sense that it "seized" the breath of Dorothy and William. Then the flowers are described almost like friends, reeling and dancing, "resting their heads" from weariness that might mirror the resting that Dorothy and William take throughout the story. They "rested, again and again." It seems as if Dorothy is projecting her feelings onto the environment, and that the daffodils helped her get through whatever "weariness" she might be feeling.

Analysis

Through its characterization of the wind as antagonist, and empathy with the personified daffodils, this short journal entry argues for the healing capacity of the natural world. When Dorothy and William first left their indoor environment -- "dinner from Eusemere" -- Dorothy seemed afraid and defeated by the weather. The anthropomorphized "threatening" weather and suffocating wind function as a kind of antagonist preventing Dorothy and her brother from reaching their destination. The visit with the similarly personified daffodils seemed to transform the narrator through their brightness, and their dancing in the wind. Instead of having their breath "seized" by the wind as Dorothy and William had experienced at the beginning of the story , the daffodils "verily laughed with the wind," dancing with it, using the bad weather to find joy.

So does this encounter with the dancing daffodils similarly empower Dorothy. While in the beginning of the story Dorothy appears to cower to the wind's dominance, in the end she takes a

note from the daffodils to gain a kind of courage: "All was cheerless and gloomy, so we faced the storm." Directly after this, Dorothy is rewarded with a happy ending: a cozy evening by the fire reading with her brother. The journey has changed Dorothy's mood.

Your Turn

As the above analysis shows, even a relatively short work of literature has a lot to analyze. This is just one interpretation among many possible interpretations. The idea is to closely examine a story to determine how the way it is written (setting, plot, character, figurative language) influences its meaning to you (interpretation). There are not necessarily "right" or "wrong" answers. More so, there are answers supported by the text and those that are not. For now, keep in mind those questions about **setting, plot, characters,** and **figurative language.** Apply them to whatever stories you read. Take notes as you read. This material could form the basis of your first literary analysis essay!

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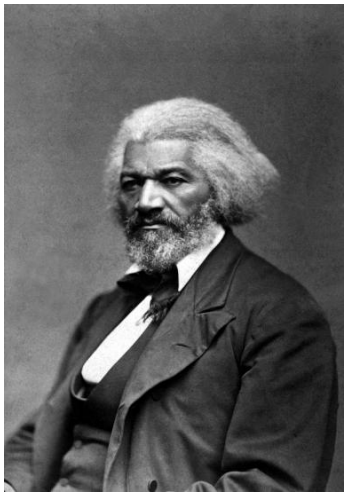
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2.4: Featured Creative Nonfiction Author- Frederick Douglass

Biography of Frederick Douglass (c.1818-1895)

Frederick Douglass was born in slavery as Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey near Easton in Talbot County, Maryland. He was not sure of the exact year of his birth, but he knew that it was 1817 or 1818. As a young boy he was sent to Baltimore, to be a house servant, where he learned to read and write, with the assistance of his master's wife. In 1838 he escaped from slavery and went to New York City, where he married Anna Murray, a free colored woman whom he had met in Baltimore. Soon thereafter he changed his name to Frederick Douglass. After fleeing to the North, he worked with other abolitionists and gave public lectures about his life in the South and the slaves' conditions; these public lectures became the basis for *Narrative*.



"Frederick Douglass" (c. 1879) is in the public domain

In *Narrative*, Douglass famously recounts his first experience of literacy and his realization of its importance for freedom. He also makes references to the Bible, Shakespeare, and other works such as *The Columbian Orator*. *Narrative* is often regarded as the finest example of the slave narrative not only for its content but also for its eloquence and literary artistry. The slave narrative refers to (auto)biographical written accounts or fictional works about enslaved people, especially enslaved Africans. While the American slave narrative is itself a distinct literary genre, Douglass's *Narrative* has characteristics corresponding to 19th-century Realism in its testimonial desire for realistic representations of slaves' lives in North America, its unabashed attention to objective (including brutal) details, and its desire for democracy and human equality.

Role in Ending Slavery

Frederick Douglass is one prominent example of how these trends: helping and protecting runaway slaves; and establishing international antislavery support networks to help put pressure on the United States to abolish the institution, came together. Douglass was born a slave in Maryland in 1818 and escaped to New York in 1838. He later moved to New Bedford, Massachusetts, with his wife.

After escaping from slavery, Douglass soon came to the forefront of the abolitionist movement as a gifted orator and a powerful narrator of his experiences as a slave. Douglass's commanding presence and powerful speaking skills electrified his listeners when he began to provide public lectures on slavery. He came to the attention of William Lloyd Garrison and others who encouraged him to write his story. In 1845, he published his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave Written by Himself*, in which he told about his life of slavery in Maryland. It was perhaps the most powerful and famous piece of African American literature from the nineteenth century. It was so widely read that it was reprinted in nine editions and translated into several languages. In it, Douglass identified by name the whites who had brutalized him, and for that reason, along with the mere act of publishing his story, Douglass had to flee the United States to avoid being murdered. He traveled to Great Britain and met with famous British abolitionists like Thomas Clarkson, drumming up moral and financial support from British and Irish antislavery societies. He was neither the first nor the last runaway slave to make this voyage, but his great success abroad contributed significantly to rousing morale among weary abolitionists at home.

British abolitionist friends ultimately bought his freedom from his Maryland owner, and Douglass returned to the United States. He began to publish his own abolitionist newspaper, *North Star* , in Rochester, New York. During the 1840s and 1850s, Douglass fought to bring about the end of slavery by telling the story of his life and highlighting how slavery destroyed families, both black and white.

In this excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* , he explains the consequences for the children fathered by white masters and slave women:

“Slaveholders have ordained, and by law established, that the children of slave women shall in all cases follow the condition of their mothers… this is done too obviously to administer to their own lusts, and make a gratification of their wicked desires profitable as well as pleasurable… the slaveholder, in cases not a few, sustains to his slaves the double relation of master and father… Such slaves [born of white masters] invariably suffer greater hardships… They are… a constant offence to their

mistress… she is never better pleased than when she sees them under the lash, … The master is frequently compelled to sell this class of his slaves, out of deference to the feelings of his white wife; and, cruel as the deed may strike any one to be, for a man to sell his own children to human flesh-mongers, … for, unless he does this, he must not only whip them himself, but must stand by and see one white son tie up his brother, of but few shades darker … and ply the gory lash to his naked back."

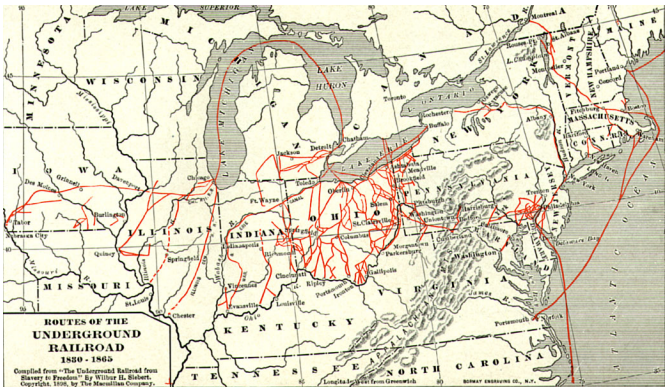
Other abolitionists also spread word of the horrors of slavery in an attempt to win more supporters for their cause. A prominent example of this is Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* , or *Life Among the Lowly* . Stowe, a white woman from a pious Connecticut family, had strong moral convictions that slavery as an institution was evil and unnatural. Her book depicted the harsh conditions in which slaves lived, the danger they were willing to place themselves in to escape, and the detrimental ways in which the institution of slavery effected slave owners.*Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a success in the North, selling more than 300,000 copies in the first nine months of its publication, and more than a million copies by 1853. Nonetheless, it was met with protest and alarm in the South.

The Underground Railroad

Many American abolitionists also took an active role in opposing slavery by supporting the Underground Railroad. Though illegal under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, participants such as former slaves Harriet Tubman, Henry Highland Garnet, Alexander Crummell, Amos Noë Freeman, and others put themselves at risk to help slaves escape to freedom. (12)

The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes and safe houses used by nineteenth-century black slaves in the United States to escape to Northern free states and Canada with the aid of abolitionists and those sympathetic to their cause. The term is also applied to the abolitionists—black and white, free and enslaved—who aided the fugitives. Some routes led to Mexico or overseas. The network was formed in the early nineteenth century and reached its height between 1850 and 1860. One estimate suggests that by 1850, 100,000 slaves had escaped via the "Railroad."

The origins of the Underground Railroad go back to the Compromise of 1850, passed by Congress after the Mexican-American War, which created a more stringent Fugitive Slave Act. The Fugitive Slave Act compelled officials of free states to assist slave catchers if there were runaway slaves in the area and granted slave catchers national immunity when in free states to do their job. Additionally, it made it possible that free blacks of the North could be forced into slavery even if they had been freed earlier or never been slaves at all because suspected slaves were unable to defend themselves in court and it was difficult to prove a free status. As a de facto bribe, judges were paid more ($10) for a decision that forced a suspected slave back into slavery than for a decision finding the slave to be free ($5). Thus, many Northerners who would have otherwise been able and content to ignore the persistence of slavery in the South chafed under what they saw as a national sanction on slavery, comprising one of the primary grievances of the Union cause during the Civil War.



*The various routes to freedom on the Underground Railroad.*Figure 6-5: Underground Railroad by Unknown is in the Public Domain.

The escape network of the Underground Railroad was not literally underground or a railroad. It was figuratively "underground" in the sense of being a covert form of resistance. It came to be referred to as a "railroad" due to the use of rail terminology in the code used by its participants. The Underground Railroad consisted of meeting points, secret routes, transportation, safe houses, and assistance provided by abolitionists and sympathizers. Individuals were often organized in small, independent groups. These small groups helped to maintain secrecy because individuals knew some connecting "stations" along the route but few details of their immediate area. Escaped slaves would move north along the route from one way station to the next. "Conductors" on the railroad came from various backgrounds and included free-born blacks, white abolitionists, former slaves (both runaways and manumitted), and Native Americans. Churches often played a role, especially the Society of Friends (Quakers), Congregationalists, Wesleyans, and Reformed Presbyterians, as well as certain sects of mainstream denominations such as the Methodist church and American Baptists.

To reduce the risk of infiltration, many people associated with the Underground Railroad knew only their part of the operation and little to nothing of the whole scheme. Written directions were discouraged for the same reason. Additionally, because many freedom seekers could not read, visual and audible clues such as patterns in quilts, song lyrics, and star positions

provided directional cues along the way. Conductors moved the runaways from station to station. Often the conductor would pretend to be a slave to enter a plantation. Once a part of a plantation, the conductor would direct the runaways to the North. Slaves would travel at night around 10 to 20 miles to each station or "depot," resting spots where the runaways could sleep and eat. The stations were out of the way places such as barns and were held by "station masters" who would provide assistance such as sending messages to other stations and directing fugitives on the path to take to their next stop. There were also those known as "stockholders" who gave money or supplies for assistance.



Figure 6-6: A Ride for Liberty – The Fugitive Slaves by Eastman Johnson has no known copyright restrictions.

Due to the risk of discovery, information about routes and safe havens was passed along by word of mouth. Southern newspapers of the day were often filled with pages of notices soliciting information about escaped slaves and offering sizable rewards for their capture and return. Federal marshals and professional bounty hunters known as "slave catchers" pursued fugitives as far as the Canadian border.

The risk was not limited solely to actual fugitives. Because strong, healthy black people in their prime working and reproductive years were treated as highly valuable commodities, it was not unusual for free blacks—both freedmen and those who had never been slaves—to be kidnapped and sold into slavery. "Certificates of freedom"—signed, notarized statements attesting to the free status of individuals—easily could be destroyed and thus afforded their holders little protection. Under the terms of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, when suspected fugitives were seized and brought to a special magistrate known as a "commissioner," they had no right to a jury trial and could not testify on their own behalf. The marshal or private slave catcher needed only to swear an oath to acquire a writ of replevin for the return of property.

Estimates vary widely, but at least 30,000 slaves, and potentially more than 100,000, escaped to Canada via the Underground Railroad. The largest group settled in Upper Canada, called Canada West from 1841 and known today as Southern Ontario, where numerous black Canadian communities developed. Upon arriving at their destinations, many fugitives were disappointed. Despite the British colonies' abolition of slavery in 1834, discrimination was still common.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in the United States, many black refugees enlisted in the Union Army, and while some later returned to Canada, many remained in the United States. Thousands of others returned to the American South after the war ended. The desire to reconnect with friends and family was strong and most were hopeful about the changes emancipation and Reconstruction would bring.

Conclusion

As the 1850s progressed, abolitionist reform took a backseat as armed mobs protected runaway slaves in the North and fortified abolitionists engaged in bloody skirmishes in the West. Culminating in John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859, the violence of the 1850s convinced many Americans that the issue of slavery was pushing the nation to the brink of sectional cataclysm. After two decades of immediatist agitation, the idealism of revivalist perfectionism had given way to a protracted battle for the moral soul of the country.

For all of the problems that abolitionism faced, the movement was far from a failure. The prominence of African Americans like Frederick Douglass in abolitionist organizations offered a powerful, if imperfect, model of interracial coexistence. While immediatists always remained a minority, their efforts paved the way for the moderately antislavery Republican Party to gain traction in the years preceding the Civil War. It is hard to imagine that Abraham Lincoln could have become president in 1860 without the ground prepared by antislavery advocates and without the presence of radical abolitionists against whom he could be cast as a moderate alternative. Though it ultimately took a civil war to break the bonds of slavery in the United States, the evangelical moral compass of revivalist Protestantism provided motivation for the embattled abolitionists.

Reading Questions

1. How does Douglass's *Narrative* demonstrate the power of both orality, literacy, and the power of truth in creative nonfiction?
2. When Douglass was writing his *Narrative*, slavery was still not abolished in the United States. How do you think this historical context might have led Douglass to specific decisions on the content of *Narrative*?
3. Explore the significance of the appendix, considering its argument, rhetorical devices, and target audience.

Contributors and Attributions

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2.5: Creative Nonfiction Reading Discussion Questions

Discuss

1. **Setting:** Consider the setting of a creative nonfiction story. Where is the story set? How does the author describe the setting? At what point in the story do they describe the setting? Which senses are used when describing the setting (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, feeling)? What metaphors, similes, or surprising word choices (called diction) does the author use when describing the setting?
2. **Characterization:** Who are the major characters in the story? What are their names? What do we know about these characters? Does one character seem to be the hero or protagonist of the story? Who or what seems to be the villain or antagonist in the story? Do characters change or develop over the course of the story? If so, how so?
3. **Plot:** Summarize the story in one or two sentences. What happens in the story? What is the conflict of the story? Another way to answer this question: does anything bad happen to the characters in the story? If so, describe the challenges the characters face. Now go deeper. How is the story structured? How is the passage of time represented? Is the story chronological (linear) or does it jump around in time (nonlinear)?
4. **Title:** Why do you think the author chose the title they did for this story? In what ways might the title reflect deeper themes or meanings in the story?

Apply

1. **What's Your Story?** Think about a time you faced a challenge in your life. Brainstorm a list of 5 moments that could be developed into a story.
2. **Setting:** Where is the setting of each of these moments? Where did the moments take place? Pick one of the moments from question #1 and describe the setting, either writing your description down on paper or telling it to a partner.
3. **Characterization:** Who were the important characters in the moment you chose to describe? You were probably one of the characters. How would you describe yourself to someone who has never met you? What other characters are important to your story? Describe them to someone who has never met them.
4. **Plot:** Write a list of the important events of the story. You can use bullet points or numbers to track these events. What led up to the conflict of your story? What happened during the challenge? What happened after the challenge, or how did you resolve it? What did you learn through this experience?
5. **Title:** What title would you give your story?

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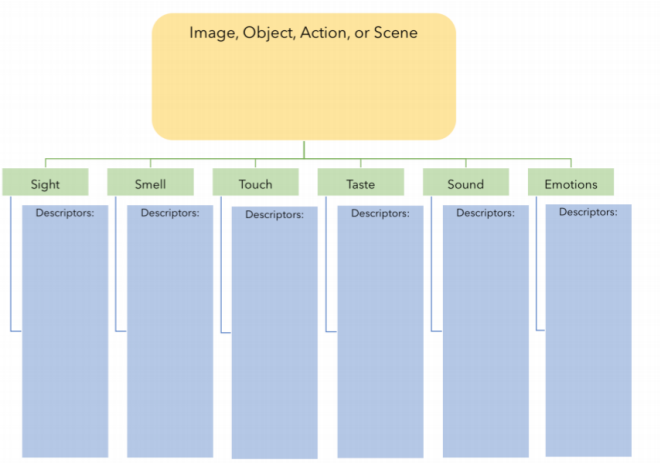
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2.6: Descriptive Imagery Worksheets

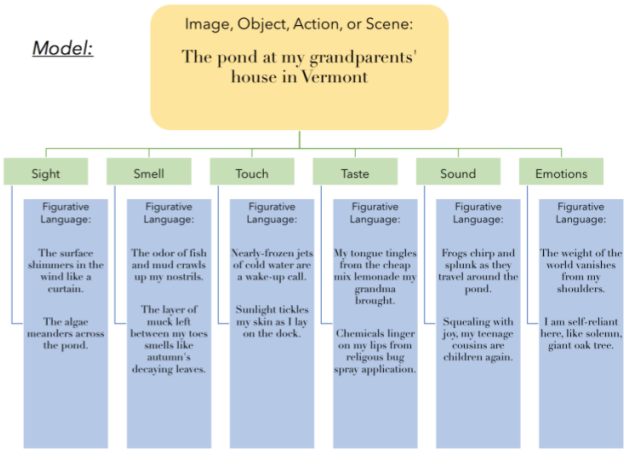
When writing a personal narrative, setting the scene is one of the most important parts of the essay. This worksheet is designed to help you more deeply describe your scene from the previous exercise using all six senses.

First, find a picture, object, action, or scene. You might even go out on a mini field trip to a nearby location to practice describing setting before applying what you have learned to your own story. Use the following descriptive imagery worksheet to practice immersing readers using all 6 senses. Consider using a mixture of adjectives, nouns, and metaphors to describe your chosen object or setting.

Descriptive Imagery Worksheet



Student Descriptive Imagery Worksheet Model



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2.7: The Personal Narrative Essay

Assignment TLDR;

This first essay assignment is a chance for me, the instructor and your peers to get to know you. It is also an opportunity to practice MLA formatting & understand basic concepts of storytelling/literature.

Simplified Directions:
Write a minimum 750-word personal narrative about a moment, object, or setting that made you the person you are today. Basically, tell a brief story about yourself. Use the Creative Nonfiction readings as inspiration. What would you like your professor and classmates to know about you? What story about yourself would you tell to counteract the "single story" described by Adichie in "The Danger of the Single Story"?
Requirements:

- Minimum 750 words
- Must include conflict or a plot of some kind
- Must include descriptive imagery of the story's setting
- Must include at least 3 literary devices in addition to conflict and descriptive imagery (metaphor, simile, dialogue, characterization)
- MLA formatting

Below are the parts to help you scaffold this assignment:

1. Personal Narrative Rough Draft
2. Personal Narrative Peer Review
3. Personal Narrative Final Draft

The following readings will help you with the technical aspects of the essay:

1. The Writing Process
2. MLA Formatting

The following readings are effective examples of personal narratives you can use to help you craft your essay:

1. Creative Nonfiction Readings
2. Student Sample Personal Narratives

The following activity will help you get started:

- Descriptive Imagery Worksheets

The in-depth essay directions follow.

Detailed Directions

For this writing assignment, students are to use what they have learned about Creative Nonfiction to write a personal narrative of their own.

To review, **creative nonfiction** tells a true story in an artistic -- or literary -- way. This means that the story has certain elements, such as descriptive imagery, setting, plot, conflict, characters, imagery, metaphors, and other **literary devices.** A **personal narrative**, then, is a work of creative nonfiction that is, well, *personal*. Usually, a personal narrative is narrated in first-person, though sometimes it can be written in third-person. Though writing about your personal experiences is often the subject of a personal narrative, if you are feeling self-conscious the story does not necessarily have to be about you: often writers will write about someone they love, an object, a place, or even a stranger with a remarkable story.

Scope

Scope, or how "big" of a story you choose to tell, is an important consideration for a personal narrative. Since you have limited time in your literature or writing class, you will probably not be able to write an autobiography or memoir. For 750-1500 words, it is best to focus on a single moment in time. An effective example of this might be "The Fourth of July" by Audre Lorde (Date

unknown) or "The Death of the Moth" by Virginia Woolf (1942). But if you have a story that stretches over a few days rather than a few minutes or hours, journal entries or letters (epistolary form) can be an effective method to tell a drawn-out story through a series of **vignettes**, or image-centric flashes of memory. Please see the story "Bajadas" by Francisco Cantu (2015) for an effective example of the epistolary form. Lastly, some authors choose to organize their essays with anchoring images or subheaders. For an effective example of this form of personal narrative, see "Girl" by Alexander Chee (2016). Take a look at the readings in this chapter to get some ideas about scope.

After examining these professional examples, it's time to tell your story! So where is a good place to start? Think about a **metamorphic moment** in your life.

Metamorphic Moments



"Untitled" by morganglines, 17 June 2007, published on Flickr **CC BY-NC-ND 2.0**

What does metamorphic mean? Think of the caterpillar's metamorphosis into a butterfly while in the chrysalis. Similarly, a metamorphic moment is an intense moment or experience which profoundly impacts or changes a person. It could be the happiest moment of a person's life, such as a wedding, birth of a child, or graduation from college. It could be the worst moment of a person's life, like the moment they realized their dream job was not a good fit after all, the moment they realized racism was real, the moment they lost someone they loved, or the moment they realized their lifelong hero was a fraud. It could be a hilarious moment, a scary moment, an *extremely* embarrassing moment: essentially, it is a moment that made you see the world in a new way or transformed you from *the person you were* to *the person you are*.

Whatever the moment might be, the important idea to remember is to tell a story in a way which immerses the reader: that you make the reader feel like they are there by describing the moment in **great detail using your five senses;** that you use metaphors; that you have a setting, conflict, and some kind of character growth. A great essay makes a reader forget they are reading an essay. It transports them to your world. It forces them to see the world through your narrator's eyes. As one of my favorite mentors, Caroline Kremers, once said about engaging readers with your writing, "go for the jugular." (Note: please do not physically assault your readers. This is a metaphor.)

Descriptive Imagery: Showing vs. Telling



"moon" by George Lezenby, 14 Sep. 2017, published on Flickr **CC BY-NC-ND 2.0**

“Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.”
— Anton Chekhov

Telling	Showing
I went to the lake. It was cool.	My breath escaped in **ragged bursts**, my quadriceps **burning** as I crested the summit. The lake stretched before me, **aquamarine, glistening** in the **hot August afternoon sun**. Ponderosa pines lined its shores, dropping their **spicy-scented** needles into the clear water. Despite the heat, the Montana mountain air **tasted crisp**.

Which of the above lakes would you want to visit? Which one paints a more immersive picture, making you feel like you are there? When writing a story, our initial instinct is usually to make a list of chronological moments: first I did this, then I did this, then I did that, it was neat-o. That might be factual, but it does not engage the reader or invite them into your world. It bores the reader. Ever been stuck listening to someone tell a story that seems like it will never end? It probably was someone **telling** you a story rather than **using the five senses to immerse you**. In the example above, the writer uses **visual** (sight), **auditory** (sound), **olfactory** (smell), **tactile** (touch), or **gustatory** (taste) imagery to help the reader picture the setting in their mind. By the final draft, the entire story should be compelling and richly detailed. While it's fine to have an outline or first draft that recounts the events of the story, the final draft should include dialogue, immersive description, plot twists, and metaphors to capture your reader's attention as you write.



"Eibsee Lake" by barnyz, 2 August 2011, published on Flickr **CC BY-NC-ND 2.0**

Need a more specific prompt to get you inspired? Check out the 7 Personal Insight Questions from the University of California's Personal Statement Prompts for Transfer Students. Interested in transferring or applying to another college or scholarship? An effective personal statement is a story that captures the attention of your readers (the college admissions team) and shows them why you are a good fit for the school/scholarship.

Why Write A Personal Narrative, Anyway?

First of all, writing a piece of creative work will help students gain an appreciation for the skill and effort which goes into writing, and helps them recognize common literary devices. It will help you get acquainted with some of the basic elements of writing, such as specificity, writing process, and time management. It will also allow you to practice MLA formatting. This will come in handy for future essays. But personal narratives are not just for literature and creative writing classes!

Believe it or not, writing a personal narrative is an extremely useful skill for anyone to master. Besides helping you get into colleges and win scholarship money, you can use it to ace job interviews, get Instagram or YouTube followers, sell a product to customers through effective marketing, or share the most interesting parts of yourself with a new friend or romantic interest. In science? Telling the story of your research can help you get grants from the government. In the medical field? Listening to patient stories can help you better provide quality care. Small business owner? Personal narratives can help attract clients (think of the "About Us" section of websites!). Passionate about social justice? A powerful personal narrative can quite literally change the world. Whatever your future career or interests, effective storytelling can make a difference in your life. So what are you waiting for? Let's get writing!

Brainstorming

1. First, write a list of as many "metamorphic moments" you can think of.
2. Next, write a list of the most important or memorable places you have been.
3. Lastly, write a list of objects which hold symbolic importance to you.

After you have written these lists, wait at least a day. Then come back and circle the 3 list items which you feel will make the best essay, or that you feel most strongly drawn to write about.

Once you find three moments, try making a brainstorming web. Write any associated words, objects, ideas, and descriptive imagery (all five senses) you associate with this moment, place, or object. Finally, pick the topic upon which you were able to generate the most ideas. This could be your essay topic!

Free Writing

Find a quiet place and set a timer for 10 minutes. Write as much as possible on your topic, as much as you can remember, in as vivid of detail as possible. Try to keep the pen moving on the page without stopping. Do not worry about grammar, spelling, punctuation, or that mean little critical voice in your head. Your job is just to get ideas down. Pretend you are trying to explain the memory to someone who has never met the people you are describing or has never been to the place where the story takes place. How would you describe the moment to an alien? That is usually a good way to ensure you are very detailed!

Other Generative Writing Ideas

1. **Find a picture that means a lot to you.** While it is clear to you why this picture is important, it is likely not clear to a stranger. Try to describe to a stranger all the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings of the moment so that they understand why the picture is meaningful to you.
2. **Find an image, object, action, or place/scene that is important to you.** Use this descriptive imagery worksheet by Shane Abrams to help you describe that object.

Learning Outcomes

- Analyze and employ logical and structural methods such as inductive and deductive reasoning, cause and effect, and logos, ethos, and pathos.
- Use style, diction, and tone appropriate to the academic community and the purpose of the specific writing task; proofread and edit essays for presentation so they exhibit no disruptive errors in English grammar, usage, or punctuation

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Creative Nonfiction Readings

Readings

3.1: Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009)

3.2: Anderson, Karen "Six Short Essays" (2017)

3.3: Bierce, Ambrose "What I Saw of Shiloh" (1881)

3.4: Cantú, Francisco "Bajadas" (2015)

3.5: Douglass, Frederick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845)

3.6: DuBois, W.E.B. "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" from The Souls of Black Folk (1903)

3.7: Oomen, Anne-Marie "The Blue" (2018)

3.8: Plato "The Allegory of the Cave" excerpt from The Republic (360 BC)

3.9: Sun Tzu. The Art of War (5th Century B.C.)

3.10: Swift, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal." (1729)

3.11: Wordsworth, Dorothy "Daffodils" entry from Grasmere journal (1802)

Supplemental Texts

(links to external sites)

1. Anzaldúa, Gloria. "How to Tame a Wild Tongue."
2. Chee, Alexander. "Girl"
3. Cunningham, Amy. "Why Women Smile."
4. Dillard, Annie. "Living Like Weasels."
5. Geller, Danielle. "Blood;Quantum" (2016)
6. Tan, Amy. "Mother Tongue."
7. Woolf, Virginia. "The Death of the Moth." (1942)
8. Woolf, Virginia. "A Room of One's Own" (1929)

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3.1: Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009)

The Danger of a Single Story

By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



"Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie" by Howard County Library System is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

I'm a storyteller. And I would like to tell you a few personal stories about what I like to call "the danger of the single story." I grew up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria. My mother says that I started reading at the age of two, although I think four is probably close to the truth. So I was an early reader, and what I read were British and American children's books.

I was also an early writer, and when I began to write, at about the age of seven, stories in pencil with crayon illustrations that my poor mother was obligated to read, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading: All my characters were white and blue-eyed, they played in the snow, they ate apples, and they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out.

Now, this despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to.

My characters also drank a lot of ginger beer, because the characters in the British books I read drank ginger beer. Never mind that I had no idea what ginger beer was.

And for many years afterwards, I would have a desperate desire to taste ginger beer. But that is another story.

What this demonstrates, I think, is how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story, particularly as children. Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books by their very nature had to have foreigners in them and had to be about things with which I could not personally identify. Now, things changed when I discovered African books. There weren't many of them available, and they weren't quite as easy to find as the foreign books.

But because of writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye, I went through a mental shift in my perception of literature. I realized that people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognized.

Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are.

I come from a conventional, middle-class Nigerian family. My father was a professor. My mother was an administrator. And so we had, as was the norm, live-in domestic help, who would often come from nearby rural villages. So, the year I turned eight, we got a new house boy. His name was Fide. The only thing my mother told us about him was that his family was very poor. My mother sent yams and rice, and our old clothes, to his family. And when I didn't finish my dinner, my mother would say, "Finish your food! Don't you know? People like Fide's family have nothing." So I felt enormous pity for Fide's family.

Then one Saturday, we went to his village to visit, and his mother showed us a beautifully patterned basket made of dyed raffia that his brother had made. I was startled. It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them was how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.

Years later, I thought about this when I left Nigeria to go to university in the United States. I was 19. My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my "tribal music," and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey.

She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove.

What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa: a single story of catastrophe. In this

single story, there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals.

I must say that before I went to the U.S., I didn't consciously identify as African. But in the U.S., whenever Africa came up, people turned to me. Never mind that I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity, and in many ways I think of myself now as African. Although I still get quite irritable when Africa is referred to as a country, the most recent example being my otherwise wonderful flight from Lagos two days ago, in which there was an announcement on the Virgin flight about the charity work in "India, Africa and other countries."

So, after I had spent some years in the U.S. as an African, I began to understand my roommate's response to me. If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner. I would see Africans in the same way that I, as a child, had seen Fide's family.

This single story of Africa ultimately comes, I think, from Western literature. Now, here is a quote from the writing of a London merchant called John Lok, who sailed to west Africa in 1561 and kept a fascinating account of his voyage. After referring to the black Africans as "beasts who have no houses," he writes, "They are also people without heads, having their mouth and eyes in their breasts."

Now, I've laughed every time I've read this. And one must admire the imagination of John Lok. But what is important about his writing is that it represents the beginning of a tradition of telling African stories in the West: A tradition of Sub-Saharan Africa as a place of negatives, of difference, of darkness, of people who, in the words of the wonderful poet Rudyard Kipling, are "half devil, half child."

And so, I began to realize that my American roommate must have throughout her life seen and heard different versions of this single story, as had a professor, who once told me that my novel was not "authentically African." Now, I was quite willing to contend that there were a number of things wrong with the novel, that it had failed in a number of places, but I had not quite imagined that it had failed at achieving something called African authenticity. In fact, I did not know what African authenticity was. The professor told me that my characters were too much like him, an educated and middle-class man. My characters drove cars. They were not starving. Therefore they were not authentically African.

But I must quickly add that I too am just as guilty in the question of the single story. A few years ago, I visited Mexico from the U.S. The political climate in the U.S. at the time was tense, and there were debates going on about immigration. And, as often happens in America, immigration became synonymous with Mexicans. There were endless stories of Mexicans as people who were fleecing the healthcare system, sneaking across the border, being arrested at the border, that sort of thing.

I remember walking around on my first day in Guadalajara, watching the people going to work, rolling up tortillas in the marketplace, smoking, laughing. I remember first feeling slight surprise. And then, I was overwhelmed with shame. I realized that I had been so immersed in the media coverage of Mexicans that they had become one thing in my mind, the abject immigrant. I had bought into the single story of Mexicans and I could not have been more ashamed of myself.

So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story.

I recently spoke at a university where a student told me that it was such a shame that Nigerian men were physical abusers like the father character in my novel. I told him that I had just read a novel called "American Psycho" --

-- and that it was such a shame that young Americans were serial murderers.

Now, obviously I said this in a fit of mild irritation.

But it would never have occurred to me to think that just because I had read a novel in which a character was a serial killer that he was somehow representative of all Americans. This is not because I am a better person than that student, but

because of America's cultural and economic power, I had many stories of America. I had read Tyler and Updike and Steinbeck and Gaitskill. I did not have a single story of America.

When I learned, some years ago, that writers were expected to have had really unhappy childhoods to be successful, I began to think about how I could invent horrible things my parents had done to me.

But the truth is that I had a very happy childhood, full of laughter and love, in a very close-knit family.

But I also had grandfathers who died in refugee camps. My cousin Polle died because he could not get adequate healthcare. One of my closest friends, Okoloma, died in a plane crash because our fire trucks did not have water. I grew up under repressive military governments that devalued education, so that sometimes, my parents were not paid their salaries. And so, as a child, I saw jam disappear from the breakfast table, then margarine disappeared, then bread became too expensive, then milk became rationed. And most of all, a kind of normalized political fear invaded our lives.

All of these stories make me who I am. But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

Of course, Africa is a continent full of catastrophes: There are immense ones, such as the horrific rapes in Congo and depressing ones, such as the fact that 5,000 people apply for one job vacancy in Nigeria. But there are other stories that are not about catastrophe, and it is very important, it is just as important, to talk about them.

I've always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.

So what if before my Mexican trip, I had followed the immigration debate from both sides, the U.S. and the Mexican? What if my mother had told us that Fide's family was poor and hardworking? What if we had an African television network that broadcast diverse African stories all over the world? What the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe calls "a balance of stories."

What if my roommate knew about my Nigerian publisher, Muhtar Bakare, a remarkable man who left his job in a bank to follow his dream and start a publishing house? Now, the conventional wisdom was that Nigerians don't read literature. He disagreed. He felt that people who could read, would read, if you made literature affordable and available to them.

Shortly after he published my first novel, I went to a TV station in Lagos to do an interview, and a woman who worked there as a messenger came up to me and said, "I really liked your novel. I didn't like the ending. Now, you must write a sequel, and this is what will happen ..."

And she went on to tell me what to write in the sequel. I was not only charmed, I was very moved. Here was a woman, part of the ordinary masses of Nigerians, who were not supposed to be readers. She had not only read the book, but she had taken ownership of it and felt justified in telling me what to write in the sequel.

Now, what if my roommate knew about my friend Funmi Iyanda, a fearless woman who hosts a TV show in Lagos, and is determined to tell the stories that we prefer to forget? What if my roommate knew about the heart procedure that was performed in the Lagos hospital last week? What if my roommate knew about contemporary Nigerian music, talented people singing in English and Pidgin, and Igbo and Yoruba and Ijo, mixing influences from Jay-Z to Fela to Bob Marley to their grandfathers.

What if my roommate knew about the female lawyer who recently went to court in Nigeria to challenge a ridiculous law that required women to get their husband's consent before renewing their passports? What if my roommate knew about Nollywood, full of innovative people making films despite great technical odds, films so popular that they really are the best example of Nigerians consuming what they produce? What if my roommate knew about my wonderfully ambitious hair braider, who has just started her own business selling hair extensions? Or about the millions of other Nigerians who start businesses and sometimes fail, but continue to nurse ambition?

Every time I am home I am confronted with the usual sources of irritation for most Nigerians: our failed infrastructure, our failed government, but also by the incredible resilience of people who thrive despite the government, rather than because of it. I teach writing workshops in Lagos every summer, and it is amazing to me how many people apply, how many people are eager to write, to tell stories.

My Nigerian publisher and I have just started a non-profit called Farafina Trust, and we have big dreams of building libraries and refurbishing libraries that already exist and providing books for state schools that don't have anything in their libraries, and also of organizing lots and lots of workshops, in reading and writing, for all the people who are eager to tell our many stories.

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

The American writer Alice Walker wrote this about her Southern relatives who had moved to the North. She introduced them to a book about the Southern life that they had left behind. "They sat around, reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, and a kind of paradise was regained."

I would like to end with this thought: That when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.

Thank you.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie grew up in Nigeria. She is the author of the novels *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*,and *Americanah*, which won the National Book Critics Circle Award and was named one of The New York Times Top Ten Best Books of 2013. Her 2009 TED Talk, The Danger of A Single Story, is now one of the most-viewed TED Talks of all time.



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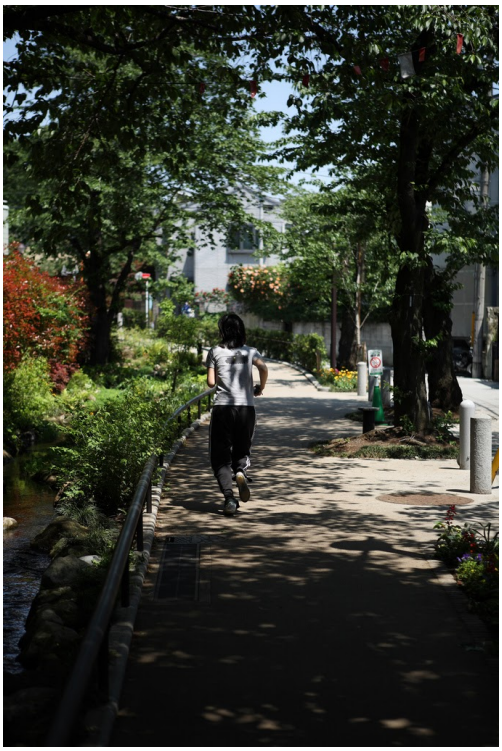
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3.2: Anderson, Karen "Six Short Essays" (2017)

"Six Short Essays"

by Karen Anderson



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Death of a Neighbor

I am scanning the obituaries in the local paper when I see the name of a neighbor, someone who lived not far from me. I didn't know she was ill, and I feel strangely empty and sad.

We weren't friends, really, but I knew her name and a little about her work and family. This is a small town, and if you live here long enough, you run into a lot of people. She and I said hello occasionally at the grocery store or library.

But while I gaze at her picture and read her obituary, I recall that I didn't like her. Which meant I would acknowledge her when we met but didn't stop to talk. Didn't make an effort to get better acquainted.

And when I try to remember *why* I didn't like her, I cannot think of a single reason. Whatever triggered my irritation was so insignificant, it has vanished. While the irritation remained. Now my sorrow about her death expands to include my own smallness, my petty grievances. I am ashamed to admit how these unexamined opinions linger—and limit my life.

Sometimes it's too late to make amends. I close the newspaper and sip my cold coffee. She was my neighbor and I never thought much about her until now. I can remember her jogging slowly down the street, her face flushed. A pretty woman.

Gradual Clearing

Under a gray sky, we load the canoe onto the truck, choosing to believe the forecast: "becoming partly sunny." But the gloomy weather suits my mood.

"You okay?" my husband asks.

"I feel sort of depressed," I say.

The wind is sharp as we push off into the Manistee River and I wish I'd worn long underwear. On this late fall day, the water is low but the colors are high. Red and orange and yellow, the oaks and maples stand along the bluffs, shining with their own light.



"Clearing" by Mike F. is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

"Let's stop on that island for coffee," Dick says, and we sit on a birch log to open the thermos. I hold the steaming cup close to my face and munch a piece of molasses cookie.

"No sun yet," I say.

"I'm still glad we came," he says.

Back in the canoe, I tie my bonnet under my chin. Around the next bend I see a brilliant red maple leaning far out over the river—the river that will eventually claim its life but now reflects its beauty. I want to have the courage to lean out over my death, I think. Over my life. To risk believing I am valuable and I belong. Right here, right now.

It's mostly cloudy when we end our trip four hours later. As I look up, searching for blue, I feel a pleasant ache in my shoulders.

"How are you doing?" my husband asks.

“Gradual clearing,” I say.



"Lilac Bloom" by Breelynne is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Lilacs in Bloom

When I see lilacs in bloom, I have to stop. Sometimes it’s in the country where enormous old bushes grow beside abandoned barns. Sometimes it’s in my neighborhood alleys where they grow beside garages that used to be horse stables.

These orphan bushes that nobody waters or prunes are lavish with their gifts. And I stop what I’m doing to admire the rich colors—dark purple, pale violet, purest white. I lean into the moist clusters and inhale that honey lavender smell.

Now, it’s true you can buy lilac bushes at a nursery and plant them in your back yard. I have done this myself and confess the results are disappointing. The branches spindly, the blossoms spare.

Lilacs, it seems, resist cultivation and do better in forgotten places with full sun and freedom. I admire this. They speak to me of something in myself that yearns to grow wild at the edges, to flourish untended and pour out my glory for one brief moment. Maybe someone will stop, maybe not.

If you pick lilacs, they will wilt in an hour. Better to lean into the living blossoms and bury your face in fragrance.

My Grandparents’ House

When I can’t sleep, I go back to my grandparents’ house and open the front door. There was no vestibule so you walked right into the living room. The coat closet had a stained glass window in blue and gold and violet.

I know that place by heart and can still stand in each room and picture the furnishings: the Victorian couch, the console radio, the four-poster twin beds upstairs. As a child, I often stayed overnight and it was a refuge from the confusions of my own home—my mother’s sadness, my father’s rage. Before I went to sleep, Nanna sat on the edge of the bed in her long nightgown and we talked awhile. “Are you warm enough?” she’d ask.

Looking back, I realize my grandparents’ house was modest in size but it seemed huge to me. Huge and calm and welcoming. In the living room, I sat beside Grandpa and listened to him read Longfellow’s poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*. I liked the way the words made music.

In the dining room, our family gathered for special meals, using the good dishes from the big mahogany breakfront. Nanna always told the grandchildren, “Don’t eat any more than you want.” Which meant you could take an extra biscuit and not finish it.

It meant you had permission to be yourself, something I didn’t feel anywhere else. Permission to sit on the floor of the coat closet in the dark and feel safe—watching the light come through the colored glass.

Rental

When I left my first marriage, I moved into a small rental house with my ten-year-old daughter. The floors creaked and the windows leaked and the oven door wouldn’t close—but I loved the place. It felt cozy and funky and just the right size for my downsized life.

Then, after I’d lived there about six months, my landlord stopped by to tell me he had a buyer for the house. “But I like it here,” I said, “and I’m in the middle of a divorce.”

Dan and I sat on the grass in the back yard and talked awhile and finally he stood up. “I went through a divorce,” he said. “I won’t sell the house.”

I stayed for five years, and figured out how to keep the oven door closed with a hanger and a rubber band. Also how to be a single mom, a single woman. I grappled with guilt and grief and unintended consequences—losing extended family, people taking sides. A roller-coaster, a slog.

And if something went wrong with the house, I called my landlord. When he had to retrieve my pantyhose from the bathtub drain, Dan laughed and said, “Not hard enough.”

When the birds in the attic turned out to be a battery in the smoke detector, he said, “Not hard enough.”

When a stray cat came to our back porch and my daughter wanted to keep it, he changed the rule about “No Pets.”

After we moved out, Dan sold the house. I still drive by. There’s a stroller out front these days and a pot of red geraniums.

Togetherness

The way my husband fixes his breakfast toast has begun to annoy me. “You could save time if you toasted the second two pieces while you’re buttering the first two,” I tell him.

“I’m not trying to save time,” he says.

He also uses too much jam. Who needs so much jam? And who is this *shrew* inside my head? Hearing her familiar voice, I know it is definitely time. In fact, it is past time for my husband and me to enjoy a few days apart.

Marriage is the hardest relationship in the world, I think. Being a parent isn’t easy but the whole goal is to separate, for the child to grow up and leave.

The goal of a marriage is to grow up and *stay*. But sometimes the secret of staying is leaving for a little while. That’s why I’m alert to the toast factor. When I start feeling annoyed by the way my husband eats his breakfast—or breathes in and out—I know it’s time for some space.

Fortunately, he is planning a trip. And almost as soon as he is out of the driveway, I can feel myself falling in love again. A feeling I want to enjoy by myself for a few days.

Karen Anderson is a writer who lives in Traverse City, Michigan. Her 30-year writing career has included journalism and marketing. These essays, which she wrote and read on her weekly feature on Interlochen Public Radio, are published in her collection, *Gradual Clearing: Weather Reports from the Heart*, Arbutus Press, 2017.

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3.3: Bierce, Ambrose "What I Saw of Shiloh" (1881)

I.

This is a simple story of a battle; such a tale as may be told by a soldier who is no writer to a reader who is no soldier.

The morning of Sunday, the sixth day of April, 1862, was bright and warm. Reveille had been sounded rather late, for the troops, wearied with long marching, were to have a day of rest. The men were idling about the embers of their bivouac fires; some preparing breakfast, others looking carelessly to the condition of their arms and accoutrements, against the inevitable inspection; still others were chatting with indolent dogmatism on that never-failing theme, the end and object of the campaign. Sentinels paced up and down the confused front with a lounging freedom of mien and stride that would not have been tolerated at another time. A few of them limped unsoldierly in deference to blistered feet. At a little distance in rear of the stacked arms were a few tents out of which frowsy-headed officers occasionally peered, languidly calling to their servants to fetch a basin of water, dust a coat or polish a scabbard. Trim young mounted orderlies, bearing dispatches obviously unimportant, urged their lazy nags by devious ways amongst the men, enduring with unconcern their good-humored raillery, the penalty of superior station. Little negroes of not very clearly defined status and function lolled on their stomachs, kicking their long, bare heels in the sunshine, or slumbered peacefully, unaware of the practical waggery prepared by white hands for their undoing.

Presently the flag hanging limp and lifeless at headquarters was seen to lift itself spiritedly from the staff. At the same instant was heard a dull, distant sound like the heavy breathing of some great animal below the horizon. The flag had lifted its head to listen. There was a momentary lull in the hum of the human swarm; then, as the flag drooped the hush passed away. But there were some hundreds more men on their feet than before; some thousands of hearts beating with a quicker pulse.

Again the flag made a warning sign, and again the breeze bore to our ears the long, deep sighing of iron lungs. The division, as if it had received the sharp word of command, sprang to its feet, and stood in groups at "attention." Even the little blacks got up. I have since seen similar effects produced by earthquakes; I am not sure but the ground was trembling then. The mess-cooks, wise in their generation, lifted the steaming camp-kettles off the fire and stood by to cast out. The mounted orderlies had somehow disappeared. Officers came ducking from beneath their tents and gathered in groups. Headquarters had become a swarming hive.

The sound of the great guns now came in regular throbbings—the strong, full pulse of the fever of battle. The flag flapped excitedly, shaking out its blazonry of stars and stripes with a sort of fierce delight. Toward the knot of officers in its shadow dashed from somewhere—he seemed to have burst out of the ground in a cloud of dust—a mounted aide-de-camp, and on the instant rose the sharp, clear notes of a bugle, caught up and repeated, and passed on by other bugles, until the level reaches of brown fields, the line of woods trending away to far hills, and the unseen valleys beyond were "telling of the sound," the farther, fainter strains half drowned in ringing cheers as the men ran to range themselves behind the stacks of arms. For this call was not the wearisome "general" before which the tents go down; it was the exhilarating "assembly," which goes to the heart as wine and stirs the blood like the kisses of a beautiful woman. Who that has heard it calling to him above the grumble of great guns can forget the wild intoxication of its music?

II.

The Confederate forces in Kentucky and Tennessee had suffered a series of reverses, culminating in the loss of Nashville. The blow was severe: immense quantities of war material had fallen to the victor, together with all the important strategic points. General Johnston withdrew Beauregard's army to Corinth, in northern Mississippi, where he hoped so to recruit and equip it as to enable it to assume the offensive and retake the lost territory.

The town of Corinth was a wretched place—the capital of a swamp. It is a two days' march west of the Tennessee River, which here and for a hundred and fifty miles farther, to where it falls into the Ohio at Paducah, runs nearly north. It is navigable to this point—that is to say, to Pittsburg Landing, where Corinth got to it by a road worn through a thickly wooded country seamed with ravines

and bayous, rising nobody knows where and running into the river under sylvan arches heavily draped with Spanish moss. In some places they were obstructed by fallen trees. The Corinth road was at certain seasons a branch of the Tennessee River. Its mouth was Pittsburg Landing. Here in 1862 were some fields and a house or two; now there are a national cemetery and other improvements.

It was at Pittsburg Landing that Grant established his army, with a river in his rear and two toy steamboats as a means of communication with the east side, whither General Buell with thirty thousand men was moving from Nashville to join him. The question has been asked, Why did General Grant occupy the enemy's side of the river in the face of a superior force before the arrival of Buell? Buell had a long way to come; perhaps Grant was weary of waiting. Certainly Johnston was, for in the gray of the morning of April 6th, when Buell's leading division was en bivouac near the little town of Savannah, eight or ten miles below, the Confederate forces, having moved out of Corinth two days before, fell upon Grant's advance brigades and destroyed them. Grant was at Savannah, but hastened to the Landing in time to find his camps in the hands of the enemy and the remnants of his beaten army cooped up with an impassable river at their backs for moral support. I have related how the news of this affair came to us at Savannah. It came on the wind—a messenger that does not bear copious details.

III.

On the side of the Tennessee River, over against Pittsburg Landing, are some low bare hills, partly inclosed by a forest. In the dusk of the evening of April 6 this open space, as seen from the other side of the stream—whence, indeed, it was anxiously watched by thousands of eyes, to many of which it grew dark long before the sun went down—would have appeared to have been ruled in long, dark lines, with new lines being constantly drawn across. These lines were the regiments of Buell's leading division, which having moved up from Savannah through a country presenting nothing but interminable swamps and pathless "bottom lands," with rank overgrowths of jungle, was arriving at the scene of action breathless, footsore and faint with hunger. It had been a terrible race; some regiments had lost a third of their number from fatigue, the men dropping from the ranks as if shot, and left to recover or die at their leisure. Nor was the scene to which they had been invited likely to inspire the moral confidence that medicines physical fatigue. True, the air was full of thunder and the earth was trembling beneath their feet; and if there is truth in the theory of the conversion of force, these men were storing up energy from every shock that burst its waves upon their bodies. Perhaps this theory may better than another explain the tremendous endurance of men in battle. But the eyes reported only matter for despair.

Before us ran the turbulent river, vexed with plunging shells and obscured in spots by blue sheets of low-lying smoke. The two little steamers were doing their duty well. They came over to us empty and went back crowded, sitting very low in the water, apparently on the point of capsizing. The farther edge of the water could not be seen; the boats came out of the obscurity, took on their passengers and vanished in the darkness. But on the heights above, the battle was burning brightly enough; a thousand lights kindled and expired in every second of time. There were broad flushings in the sky, against which the branches of the trees showed black. Sudden flames burst out here and there, singly and in dozens. Fleeting streaks of fire crossed over to us by way of welcome. These expired in blinding flashes and fierce little rolls of smoke, attended with the peculiar metallic ring of bursting shells, and followed by the musical humming of the fragments as they struck into the ground on every side, making us wince, but doing little harm. The air was full of noises. To the right and the left the musketry rattled smartly and petulantly; directly in front it sighed and growled. To the experienced ear this meant that the death-line was an arc of which the river was the chord. There were deep, shaking explosions and smart shocks; the whisper of stray bullets and the hurtle of conical shells; the rush of round shot. There were faint, desultory cheers, such as announce a momentary or partial triumph. Occasionally, against the glare behind the trees, could be seen moving black figures, singularly distinct but apparently no longer than a thumb. They seemed to me ludicrously like the figures of demons in old allegorical prints of hell. To destroy these and all their belongings the enemy needed but another hour of daylight; the steamers in that case would have been doing him fine service by bringing more fish to his net. Those of us who had the good fortune to arrive late could then have eaten our teeth in impotent rage. Nay, to make his victory sure it did not need that the sun should pause

in the heavens; one of the many random shots falling into the river would have done the business had chance directed it into the engine-room of a steamer. You can perhaps fancy the anxiety with which we watched them leaping down.

But we had two other allies besides the night. Just where the enemy had pushed his right flank to the river was the mouth of a wide bayou, and here two gunboats had taken station. They too were of the toy sort, plated perhaps with railway metals, perhaps with boiler-iron. They staggered under a heavy gun or two each. The bayou made an opening in the high bank of the river. The bank was a parapet, behind which the gunboats crouched, firing up the bayou as through an embrasure. The enemy was at this disadvantage: he could not get at the gunboats, and he could advance only by exposing his flank to their ponderous missiles, one of which would have broken a half-mile of his bones and made nothing of it. Very annoying this must have been—these twenty gunners beating back an army because a sluggish creek had been pleased to fall into a river at one point rather than another. Such is the part that accident may play in the game of war.

As a spectacle this was rather fine. We could just discern the black bodies of these boats, looking very much like turtles. But when they let off their big guns there was a conflagration. The river shuddered in its banks, and hurried on, bloody, wounded, terrified! Objects a mile away sprang toward our eyes as a snake strikes at the face of its victim. The report stung us to the brain, but we blessed it audibly. Then we could hear the great shell tearing away through the air until the sound died out in the distance; then, a surprisingly long time afterward, a dull, distant explosion and a sudden silence of small-arms told their own tale.

IV.

There was, I remember, no elephant on the boat that passed us across that evening, nor, I think, any hippopotamus. These would have been out of place. We had, however, a woman. Whether the baby was somewhere on board I did not learn. She was a fine creature, this woman; somebody's wife. Her mission, as she understood it, was to inspire the failing heart with courage; and when she selected mine I felt less flattered by her preference than astonished by her penetration. How did she learn? She stood on the upper deck with the red blaze of battle bathing her beautiful face, the twinkle of a thousand rifles mirrored in her eyes; and displaying a small ivory-handled pistol, she told me in a sentence punctuated by the thunder of great guns that if it came to the worst she would do her duty like a man! I am proud to remember that I took off my hat to this little fool.

V.

Along the sheltered strip of beach between the river bank and the water was a confused mass of humanity—several thousands of men. They were mostly unarmed; many were wounded; some dead. All the camp-following tribes were there; all the cowards; a few officers. Not one of them knew where his regiment was, nor if he had a regiment. Many had not. These men were defeated, beaten, cowed. They were deaf to duty and dead to shame. A more demented crew never drifted to the rear of broken battalions. They would have stood in their tracks and been shot down to a man by a provost-marshal's guard, but they could not have been urged up that bank. An army's bravest men are its cowards. The death which they would not meet at the hands of the enemy they will meet at the hands of their officers, with never a flinching.

Whenever a steamboat would land, this abominable mob had to be kept off her with bayonets; when she pulled away, they sprang on her and were pushed by scores into the water, where they were suffered to drown one another in their own way. The men disembarking insulted them, shoved them, struck them. In return they expressed their unholy delight in the certainty of our destruction by the enemy.

By the time my regiment had reached the plateau night had put an end to the struggle. A sputter of rifles would break out now and then, followed perhaps by a spiritless hurrah. Occasionally a shell from a far-away battery would come pitching down somewhere near, with a whir crescendo, or flit above our heads with a whisper like that made by the wings of a night bird, to smother itself in the river. But there was no more fighting. The gunboats, however, blazed away at set intervals all night long, just to make the enemy uncomfortable and break him of his rest.

For us there was no rest. Foot by foot we moved through the dusky fields, we knew not whither. There were men

all about us, but no camp-fires; to have made a blaze would have been madness. The men were of strange regiments; they mentioned the names of unknown generals. They gathered in groups by the wayside, asking eagerly our numbers. They recounted the depressing incidents of the day. A thoughtful officer shut their mouths with a sharp word as he passed; a wise one coming after encouraged them to repeat their doleful tale all along the line.

Hidden in hollows and behind clumps of rank brambles were large tents, dimly lighted with candles, but looking comfortable. The kind of comfort they supplied was indicated by pairs of men entering and reappearing, bearing litters; by low moans from within and by long rows of dead with covered faces outside. These tents were constantly receiving the wounded, yet were never full; they were continually ejecting the dead, yet were never empty. It was as if the helpless had been carried in and murdered, that they might not hamper those whose business it was to fall to-morrow.

The night was now black-dark; as is usual after a battle, it had begun to rain. Still we moved; we were being put into position by somebody. Inch by inch we crept along, treading on one another's heels by way of keeping together. Commands were passed along the line in whispers; more commonly none were given. When the men had pressed so closely together that they could advance no farther they stood stock-still, sheltering the locks of their rifles with their ponchos. In this position many fell asleep. When those in front suddenly stepped away those in the rear, roused by the tramping, hastened after with such zeal that the line was soon choked again. Evidently the head of the division was being piloted at a snail's pace by some one who did not feel sure of his ground. Very often we struck our feet against the dead; more frequently against those who still had spirit enough to resent it with a moan. These were lifted carefully to one side and abandoned. Some had sense enough to ask in their weak way for water. Absurd! Their clothes were soaken, their hair dank; their white faces, dimly discernible, were clammy and cold. Besides, none of us had any water. There was plenty coming, though, for before midnight a thunderstorm broke upon us with great violence. The rain, which had for hours been a dull drizzle, fell with a copiousness that stifled us; we moved in running water up to our ankles. Happily, we were in a forest of great trees heavily "decorated" with Spanish moss, or with an enemy standing to his guns the disclosures of the lightning might have been inconvenient. As it was, the incessant blaze enabled us to consult our watches and encouraged us by displaying our numbers; our black, sinuous line, creeping like a giant serpent beneath the trees, was apparently interminable. I am almost ashamed to say how sweet I found the companionship of those coarse men.

So the long night wore away, and as the glimmer of morning crept in through the forest we found ourselves in a more open country. But where? Not a sign of battle was here. The trees were neither splintered nor scarred, the underbrush was unmown, the ground had no footprints but our own. It was as if we had broken into glades sacred to eternal silence. I should not have been surprised to see sleek leopards come fawning about our feet, and milk-white deer confront us with human eyes.

A few inaudible commands from an invisible leader had placed us in order of battle. But where was the enemy? Where, too, were the riddled regiments that we had come to save? Had our other divisions arrived during the night and passed the river to assist us? or were we to oppose our paltry five thousand breasts to an army flushed with victory? What protected our right? Who lay upon our left? Was there really anything in our front?

There came, borne to us on the raw morning air, the long, weird note of a bugle. It was directly before us. It rose with a low, clear, deliberate warble, and seemed to float in the gray sky like the note of a lark. The bugle calls of the Federal and the Confederate armies were the same: it was the "assembly"! As it died away I observed that the atmosphere had suffered a change; despite the equilibrium established by the storm, it was electric. Wings were growing on blistered feet. Bruised muscles and jolted bones, shoulders pounded by the cruel knapsack, eyelids leaden from lack of sleep—all were pervaded by the subtle fluid, all were unconscious of their clay. The men thrust forward their heads, expanded their eyes and clenched their teeth. They breathed hard, as if throttled by tugging at the leash. If you had laid your hand in the beard or hair of one of these men it would have crackled and shot sparks.

VI.

I suppose the country lying between Corinth and Pittsburg Landing could boast a few inhabitants other than alligators. What manner of people they were it is impossible to say, inasmuch as the fighting dispersed, or possibly exterminated them; perhaps in merely classing them as non-saurian I shall describe them with sufficient particularity and at the same time avert from myself the natural suspicion attaching to a writer who points out to persons who do not know him the peculiarities of persons whom he does not know. One thing, however, I hope I may without offense affirm of these swamp-dwellers—they were pious. To what deity their veneration was given—whether, like the Egyptians, they worshiped the crocodile, or, like other Americans, adored themselves, I do not presume to guess. But whoever, or whatever, may have been the divinity whose ends they shaped, unto Him, or It, they had builded a temple. This humble edifice, centrally situated in the heart of a solitude, and conveniently accessible to the supersylvan crow, had been christened Shiloh Chapel, whence the name of the battle. The fact of a Christian church—assuming it to have been a Christian church—giving name to a wholesale cutting of Christian throats by Christian hands need not be dwelt on here; the frequency of its recurrence in the history of our species has somewhat abated the moral interest that would otherwise attach to it.

VII.

Owing to the darkness, the storm and the absence of a road, it had been impossible to move the artillery from the open ground about the Landing. The privation was much greater in a moral than in a material sense. The infantry soldier feels a confidence in this cumbrous arm quite unwarranted by its actual achievements in thinning out the opposition. There is something that inspires confidence in the way a gun dashes up to the front, shoving fifty or a hundred men to one side as if it said, " Permit me!" Then it squares its shoulders, calmly dislocates a joint in its back, sends away its twenty-four legs and settles down with a quiet rattle which says as plainly as possible, "I've come to stay." There is a superb scorn in its grimly defiant attitude, with its nose in the air; it appears not so much to threaten the enemy as deride him.

Our batteries were probably toiling after us somewhere; we could only hope the enemy might delay his attack until they should arrive. "He may delay his defense if he like," said a sententious young officer to whom I had imparted this natural wish. He had read the signs aright; the words were hardly spoken when a group of staff officers about the brigade commander shot away in divergent lines as if scattered by a whirlwind, and galloping each to the commander of a regiment gave the word. There was a momentary confusion of tongues, a thin line of skirmishers detached itself from the compact front and pushed forward, followed by its diminutive reserves of half a company each—one of which platoons it was my fortune to command. When the straggling line of skirmishers had swept four or five hundred yards ahead, "See," said one of my comrades, "she moves!" She did indeed, and in fine style, her front as straight as a string, her reserve regiments in columns doubled on the center, following in true subordination; no braying of brass to apprise the enemy, no fifing and drumming to amuse him; no ostentation of gaudy flags; no nonsense. This was a matter of business.

In a few moments we had passed out of the singular oasis that had so marvelously escaped the desolation of battle, and now the evidences of the previous day's struggle were present in profusion. The ground was tolerably level here, the forest less dense, mostly clear of undergrowth, and occasionally opening out into small natural meadows. Here and there were small pools—mere discs of rainwater with a tinge of blood. Riven and torn with cannon-shot, the trunks of the trees protruded bunches of splinters like hands, the fingers above the wound interlacing with those below. Large branches had been lopped, and hung their green heads to the ground, or swung critically in their netting of vines, as in a hammock. Many had been cut clean off and their masses of foliage seriously impeded the progress of the troops. The bark of these trees, from the root upward to a height of ten or twenty feet, was so thickly pierced with bullets and grape that one could not have laid a hand on it without covering several punctures. None had escaped. How the human body survives a storm like this must be explained by the fact that it is exposed to it but a few moments at a time, whereas these grand old trees had had no one to take their places, from the rising to the going down of the sun. Angular bits of iron, concavo-convex, sticking in the sides of muddy depressions,

showed where shells had exploded in their furrows. Knapsacks, canteens, haversacks distended with soaken and swollen biscuits, gaping to disgorge, blankets beaten into the soil by the rain, rifles with bent barrels or splintered stocks, waist-belts, hats and the omnipresent sardine-box—all the wretched debris of the battle still littered the spongy earth as far as one could see, in every direction. Dead horses were everywhere; a few disabled caissons, or limbers, reclining on one elbow, as it were; ammunition wagons standing disconsolate behind four or six sprawling mules. Men? There were men enough; all dead, apparently, except one, who lay near where I had halted my platoon to await the slower movement of the line—a Federal sergeant, variously hurt, who had been a fine giant in his time. He lay face upward, taking in his breath in convulsive, rattling snorts, and blowing it out in sputters of froth which crawled creamily down his cheeks, piling itself alongside his neck and ears. A bullet had clipped a groove in his skull, above the temple; from this the brain protruded in bosses, dropping off in flakes and strings. I had not previously known one could get on, even in this unsatisfactory fashion, with so little brain. One of my men, whom I knew for a womanish fellow, asked if he should put his bayonet through him. Inexpressibly shocked by the cold-blooded proposal, I told him I thought not; it was unusual, and too many were looking.

VIII.

It was plain that the enemy had retreated to Corinth. The arrival of our fresh troops and their successful passage of the river had disheartened him. Three or four of his gray cavalry videttes moving amongst the trees on the crest of a hill in our front, and galloping out of sight at the crack of our skirmishers' rifles, confirmed us in the belief; an army face to face with its enemy does not employ cavalry to watch its front. True, they might be a general and his staff. Crowning this rise we found a level field, a quarter of a mile in width; beyond it a gentle acclivity, covered with an undergrowth of young oaks, impervious to sight. We pushed on into the open, but the division halted at the edge. Having orders to conform to its movements, we halted too; but that did not suit; we received an intimation to proceed. I had performed this sort of service before, and in the exercise of my discretion deployed my platoon, pushing it forward at a run, with trailed arms, to strengthen the skirmish line, which I overtook some thirty or forty yards from the wood. Then—I can't describe it—the forest seemed all at once to flame up and disappear with a crash like that of a great wave upon the beach—a crash that expired in hot hissings, and the sickening "spat" of lead against flesh. A dozen of my brave fellows tumbled over like ten-pins. Some struggled to their feet, only to go down again, and yet again. Those who stood fired into the smoking brush and doggedly retired. We had expected to find, at most, a line of skirmishers similar to our own; it was with a view to overcoming them by a sudden coup at the moment of collision that I had thrown forward my little reserve. What we had found was a line of battle, coolly holding its fire till it could count our teeth. There was no more to be done but get back across the open ground, every superficial yard of which was throwing up its little jet of mud provoked by an impinging bullet. We got back, most of us, and I shall never forget the ludicrous incident of a young officer who had taken part in the affair walking up to his colonel, who had been a calm and apparently impartial spectator, and gravely reporting: "The enemy is in force just beyond this field, sir."

IX.

In subordination to the design of this narrative, as defined by its title, the incidents related necessarily group themselves about my own personality as a center; and, as this center, during the few terrible hours of the engagement, maintained a variably constant relation to the open field already mentioned, it is important that the reader should bear in mind the topographical and tactical features of the local situation. The hither side of the field was occupied by the front of my brigade—a length of two regiments in line, with proper intervals for field batteries. During the entire fight the enemy held the slight wooded acclivity beyond. The debatable ground to the right and left of the open was broken and thickly wooded for miles, in some places quite inaccessible to artillery and at very few points offering opportunities for its successful employment. As a consequence of this the two sides of the field were soon studded thickly with confronting guns, which flamed away at one another with amazing zeal and rather startling effect. Of course, an infantry attack delivered from either side was not to be thought of when the covered flanks offered inducements so unquestionably superior; and I believe the riddled bodies of my poor skirmishers were the only ones left on this

"neutral ground" that day. But there was a very pretty line of dead continually growing in our rear, and doubtless the enemy had at his back a similar encouragement.

The configuration of the ground offered us no protection. By lying flat on our faces between the guns we were screened from view by a straggling row of brambles, which marked the course of an obsolete fence; but the enemy's grape was sharper than his eyes, and it was poor consolation to know that his gunners could not see what they were doing, so long as they did it. The shock of our own pieces nearly deafened us, but in the brief intervals we could hear the battle roaring and stammering in the dark reaches of the forest to the right and left, where our other divisions were dashing themselves again and again into the smoking jungle. What would we not have given to join them in their brave, hopeless task! But to lie inglorious beneath showers of shrapnel darting divergent from the unassailable sky—meekly to be blown out of life by level gusts of grape—to clench our teeth and shrink helpless before big shot pushing noisily through the consenting air—this was horrible! "Lie down, there!" a captain would shout, and then get up himself to see that his order was obeyed. "Captain, take cover, sir!" the lieutenant-colonel would shriek, pacing up and down in the most exposed position that he could find.

O those cursed guns!—not the enemy's, but our own. Had it not been for them, we might have died like men. They must be supported, forsooth, the feeble, boasting bullies! It was impossible to conceive that these pieces were doing the enemy as excellent a mischief as his were doing us; they seemed to raise their "cloud by day" solely to direct aright the streaming procession of Confederate missiles. They no longer inspired confidence, but begot apprehension; and it was with grim satisfaction that I saw the carriage of one and another smashed into matchwood by a whooping shot and bundled out of the line.

X.

The dense forests wholly or partly in which were fought so many battles of the Civil War, lay upon the earth in each autumn a thick deposit of dead leaves and stems, the decay of which forms a soil of surprising depth and richness. In dry weather the upper stratum is as inflammable as tinder. A fire once kindled in it will spread with a slow, persistent advance as far as local conditions permit, leaving a bed of light ashes beneath which the less combustible accretions of previous years will smolder until extinguished by rains. In many of the engagements of the war the fallen leaves took fire and roasted the fallen men. At Shiloh, during the first day's fighting, wide tracts of woodland were burned over in this way and scores of wounded who might have recovered perished in slow torture. I remember a deep ravine a little to the left and rear of the field I have described, in which, by some mad freak of heroic incompetence, a part of an Illinois regiment had been surrounded, and refusing to surrender was destroyed, as it very well deserved. My regiment having at last been relieved at the guns and moved over to the heights above this ravine for no obvious purpose, I obtained leave to go down into the valley of death and gratify a reprehensible curiosity.

Forbidding enough it was in every way. The fire had swept every superficial foot of it, and at every step I sank into ashes to the ankle. It had contained a thick undergrowth of young saplings, every one of which had been severed by a bullet, the foliage of the prostrate tops being afterward burnt and the stumps charred. Death had put his sickle into this thicket and fire had gleaned the field. Along a line which was not that of extreme depression, but was at every point significantly equidistant from the heights on either hand, lay the bodies, half buried in ashes; some in the unlovely looseness of attitude denoting sudden death by the bullet, but by far the greater number in postures of agony that told of the tormenting flame. Their clothing was half burnt away—their hair and beard entirely; the rain had come too late to save their nails. Some were swollen to double girth; others shriveled to manikins. According to degree of exposure, their faces were bloated and black or yellow and shrunken. The contraction of muscles which had given them claws for hands had cursed each countenance with a hideous grin. Faugh! I cannot catalogue the charms of these gallant gentlemen who had got what they enlisted for.

XI.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon, and raining. For fifteen hours we had been wet to the skin. Chilled, sleepy, hungry and disappointed—profoundly disgusted with the inglorious part to which they had been condemned—the men of my regiment did everything doggedly. The spirit had gone quite out of them. Blue sheets of powder

smoke, drifting amongst the trees, settling against the hillsides and beaten into nothingness by the falling rain, filled the air with their peculiar pungent odor, but it no longer stimulated. For miles on either hand could be heard the hoarse murmur of the battle, breaking out near by with frightful distinctness, or sinking to a murmur in the distance; and the one sound aroused no more attention than the other.

We had been placed again in rear of those guns, but even they and their iron antagonists seemed to have tired of their feud, pounding away at one another with amiable infrequency. The right of the regiment extended a little beyond the field. On the prolongation of the line in that direction were some regiments of another division, with one in reserve. A third of a mile back lay the remnant of somebody's brigade looking to its wounds. The line of forest bounding this end of the field stretched as straight as a wall from the right of my regiment to Heaven knows what regiment of the enemy. There suddenly appeared, marching down along this wall, not more than two hundred yards in our front, a dozen files of gray-clad men with rifles on the right shoulder. At an interval of fifty yards they were followed by perhaps half as many more; and in fair supporting distance of these stalked with confident mien a single man! There seemed to me something indescribably ludicrous in the advance of this handful of men upon an army, albeit with their left flank protected by a forest. It does not so impress me now. They were the exposed flanks of three lines of infantry, each half a mile in length. In a moment our gunners had grappled with the nearest pieces, swung them half round, and were pouring streams of canister into the invaded wood. The infantry rose in masses, springing into line. Our threatened regiments stood like a wall, their loaded rifles at "ready," their bayonets hanging quietly in the scabbards. The right wing of my own regiment was thrown slightly backward to threaten the flank of the assault. The battered brigade away to the rear pulled itself together.

Then the storm burst. A great gray cloud seemed to spring out of the forest into the faces of the waiting battalions. It was received with a crash that made the very trees turn up their leaves. For one instant the assailants paused above their dead, then struggled forward, their bayonets glittering in the eyes that shone behind the smoke. One moment, and those unmoved men in blue would be impaled. What were they about? Why did they not fix bayonets? Were they stunned by their own volley? Their inaction was maddening! Another tremendous crash!—the rear rank had fired! Humanity, thank Heaven! is not made for this, and the shattered gray mass drew back a score of paces, opening a feeble fire. Lead had scored its old-time victory over steel; the heroic had broken its great heart against the commonplace. There are those who say that it is sometimes otherwise.

All this had taken but a minute of time, and now the second Confederate line swept down and poured in its fire. The line of blue staggered and gave way; in those two terrific volleys it seemed to have quite poured out its spirit. To this deadly work our reserve regiment now came up with a run. It was surprising to see it spitting fire with never a sound, for such was the infernal din that the ear could take in no more. This fearful scene was enacted within fifty paces of our toes, but we were rooted to the ground as if we had grown there. But now our commanding officer rode from behind us to the front, waved his hand with the courteous gesture that says apres vous, and with a barely audible cheer we sprang into the fight. Again the smoking front of gray receded, and again, as the enemy's third line emerged from its leafy covert, it pushed forward across the piles of dead and wounded to threaten with protruded steel. Never was seen so striking a proof of the paramount importance of numbers. Within an area of three hundred yards by fifty there struggled for front places no fewer than six regiments; and the accession of each, after the first collision, had it not been immediately counterpoised, would have turned the scale.

As matters stood, we were now very evenly matched, and how long we might have held out God only knows. But all at once something appeared to have gone wrong with the enemy's left; our men had somewhere pierced his line. A moment later his whole front gave way, and springing forward with fixed bayonets we pushed him in utter confusion back to his original line. Here, among the tents from which Grant's people had been expelled the day before, our broken and disordered regiments inextricably intermingled, and drunken with the wine of triumph, dashed confidently against a pair of trim battalions, provoking a tempest of hissing lead that made us stagger under its very weight. The sharp onset of

another against our flank sent us whirling back with fire at our heels and fresh foes in merciless pursuit—who in their turn were broken upon the front of the invalided brigade previously mentioned, which had moved up from the rear to assist in this lively work.

As we rallied to reform behind our beloved guns and noted the ridiculous brevity of our line—as we sank from sheer fatigue, and tried to moderate the terrific thumping of our hearts—as we caught our breath to ask who had seen such-and-such a comrade, and laughed hysterically at the reply—there swept past us and over us into the open field a long regiment with fixed bayonets and rifles on the right shoulder. Another followed, and another; two—three—four! Heavens! where do all these men come from, and why did they not come before? How grandly and confidently they go sweeping on like long blue waves of ocean chasing one another to the cruel rocks! Involuntarily we draw in our weary feet beneath us as we sit, ready to spring up and interpose our breasts when these gallant lines shall come back to us across the terrible field, and sift brokenly through among the trees with spouting fires at their backs. We still our breathing to catch the full grandeur of the volleys that are to tear them to shreds. Minute after minute passes and the sound does not come. Then for the first time we note that the silence of the whole region is not comparative, but absolute. Have we become stone deaf? See; here comes a stretcher-bearer, and there a surgeon! Good heavens! a chaplain!

The battle was indeed at an end.

XII.

And this was, O so long ago! How they come back to me—dimly and brokenly, but with what a magic spell—those years of youth when I was soldiering! Again I hear the far warble of blown bugles. Again I see the tall, blue smoke of camp-fires ascending from the dim valleys of Wonderland. There steals upon my sense the ghost of an odor from pines that canopy the ambuscade. I feel upon my cheek the morning mist that shrouds the hostile camp unaware of its doom, and my blood stirs at the ringing rifle-shot of the solitary sentinel. Unfamiliar landscapes, glittering with sunshine or sullen with rain, come to me demanding recognition, pass, vanish and give place to others. Here in the night stretches a wide and blasted field studded with half-extinct fires burning redly with I know not what presage of evil. Again I shudder as I note its desolation and its awful silence. Where was it? To what monstrous inharmony of death was it the visible prelude?

O days when all the world was beautiful and strange; when unfamiliar constellations burned in the Southern midnights, and the mocking-bird poured out his heart in the moon-gilded magnolia; when there was something new under a new sun; will your fine, far memories ever cease to lay contrasting pictures athwart the harsher features of this later world, accentuating the ugliness of the longer and tamer life? Is it not strange that the phantoms of a blood-stained period have so airy a grace and look with so tender eyes?—that I recall with difficulty the danger and death and horrors of the time, and without effort all that was gracious and picturesque? Ah, Youth, there is no such wizard as thou! Give me but one touch of thine artist hand upon the dull canvas of the Present; gild for but one moment the drear and somber scenes of to-day, and I will willingly surrender an other life than the one that I should have thrown away at Shiloh.

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3.4: Cantú, Francisco "Bajadas" (2015)

Bajadas ba-ja-da noun

1: a steep curved descending road or trail

2: an alluvial plain formed at the base of a mountain by the coalescing of several alluvial fans

Origin 1865-70, Americanism: from the Spanish feminine past participle of bajar: to descend

December 20

Santiago quit the academy yesterday. We were on our way into town when I heard the news, speeding across the cold and brittle grasslands of New Mexico. Morales must have told me, or maybe it was Hart. I called Santiago as soon as I found out. You don't have to quit, I told him, you can still finish, you should stay. I can't, he said, it's not the work for me. I have to go back to Puerto Rico; I have to be with my family. I wished him luck and told him I was sorry to see him go. He thanked me and said to finish for the both of us, and I promised that I would.

Of all my classmates, it was Santiago I most wanted to see graduate. He marched out of step, his gear was a mess, he couldn't handle his weapon, and it took him over fifteen minutes to run the mile and a half. But he tried harder than any of us. He sweat the most, yelled the loudest. He was thirty-eight, an accountant from Puerto Rico, a husband and a father. Yesterday, he left the firing range with a pocket full of live rounds, and the instructors ordered him to sing "I'm a Little Teapot" in front of the class. He didn't know the song, so they suggested "God Bless America." He belted out the chorus at the top of his lungs, his chest heaving after each line. We laughed, all of us, at his thick accent, at the misremembered verses, at his voice, off-key and quaking.

In town, over drinks, Hart went on about the winters in Detroit. I can't go back there, he said, not like Santiago. Fuck that. He asked Morales and me about winter in Arizona. Morales laughed. You don't have to worry about snow where we're going, vato, that's for sure. Hart thought it sounded nice. Nice, I asked? Just wait until the summer. Have you ever felt 115 degrees? Hell no, he said. Well, I told him, we'll be out in the heat, fetching dead bodies from the desert. Who the fuck walks in the desert when it's 115, he asked? I drank my way through another beer and went rambling on about how everyone used to cross in the city, in San Diego and El Paso, until they shut it all down in the '90s with fences and newly hired Border Patrol agents like us. If they sealed the cities, they thought, people wouldn't risk crossing in the mountains and the deserts. But they were wrong, I said, and now we're the ones who get to deal with it. Morales looked at me, his eyes dark and buried beneath his brow. I'm sorry, I told them, I can't help it—I studied this shit in school.

On our way back to the academy, I sat in the backseat of Morales' truck. In the front, Morales told Hart about growing up on the border in Douglas, about uncles and cousins on the south side, and I sat with my head against the cold glass of the window, staring at the darkened plain, slipping in and out of sleep.

3 January

Last week, my mother flew in from Arizona to see me, because—she said—we've never missed a Christmas together. She picked me up at the academy on Christmas Eve and we drove through the straw-colored hills, leaving behind the trembling Chihuahuan grasslands as we climbed into the evergreen mountains of southern New Mexico. We stayed the night in a two-room cabin, warm and bright with pinewood. We set up a miniature tree on the living room table, decorating it with tiny glass bulbs. Then, wrapped in blankets, we laughed and drank eggnog and brandy until the conversation deteriorated into discussion of my impending work.

Look, my mother said, I spent most of my adult life working for the government as a park ranger, so don't take this the wrong way—but don't you think it's below you, earning a degree just to become a border-cop? Look, I said, I spent four years away from home, studying this place through facts, policy, and history. I'm tired of reading. I want to exist outside, to know the reality of this border, day in and day out. Are you crazy, she said? You grew up with me, living in deserts and national parks. We've never been far from the border. Sure, I said, but I don't truly understand the landscape, I don't know how to handle myself in the face of ugliness or danger. My mother balked. There are ways to learn that don't place you at risk, she said, ways that let you help people. I fumed. I can still help people, I told her—I speak Spanish, I've lived in Mexico, I've been to the places where people are coming from. And don't worry, I told her, I won't place myself at risk—I'm not too proud to back away from danger.

Good, she said. We hugged, and she told me she was happy I'd soon be back home in Arizona, closer to her. Before bed, we each opened a single present, as we have done every Christmas Eve since I can remember.

In the morning, we ate brunch at the town's historic hotel, feasting on pot roast by a crackling fire. Afterward we climbed the stairs to a narrow lookout tower where people crowded and huddled together in jackets, walking in slow circles to take in the view. Below us, an expanse of sunlit plain stretched

westward from the base of the mountain. I watched as the landscape shifted under the winter light. Behind me, my mother placed her hand on my shoulder and pointed to a cloud of gypsum sand in the distance, impossibly small, swirling across the basin desert.

24 February

We caught our first dope load today, only our second day after arriving at the station from the academy. We were east of the port of entry when the sensor hit at Sykes trail. At the trailhead, Cole, our supervisor, found foot sign for eight and had us pile out of the vehicles. For four miles we made our way toward the mountains following toe digs and kicked-over rocks. Cole went in front and called us up one by one to watch us cut sign. We found the first bundle discarded among the boulders at the base of the pass. We spread out to comb the hillsides and after about ten minutes we had recovered two backpacks filled with food and clothes and four more fifty-pound bundles wrapped in sugar sacks spray-painted black. Cole had us dump the packs, and I watched as several of my classmates ripped and tore at the clothing, scattering it among the tangled branches of mesquite and paloverde. In one of the backpacks, I found a laminated prayer card depicting Saint Jude, a tongue of flames hovering above his head. Morales found a pack of cigarettes and sat smoking on a rock as others laughed loudly and stepped on a heap of food. Nearby, Hart giggled and shouted to us as he pissed on a pile of ransacked belongings. As we hiked with the bundles back to our vehicles the February sun grew low in the sky and cast a warm light over the desert. At the edge of the trail, in the pink shade of a paloverde, a desert tortoise raised itself up on its front legs to watch us pass.

2 April

Tonight we stood for hours in the darkness along the pole line. After we had tired of the cold and the buzzing of the power lines, Cole had us lay a spike strip across the dirt road and return to wait in our vehicles parked in a nearby wash. We sat with the engines on and the heat blasting, and after a few minutes of silence, Morales asked Cole why some of the agents at the station called him “Black Death.” He laughed and pulled a can of Copenhagen from his shirt pocket. You have to be careful, he said, the Indians out here, when they’re drunk and walking at night between the villages, they fall asleep on the fucking road. He packed the can as he spoke, swinging his right arm and thumping his forefinger across the lid. When it’s cold out, he explained, the asphalt holds warmth from the sun, even at night. A few years ago, I was working the midnight shift, driving down IR9, and I saw this fucking Indian asleep in the middle of the road. I stopped the truck and woke his ass up. His brother was there with him, sleeping in the bushes. They were drunk as hell. Cole pinched a wad of dip into his mouth. His lower lip bulged, catching the green light from the control panel. I gave the guys a ride into the next village, he said, dropped them off at their cousin’s place. Told them not to sleep on the goddamn road. Cole grabbed an empty Pepsi cup from the center console and spit. Maybe nine or ten months later, he continued, same fucking spot, I ran over the guy, killed him right there. Same fucking guy, asleep on the damn road. I never even saw him. After that, they started calling me Black Death. Cole laughed and spat into his cup and a few of us laughed with him, not knowing exactly what kind of laugh it was.

Just after midnight, a blacked-out truck roared across the spikes and three of its tires went. We tore after it, speeding blindly through a cloud of dust until we realized the vehicle had turned. We doubled back to where the tire sign left the road and followed it until we found the truck abandoned at the foot of a hill. In the back of the truck we found two marijuana bundles and a .22 rifle. Cole sent us to scour the hillside with our flashlights, but we only found one other bundle. It’s a fucking gimme load, Cole said. I asked what he meant. It’s a goddamn distraction, that’s what. They’re waiting us out. But my classmates and I didn’t care, we were high from the chase. We drove the truck into a wash until it became stuck, and slashed the unpopped tire, leaving it there with the lights on and the engine running. On the way back to the station, I asked Cole what would happen to the truck. He told me he’d call the tribal police to seize the vehicle, but I knew he wouldn’t. Even if he did, they wouldn’t come for it, they wouldn’t want the paperwork either. They, too, would leave it here to be ransacked, picked over, and lit on fire—evidence of a swirling disorder.

4 April

After sundown, Cole sent Morales up a hill near the highway with a thermal reconnaissance camera. Let me borrow your beanie, vato, he said to me, it’s cold out. I handed it to him and stayed inside the vehicle, waiting with the others. An hour later, he spotted a group of ten just east of mile marker five. We rushed out of the car and set out on foot as he guided us in on the radio, but by the time we reached the group, they had already scattered. We found them one by one, huddled in the brush and curled up around the trunks of paloverde trees and cholla cactus. Not one of them ran. We made them take off their shoelaces and empty their backpacks, and we walked all ten of them single file back to the road. For a while I walked next to an older man who told me they were all from Michoacan. It’s beautiful there, I said. Yes, he replied, but there’s no work. You’ve been to Michoacan, he asked? I told him I had. Then you must have seen what it is to live in Mexico, he said. And now you see what it is like for us at the border. *Pues si*, I said,

we're out here every day. For a while we walked silently next to each other and then, after several minutes, he sighed deeply. *Hay mucha desesperacion*, he told me, almost whispering. I tried to look at his face, but it was too dark.

At the station, I processed the man for deportation, and he asked me after I had taken his fingerprints if there was any work at the station for him. You don't understand, I said, you've just got to wait here until the bus comes. They'll take you to Tucson and then to Nogales and then you'll be back in Mexico. I understand, he assured me, I just want to know if there is something I can do while I wait, something to help. I can take out the trash or clean out the cells. I want to show you that I'm here to work, that I'm not a bad person, that I m not here to bring in drugs, I'm not here to do anything illegal. I want to work. I looked at him. I know that, I said.

7 April

Sunday night, Cole showed us the layup spot where he had almost been run over by smugglers. He led us to a wide wash full of old blankets and discarded clothes and pieces of twine and empty cans of tuna and crushed water bottles. We climbed out of the wash and walked to a nearby cactus, a tall and sprawling chain-fruit cholla, and Cole asked if any of us had hand sanitizer. Someone tossed him a small bottle and he emptied the gel on the black trunk of the cactus. Cole asked for a lighter and with it, he lit the gel and stepped back to watch the flames crawl up the trunk, crackling and popping as they engulfed the plant's spiny arms. In the light from the fire, Cole packed his can of dip and took a pinch into his mouth. His bottom lip shone taut and smooth, his shaved black skin reflecting the flames. He spit into the fire and the rest of us stood with him in a circle around the cholla as it burned, laughing loudly, taking pictures and video with our phones, watching as thick smoke billowed into the night, filling the air with the burnt smell of tar and resin, like freshly laid asphalt.

9 April

Cole was ahead scouting the trail in the darkness when he radioed about the mountain lion. Come with your sidearms drawn, he said. We figured he was full of shit. We had been talking loudly, walking with our flashlights on—surely a mountain lion would shy away. We continued down the trail until the ground leveled off, and it was then that a grave hiss issued up from the darkness beside us, a sound like hot wind escaping the depths of the earth. Holy fucking shit, we said. We drew our sidearms and shuffled down the path back-to-back, casting light in all directions around us. In that moment, I felt a profound and immediate fear—not of the danger posed to us by the animal, but rather, the idea that it would show itself to us, so many men armed and heedless, that it would be shot down and fit on fire and left here beside the trail, another relic of a desert unspooling.

7 June

There are days when I feel I am becoming good at what I do. And then I wonder, what does it mean to be good at this? I wonder sometimes how I might explain certain things, the sense in what we do when they run from us, scattering into the brush, leaving behind their water jugs and their backpacks full of food and clothes, how to explain what we do when we discover their layup spots stocked with water and stashed rations. Of course, what you do depends on who you're with, depends on what kind of agent you are, what kind of agent you want to become, but it's true that we slash their bottles and drain their water into the dry earth, that we dump their backpacks and pile their food and clothes to be crushed and pissed on and stepped over, strewn across the desert and set ablaze, and Christ, it sounds terrible, and maybe it is, but the idea is that when they come out from their hiding places, when they regroup and return to find their stockpiles ransacked and stripped, they'll realize then their situation, that they're fucked, that it's hopeless to continue on, and they'll quit right then and there, they'll save themselves, they'll struggle toward the nearest highway or dirt road to flag down some passing agent or they'll head for the nearest parched village to knock on someone's door, someone who will give them food and water and call us to take them in—that's the idea, the sense in it all. But still I have nightmares, visions of them staggering through the desert, men from Michoacan, from places I've known, men lost and wandering without food or water, dying slowly as they look for some road, some village, some way out. In my dreams I seek them, searching in vain until finally I am met by their bodies lying face-down on the ground before me, dead and stinking on the desert floor, human waypoints in a vast and smoldering expanse.

23 June

Last month, we were released from the training unit and dispersed into rotating shifts to work under journeymen agents. For the past week, I've been partnered with Mortenson, a four-year veteran and the Mormon son of a Salt Lake City cop. This morning, at dawn, we sat together in the port of entry and watched from the camera room as two men and a woman cut a hole in the pedestrian fence. Mortenson and I bolted from the room and ran to the site of the breach, rounding the corner just in time to see the two men already scrambling back through the hole to Mexico. The woman stood motionless beside the fence, too scared to run. As Mortenson inspected the breach, the girl wept, telling me it was her birthday, that she was turning twenty-three, and she pleaded for me to let her go, swearing she

would never cross again. Mortenson turned and took a long look at the woman and then laughed. I booked her last week, he said.

She spoke hurriedly to us as we walked back to the port of entry, and while Mortenson went inside to gather our things, I stood with her in the parking lot. She told me she was from Guadalajara, that she had some problems there, that she had already tried four times to cross. She swore to me that she would stay in Mexico for good this time, that she would finally go back to finish music school. *Te lo juro*, she said. She looked at me and smiled. Someday I'm going to be a singer, you know. I believe it, I said, smiling back. She told me that she thought I was nice, and before Mortenson returned from the port, she snuck her counterfeit green card into my hand, telling me she didn't want to get in trouble if they found it on her at the processing center. When Mortenson came back, we helped her into the patrol vehicle and drove north toward the station, laughing and applauding as she sang to us from the backseat. She's going to be a singer, I told Mortenson. The woman beamed. She already is, he said.

27 July

Last night, finally allowed to patrol on my own, I sat watching storms roll across the moonlit desert. There were three of them: the first due south in Mexico; the second in the east, creeping down from the mountains; the third hovering just behind me, close enough for me to feel smatterings of rain and gusts of warm wind. In the distance, hot lightning appeared like a line of neon, illuminating the desert in a shuddering white light.

30 July

Agents found Martin Ubalde de la Vega and his three companions on the bombing range ten miles west of the highway. At the time of rescue, the four men had been in the desert for six days and had wandered in the July heat for more than forty-eight hours without food or water. By the time they were found, one of the men had already met his death. Of the survivors, one was quickly treated and discharged from the hospital, while another remained in intensive care, recently awoken from a coma, unable to remember his own name. When I arrived at the hospital asking for the third survivor, nurses explained that he was recovering from kidney failure and they guided me to his room, where he lay hidden like a dark stone in white sheets.

I had been charged with watching over de la Vega until his condition was stable, at which point I would transport him to the station to be processed for deportation. I settled in a chair next to him, and after several moments of silence, I asked him to tell me about himself. He answered timidly, as if unsure of what to say or even how to speak. He began by apologizing for his Spanish, explaining that he only knew what they had taught him in school. He told me he came from the jungles of Guerrero, that in his village they spoke Mixtec and farmed the green earth. He was the father of seven children, he said, five girls and two boys. His elder daughter lived in California and he had crossed the border with plans to go there, to live with her and find work.

We spent the following hours watching *telenovelas* and occasionally de la Vega would turn to ask me about the women in America, wondering if they were like the ones on TV. Then, smiling, he began to tell me about his youngest daughter, still in Mexico. She's just turned eighteen, he said. You could marry her.

Later that afternoon, de la Vega was cleared for release. The nurse brought in his belongings—a pair of blue jeans and sneakers with holes worn through the soles. I asked what had happened to his shirt. I don't know, he told me. I looked at the nurse and she shrugged, telling me he had come that way. We've got no clothes here, she added, only hospital gowns. As we exited the building, I imagined de la Vega's embarrassment, the fear he must have at remaining bare-chested as he was to be ferried through alien territory, booked and transferred between government processing centers and bussed to the border to enter his country alone and half naked.

At the patrol vehicle, I placed de la Vega in the passenger seat and popped the trunk. At the back of the cruiser, I undid my gun belt, unbuttoned my uniform shirt, and removed my white v-neck. Then I reassembled my uniform and returned to the passenger door and offered de la Vega my undershirt. Before leaving town, I asked de la Vega if he was hungry. You should eat something now, I told him, at the station there's only juice and crackers. De la Vega agreed and I asked what he was hungry for. What do Americans eat, he asked? I laughed. Here we eat mostly Mexican food. He looked at me unbelievingly. But we also eat hamburgers, I said. As we pulled into the drive-thru window at McDonalds, de la Vega told me he didn't have any money. *Yo te invito*, I said.

As we drove south along the open highway, I tuned into a Mexican radio station and we listened to the sounds of norteno as de la Vega finished his meal. After he had eaten, de la Vega sat silently next to me, watching the passing desert. Then, quietly, as if whispering to me or to someone else, he began to speak of the rains in Guerrero, about the wet and green jungle, and I wondered if he could have ever been made to imagine a place like this—a place where one of his companions would meet his death and another would be made to forget his own name, a landscape where the earth still burned with volcanic heat.

4 August

This evening as I cut for sign along the border road, I watched a Sonoran coachwhip snake try to find its way into Mexico through the pedestrian fence. The animal slithered along the length of the mesh looking for a way south, hitting its head against the rusted metal again and again until finally I guided it over to the wide opening of a wash grate. After the snake made its way across the adjacent road, I stood for a while looking through the mesh, staring at the undulating tracks it left in the dirt.

7 August

Yesterday, on the border road, a woman on the south side of the pedestrian fence flagged me down as 1 passed. I stopped my vehicle and went over to her. With panic in her voice she asked me if I knew about her son he had crossed days ago, she said, or maybe it was a week ago, she wasn't sure. She hadn't heard anything from him, no one had, and she didn't know if he had been caught or if he was lost somewhere in the desert or if he was even still alive. *Estamos desesperados*, she told me, her voice quivering, with one hand clawing at her chest and the other pressed trembling against the border fence. I don't remember what I told her, if I took down the mans name or if I gave her the phone number to some faraway office or remote hotline, but I remember thinking later about de la Vega, about his dead and delirious companions, about all the questions I should have asked the woman. I arrived home that evening and threw my gun belt and uniform across the couch, standing alone in my cavernous living room. I called my mother. I'm safe, I told her, I'm at home.

29 August

At the end of the night, Mortenson called me into the processing room and asked me to translate for two girls who had just been brought in, nine- and ten-year-old sisters who were picked up with two women at the checkpoint. He told me to ask them basic questions: Where is your mother? In California. Who are the women who brought you here? Friends. Where are you from? Sinaloa. The girls peppered me with nervous questions in return: When could they go home? Where were the women who drove them, when were they coming back? Could they call their mother? I tried to explain things to them, but they were too young, too bewildered, too distraught at being surrounded by men in uniform. One of the agents brought the girls a bag of Skittles, but even then they couldn't smile, they couldn't say thank you, they just stood there, looking at the candy with horror.

After the girls were placed in a holding cell, I told Mortenson I had to leave. My shift's over, I said. He told me they still needed to interview the women who were picked up with the girls and asked me to stay and translate. I can't help anymore, I told him, I have to go home. As I drove away from the station, I tried not to think of the girls and my hands shook at the wheel. I wanted to call my mother, but it was too late, it was the middle of the night.

30 August

Last night I dreamed I was grinding my teeth out, spitting the crumbled pieces into my palms and holding them in my cupped hands, searching for someone to show them to, someone who could see what was happening.

12 September

Morales was the first to hear him, screaming in the distance from one of the spider roads. He hiked for a mile or two and found the kid lying on the ground, hysterical. For more than twenty-four hours he had been lost in a vast mesquite thicket. The coyote who left him there told him he was holding back the group and handed him half a liter of water, pointing to some hills in the distance, telling him to walk at them until he found a road. When I arrived with the water, the kid was on the ground next to Morales, lurching in the shade and crying like a child. The kid was fat—his pants hung from his ass and his fly was half open, his zipper broken, his shirt hanging loosely from his shoulders, inside out and torn and soaked in sweat. Morales looked at me and smiled and then turned to the kid. Your waters here, *Gordo*. I kneeled next to him and handed him the gallon jug. He took a sip and began to pant and groan. Drink more, I said, but drink slowly. I can't, he moaned, I'm going to die. No you're not, I told him, you're still sweating.

After the kid drank some water, we helped him up and tried walking him through the thicket toward the road. He lagged and staggered, crying out behind us. *Ay oficial*, he would moan, *no puedo*. As we crouched and barged through tangled branches, I slowly became overwhelmed by his panic until finally we broke out of the thicket and spotted the dirt road. You see the trucks, *Gordo*? Can you make it that far? Maybe we should just leave you here, *no puedes*, *verdad*?

On the ride back to the station, the kid regained some composure. He was nineteen years old, he told me, and had planned to go to Oregon to sell heroine, *un puno a la vez*. You can make a lot of money that way, he told me. For several minutes the kid was silent. You know, he finally said, I really thought I was going to die in that thicket. I prayed to God that I would get out, I prayed to the Virgin and to all the saints, to every saint I could think of. It's strange, he said, I've never done that before. I've never believed in God.

30 September

Today I went to the hospital to see Morales. He was in a motorcycle accident two weeks ago and wasn't wearing his helmet. For a while we had been hearing at the station that he might not make it. I was too afraid to see him a week ago when he was in a coma and I was afraid, still, to see him a few days later after he had come out of it, when he would wake up cursing and pulling his tubes out, when he still didn't recognize anybody. When I finally saw him, I was surprised how thin he was, how frail. He had bruises under his deep-set eyes, a feeding tube in his nose, an iv line in his arm, and a huge gash across the left side of his skull where half his hair had been shaved off. *Ey vato*, he said to me quietly. I smiled at him. I like your haircut, I said. As Morales spoke to me he seemed far away, his eyes scanning the room as if searching for some landmark, something to suggest the nature of the place he had come to. His childhood friend from Douglas was there. He told me Morales couldn't see out of his left eye, but that doctors thought the sight would come back eventually. His mother and father were there too, speaking quietly to each other in Spanish. A little while after I arrived, Cole and Hart came, and as they stood talking at his bedside, I could see a wet glaze in Cole's eyes. I excused myself from the room, telling everyone I'd come back, but I didn't.

13 October

Last week I took the border road out to the lava flow, driving for more than an hour across rocky hills and long valleys. The earth became darker as I neared the flow, devoid of plants and cactus. To the south a pale band of sand dunes underlined the base of a nameless cordillera, shifting at the horizon in shades of purple and dark clay. I drove across the lava flow and looked over black rocks glistening as if wet under the afternoon sun, rocks pockmarked from a time when the earth melted and simmered between erupting volcanoes, a molten crust cracking and shifting as it cooled.

25 December

At midnight on Christmas Eve, just before the end of my shift, I heard gunshots ring out in Mexico. I stopped my vehicle at the top of a small hill and stood on the roof to watch the sparkling of fireworks along the southern horizon. After returning home, I woke my mother who had come to visit for the holiday, her eyes bleary with worry and sleep. We sat in my empty living room in the night-weary hours of the morning, drinking eggnog and stringing popcorn around an artificial tree. My mother asked about my shift. It was fine, I said. She asked me if I liked my work, if I was learning what I wanted. It's not something to like, I said, it's not a classroom. It's a job, and I'm getting used to it, and I'm getting good at it. I can make sense of what that means later.

You know, my mother said, it's not just your safety I worry about. I know how the soul can be placed at hazard fighting impossible battles. I spent my whole career working for the government, slowly losing a sense of purpose even though I remained close to the outdoors, close to my passion. I don't want that for you.

I cut her off—I didn't want to tell about my dreams of dead bodies, about the fires burning in the desert, about my hands shaking at the wheel. Mom—I said—let's open a present.

30 December

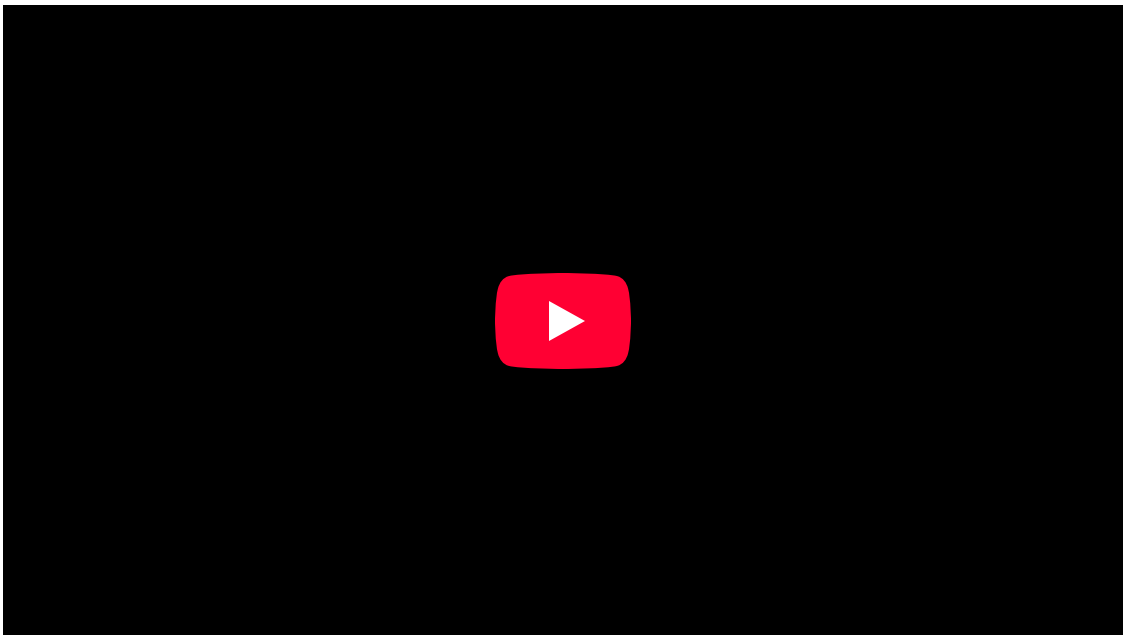
Tonight the scope truck spotted a group of twenty just north of the line. The operator said they were moving slowly, that it looked as if there might be women and children in the group. He guided us in, and we quickly located their sign and then lost it again across a stretch of hard-packed desert pavement. We split up and combed the hillside, hunting for toe digs and kicked-over rocks. On the walk back to the car, I became furious. There were supposed to be twenty of them, they were supposed to be slow, but still I couldn't catch up, I couldn't stay on the sign, I couldn't even get close enough to hear them in the distance, and so now they remained out there in the desert: men, women, and children, entire families invisible and unheard, and I was powerless to help them, powerless to keep them from straying through the night and the cold.

Attributions

After its original publication in *Ploughshares,* this creative nonfiction essay won a place in the *Best American Essays* of 2016. It would later be developed into an award-winning, book-length work of Creative Nonfiction called *La línea se convierte en río: Una crónica de la frontera*, or *The Line Becomes a River* (Penguin 2018). The true story, written in epistolary form, follows third generation Mexican-American immigrant and former border patrol agent Francisco Cantú as he navigates the physical, interpersonal, and moral challenges of the borderlands. This text is licensed CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 and must be reproduced in its original format along with link attributions to *Ploughshares* and Francisco Cantú.

Supplemental Video

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3.5: Douglass, Frederick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845)

NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS

AN AMERICAN SLAVE. WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

BOSTON

PUBLISHED AT THE ANTI-SLAVERY OFFICE,
NO. 25 CORNHILL
1845

**ENTERED, ACCORDING TO ACT OF CONGRESS,
IN THE YEAR 1845
BY FREDERICK DOUGLASS,
IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COURT
OF MASSACHUSETTS.**

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A PARODY

PREFACE

In the month of August, 1841, I attended an anti-slavery convention in Nantucket, at which it was my happiness to become acquainted with *Frederick Douglass*, the writer of the following Narrative. He was a stranger to nearly every member of that body; but, having recently made his escape from the southern prison-house of bondage, and feeling his curiosity excited to ascertain the principles and measures of the abolitionists,—of whom he had heard a somewhat vague description while he was a slave,—he was induced to give his attendance, on the occasion alluded to, though at that time a resident in New Bedford.

Fortunate, most fortunate occurrence!—fortunate for the millions of his manacled brethren, yet panting for deliverance from their awful thraldom!—fortunate for the cause of negro emancipation, and of universal liberty!—fortunate for the land of his birth, which he has already done so much to save and bless!—fortunate for a large circle of friends and acquaintances, whose sympathy and affection he has strongly secured by the many sufferings he has endured, by his virtuous traits of character, by his ever-abiding remembrance of those who are in bonds, as being bound with them!—fortunate for the multitudes, in various parts of our republic, whose minds he has enlightened on the subject of slavery, and who have been melted to tears by his pathos, or roused to virtuous indignation by his stirring eloquence against the enslavers of men!—fortunate for himself, as it at once brought him into the field of public usefulness, "gave the world assurance of a MAN," quickened the slumbering energies of his soul, and consecrated him to the great work of breaking the rod of the oppressor, and letting the oppressed go free!

I shall never forget his first speech at the convention—the extraordinary emotion it excited in my own mind—the powerful impression it created upon a crowded auditory, completely taken by surprise—the applause which followed from the beginning to the end of his felicitous remarks. I think I never hated slavery so intensely as at that moment; certainly, my perception of the enormous outrage which is inflicted by it, on the godlike nature of its victims, was rendered far more clear than ever. There stood one, in physical proportion and stature commanding and exact—in intellect richly endowed—in natural eloquence a prodigy—in soul manifestly "created but a little lower than the angels"—yet a slave, ay, a fugitive slave,—trembling for his safety, hardly daring to believe that on the American soil, a single white person could be found who would befriend him at all hazards, for the love of God and humanity! Capable of high attainments as an intellectual and moral being—needing nothing

but a comparatively small amount of cultivation to make him an ornament to society and a blessing to his race—by the law of the land, by the voice of the people, by the terms of the slave code, he was only a piece of property, a beast of burden, a chattel personal, nevertheless!

A beloved friend from New Bedford prevailed on *Mr. Douglass* to address the convention: He came forward to the platform with a hesitancy and embarrassment, necessarily the attendants of a sensitive mind in such a novel position. After apologizing for his ignorance, and reminding the audience that slavery was a poor school for the human intellect and heart, he proceeded to narrate some of the facts in his own history as a slave, and in the course of his speech gave utterance to many noble thoughts and thrilling reflections. As soon as he had taken his seat, filled with hope and admiration, I rose, and declared that *Patrick Henry*, of revolutionary fame, never made a speech more eloquent in the cause of liberty, than the one we had just listened to from the lips of that hunted fugitive. So I believed at that time—such is my belief now. I reminded the audience of the peril which surrounded this self-emancipated young man at the North,—even in Massachusetts, on the soil of the Pilgrim Fathers, among the descendants of revolutionary sires; and I appealed to them, whether they would ever allow him to be carried back into slavery,—law or no law, constitution or no constitution. The response was unanimous and in thunder-tones—"NO!" "Will you succor and protect him as a brother-man—a resident of the old Bay State?" "YES!" shouted the whole mass, with an energy so startling, that the ruthless tyrants south of Mason and Dixon's line might almost have heard the mighty burst of feeling, and recognized it as the pledge of an invincible determination, on the part of those who gave it, never to betray him that wanders, but to hide the outcast, and firmly to abide the consequences.

It was at once deeply impressed upon my mind, that, if *Mr. Douglass* could be persuaded to consecrate his time and talents to the promotion of the anti-slavery enterprise, a powerful impetus would be given to it, and a stunning blow at the same time inflicted on northern prejudice against a colored complexion. I therefore endeavored to instil hope and courage into his mind, in order that he might dare to engage in a vocation so anomalous and responsible for a person in his situation; and I was seconded in this effort by warm-hearted friends, especially by the late General Agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Mr. John A. Collins*, whose judgment in this instance entirely coincided with my own. At first, he could give no encouragement; with unfeigned diffidence, he expressed his conviction that he was not adequate to the performance of so great a task; the path marked out was wholly an untrodden one; he was sincerely apprehensive that he should do more harm than good. After much deliberation, however, he consented to make a trial; and ever since that period, he has acted as a lecturing agent, under the auspices either of the American or the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. In labors he has been most abundant; and his success in combating prejudice, in gaining proselytes, in agitating the public mind, has far surpassed the most sanguine expectations that were raised at the commencement of his brilliant career. He has borne himself with gentleness and meekness, yet with true manliness of character. As a public speaker, he excels in pathos, wit, comparison, imitation, strength of reasoning, and fluency of language. There is in him that union of head and heart, which is indispensable to an enlightenment of the heads and a winning of the hearts of others. May his strength continue to be equal to his day! May he continue to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God," that he may be increasingly serviceable in the cause of bleeding humanity, whether at home or abroad!

It is certainly a very remarkable fact, that one of the most efficient advocates of the slave population, now before the public, is a fugitive slave, in the person of *Frederick Douglass*; and that the free colored population of the United States are as ably represented by one of their own number, in the person of *Charles Lenox Remond*, whose eloquent appeals have extorted the highest applause of multitudes on both sides of the Atlantic. Let the calumniators of the colored race despise themselves for their baseness and illiberality of spirit, and henceforth cease to talk of the natural inferiority of those who require nothing but time and opportunity to attain to the highest point of human excellence.

It may, perhaps, be fairly questioned, whether any other portion of the population of the earth could have endured the privations, sufferings and horrors of slavery, without having become more degraded in the scale of humanity than the slaves of African descent. Nothing has been left undone to cripple their intellects, darken their minds, debase their moral nature, obliterate all traces of their relationship to mankind; and yet how wonderfully they have sustained the mighty load of a most frightful bondage, under which they have been groaning for centuries! To illustrate the effect of slavery on the white man,—to show that he has no powers of endurance, in such a condition, superior to those of his black brother,—*Daniel O'connell*, the distinguished advocate of universal emancipation, and the mightiest champion of prostrate but not conquered Ireland, relates the following anecdote in a speech delivered by him in the Conciliation Hall, Dublin, before the Loyal National Repeal Association, March 31, 1845. "No matter," said *Mr. O'connell*, "under what specious term it may disguise itself, slavery is still hideous. *It has a natural, an inevitable tendency to brutalize every noble faculty of man.* An American sailor, who was cast away on the shore of Africa, where he was kept in slavery for three years, was, at the

expiration of that period, found to be imbruted and stultified—he had lost all reasoning power; and having forgotten his native language, could only utter some savage gibberish between Arabic and English, which nobody could understand, and which even he himself found difficulty in pronouncing. So much for the humanizing influence of *The Domestic Institution*!" Admitting this to have been an extraordinary case of mental deterioration, it proves at least that the white slave can sink as low in the scale of humanity as the black one.

Mr. Douglass has very properly chosen to write his own Narrative, in his own style, and according to the best of his ability, rather than to employ some one else. It is, therefore, entirely his own production; and, considering how long and dark was the career he had to run as a slave,—how few have been his opportunities to improve his mind since he broke his iron fetters,—it is, in my judgment, highly creditable to his head and heart. He who can peruse it without a tearful eye, a heaving breast, an afflicted spirit,—without being filled with an unutterable abhorrence of slavery and all its abettors, and animated with a determination to seek the immediate overthrow of that execrable system,—without trembling for the fate of this country in the hands of a righteous God, who is ever on the side of the oppressed, and whose arm is not shortened that it cannot save,—must have a flinty heart, and be qualified to act the part of a trafficker "in slaves and the souls of men." I am confident that it is essentially true in all its statements; that nothing has been set down in malice, nothing exaggerated, nothing drawn from the imagination; that it comes short of the reality, rather than overstates a single fact in regard to *slavery as it is*. The experience of *Frederick Douglass*, as a slave, was not a peculiar one; his lot was not especially a hard one; his case may be regarded as a very fair specimen of the treatment of slaves in Maryland, in which State it is conceded that they are better fed and less cruelly treated than in Georgia, Alabama, or Louisiana. Many have suffered incomparably more, while very few on the plantations have suffered less, than himself. Yet how deplorable was his situation! what terrible chastisements were inflicted upon his person! what still more shocking outrages were perpetrated upon his mind! with all his noble powers and sublime aspirations, how like a brute was he treated, even by those professing to have the same mind in them that was in Christ Jesus! to what dreadful liabilities was he continually subjected! how destitute of friendly counsel and aid, even in his greatest extremities! how heavy was the midnight of woe which shrouded in blackness the last ray of hope, and filled the future with terror and gloom! what longings after freedom took possession of his breast, and how his misery augmented, in proportion as he grew reflective and intelligent,—thus demonstrating that a happy slave is an extinct man! how he thought, reasoned, felt, under the lash of the driver, with the chains upon his limbs! what perils he encountered in his endeavors to escape from his horrible doom! and how signal have been his deliverance and preservation in the midst of a nation of pitiless enemies!

This Narrative contains many affecting incidents, many passages of great eloquence and power; but I think the most thrilling one of them all is the description *Douglass* gives of his feelings, as he stood soliloquizing respecting his fate, and the chances of his one day being a freeman, on the banks of the Chesapeake Bay—viewing the receding vessels as they flew with their white wings before the breeze, and apostrophizing them as animated by the living spirit of freedom. Who can read that passage, and be insensible to its pathos and sublimity? Compressed into it is a whole Alexandrian library of thought, feeling, and sentiment—all that can, all that need be urged, in the form of expostulation, entreaty, rebuke, against that crime of crimes,—making man the property of his fellow-man! O, how accursed is that system, which entombs the godlike mind of man, defaces the divine image, reduces those who by creation were crowned with glory and honor to a level with four-footed beasts, and exalts the dealer in human flesh above all that is called God! Why should its existence be prolonged one hour? Is it not evil, only evil, and that continually? What does its presence imply but the absence of all fear of God, all regard for man, on the part of the people of the United States? Heaven speed its eternal overthrow!

So profoundly ignorant of the nature of slavery are many persons, that they are stubbornly incredulous whenever they read or listen to any recital of the cruelties which are daily inflicted on its victims. They do not deny that the slaves are held as property; but that terrible fact seems to convey to their minds no idea of injustice, exposure to outrage, or savage barbarity. Tell them of cruel scourgings, of mutilations and brandings, of scenes of pollution and blood, of the banishment of all light and knowledge, and they affect to be greatly indignant at such enormous exaggerations, such wholesale misstatements, such abominable libels on the character of the southern planters! As if all these direful outrages were not the natural results of slavery! As if it were less cruel to reduce a human being to the condition of a thing, than to give him a severe flagellation, or to deprive him of necessary food and clothing! As if whips, chains, thumb-screws, paddles, blood-hounds, overseers, drivers, patrols, were not all indispensable to keep the slaves down, and to give protection to their ruthless oppressors! As if, when the marriage institution is abolished, concubinage, adultery, and incest, must not necessarily abound; when all the rights of humanity are annihilated, any barrier remains to protect the victim from the fury of the spoiler; when absolute power is

assumed over life and liberty, it will not be wielded with destructive sway! Skeptics of this character abound in society. In some few instances, their incredulity arises from a want of reflection; but, generally, it indicates a hatred of the light, a desire to shield slavery from the assaults of its foes, a contempt of the colored race, whether bond or free. Such will try to discredit the shocking tales of slaveholding cruelty which are recorded in this truthful Narrative; but they will labor in vain. *Mr. Douglass* has frankly disclosed the place of his birth, the names of those who claimed ownership in his body and soul, and the names also of those who committed the crimes which he has alleged against them. His statements, therefore, may easily be disproved, if they are untrue.

In the course of his Narrative, he relates two instances of murderous cruelty,—in one of which a planter deliberately shot a slave belonging to a neighboring plantation, who had unintentionally gotten within his lordly domain in quest of fish; and in the other, an overseer blew out the brains of a slave who had fled to a stream of water to escape a bloody scourging. *Mr. Douglass* states that in neither of these instances was any thing done by way of legal arrest or judicial investigation. The Baltimore American, of March 17, 1845, relates a similar case of atrocity, perpetrated with similar impunity—as follows:—"*Shooting a slave.*—We learn, upon the authority of a letter from Charles county, Maryland, received by a gentleman of this city, that a young man, named Matthews, a nephew of General Matthews, and whose father, it is believed, holds an office at Washington, killed one of the slaves upon his father's farm by shooting him. The letter states that young Matthews had been left in charge of the farm; that he gave an order to the servant, which was disobeyed, when he proceeded to the house, *obtained a gun, and, returning, shot the servant.* He immediately, the letter continues, fled to his father's residence, where he still remains unmolested."—Let it never be forgotten, that no slaveholder or overseer can be convicted of any outrage perpetrated on the person of a slave, however diabolical it may be, on the testimony of colored witnesses, whether bond or free. By the slave code, they are adjudged to be as incompetent to testify against a white man, as though they were indeed a part of the brute creation. Hence, there is no legal protection in fact, whatever there may be in form, for the slave population; and any amount of cruelty may be inflicted on them with impunity. Is it possible for the human mind to conceive of a more horrible state of society?

The effect of a religious profession on the conduct of southern masters is vividly described in the following Narrative, and shown to be any thing but salutary. In the nature of the case, it must be in the highest degree pernicious. The testimony of *Mr. Douglass*, on this point, is sustained by a cloud of witnesses, whose veracity is unimpeachable. "A slaveholder's profession of Christianity is a palpable imposture. He is a felon of the highest grade. He is a man-stealer. It is of no importance what you put in the other scale."

Reader! are you with the man-stealers in sympathy and purpose, or on the side of their down-trodden victims? If with the former, then are you the foe of God and man. If with the latter, what are you prepared to do and dare in their behalf? Be faithful, be vigilant, be untiring in your efforts to break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free. Come what may—cost what it may—inscribe on the banner which you unfurl to the breeze, as your religious and political motto—"NO COMPROMISE WITH SLAVERY! NO UNION WITH SLAVEHOLDERS!"

WM. LLOYD GARRISON BOSTON,
May 1, 1845.

LETTER FROM WENDELL PHILLIPS, ESQ.

BOSTON, APRIL 22, 1845.

My Dear Friend:

You remember the old fable of "The Man and the Lion," where the lion complained that he should not be so misrepresented "when the lions wrote history."

I am glad the time has come when the "lions write history." We have been left long enough to gather the character of slavery from the involuntary evidence of the masters. One might, indeed, rest sufficiently satisfied with what, it is evident, must be, in general, the results of such a relation, without seeking farther to find whether they have followed in every instance. Indeed, those who stare at the half-peck of corn a week, and love to count the lashes on the slave's back, are seldom the "stuff" out of which reformers and abolitionists are to be made. I remember that, in 1838, many were waiting for the results of the West India experiment, before they could come into our ranks. Those "results" have come long ago; but, alas! few of that number have come with them, as converts. A man must be disposed to judge of emancipation by other tests than whether it has increased the produce of sugar,—and to hate slavery for other reasons than because it starves men and whips women,—before he is ready to lay the first stone of his anti-slavery life.

I was glad to learn, in your story, how early the most neglected of God's children waken to a sense of their rights, and of the injustice done them. Experience is a keen teacher; and long before you had mastered your A B C, or knew where the "white sails" of the Chesapeake were bound, you began, I see, to gauge the wretchedness of the slave, not by his hunger and want, not by his lashes and toil, but by the cruel and blighting death which gathers over his soul.

In connection with this, there is one circumstance which makes your recollections peculiarly valuable, and renders your early insight the more remarkable. You come from that part of the country where we are told slavery appears with its fairest features. Let us hear, then, what it is at its best estate—gaze on its bright side, if it has one; and then imagination may task her powers to add dark lines to the picture, as she travels southward to that (for the colored man) Valley of the Shadow of Death, where the Mississippi sweeps along.

Again, we have known you long, and can put the most entire confidence in your truth, candor, and sincerity. Every one who has heard you speak has felt, and, I am confident, every one who reads your book will feel, persuaded that you give them a fair specimen of the whole truth. No one-sided portrait,—no wholesale complaints,—but strict justice done, whenever individual kindliness has neutralized, for a moment, the deadly system with which it was strangely allied. You have been with us, too, some years, and can fairly compare the twilight of rights, which your race enjoy at the North, with that "noon of night" under which they labor south of Mason and Dixon's line. Tell us whether, after all, the half-free colored man of Massachusetts is worse off than the pampered slave of the rice swamps!

In reading your life, no one can say that we have unfairly picked out some rare specimens of cruelty. We know that the bitter drops, which even you have drained from the cup, are no incidental aggravations, no individual ills, but such as must mingle always and necessarily in the lot of every slave. They are the essential ingredients, not the occasional results, of the system.

After all, I shall read your book with trembling for you. Some years ago, when you were beginning to tell me your real name and birthplace, you may remember I stopped you, and preferred to remain ignorant of all. With the exception of a vague description, so I continued, till the other day, when you read me your memoirs. I hardly knew, at the time, whether to thank you or not for the sight of them, when I reflected that it was still dangerous, in Massachusetts, for honest men to tell their names! They say the fathers, in 1776, signed the Declaration of Independence with the halter about their necks. You, too, publish your declaration of freedom with danger compassing you around. In all the broad lands which the Constitution of the United States overshadows, there is no single spot,—however narrow or desolate,—where a fugitive slave can plant himself and say, "I am safe." The whole armory of Northern Law has no shield for you. I am free to say that, in your place, I should throw the MS. into the fire.

You, perhaps, may tell your story in safety, endeared as you are to so many warm hearts by rare gifts, and a still rarer devotion of them to the service of others. But it will be owing only to your labors, and the fearless efforts of those who, trampling the laws and Constitution of the country under their feet, are determined that they will "hide the outcast," and that their hearths shall be, spite of the law, an asylum for the oppressed, if, some time or other, the humblest may stand in our streets, and bear witness in safety against the cruelties of which he has been the victim.

Yet it is sad to think, that these very throbbing hearts which welcome your story, and form your best safeguard in telling it, are all beating contrary to the "statute in such case made and provided." Go on, my dear friend, till you, and those who, like you, have been saved, so as by fire, from the dark prison-house, shall stereotype these free, illegal pulses into statutes; and New England, cutting loose from a blood-stained Union, shall glory in being the house of refuge for the oppressed,—till we no longer merely "*hide* the outcast," or make a merit of standing idly by while he is hunted in our midst; but, consecrating anew the soil of the Pilgrims as an asylum for the oppressed, proclaim our *welcome* to the slave so loudly, that the tones shall reach every hut in the Carolinas, and make the broken-hearted bondman leap up at the thought of old Massachusetts.

God speed the day!

Till then, and ever,
Yours truly,
WENDELL PHILLIPS

FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

Frederick Douglass was born in slavery as Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey near Easton in Talbot County, Maryland. He was not sure of the exact year of his birth, but he knew that it was 1817 or 1818. As a young boy he was sent to Baltimore, to be a house servant, where he learned to read and write, with the assistance of his master's wife. In 1838 he escaped from slavery and went to New York City, where he married Anna Murray, a free colored woman whom he had met in Baltimore. Soon thereafter he changed his name to Frederick Douglass. In 1841 he addressed a convention of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in Nantucket and so greatly impressed the group that they immediately employed him as an agent. He was such an impressive orator that numerous persons doubted if he had ever been a slave, so he wrote *Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass*. During the Civil War he assisted in the recruiting of colored men for the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Regiments and consistently argued for the emancipation of slaves. After the war he was active in securing and protecting the rights of the freemen. In his later years, at different times, he was secretary

of the Santo Domingo Commission, marshall and recorder of deeds of the District of Columbia, and United States Minister to Haiti. His other autobiographical works are *My Bondage And My Freedom* and *Life And Times Of Frederick Douglass*, published in 1855 and 1881 respectively. He died in 1895.

CHAPTER I

I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit. The nearest estimate I can give makes me now between twenty-seven and twenty-eight years of age. I come to this, from hearing my master say, some time during 1835, I was about seventeen years old.

My mother was named Harriet Bailey. She was the daughter of Isaac and Betsey Bailey, both colored, and quite dark. My mother was of a darker complexion than either my grandmother or grandfather.

My father was a white man. He was admitted to be such by all I ever heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father; but of the correctness of this opinion, I know nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me. My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant—before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom, in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at a very early age. Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired out on some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field labor. For what this separation is done, I do not know, unless it be to hinder the development of the child's affection toward its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child. This is the inevitable result.

I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night. She was hired by a Mr. Stewart, who lived about twelve miles from my home. She made her journeys to see me in the night, travelling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work. She was a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise, unless a slave has special permission from his or her master to the contrary—a permission which they seldom get, and one that gives to him that gives it the proud name of being a kind master. I do not recollect of ever seeing my mother by the light of day. She was with me in the night. She would lie down with me, and get me to sleep, but long before I waked she was gone. Very little communication ever took place between us. Death soon ended what little we could have while she lived, and with it her hardships and suffering. She died when I was about seven years old, on one of my master's farms, near Lee's Mill. I was not allowed to be present during her illness, at her death, or burial. She was gone long before I knew any thing about it. Never having enjoyed, to any considerable extent, her soothing presence, her tender and watchful care, I received the tidings of her death with much the same emotions I should have probably felt at the death of a stranger.

Called thus suddenly away, she left me without the slightest intimation of who my father was. The whisper that my master was my father, may or may not be true; and, true or false, it is of but little consequence to my purpose whilst the fact remains, in all its glaring odiousness, that slaveholders have ordained, and by law established, that the children of slave women shall in all cases follow the condition of their mothers; and this is done too obviously to administer to their own lusts, and make a gratification of their wicked desires profitable as well as pleasurable; for by this cunning arrangement, the slaveholder, in cases not a few, sustains to his slaves the double relation of master and father.

I know of such cases; and it is worthy of remark that such slaves invariably suffer greater hardships, and have more to contend with, than others. They are, in the first place, a constant offence to their mistress. She is ever disposed to find fault with them; they can seldom do any thing to please her; she is never better pleased than when she sees them under the lash, especially when she suspects her husband of showing to his mulatto children favors which he withholds from his black slaves. The master is frequently compelled to sell this class of his slaves, out of deference to the feelings of his white wife; and, cruel as the deed may strike any one to be, for a man to sell his own children to human flesh-mongers, it is often the dictate of humanity for him to do so; for, unless he does this, he must not only whip them himself, but must stand by and see one white son tie up his brother, of but few shades darker complexion than himself, and ply the gory lash to his naked back; and if he lisp one word of disapproval, it is set down to his parental partiality,

and only makes a bad matter worse, both for himself and the slave whom he would protect and defend.

Every year brings with it multitudes of this class of slaves. It was doubtless in consequence of a knowledge of this fact, that one great statesman of the south predicted the downfall of slavery by the inevitable laws of population. Whether this prophecy is ever fulfilled or not, it is nevertheless plain that a very different-looking class of people are springing up at the south, and are now held in slavery, from those originally brought to this country from Africa; and if their increase do no other good, it will do away the force of the argument, that God cursed Ham, and therefore American slavery is right. If the lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery at the south must soon become unscriptural; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently their own masters.

I have had two masters. My first master's name was Anthony. I do not remember his first name. He was generally called Captain Anthony—a title which, I presume, he acquired by sailing a craft on the Chesapeake Bay. He was not considered a rich slaveholder. He owned two or three farms, and about thirty slaves. His farms and slaves were under the care of an overseer. The overseer's name was Plummer. Mr. Plummer was a miserable drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster. He always went armed with a cowskin and a heavy cudgel. I have known him to cut and slash the women's heads so horribly, that even master would be enraged at his cruelty, and would threaten to whip him if he did not mind himself. Master, however, was not a humane slaveholder. It required extraordinary barbarity on the part of an overseer to affect him. He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave. I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it.

This occurrence took place very soon after I went to live with my old master, and under the following circumstances. Aunt Hester went out one night,—where or for what I do not know,—and happened to be absent when my master desired her presence. He had ordered her not to go out evenings, and warned her that she must never let him catch her in company with a young man, who was paying attention to her belonging to Colonel Lloyd. The young man's name was Ned Roberts, generally called Lloyd's Ned. Why master was so careful of her, may be safely left to conjecture. She was a woman of noble form, and of graceful proportions, having very few equals, and fewer superiors, in personal appearance, among the colored or white women of our neighborhood.

Aunt Hester had not only disobeyed his orders in going out, but had been found in company with Lloyd's Ned; which circumstance, I found, from what he said while whipping her, was the chief offence. Had he been a man of pure morals himself, he might have been thought interested in protecting the innocence of my aunt; but those who knew him will not suspect him of any such virtue. Before he commenced whipping Aunt Hester, he took her into the kitchen, and stripped her from neck to waist, leaving her neck, shoulders, and back, entirely naked. He then told her to cross her hands, calling her at the same time a d——d b—-h. After crossing her hands, he tied them with a strong rope, and led her to a stool under a large hook in the joist, put in for the purpose. He made her get upon the stool, and tied her hands to the hook. She now stood fair for his infernal purpose. Her arms were stretched up at their full length, so that she stood upon the ends of her toes. He then said to her, "Now, you d——d b—-h, I'll learn you how to disobey my orders!" and after rolling up his sleeves, he commenced to lay on the heavy cowskin, and soon the warm, red blood (amid heart-rending shrieks from her, and horrid oaths from him) came dripping to the floor. I was so terrified and horror-stricken at the sight, that I hid myself in a closet, and dared not venture out till long after the bloody transaction was over. I expected it would be my turn next. It was all new to me. I had never seen any thing like it before. I had always lived with my grandmother on the outskirts of the plantation, where she was put to raise the children of the younger women. I had therefore been, until now, out of the way of the bloody scenes that often occurred on the plantation.

CHAPTER II

My master's family consisted of two sons, Andrew and Richard; one daughter, Lucretia, and her husband, Captain Thomas Auld. They lived in one house, upon the home plantation of Colonel

Edward Lloyd. My master was Colonel Lloyd's clerk and superintendent. He was what might be called the overseer of the overseers. I spent two years of childhood on this plantation in my old master's family. It was here that I witnessed the bloody transaction recorded in the first chapter; and as I received my first impressions of slavery on this plantation, I will give some description of it, and of slavery as it there existed. The plantation is about twelve miles north of Easton, in Talbot county, and is situated on the border of Miles River. The principal products raised upon it were tobacco, corn, and wheat. These were raised in great abundance; so that, with the products of this and the other farms belonging to him, he was able to keep in almost constant employment a large sloop, in carrying them to market at Baltimore. This sloop was named Sally Lloyd, in honor of one of the colonel's daughters. My master's son-in-law, Captain Auld, was master of the vessel; she was otherwise manned by the colonel's own slaves. Their names were Peter, Isaac, Rich, and Jake. These were esteemed very highly by the other slaves, and looked upon as the privileged ones of the plantation; for it was no small affair, in the eyes of the slaves, to be allowed to see Baltimore.

Colonel Lloyd kept from three to four hundred slaves on his home plantation, and owned a large number more on the neighboring farms belonging to him. The names of the farms nearest to the home plantation were Wye Town and New Design. "Wye Town" was under the overseership of a man named Noah Willis. New Design was under the overseership of a Mr. Townsend. The overseers of these, and all the rest of the farms, numbering over twenty, received advice and direction from the managers of the home plantation. This was the great business place. It was the seat of government for the whole twenty farms. All disputes among the overseers were settled here. If a slave was convicted of any high misdemeanor, became unmanageable, or evinced a determination to run away, he was brought immediately here, severely whipped, put on board the sloop, carried to Baltimore, and sold to Austin Woolfolk, or some other slave-trader, as a warning to the slaves remaining.

Here, too, the slaves of all the other farms received their monthly allowance of food, and their yearly clothing. The men and women slaves received, as their monthly allowance of food, eight pounds of pork, or its equivalent in fish, and one bushel of corn meal. Their yearly clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts, one pair of linen trousers, like the shirts, one jacket, one pair of trousers for winter, made of coarse negro cloth, one pair of stockings, and one pair of shoes; the whole of which could not have cost more than seven dollars. The allowance of the slave children was given to their mothers, or the old women having the care of them. The children unable to work in the field had neither shoes, stockings, jackets, nor trousers, given to them; their clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts per year. When these failed them, they went naked until the next allowance-day. Children from seven to ten years old, of both sexes, almost naked, might be seen at all seasons of the year.

There were no beds given the slaves, unless one coarse blanket be considered such, and none but the men and women had these. This, however, is not considered a very great privation. They find less difficulty from the want of beds, than from the want of time to sleep; for when their day's work in the field is done, the most of them having their washing, mending, and cooking to do, and having few or none of the ordinary facilities for doing either of these, very many of their sleeping hours are consumed in preparing for the field the coming day; and when this is done, old and young, male and female, married and single, drop down side by side, on one common bed,—the cold, damp floor,—each covering himself or herself with their miserable blankets; and here they sleep till they are summoned to the field by the driver's horn. At the sound of this, all must rise, and be off to the field. There must be no halting; every one must be at his or her post; and woe betides them who hear not this morning summons to the field; for if they are not awakened by the sense of hearing, they are by the sense of feeling: no age nor sex finds any favor. Mr. Severe, the overseer, used to stand by the door of the quarter, armed with a large hickory stick and heavy cowskin, ready to whip any one who was so unfortunate as not to hear, or, from any other cause, was prevented from being ready to start for the field at the sound of the horn.

Mr. Severe was rightly named: he was a cruel man. I have seen him whip a woman, causing the blood to run half an hour at the time; and this, too, in the midst of her crying children, pleading for their mother's release. He seemed to take pleasure in manifesting his fiendish barbarity. Added to his cruelty, he was a profane swearer. It was enough to chill the blood and stiffen the hair of an ordinary man to hear him talk. Scarce a sentence escaped him but that was commenced or concluded by some horrid oath. The field was the place to witness his cruelty and profanity. His presence made it both the field of blood and of blasphemy. From the rising till the going down of the sun, he was cursing, raving, cutting, and slashing among the slaves of the field, in the most frightful manner. His career was short. He died very soon after I went to Colonel Lloyd's; and he died as he lived, uttering, with his dying groans, bitter curses and horrid oaths. His death was regarded by the slaves as the result of a merciful providence.

Mr. Severe's place was filled by a Mr. Hopkins. He was a very different man. He was less cruel, less profane, and made less noise, than Mr. Severe. His course was characterized by no extraordinary demonstrations of cruelty. He whipped, but

seemed to take no pleasure in it. He was called by the slaves a good overseer.

The home plantation of Colonel Lloyd wore the appearance of a country village. All the mechanical operations for all the farms were performed here. The shoemaking and mending, the blacksmithing, cartwrighting, coopering, weaving, and grain-grinding, were all performed by the slaves on the home plantation. The whole place wore a business-like aspect very unlike the neighboring farms. The number of houses, too, conspired to give it advantage over the neighboring farms. It was called by the slaves the *Great House Farm.* Few privileges were esteemed higher, by the slaves of the out-farms, than that of being selected to do errands at the Great House Farm. It was associated in their minds with greatness. A representative could not be prouder of his election to a seat in the American Congress, than a slave on one of the out-farms would be of his election to do errands at the Great House Farm. They regarded it as evidence of great confidence reposed in them by their overseers; and it was on this account, as well as a constant desire to be out of the field from under the driver's lash, that they esteemed it a high privilege, one worth careful living for. He was called the smartest and most trusty fellow, who had this honor conferred upon him the most frequently. The competitors for this office sought as diligently to please their overseers, as the office-seekers in the political parties seek to please and deceive the people. The same traits of character might be seen in Colonel Lloyd's slaves, as are seen in the slaves of the political parties.

The slaves selected to go to the Great House Farm, for the monthly allowance for themselves and their fellow-slaves, were peculiarly enthusiastic. While on their way, they would make the dense old woods, for miles around, reverberate with their wild songs, revealing at once the highest joy and the deepest sadness. They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune. The thought that came up, came out—if not in the word, in the sound;—and as frequently in the one as in the other. They would sometimes sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone. Into all of their songs they would manage to weave something of the Great House Farm. Especially would they do this, when leaving home. They would then sing most exultingly the following words:—

> *"I am going away to the Great House*
> *O, yea! O, yea! O!"*

This they would sing, as a chorus, to words which to many would seem unmeaning jargon, but which, nevertheless, were full of meaning to themselves. I have sometimes thought that the mere hearing of those songs would do more to impress some minds with the horrible character of slavery, than the reading of whole volumes of philosophy on the subject could do.

I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circle; so that I neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear. They told a tale of woe which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension; they were tones loud, long, and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains. The hearing of those wild notes always depressed my spirit, and filled me with ineffable sadness. I have frequently found myself in tears while hearing them. The mere recurrence to those songs, even now, afflicts me; and while I am writing these lines, an expression of feeling has already found its way down my cheek. To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery. I can never get rid of that conception. Those songs still follow me, to deepen my hatred of slavery, and quicken my sympathies for my brethren in bonds. If any one wishes to be impressed with the soul-killing effects of slavery, let him go to Colonel Lloyd's plantation, and, on allowance-day, place himself in the deep pine woods, and there let him, in silence, analyze the sounds that shall pass through the chambers of his soul,—and if he is not thus impressed, it will only be because "there is no flesh in his obdurate heart."

I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. At least, such is my experience. I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness. Crying for joy, and singing for joy, were alike uncommon to me while in the jaws of slavery. The singing of a man cast away upon a desolate island might be as appropriately considered as evidence of contentment and happiness, as the singing of a slave; the songs of the one and of the other are prompted by the same emotion.

CHAPTER III

Colonel Lloyd kept a large and finely cultivated garden, which afforded almost constant employment for four men, besides the chief gardener, (Mr. M'Durmond.) This garden was probably the greatest attraction of the place. During the summer months, people came from far and near—from Baltimore, Easton, and Annapolis—to see it. It abounded in fruits of almost every

description, from the hardy apple of the north to the delicate orange of the south. This garden was not the least source of trouble on the plantation. Its excellent fruit was quite a temptation to the hungry swarms of boys, as well as the older slaves, belonging to the colonel, few of whom had the virtue or the vice to resist it. Scarcely a day passed, during the summer, but that some slave had to take the lash for stealing fruit. The colonel had to resort to all kinds of stratagems to keep his slaves out of the garden. The last and most successful one was that of tarring his fence all around; after which, if a slave was caught with any tar upon his person, it was deemed sufficient proof that he had either been into the garden, or had tried to get in. In either case, he was severely whipped by the chief gardener. This plan worked well; the slaves became as fearful of tar as of the lash. They seemed to realize the impossibility of touching *tar* without being defiled.

The colonel also kept a splendid riding equipage. His stable and carriage-house presented the appearance of some of our large city livery establishments. His horses were of the finest form and noblest blood. His carriage-house contained three splendid coaches, three or four gigs, besides dearborns and barouches of the most fashionable style.

This establishment was under the care of two slaves—old Barney and young Barney—father and son. To attend to this establishment was their sole work. But it was by no means an easy employment; for in nothing was Colonel Lloyd more particular than in the management of his horses. The slightest inattention to these was unpardonable, and was visited upon those, under whose care they were placed, with the severest punishment; no excuse could shield them, if the colonel only suspected any want of attention to his horses—a supposition which he frequently indulged, and one which, of course, made the office of old and young Barney a very trying one. They never knew when they were safe from punishment. They were frequently whipped when least deserving, and escaped whipping when most deserving it. Every thing depended upon the looks of the horses, and the state of Colonel Lloyd's own mind when his horses were brought to him for use. If a horse did not move fast enough, or hold his head high enough, it was owing to some fault of his keepers. It was painful to stand near the stable-door, and hear the various complaints against the keepers when a horse was taken out for use. "This horse has not had proper attention. He has not been sufficiently rubbed and curried, or he has not been properly fed; his food was too wet or too dry; he got it too soon or too late; he was too hot or too cold; he had too much hay, and not enough of grain; or he had too much grain, and not enough of hay; instead of old Barney's attending to the horse, he had very improperly left it to his son." To all these complaints, no matter how unjust, the slave must answer never a word. Colonel Lloyd could not brook any contradiction from a slave. When he spoke, a slave must stand, listen, and tremble; and such was literally the case. I have seen Colonel Lloyd make old Barney, a man between fifty and sixty years of age, uncover his bald head, kneel down upon the cold, damp ground, and receive upon his naked and toil-worn shoulders more than thirty lashes at the time. Colonel Lloyd had three sons—Edward, Murray, and Daniel,—and three sons-in-law, Mr. Winder, Mr. Nicholson, and Mr. Lowndes. All of these lived at the Great House Farm, and enjoyed the luxury of whipping the servants when they pleased, from old Barney down to William Wilkes, the coach-driver. I have seen Winder make one of the house-servants stand off from him a suitable distance to be touched with the end of his whip, and at every stroke raise great ridges upon his back.

To describe the wealth of Colonel Lloyd would be almost equal to describing the riches of Job. He kept from ten to fifteen house-servants. He was said to own a thousand slaves, and I think this estimate quite within the truth. Colonel Lloyd owned so many that he did not know them when he saw them; nor did all the slaves of the out-farms know him. It is reported of him, that, while riding along the road one day, he met a colored man, and addressed him in the usual manner of speaking to colored people on the public highways of the south: "Well, boy, whom do you belong to?" "To Colonel Lloyd," replied the slave. "Well, does the colonel treat you well?" "No, sir," was the ready reply. "What, does he work you too hard?" "Yes, sir." "Well, don't he give you enough to eat?" "Yes, sir, he gives me enough, such as it is."

The colonel, after ascertaining where the slave belonged, rode on; the man also went on about his business, not dreaming that he had been conversing with his master. He thought, said, and heard nothing more of the matter, until two or three weeks afterwards. The poor man was then informed by his overseer that, for having found fault with his master, he was now to be sold to a Georgia trader. He was immediately chained and handcuffed; and thus, without a moment's warning, he was snatched away, and forever sundered, from his family and friends, by a hand more unrelenting than death. This is the penalty of telling the truth, of telling the simple truth, in answer to a series of plain questions.

It is partly in consequence of such facts, that slaves, when inquired of as to their condition and the character of their masters, almost universally say they are contented, and that their masters are kind. The slaveholders have been known to send in spies among their slaves, to ascertain their views and feelings in regard to their condition. The frequency of this has had the effect to establish among the slaves the maxim, that a still tongue makes a wise head. They suppress the truth rather than

take the consequences of telling it, and in so doing prove themselves a part of the human family. If they have any thing to say of their masters, it is generally in their masters' favor, especially when speaking to an untried man. I have been frequently asked, when a slave, if I had a kind master, and do not remember ever to have given a negative answer; nor did I, in pursuing this course, consider myself as uttering what was absolutely false; for I always measured the kindness of my master by the standard of kindness set up among slaveholders around us. Moreover, slaves are like other people, and imbibe prejudices quite common to others. They think their own better than that of others. Many, under the influence of this prejudice, think their own masters are better than the masters of other slaves; and this, too, in some cases, when the very reverse is true. Indeed, it is not uncommon for slaves even to fall out and quarrel among themselves about the relative goodness of their masters, each contending for the superior goodness of his own over that of the others. At the very same time, they mutually execrate their masters when viewed separately. It was so on our plantation. When Colonel Lloyd's slaves met the slaves of Jacob Jepson, they seldom parted without a quarrel about their masters; Colonel Lloyd's slaves contending that he was the richest, and Mr. Jepson's slaves that he was the smartest, and most of a man. Colonel Lloyd's slaves would boast his ability to buy and sell Jacob Jepson. Mr. Jepson's slaves would boast his ability to whip Colonel Lloyd. These quarrels would almost always end in a fight between the parties, and those that whipped were supposed to have gained the point at issue. They seemed to think that the greatness of their masters was transferable to themselves. It was considered as being bad enough to be a slave; but to be a poor man's slave was deemed a disgrace indeed!

CHAPTER IV

Mr. Hopkins remained but a short time in the office of overseer. Why his career was so short, I do not know, but suppose he lacked the necessary severity to suit Colonel Lloyd. Mr. Hopkins was succeeded by Mr. Austin Gore, a man possessing, in an eminent degree, all those traits of character indispensable to what is called a first-rate overseer. Mr. Gore had served Colonel Lloyd, in the capacity of overseer, upon one of the out-farms, and had shown himself worthy of the high station of overseer upon the home or Great House Farm.

Mr. Gore was proud, ambitious, and persevering. He was artful, cruel, and obdurate. He was just the man for such a place, and it was just the place for such a man. It afforded scope for the full exercise of all his powers, and he seemed to be perfectly at home in it. He was one of those who could torture the slightest look, word, or gesture, on the part of the slave, into impudence, and would treat it accordingly. There must be no answering back to him; no explanation was allowed a slave, showing himself to have been wrongfully accused. Mr. Gore acted fully up to the maxim laid down by slaveholders,—"It is better that a dozen slaves should suffer under the lash, than that the overseer should be convicted, in the presence of the slaves, of having been at fault." No matter how innocent a slave might be—it availed him nothing, when accused by Mr. Gore of any misdemeanor. To be accused was to be convicted, and to be convicted was to be punished; the one always following the other with immutable certainty. To escape punishment was to escape accusation; and few slaves had the fortune to do either, under the overseership of Mr. Gore. He was just proud enough to demand the most debasing homage of the slave, and quite servile enough to crouch, himself, at the feet of the master. He was ambitious enough to be contented with nothing short of the highest rank of overseers, and persevering enough to reach the height of his ambition. He was cruel enough to inflict the severest punishment, artful enough to descend to the lowest trickery, and obdurate enough to be insensible to the voice of a reproving conscience. He was, of all the overseers, the most dreaded by the slaves. His presence was painful; his eye flashed confusion; and seldom was his sharp, shrill voice heard, without producing horror and trembling in their ranks.

Mr. Gore was a grave man, and, though a young man, he indulged in no jokes, said no funny words, seldom smiled. His words were in perfect keeping with his looks, and his looks were in perfect keeping with his words. Overseers will sometimes indulge in a witty word, even with the slaves; not so with Mr. Gore. He spoke but to command, and commanded but to be obeyed; he dealt sparingly with his words, and bountifully with his whip, never using the former where the latter would answer as well. When he whipped, he seemed to do so from a sense of duty, and feared no consequences. He did nothing reluctantly, no matter how disagreeable; always at his post, never inconsistent. He never promised but to fulfil. He was, in a word, a man of the most inflexible firmness and stone-like coolness.

His savage barbarity was equalled only by the consummate coolness with which he committed the grossest and most savage deeds upon the slaves under his charge. Mr. Gore once undertook to whip one of Colonel Lloyd's slaves, by the name of Demby. He had given Demby but few stripes, when, to get rid of the scourging, he ran and plunged himself into a creek, and stood there at the depth of his shoulders, refusing to come out. Mr. Gore told him that he would give him three calls, and that, if he did not come out at the third call, he would shoot him. The first call was given. Demby made no response, but stood his ground. The second and third calls were given with the same

result. Mr. Gore then, without consultation or deliberation with any one, not even giving Demby an additional call, raised his musket to his face, taking deadly aim at his standing victim, and in an instant poor Demby was no more. His mangled body sank out of sight, and blood and brains marked the water where he had stood.

A thrill of horror flashed through every soul upon the plantation, excepting Mr. Gore. He alone seemed cool and collected. He was asked by Colonel Lloyd and my old master, why he resorted to this extraordinary expedient. His reply was, (as well as I can remember,) that Demby had become unmanageable. He was setting a dangerous example to the other slaves,—one which, if suffered to pass without some such demonstration on his part, would finally lead to the total subversion of all rule and order upon the plantation. He argued that if one slave refused to be corrected, and escaped with his life, the other slaves would soon copy the example; the result of which would be, the freedom of the slaves, and the enslavement of the whites. Mr. Gore's defence was satisfactory. He was continued in his station as overseer upon the home plantation. His fame as an overseer went abroad. His horrid crime was not even submitted to judicial investigation. It was committed in the presence of slaves, and they of course could neither institute a suit, nor testify against him; and thus the guilty perpetrator of one of the bloodiest and most foul murders goes unwhipped of justice, and uncensured by the community in which he lives. Mr. Gore lived in St. Michael's, Talbot county, Maryland, when I left there; and if he is still alive, he very probably lives there now; and if so, he is now, as he was then, as highly esteemed and as much respected as though his guilty soul had not been stained with his brother's blood.

I speak advisedly when I say this,—that killing a slave, or any colored person, in Talbot county, Maryland, is not treated as a crime, either by the courts or the community. Mr. Thomas Lanman, of St. Michael's, killed two slaves, one of whom he killed with a hatchet, by knocking his brains out. He used to boast of the commission of the awful and bloody deed. I have heard him do so laughingly, saying, among other things, that he was the only benefactor of his country in the company, and that when others would do as much as he had done, we should be relieved of "the d——d niggers."

The wife of Mr. Giles Hicks, living but a short distance from where I used to live, murdered my wife's cousin, a young girl between fifteen and sixteen years of age, mangling her person in the most horrible manner, breaking her nose and breastbone with a stick, so that the poor girl expired in a few hours afterward. She was immediately buried, but had not been in her untimely grave but a few hours before she was taken up and examined by the coroner, who decided that she had come to her death by severe beating. The offence for which this girl was thus murdered was this:—She had been set that night to mind Mrs. Hicks's baby, and during the night she fell asleep, and the baby cried. She, having lost her rest for several nights previous, did not hear the crying. They were both in the room with Mrs. Hicks. Mrs. Hicks, finding the girl slow to move, jumped from her bed, seized an oak stick of wood by the fireplace, and with it broke the girl's nose and breastbone, and thus ended her life. I will not say that this most horrid murder produced no sensation in the community. It did produce sensation, but not enough to bring the murderess to punishment. There was a warrant issued for her arrest, but it was never served. Thus she escaped not only punishment, but even the pain of being arraigned before a court for her horrid crime.

Whilst I am detailing bloody deeds which took place during my stay on Colonel Lloyd's plantation, I will briefly narrate another, which occurred about the same time as the murder of Demby by Mr. Gore.

Colonel Lloyd's slaves were in the habit of spending a part of their nights and Sundays in fishing for oysters, and in this way made up the deficiency of their scanty allowance. An old man belonging to Colonel Lloyd, while thus engaged, happened to get beyond the limits of Colonel Lloyd's, and on the premises of Mr. Beal Bondly. At this trespass, Mr. Bondly took offence, and with his musket came down to the shore, and blew its deadly contents into the poor old man.

Mr. Bondly came over to see Colonel Lloyd the next day, whether to pay him for his property, or to justify himself in what he had done, I know not. At any rate, this whole fiendish transaction was soon hushed up. There was very little said about it at all, and nothing done. It was a common saying, even among little white boys, that it was worth a half-cent to kill a "nigger," and a half-cent to bury one.

CHAPTER V

As to my own treatment while I lived on Colonel Lloyd's plantation, it was very similar to that of the other slave children. I was not old enough to work in the field, and there being little else than field work to do, I had a great deal of leisure time. The most I had to do was to drive up the cows at evening, keep the fowls out of the garden, keep the front yard clean, and run of errands for my old master's daughter, Mrs. Lucretia Auld. The most of my leisure time I spent in helping Master Daniel Lloyd in finding his birds, after he had shot them. My connection with Master Daniel was of some advantage to me. He became quite attached to me, and was a sort of protector of me. He would not allow the older boys to impose upon me, and would divide his cakes with me.

I was seldom whipped by my old master, and suffered little from any thing else than hunger and cold. I suffered much from hunger, but much more from cold. In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked—no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing on but a coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to my knees. I had no bed. I must have perished with cold, but that, the coldest nights, I used to steal a bag which was used for carrying corn to the mill. I would crawl into this bag, and there sleep on the cold, damp, clay floor, with my head in and feet out. My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes.

We were not regularly allowanced. Our food was coarse corn meal boiled. This was called *mush*. It was put into a large wooden tray or trough, and set down upon the ground. The children were then called, like so many pigs, and like so many pigs they would come and devour the mush; some with oyster-shells, others with pieces of shingle, some with naked hands, and none with spoons. He that ate fastest got most; he that was strongest secured the best place; and few left the trough satisfied.

I was probably between seven and eight years old when I left Colonel Lloyd's plantation. I left it with joy. I shall never forget the ecstasy with which I received the intelligence that my old master (Anthony) had determined to let me go to Baltimore, to live with Mr. Hugh Auld, brother to my old master's son-in-law, Captain Thomas Auld. I received this information about three days before my departure. They were three of the happiest days I ever enjoyed. I spent the most part of all these three days in the creek, washing off the plantation scurf, and preparing myself for my departure.

The pride of appearance which this would indicate was not my own. I spent the time in washing, not so much because I wished to, but because Mrs. Lucretia had told me I must get all the dead skin off my feet and knees before I could go to Baltimore; for the people in Baltimore were very cleanly, and would laugh at me if I looked dirty. Besides, she was going to give me a pair of trousers, which I should not put on unless I got all the dirt off me. The thought of owning a pair of trousers was great indeed! It was almost a sufficient motive, not only to make me take off what would be called by pig-drovers the mange, but the skin itself. I went at it in good earnest, working for the first time with the hope of reward.

The ties that ordinarily bind children to their homes were all suspended in my case. I found no severe trial in my departure. My home was charmless; it was not home to me; on parting from it, I could not feel that I was leaving any thing which I could have enjoyed by staying. My mother was dead, my grandmother lived far off, so that I seldom saw her. I had two sisters and one brother, that lived in the same house with me; but the early separation of us from our mother had well nigh blotted the fact of our relationship from our memories. I looked for home elsewhere, and was confident of finding none which I should relish less than the one which I was leaving. If, however, I found in my new home hardship, hunger, whipping, and nakedness, I had the consolation that I should not have escaped any one of them by staying. Having already had more than a taste of them in the house of my old master, and having endured them there, I very naturally inferred my ability to endure them elsewhere, and especially at Baltimore; for I had something of the feeling about Baltimore that is expressed in the proverb, that "being hanged in England is preferable to dying a natural death in Ireland." I had the strongest desire to see Baltimore. Cousin Tom, though not fluent in speech, had inspired me with that desire by his eloquent description of the place. I could never point out any thing at the Great House, no matter how beautiful or powerful, but that he had seen something at Baltimore far exceeding, both in beauty and strength, the object which I pointed out to him. Even the Great House itself, with all its pictures, was far inferior to many buildings in Baltimore. So strong was my desire, that I thought a gratification of it would fully compensate for whatever loss of comforts I should sustain by the exchange. I left without a regret, and with the highest hopes of future happiness.

We sailed out of Miles River for Baltimore on a Saturday morning. I remember only the day of the week, for at that time I had no knowledge of the days of the month, nor the months of the year. On setting sail, I walked aft, and gave to Colonel Lloyd's plantation what I hoped would be the last look. I then placed myself in the bows of the sloop, and there spent the remainder of the day in looking ahead, interesting myself in what was in the distance rather than in things near by or behind.

In the afternoon of that day, we reached Annapolis, the capital of the State. We stopped but a few moments, so that I had no time to go on shore. It was the first large town that I had ever seen, and though it would look small compared with some of our New England factory villages, I thought it a wonderful place for its size—more imposing even than the Great House Farm!

We arrived at Baltimore early on Sunday morning, landing at Smith's Wharf, not far from Bowley's Wharf. We had on board the sloop a large flock of sheep; and after aiding in driving them to the slaughterhouse of Mr. Curtis on Louden Slater's Hill, I was conducted by Rich, one of the hands belonging on board of the sloop, to my new home in Alliciana Street, near Mr. Gardner's ship-yard, on Fells Point.

Mr. and Mrs. Auld were both at home, and met me at the door with their little son Thomas, to take care of whom I had been given. And here I saw what I had never seen before; it was a white face beaming with the most kindly emotions; it was the face of my new mistress, Sophia Auld. I wish I could describe the rapture that flashed through my soul as I beheld it. It was a new and strange sight to me, brightening up my pathway with the light of happiness. Little Thomas was told, there was his Freddy,—and I was told to take care of little Thomas; and thus I entered upon the duties of my new home with the most cheering prospect ahead.

I look upon my departure from Colonel Lloyd's plantation as one of the most interesting events of my life. It is possible, and even quite probable, that but for the mere circumstance of being removed from that plantation to Baltimore, I should have to-day, instead of being here seated by my own table, in the enjoyment of freedom and the happiness of home, writing this Narrative, been confined in the galling chains of slavery. Going to live at Baltimore laid the foundation, and opened the gateway, to all my subsequent prosperity. I have ever regarded it as the first plain manifestation of that kind providence which has ever since attended me, and marked my life with so many favors. I regarded the selection of myself as being somewhat remarkable. There were a number of slave children that might have been sent from the plantation to Baltimore. There were those younger, those older, and those of the same age. I was chosen from among them all, and was the first, last, and only choice.

I may be deemed superstitious, and even egotistical, in regarding this event as a special interposition of divine Providence in my favor. But I should be false to the earliest sentiments of my soul, if I suppressed the opinion. I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and incur my own abhorrence. From my earliest recollection, I date the entertainment of a deep conviction that slavery would not always be able to hold me within its foul embrace; and in the darkest hours of my career in slavery, this living word of faith and spirit of hope departed not from me, but remained like ministering angels to cheer me through the gloom. This good spirit was from God, and to him I offer thanksgiving and praise.

CHAPTER VI

My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at the door,—a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living. She was by trade a weaver; and by constant application to her business, she had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery. I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely unlike any other white woman I had ever seen. I could not approach her as I was accustomed to approach other white ladies. My early instruction was all out of place. The crouching servility, usually so acceptable a quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her. Her favor was not gained by it; she seemed to be disturbed by it. She did not deem it impudent or unmannerly for a slave to look her in the face. The meanest slave was put fully at ease in her presence, and none left without feeling better for having seen her. Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music.

But, alas! this kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon.

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a

fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both.

I had resided but a short time in Baltimore before I observed a marked difference, in the treatment of slaves, from that which I had witnessed in the country. A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a slave on the plantation. He is much better fed and clothed, and enjoys privileges altogether unknown to the slave on the plantation. There is a vestige of decency, a sense of shame, that does much to curb and check those outbreaks of atrocious cruelty so commonly enacted upon the plantation. He is a desperate slaveholder, who will shock the humanity of his non-slaveholding neighbors with the cries of his lacerated slave. Few are willing to incur the odium attaching to the reputation of being a cruel master; and above all things, they would not be known as not giving a slave enough to eat. Every city slaveholder is anxious to have it known of him, that he feeds his slaves well; and it is due to them to say, that most of them do give their slaves enough to eat. There are, however, some painful exceptions to this rule. Directly opposite to us, on Philpot Street, lived Mr. Thomas Hamilton. He owned two slaves. Their names were Henrietta and Mary. Henrietta was about twenty-two years of age, Mary was about fourteen; and of all the mangled and emaciated creatures I ever looked upon, these two were the most so. His heart must be harder than stone, that could look upon these unmoved. The head, neck, and shoulders of Mary were literally cut to pieces. I have frequently felt her head, and found it nearly covered with festering sores, caused by the lash of her cruel mistress. I do not know that her master ever whipped her, but I have been an eye-witness to the cruelty of Mrs. Hamilton. I used to be in Mr. Hamilton's house nearly every day. Mrs. Hamilton used to sit in a large chair in the middle of the room, with a heavy cowskin always by her side, and scarce an hour passed during the day but was marked by the blood of one of these slaves. The girls seldom passed her without her saying, "Move faster, you *black gip!*" at the same time giving them a blow with the cowskin over the head or shoulders, often drawing the blood. She would then say, "Take that, you *black gip!*" continuing, "If you don't move faster, I'll move you!" Added to the cruel lashings to which these slaves were subjected, they were kept nearly half-starved. They seldom knew what it was to eat a full meal. I have seen Mary contending with the pigs for the offal thrown into the street. So much was Mary kicked and cut to pieces, that she was oftener called "*pecked*" than by her name.

CHAPTER VII

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one else. It is due, however, to my mistress to say of her, that she did not adopt this course of treatment immediately. She at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was at least necessary for her to have some training in the exercise of irresponsible power, to make her equal to the task of treating me as though I were a brute.

My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tender-hearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practise her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience

soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other.

From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the *inch*, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the *ell*.

The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids;—not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, *but I am a slave for life!* Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.

I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being *a slave for life* began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled "The Columbian Orator." Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting matter, I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master.

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed. While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear any one speak of slavery. I was a ready listener. Every little while, I could hear something about the

abolitionists. It was some time before I found what the word meant. It was always used in such connections as to make it an interesting word to me. If a slave ran away and succeeded in getting clear, or if a slave killed his master, set fire to a barn, or did any thing very wrong in the mind of a slaveholder, it was spoken of as the fruit of *abolition.* Hearing the word in this connection very often, I set about learning what it meant. The dictionary afforded me little or no help. I found it was "the act of abolishing;" but then I did not know what was to be abolished. Here I was perplexed. I did not dare to ask any one about its meaning, for I was satisfied that it was something they wanted me to know very little about. After a patient waiting, I got one of our city papers, containing an account of the number of petitions from the north, praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and of the slave trade between the States. From this time I understood the words *abolition* and *abolitionist,* and always drew near when that word was spoken, expecting to hear something of importance to myself and fellow-slaves. The light broke in upon me by degrees. I went one day down on the wharf of Mr. Waters; and seeing two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone, I went, unasked, and helped them. When we had finished, one of them came to me and asked me if I were a slave. I told him I was. He asked, "Are ye a slave for life?" I told him that I was. The good Irishman seemed to be deeply affected by the statement. He said to the other that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it was a shame to hold me. They both advised me to run away to the north; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended not to be interested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I looked forward to a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself with the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

The idea as to how I might learn to write was suggested to me by being in Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard, and frequently seeing the ship carpenters, after hewing, and getting a piece of timber ready for use, write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was intended. When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus—"L." When a piece was for the starboard side, it would be marked thus—"S." A piece for the larboard side forward, would be marked thus—"L. F." When a piece was for starboard side forward, it would be marked thus—"S. F." For larboard aft, it would be marked thus—"L. A." For starboard aft, it would be marked thus—"S. A." I soon learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when placed upon a piece of timber in the ship-yard. I immediately commenced copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters named. After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, "I don't believe you. Let me see you try it." I would then make the letters which I had been so fortunate as to learn, and ask him to beat that. In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which it is quite possible I should never have gotten in any other way. During this time, my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk. With these, I learned mainly how to write. I then commenced and continued copying the Italics in Webster's Spelling Book, until I could make them all without looking on the book. By this time, my little Master Thomas had gone to school, and learned how to write, and had written over a number of copy-books. These had been brought home, and shown to some of our near neighbors, and then laid aside. My mistress used to go to class meeting at the Wilk Street meetinghouse every Monday afternoon, and leave me to take care of the house. When left thus, I used to spend the time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas's copy-book, copying what he had written. I continued to do this until I could write a hand very similar to that of Master Thomas. Thus, after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write.

CHAPTER VIII

In a very short time after I went to live at Baltimore, my old master's youngest son Richard died; and in about three years and six months after his death, my old master, Captain Anthony, died, leaving only his son, Andrew, and daughter, Lucretia, to share his estate. He died while on a visit to see his daughter at Hillsborough. Cut off thus unexpectedly, he left no will as to the disposal of his property. It was therefore necessary to have a valuation of the property, that it might be equally divided between Mrs. Lucretia and Master Andrew. I was immediately sent for, to be valued with the other property. Here again my feelings rose up in detestation of slavery. I had now a new conception of my degraded condition. Prior to this, I had become, if not insensible to my lot, at least partly so. I left Baltimore with a young heart overborne with sadness, and a soul full of apprehension. I took passage with Captain Rowe, in the schooner Wild Cat, and, after a sail of about twenty-four hours, I found myself near the place of my birth. I had now been absent from it almost, if not quite, five years. I, however, remembered the place very well. I was only about five years old

when I left it, to go and live with my old master on Colonel Lloyd's plantation; so that I was now between ten and eleven years old.

We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination. Silvery-headed age and sprightly youth, maids and matrons, had to undergo the same indelicate inspection. At this moment, I saw more clearly than ever the brutalizing effects of slavery upon both slave and slaveholder.

After the valuation, then came the division. I have no language to express the high excitement and deep anxiety which were felt among us poor slaves during this time. Our fate for life was now to be decided. we had no more voice in that decision than the brutes among whom we were ranked. A single word from the white men was enough—against all our wishes, prayers, and entreaties—to sunder forever the dearest friends, dearest kindred, and strongest ties known to human beings. In addition to the pain of separation, there was the horrid dread of falling into the hands of Master Andrew. He was known to us all as being a most cruel wretch,—a common drunkard, who had, by his reckless mismanagement and profligate dissipation, already wasted a large portion of his father's property. We all felt that we might as well be sold at once to the Georgia traders, as to pass into his hands; for we knew that that would be our inevitable condition,—a condition held by us all in the utmost horror and dread.

I suffered more anxiety than most of my fellow-slaves. I had known what it was to be kindly treated; they had known nothing of the kind. They had seen little or nothing of the world. They were in very deed men and women of sorrow, and acquainted with grief. Their backs had been made familiar with the bloody lash, so that they had become callous; mine was yet tender; for while at Baltimore I got few whippings, and few slaves could boast of a kinder master and mistress than myself; and the thought of passing out of their hands into those of Master Andrew—a man who, but a few days before, to give me a sample of his bloody disposition, took my little brother by the throat, threw him on the ground, and with the heel of his boot stamped upon his head till the blood gushed from his nose and ears—was well calculated to make me anxious as to my fate. After he had committed this savage outrage upon my brother, he turned to me, and said that was the way he meant to serve me one of these days,—meaning, I suppose, when I came into his possession.

Thanks to a kind Providence, I fell to the portion of Mrs. Lucretia, and was sent immediately back to Baltimore, to live again in the family of Master Hugh. Their joy at my return equalled their sorrow at my departure. It was a glad day to me. I had escaped a worse than lion's jaws. I was absent from Baltimore, for the purpose of valuation and division, just about one month, and it seemed to have been six.

Very soon after my return to Baltimore, my mistress, Lucretia, died, leaving her husband and one child, Amanda; and in a very short time after her death, Master Andrew died. Now all the property of my old master, slaves included, was in the hands of strangers,—strangers who had had nothing to do with accumulating it. Not a slave was left free. All remained slaves, from the youngest to the oldest. If any one thing in my experience, more than another, served to deepen my conviction of the infernal character of slavery, and to fill me with unutterable loathing of slaveholders, it was their base ingratitude to my poor old grandmother. She had served my old master faithfully from youth to old age. She had been the source of all his wealth; she had peopled his plantation with slaves; she had become a great grandmother in his service. She had rocked him in infancy, attended him in childhood, served him through life, and at his death wiped from his icy brow the cold death-sweat, and closed his eyes forever. She was nevertheless left a slave—a slave for life—a slave in the hands of strangers; and in their hands she saw her children, her grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren, divided, like so many sheep, without being gratified with the small privilege of a single word, as to their or her own destiny. And, to cap the climax of their base ingratitude and fiendish barbarity, my grandmother, who was now very old, having outlived my old master and all his children, having seen the beginning and end of all of them, and her present owners finding she was of but little value, her frame already racked with the pains of old age, and complete helplessness fast stealing over her once active limbs, they took her to the woods, built her a little hut, put up a little mud-chimney, and then made her welcome to the privilege of supporting herself there in perfect loneliness; thus virtually turning her out to die! If my poor old grandmother now lives, she lives to suffer in utter loneliness; she lives to remember and mourn over the loss of children, the loss of grandchildren, and the loss of great-grandchildren. They are, in the language of the slave's poet, Whittier,—

> *"Gone, gone, sold and gone*
> *To the rice swamp dank and lone,*
> *Where the slave-whip ceaseless swing*
> *Where the noisome insect stings,*
> *Where the fever-demon strews*

> *Poison with the falling dews,*
> *Where the sickly sunbeams glare*
> *Through the hot and misty air:—*
> *Gone, gone, sold and gone*
> *To the rice swamp dank and lone,*
> *From Virginia hills and waters—*
> *Woe is me, my stolen daughters!"*

The hearth is desolate. The children, the unconscious children, who once sang and danced in her presence, are gone. She gropes her way, in the darkness of age, for a drink of water. Instead of the voices of her children, she hears by day the moans of the dove, and by night the screams of the hideous owl. All is gloom. The grave is at the door. And now, when weighed down by the pains and aches of old age, when the head inclines to the feet, when the beginning and ending of human existence meet, and helpless infancy and painful old age combine together—at this time, this most needful time, the time for the exercise of that tenderness and affection which children only can exercise towards a declining parent—my poor old grandmother, the devoted mother of twelve children, is left all alone, in yonder little hut, before a few dim embers. She stands—she sits—she staggers—she falls—she groans—she dies—and there are none of her children or grandchildren present, to wipe from her wrinkled brow the cold sweat of death, or to place beneath the sod her fallen remains. Will not a righteous God visit for these things?

In about two years after the death of Mrs. Lucretia, Master Thomas married his second wife. Her name was Rowena Hamilton. She was the eldest daughter of Mr. William Hamilton. Master now lived in St. Michael's. Not long after his marriage, a misunderstanding took place between himself and Master Hugh; and as a means of punishing his brother, he took me from him to live with himself at St. Michael's. Here I underwent another most painful separation. It, however, was not so severe as the one I dreaded at the division of property; for, during this interval, a great change had taken place in Master Hugh and his once kind and affectionate wife. The influence of brandy upon him, and of slavery upon her, had effected a disastrous change in the characters of both; so that, as far as they were concerned, I thought I had little to lose by the change. But it was not to them that I was attached. It was to those little Baltimore boys that I felt the strongest attachment. I had received many good lessons from them, and was still receiving them, and the thought of leaving them was painful indeed. I was leaving, too, without the hope of ever being allowed to return. Master Thomas had said he would never let me return again. The barrier betwixt himself and brother he considered impassable.

I then had to regret that I did not at least make the attempt to carry out my resolution to run away; for the chances of success are tenfold greater from the city than from the country.

I sailed from Baltimore for St. Michael's in the sloop Amanda, Captain Edward Dodson. On my passage, I paid particular attention to the direction which the steamboats took to go to Philadelphia. I found, instead of going down, on reaching North Point they went up the bay, in a north-easterly direction. I deemed this knowledge of the utmost importance. My determination to run away was again revived. I resolved to wait only so long as the offering of a favorable opportunity. When that came, I was determined to be off.

CHAPTER IX

I have now reached a period of my life when I can give dates. I left Baltimore, and went to live with Master Thomas Auld, at St. Michael's, in March, 1832. It was now more than seven years since I lived with him in the family of my old master, on Colonel Lloyd's plantation. We of course were now almost entire strangers to each other. He was to me a new master, and I to him a new slave. I was ignorant of his temper and disposition; he was equally so of mine. A very short time, however, brought us into full acquaintance with each other. I was made acquainted with his wife not less than with himself. They were well matched, being equally mean and cruel. I was now, for the first time during a space of more than seven years, made to feel the painful gnawings of hunger—a something which I had not experienced before since I left Colonel Lloyd's plantation. It went hard enough with me then, when I could look back to no period at which I had enjoyed a sufficiency. It was tenfold harder after living in Master Hugh's family, where I had always had enough to eat, and of that which was good. I have said Master Thomas was a mean man. He was so. Not to give a slave enough to eat, is regarded as the most aggravated development of meanness even among slaveholders. The rule is, no matter how coarse the food, only let there be enough of it. This is the theory; and in the part of Maryland from which I came, it is the general practice,—though there are many exceptions. Master Thomas gave us enough of neither coarse nor fine food. There were four slaves of us in the kitchen—my sister Eliza, my aunt Priscilla, Henny, and myself; and we were allowed less than a half of a bushel of corn-meal per week, and very little else, either in the shape of meat or vegetables. It was not enough for us to subsist upon. We were therefore reduced to the wretched necessity of living at the expense of our neighbors. This we did by begging and stealing, whichever came handy in the time of need, the one being considered as legitimate as the other. A great many times have we poor creatures been nearly perishing with hunger, when food in abundance lay mouldering in the safe and

smoke-house, and our pious mistress was aware of the fact; and yet that mistress and her husband would kneel every morning, and pray that God would bless them in basket and store!

Bad as all slaveholders are, we seldom meet one destitute of every element of character commanding respect. My master was one of this rare sort. I do not know of one single noble act ever performed by him. The leading trait in his character was meanness; and if there were any other element in his nature, it was made subject to this. He was mean; and, like most other mean men, he lacked the ability to conceal his meanness. Captain Auld was not born a slaveholder. He had been a poor man, master only of a Bay craft. He came into possession of all his slaves by marriage; and of all men, adopted slaveholders are the worst. He was cruel, but cowardly. He commanded without firmness. In the enforcement of his rules, he was at times rigid, and at times lax. At times, he spoke to his slaves with the firmness of Napoleon and the fury of a demon; at other times, he might well be mistaken for an inquirer who had lost his way. He did nothing of himself. He might have passed for a lion, but for his ears. In all things noble which he attempted, his own meanness shone most conspicuous. His airs, words, and actions, were the airs, words, and actions of born slaveholders, and, being assumed, were awkward enough. He was not even a good imitator. He possessed all the disposition to deceive, but wanted the power. Having no resources within himself, he was compelled to be the copyist of many, and being such, he was forever the victim of inconsistency; and of consequence he was an object of contempt, and was held as such even by his slaves. The luxury of having slaves of his own to wait upon him was something new and unprepared for. He was a slaveholder without the ability to hold slaves. He found himself incapable of managing his slaves either by force, fear, or fraud. We seldom called him "master;" we generally called him "Captain Auld," and were hardly disposed to title him at all. I doubt not that our conduct had much to do with making him appear awkward, and of consequence fretful. Our want of reverence for him must have perplexed him greatly. He wished to have us call him master, but lacked the firmness necessary to command us to do so. His wife used to insist upon our calling him so, but to no purpose. In August, 1832, my master attended a Methodist camp-meeting held in the Bay-side, Talbot county, and there experienced religion. I indulged a faint hope that his conversion would lead him to emancipate his slaves, and that, if he did not do this, it would, at any rate, make him more kind and humane. I was disappointed in both these respects. It neither made him to be humane to his slaves, nor to emancipate them. If it had any effect on his character, it made him more cruel and hateful in all his ways; for I believe him to have been a much worse man after his conversion than before. Prior to his conversion, he relied upon his own depravity to shield and sustain him in his savage barbarity; but after his conversion, he found religious sanction and support for his slaveholding cruelty. He made the greatest pretensions to piety. His house was the house of prayer. He prayed morning, noon, and night. He very soon distinguished himself among his brethren, and was soon made a class-leader and exhorter. His activity in revivals was great, and he proved himself an instrument in the hands of the church in converting many souls. His house was the preachers' home. They used to take great pleasure in coming there to put up; for while he starved us, he stuffed them. We have had three or four preachers there at a time. The names of those who used to come most frequently while I lived there, were Mr. Storks, Mr. Ewery, Mr. Humphry, and Mr. Hickey. I have also seen Mr. George Cookman at our house. We slaves loved Mr. Cookman. We believed him to be a good man. We thought him instrumental in getting Mr. Samuel Harrison, a very rich slaveholder, to emancipate his slaves; and by some means got the impression that he was laboring to effect the emancipation of all the slaves. When he was at our house, we were sure to be called in to prayers. When the others were there, we were sometimes called in and sometimes not. Mr. Cookman took more notice of us than either of the other ministers. He could not come among us without betraying his sympathy for us, and, stupid as we were, we had the sagacity to see it.

While I lived with my master in St. Michael's, there was a white young man, a Mr. Wilson, who proposed to keep a Sabbath school for the instruction of such slaves as might be disposed to learn to read the New Testament. We met but three times, when Mr. West and Mr. Fairbanks, both class-leaders, with many others, came upon us with sticks and other missiles, drove us off, and forbade us to meet again. Thus ended our little Sabbath school in the pious town of St. Michael's.

I have said my master found religious sanction for his cruelty. As an example, I will state one of many facts going to prove the charge. I have seen him tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip; and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of Scripture—"He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Master would keep this lacerated young woman tied up in this horrid situation four or five hours at a time. I have known him to tie her up early in the morning, and whip her before breakfast; leave her, go to his store, return at dinner, and whip her again, cutting her in the places already made raw with his cruel lash. The secret of master's cruelty toward "Henny" is found in the fact of her being almost helpless. When quite a child, she fell into the fire, and burned herself horribly. Her

hands were so burnt that she never got the use of them. She could do very little but bear heavy burdens. She was to master a bill of expense; and as he was a mean man, she was a constant offence to him. He seemed desirous of getting the poor girl out of existence. He gave her away once to his sister; but, being a poor gift, she was not disposed to keep her. Finally, my benevolent master, to use his own words, "set her adrift to take care of herself." Here was a recently-converted man, holding on upon the mother, and at the same time turning out her helpless child, to starve and die! Master Thomas was one of the many pious slaveholders who hold slaves for the very charitable purpose of taking care of them.

My master and myself had quite a number of differences. He found me unsuitable to his purpose. My city life, he said, had had a very pernicious effect upon me. It had almost ruined me for every good purpose, and fitted me for every thing which was bad. One of my greatest faults was that of letting his horse run away, and go down to his father-inlaw's farm, which was about five miles from St. Michael's. I would then have to go after it. My reason for this kind of carelessness, or carefulness, was, that I could always get something to eat when I went there. Master William Hamilton, my master's father-in-law, always gave his slaves enough to eat. I never left there hungry, no matter how great the need of my speedy return. Master Thomas at length said he would stand it no longer. I had lived with him nine months, during which time he had given me a number of severe whippings, all to no good purpose. He resolved to put me out, as he said, to be broken; and, for this purpose, he let me for one year to a man named Edward Covey. Mr. Covey was a poor man, a farm-renter. He rented the place upon which he lived, as also the hands with which he tilled it. Mr. Covey had acquired a very high reputation for breaking young slaves, and this reputation was of immense value to him. It enabled him to get his farm tilled with much less expense to himself than he could have had it done without such a reputation. Some slaveholders thought it not much loss to allow Mr. Covey to have their slaves one year, for the sake of the training to which they were subjected, without any other compensation. He could hire young help with great ease, in consequence of this reputation. Added to the natural good qualities of Mr. Covey, he was a professor of religion—a pious soul—a member and a class-leader in the Methodist church. All of this added weight to his reputation as a "nigger-breaker." I was aware of all the facts, having been made acquainted with them by a young man who had lived there. I nevertheless made the change gladly; for I was sure of getting enough to eat, which is not the smallest consideration to a hungry man.

CHAPTER X

I had left Master Thomas's house, and went to live with Mr. Covey, on the 1st of January, 1833. I was now, for the first time in my life, a field hand. In my new employment, I found myself even more awkward than a country boy appeared to be in a large city. I had been at my new home but one week before Mr. Covey gave me a very severe whipping, cutting my back, causing the blood to run, and raising ridges on my flesh as large as my little finger. The details of this affair are as follows: Mr. Covey sent me, very early in the morning of one of our coldest days in the month of January, to the woods, to get a load of wood. He gave me a team of unbroken oxen. He told me which was the in-hand ox, and which the off-hand one. He then tied the end of a large rope around the horns of the in-hand ox, and gave me the other end of it, and told me, if the oxen started to run, that I must hold on upon the rope. I had never driven oxen before, and of course I was very awkward. I, however, succeeded in getting to the edge of the woods with little difficulty; but I had got a very few rods into the woods, when the oxen took fright, and started full tilt, carrying the cart against trees, and over stumps, in the most frightful manner. I expected every moment that my brains would be dashed out against the trees. After running thus for a considerable distance, they finally upset the cart, dashing it with great force against a tree, and threw themselves into a dense thicket. How I escaped death, I do not know. There I was, entirely alone, in a thick wood, in a place new to me. My cart was upset and shattered, my oxen were entangled among the young trees, and there was none to help me. After a long spell of effort, I succeeded in getting my cart righted, my oxen disentangled, and again yoked to the cart. I now proceeded with my team to the place where I had, the day before, been chopping wood, and loaded my cart pretty heavily, thinking in this way to tame my oxen. I then proceeded on my way home. I had now consumed one half of the day. I got out of the woods safely, and now felt out of danger. I stopped my oxen to open the woods gate; and just as I did so, before I could get hold of my ox-rope, the oxen again started, rushed through the gate, catching it between the wheel and the body of the cart, tearing it to pieces, and coming within a few inches of crushing me against the gate-post. Thus twice, in one short day, I escaped death by the merest chance. On my return, I told Mr. Covey what had happened, and how it happened. He ordered me to return to the woods again immediately. I did so, and he followed on after me. Just as I got into the woods, he came up and told me to stop my cart, and that he would teach me how to trifle away my time, and break gates. He then went to a large gum-tree, and with his axe cut three large switches, and, after trimming them up neatly with his pocketknife, he ordered me to take off my clothes. I made him

no answer, but stood with my clothes on. He repeated his order. I still made him no answer, nor did I move to strip myself. Upon this he rushed at me with the fierceness of a tiger, tore off my clothes, and lashed me till he had worn out his switches, cutting me so savagely as to leave the marks visible for a long time after. This whipping was the first of a number just like it, and for similar offences.

I lived with Mr. Covey one year. During the first six months, of that year, scarce a week passed without his whipping me. I was seldom free from a sore back. My awkwardness was almost always his excuse for whipping me. We were worked fully up to the point of endurance. Long before day we were up, our horses fed, and by the first approach of day we were off to the field with our hoes and ploughing teams. Mr. Covey gave us enough to eat, but scarce time to eat it. We were often less than five minutes taking our meals. We were often in the field from the first approach of day till its last lingering ray had left us; and at saving-fodder time, midnight often caught us in the field binding blades.

Covey would be out with us. The way he used to stand it, was this. He would spend the most of his afternoons in bed. He would then come out fresh in the evening, ready to urge us on with his words, example, and frequently with the whip. Mr. Covey was one of the few slaveholders who could and did work with his hands. He was a hard-working man. He knew by himself just what a man or a boy could do. There was no deceiving him. His work went on in his absence almost as well as in his presence; and he had the faculty of making us feel that he was ever present with us. This he did by surprising us. He seldom approached the spot where we were at work openly, if he could do it secretly. He always aimed at taking us by surprise. Such was his cunning, that we used to call him, among ourselves, "the snake." When we were at work in the cornfield, he would sometimes crawl on his hands and knees to avoid detection, and all at once he would rise nearly in our midst, and scream out, "Ha, ha! Come, come! Dash on, dash on!" This being his mode of attack, it was never safe to stop a single minute. His comings were like a thief in the night. He appeared to us as being ever at hand. He was under every tree, behind every stump, in every bush, and at every window, on the plantation. He would sometimes mount his horse, as if bound to St. Michael's, a distance of seven miles, and in half an hour afterwards you would see him coiled up in the corner of the wood-fence, watching every motion of the slaves. He would, for this purpose, leave his horse tied up in the woods. Again, he would sometimes walk up to us, and give us orders as though he was upon the point of starting on a long journey, turn his back upon us, and make as though he was going to the house to get ready; and, before he would get half way thither, he would turn short and crawl into a fence-corner, or behind some tree, and there watch us till the going down of the sun.

Mr. Covey's *forte* consisted in his power to deceive. His life was devoted to planning and perpetrating the grossest deceptions. Every thing he possessed in the shape of learning or religion, he made conform to his disposition to deceive. He seemed to think himself equal to deceiving the Almighty. He would make a short prayer in the morning, and a long prayer at night; and, strange as it may seem, few men would at times appear more devotional than he. The exercises of his family devotions were always commenced with singing; and, as he was a very poor singer himself, the duty of raising the hymn generally came upon me. He would read his hymn, and nod at me to commence. I would at times do so; at others, I would not. My non-compliance would almost always produce much confusion. To show himself independent of me, he would start and stagger through with his hymn in the most discordant manner. In this state of mind, he prayed with more than ordinary spirit. Poor man! such was his disposition, and success at deceiving, I do verily believe that he sometimes deceived himself into the solemn belief, that he was a sincere worshipper of the most high God; and this, too, at a time when he may be said to have been guilty of compelling his woman slave to commit the sin of adultery. The facts in the case are these: Mr. Covey was a poor man; he was just commencing in life; he was only able to buy one slave; and, shocking as is the fact, he bought her, as he said, for *a breeder*. This woman was named Caroline. Mr. Covey bought her from Mr. Thomas Lowe, about six miles from St. Michael's. She was a large, able-bodied woman, about twenty years old. She had already given birth to one child, which proved her to be just what he wanted. After buying her, he hired a married man of Mr. Samuel Harrison, to live with him one year; and him he used to fasten up with her every night! The result was, that, at the end of the year, the miserable woman gave birth to twins. At this result Mr. Covey seemed to be highly pleased, both with the man and the wretched woman. Such was his joy, and that of his wife, that nothing they could do for Caroline during her confinement was too good, or too hard, to be done. The children were regarded as being quite an addition to his wealth.

If at any one time of my life more than another, I was made to drink the bitterest dregs of slavery, that time was during the first six months of my stay with Mr. Covey. We were worked in all weathers. It was never too hot or too cold; it could never rain, blow, hail, or snow, too hard for us to work in the field. Work, work, work, was scarcely more the order of the day than of the night. The longest days were too short for him, and the shortest nights too long for him. I was somewhat unmanageable when I first went there, but a few months of this discipline tamed me. Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body,

soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!

Sunday was my only leisure time. I spent this in a sort of beast-like stupor, between sleep and wake, under some large tree. At times I would rise up, a flash of energetic freedom would dart through my soul, accompanied with a faint beam of hope, that flickered for a moment, and then vanished. I sank down again, mourning over my wretched condition. I was sometimes prompted to take my life, and that of Covey, but was prevented by a combination of hope and fear. My sufferings on this plantation seem now like a dream rather than a stern reality.

Our house stood within a few rods of the Chesapeake Bay, whose broad bosom was ever white with sails from every quarter of the habitable globe. Those beautiful vessels, robed in purest white, so delightful to the eye of freemen, were to me so many shrouded ghosts, to terrify and torment me with thoughts of my wretched condition. I have often, in the deep stillness of a summer's Sabbath, stood all alone upon the lofty banks of that noble bay, and traced, with saddened heart and tearful eye, the countless number of sails moving off to the mighty ocean. The sight of these always affected me powerfully. My thoughts would compel utterance; and there, with no audience but the Almighty, I would pour out my soul's complaint, in my rude way, with an apostrophe to the moving multitude of ships:—

"You are loosed from your moorings, and are free; I am fast in my chains, and am a slave! You move merrily before the gentle gale, and I sadly before the bloody whip! You are freedom's swift-winged angels, that fly round the world; I am confined in bands of iron! O that I were free! O, that I were on one of your gallant decks, and under your protecting wing! Alas! betwixt me and you, the turbid waters roll. Go on, go on. O that I could also go! Could I but swim! If I could fly! O, why was I born a man, of whom to make a brute! The glad ship is gone; she hides in the dim distance. I am left in the hottest hell of unending slavery. O God, save me! God, deliver me! Let me be free! Is there any God? Why am I a slave? I will run away. I will not stand it. Get caught, or get clear, I'll try it. I had as well die with ague as the fever. I have only one life to lose. I had as well be killed running as die standing. Only think of it; one hundred miles straight north, and I am free! Try it? Yes! God helping me, I will. It cannot be that I shall live and die a slave. I will take to the water. This very bay shall yet bear me into freedom. The steamboats steered in a north-east course from North Point. I will do the same; and when I get to the head of the bay, I will turn my canoe adrift, and walk straight through Delaware into Pennsylvania. When I get there, I shall not be required to have a pass; I can travel without being disturbed. Let but the first opportunity offer, and, come what will, I am off. Meanwhile, I will try to bear up under the yoke. I am not the only slave in the world. Why should I fret? I can bear as much as any of them. Besides, I am but a boy, and all boys are bound to some one. It may be that my misery in slavery will only increase my happiness when I get free. There is a better day coming."

Thus I used to think, and thus I used to speak to myself; goaded almost to madness at one moment, and at the next reconciling myself to my wretched lot.

I have already intimated that my condition was much worse, during the first six months of my stay at Mr. Covey's, than in the last six. The circumstances leading to the change in Mr. Covey's course toward me form an epoch in my humble history. You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man. On one of the hottest days of the month of August, 1833, Bill Smith, William Hughes, a slave named Eli, and myself, were engaged in fanning wheat. Hughes was clearing the fanned wheat from before the fan. Eli was turning, Smith was feeding, and I was carrying wheat to the fan. The work was simple, requiring strength rather than intellect; yet, to one entirely unused to such work, it came very hard. About three o'clock of that day, I broke down; my strength failed me; I was seized with a violent aching of the head, attended with extreme dizziness; I trembled in every limb. Finding what was coming, I nerved myself up, feeling it would never do to stop work. I stood as long as I could stagger to the hopper with grain. When I could stand no longer, I fell, and felt as if held down by an immense weight. The fan of course stopped; every one had his own work to do; and no one could do the work of the other, and have his own go on at the same time.

Mr. Covey was at the house, about one hundred yards from the treading-yard where we were fanning. On hearing the fan stop, he left immediately, and came to the spot where we were. He hastily inquired what the matter was. Bill answered that I was sick, and there was no one to bring wheat to the fan. I had by this time crawled away under the side of the post and rail-fence by which the yard was enclosed, hoping to find relief by getting out of the sun. He then asked where I was. He was told by one of the hands. He came to the spot, and, after looking at me awhile, asked me what was the matter. I told him as well as I could, for I scarce had strength to speak. He then gave me a savage kick in the side, and told me to get up. I tried to do so, but fell back in the attempt. He gave me another kick, and again told me to rise. I again tried, and succeeded in gaining my feet; but, stooping to get the tub with which I was feeding the fan, I again staggered and fell. While down in this situation, Mr. Covey took up the hickory slat with which Hughes had been striking off the half-bushel measure, and with it gave me a heavy blow upon the head, making a large wound, and the blood

ran freely; and with this again told me to get up. I made no effort to comply, having now made up my mind to let him do his worst. In a short time after receiving this blow, my head grew better. Mr. Covey had now left me to my fate. At this moment I resolved, for the first time, to go to my master, enter a complaint, and ask his protection. In order to do this, I must that afternoon walk seven miles; and this, under the circumstances, was truly a severe undertaking. I was exceedingly feeble; made so as much by the kicks and blows which I received, as by the severe fit of sickness to which I had been subjected. I, however, watched my chance, while Covey was looking in an opposite direction, and started for St. Michael's. I succeeded in getting a considerable distance on my way to the woods, when Covey discovered me, and called after me to come back, threatening what he would do if I did not come. I disregarded both his calls and his threats, and made my way to the woods as fast as my feeble state would allow; and thinking I might be overhauled by him if I kept the road, I walked through the woods, keeping far enough from the road to avoid detection, and near enough to prevent losing my way. I had not gone far before my little strength again failed me. I could go no farther. I fell down, and lay for a considerable time. The blood was yet oozing from the wound on my head. For a time I thought I should bleed to death; and think now that I should have done so, but that the blood so matted my hair as to stop the wound. After lying there about three quarters of an hour, I nerved myself up again, and started on my way, through bogs and briers, barefooted and bareheaded, tearing my feet sometimes at nearly every step; and after a journey of about seven miles, occupying some five hours to perform it, I arrived at master's store. I then presented an appearance enough to affect any but a heart of iron. From the crown of my head to my feet, I was covered with blood. My hair was all clotted with dust and blood; my shirt was stiff with blood. I suppose I looked like a man who had escaped a den of wild beasts, and barely escaped them. In this state I appeared before my master, humbly entreating him to interpose his authority for my protection. I told him all the circumstances as well as I could, and it seemed, as I spoke, at times to affect him. He would then walk the floor, and seek to justify Covey by saying he expected I deserved it. He asked me what I wanted. I told him, to let me get a new home; that as sure as I lived with Mr. Covey again, I should live with but to die with him; that Covey would surely kill me; he was in a fair way for it. Master Thomas ridiculed the idea that there was any danger of Mr. Covey's killing me, and said that he knew Mr. Covey; that he was a good man, and that he could not think of taking me from him; that, should he do so, he would lose the whole year's wages; that I belonged to Mr. Covey for one year, and that I must go back to him, come what might; and that I must not trouble him with any more stories, or that he would himself *get hold of me*. After threatening me thus, he gave me a very large dose of salts, telling me that I might remain in St. Michael's that night, (it being quite late,) but that I must be off back to Mr. Covey's early in the morning; and that if I did not, he would *get hold of me*, which meant that he would whip me. I remained all night, and, according to his orders, I started off to Covey's in the morning, (Saturday morning,) wearied in body and broken in spirit. I got no supper that night, or breakfast that morning. I reached Covey's about nine o'clock; and just as I was getting over the fence that divided Mrs. Kemp's fields from ours, out ran Covey with his cowskin, to give me another whipping. Before he could reach me, I succeeded in getting to the cornfield; and as the corn was very high, it afforded me the means of hiding. He seemed very angry, and searched for me a long time. My behavior was altogether unaccountable. He finally gave up the chase, thinking, I suppose, that I must come home for something to eat; he would give himself no further trouble in looking for me. I spent that day mostly in the woods, having the alternative before me,—to go home and be whipped to death, or stay in the woods and be starved to death. That night, I fell in with Sandy Jenkins, a slave with whom I was somewhat acquainted. Sandy had a free wife who lived about four miles from Mr. Covey's; and it being Saturday, he was on his way to see her. I told him my circumstances, and he very kindly invited me to go home with him. I went home with him, and talked this whole matter over, and got his advice as to what course it was best for me to pursue. I found Sandy an old adviser. He told me, with great solemnity, I must go back to Covey; but that before I went, I must go with him into another part of the woods, where there was a certain *root*, which, if I would take some of it with me, carrying it *always on my right side*, would render it impossible for Mr. Covey, or any other white man, to whip me. He said he had carried it for years; and since he had done so, he had never received a blow, and never expected to while he carried it. I at first rejected the idea, that the simple carrying of a root in my pocket would have any such effect as he had said, and was not disposed to take it; but Sandy impressed the necessity with much earnestness, telling me it could do no harm, if it did no good. To please him, I at length took the root, and, according to his direction, carried it upon my right side. This was Sunday morning. I immediately started for home; and upon entering the yard gate, out came Mr. Covey on his way to meeting. He spoke to me very kindly, bade me drive the pigs from a lot near by, and passed on towards the church. Now, this singular conduct of Mr. Covey really made me begin to think that there was something in the *root* which Sandy had given me; and had it been on any other day than Sunday, I could have attributed the conduct to no other cause than the influence of that root; and as it was, I was half inclined to think the *root* to be something more than I at first had taken it to be. All went

well till Monday morning. On this morning, the virtue of the *root* was fully tested. Long before daylight, I was called to go and rub, curry, and feed, the horses. I obeyed, and was glad to obey. But whilst thus engaged, whilst in the act of throwing down some blades from the loft, Mr. Covey entered the stable with a long rope; and just as I was half out of the loft, he caught hold of my legs, and was about tying me. As soon as I found what he was up to, I gave a sudden spring, and as I did so, he holding to my legs, I was brought sprawling on the stable floor. Mr. Covey seemed now to think he had me, and could do what he pleased; but at this moment—from whence came the spirit I don't know—I resolved to fight; and, suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard by the throat; and as I did so, I rose. He held on to me, and I to him. My resistance was so entirely unexpected that Covey seemed taken all aback. He trembled like a leaf. This gave me assurance, and I held him uneasy, causing the blood to run where I touched him with the ends of my fingers. Mr. Covey soon called out to Hughes for help. Hughes came, and, while Covey held me, attempted to tie my right hand. While he was in the act of doing so, I watched my chance, and gave him a heavy kick close under the ribs. This kick fairly sickened Hughes, so that he left me in the hands of Mr. Covey. This kick had the effect of not only weakening Hughes, but Covey also. When he saw Hughes bending over with pain, his courage quailed. He asked me if I meant to persist in my resistance. I told him I did, come what might; that he had used me like a brute for six months, and that I was determined to be used so no longer. With that, he strove to drag me to a stick that was lying just out of the stable door. He meant to knock me down. But just as he was leaning over to get the stick, I seized him with both hands by his collar, and brought him by a sudden snatch to the ground. By this time, Bill came. Covey called upon him for assistance. Bill wanted to know what he could do. Covey said, "Take hold of him, take hold of him!" Bill said his master hired him out to work, and not to help to whip me; so he left Covey and myself to fight our own battle out. We were at it for nearly two hours. Covey at length let me go, puffing and blowing at a great rate, saying that if I had not resisted, he would not have whipped me half so much. The truth was, that he had not whipped me at all. I considered him as getting entirely the worst end of the bargain; for he had drawn no blood from me, but I had from him. The whole six months afterwards, that I spent with Mr. Covey, he never laid the weight of his finger upon me in anger. He would occasionally say, he didn't want to get hold of me again. "No," thought I, "you need not; for you will come off worse than you did before."

This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free. The gratification afforded by the triumph was a full compensation for whatever else might follow, even death itself. He only can understand the deep satisfaction which I experienced, who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of slavery. I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me.

From this time I was never again what might be called fairly whipped, though I remained a slave four years afterwards. I had several fights, but was never whipped.

It was for a long time a matter of surprise to me why Mr. Covey did not immediately have me taken by the constable to the whipping-post, and there regularly whipped for the crime of raising my hand against a white man in defence of myself. And the only explanation I can now think of does not entirely satisfy me; but such as it is, I will give it. Mr. Covey enjoyed the most unbounded reputation for being a first-rate overseer and negro-breaker. It was of considerable importance to him. That reputation was at stake; and had he sent me—a boy about sixteen years old—to the public whipping-post, his reputation would have been lost; so, to save his reputation, he suffered me to go unpunished.

My term of actual service to Mr. Edward Covey ended on Christmas day, 1833. The days between Christmas and New Year's day are allowed as holidays; and, accordingly, we were not required to perform any labor, more than to feed and take care of the stock. This time we regarded as our own, by the grace of our masters; and we therefore used or abused it nearly as we pleased. Those of us who had families at a distance, were generally allowed to spend the whole six days in their society. This time, however, was spent in various ways. The staid, sober, thinking and industrious ones of our number would employ themselves in making corn-brooms, mats, horse-collars, and baskets; and another class of us would spend the time in hunting opossums, hares, and coons. But by far the larger part engaged in such sports and merriments as playing ball, wrestling, running foot-races, fiddling, dancing, and drinking whisky; and this latter mode of spending the time was by far the most agreeable to the feelings of our masters. A slave who would work during the holidays was considered by our masters as scarcely deserving them. He was regarded as one who rejected the favor of his master. It was deemed a disgrace not to get drunk at Christmas; and he was regarded as lazy indeed, who

had not provided himself with the necessary means, during the year, to get whisky enough to last him through Christmas.

From what I know of the effect of these holidays upon the slave, I believe them to be among the most effective means in the hands of the slaveholder in keeping down the spirit of insurrection. Were the slaveholders at once to abandon this practice, I have not the slightest doubt it would lead to an immediate insurrection among the slaves. These holidays serve as conductors, or safety-valves, to carry off the rebellious spirit of enslaved humanity. But for these, the slave would be forced up to the wildest desperation; and woe betide the slaveholder, the day he ventures to remove or hinder the operation of those conductors! I warn him that, in such an event, a spirit will go forth in their midst, more to be dreaded than the most appalling earthquake.

The holidays are part and parcel of the gross fraud, wrong, and inhumanity of slavery. They are professedly a custom established by the benevolence of the slaveholders; but I undertake to say, it is the result of selfishness, and one of the grossest frauds committed upon the down-trodden slave. They do not give the slaves this time because they would not like to have their work during its continuance, but because they know it would be unsafe to deprive them of it. This will be seen by the fact, that the slaveholders like to have their slaves spend those days just in such a manner as to make them as glad of their ending as of their beginning. Their object seems to be, to disgust their slaves with freedom, by plunging them into the lowest depths of dissipation. For instance, the slaveholders not only like to see the slave drink of his own accord, but will adopt various plans to make him drunk. One plan is, to make bets on their slaves, as to who can drink the most whisky without getting drunk; and in this way they succeed in getting whole multitudes to drink to excess. Thus, when the slave asks for virtuous freedom, the cunning slaveholder, knowing his ignorance, cheats him with a dose of vicious dissipation, artfully labelled with the name of liberty. The most of us used to drink it down, and the result was just what might be supposed; many of us were led to think that there was little to choose between liberty and slavery. We felt, and very properly too, that we had almost as well be slaves to man as to rum. So, when the holidays ended, we staggered up from the filth of our wallowing, took a long breath, and marched to the field,—feeling, upon the whole, rather glad to go, from what our master had deceived us into a belief was freedom, back to the arms of slavery.

I have said that this mode of treatment is a part of the whole system of fraud and inhumanity of slavery. It is so. The mode here adopted to disgust the slave with freedom, by allowing him to see only the abuse of it, is carried out in other things. For instance, a slave loves molasses; he steals some. His master, in many cases, goes off to town, and buys a large quantity; he returns, takes his whip, and commands the slave to eat the molasses, until the poor fellow is made sick at the very mention of it. The same mode is sometimes adopted to make the slaves refrain from asking for more food than their regular allowance. A slave runs through his allowance, and applies for more. His master is enraged at him; but, not willing to send him off without food, gives him more than is necessary, and compels him to eat it within a given time. Then, if he complains that he cannot eat it, he is said to be satisfied neither full nor fasting, and is whipped for being hard to please! I have an abundance of such illustrations of the same principle, drawn from my own observation, but think the cases I have cited sufficient. The practice is a very common one.

On the first of January, 1834, I left Mr. Covey, and went to live with Mr. William Freeland, who lived about three miles from St. Michael's. I soon found Mr. Freeland a very different man from Mr. Covey. Though not rich, he was what would be called an educated southern gentleman. Mr. Covey, as I have shown, was a well-trained negro-breaker and slave-driver. The former (slaveholder though he was) seemed to possess some regard for honor, some reverence for justice, and some respect for humanity. The latter seemed totally insensible to all such sentiments. Mr. Freeland had many of the faults peculiar to slaveholders, such as being very passionate and fretful; but I must do him the justice to say, that he was exceedingly free from those degrading vices to which Mr. Covey was constantly addicted. The one was open and frank, and we always knew where to find him. The other was a most artful deceiver, and could be understood only by such as were skilful enough to detect his cunningly-devised frauds. Another advantage I gained in my new master was, he made no pretensions to, or profession of, religion; and this, in my opinion, was truly a great advantage. I assert most unhesitatingly, that the religion of the south is a mere covering for the most horrid crimes,—a justifier of the most appalling barbarity,—a sanctifier of the most hateful frauds,—and a dark shelter under, which the darkest, foulest, grossest, and most infernal deeds of slaveholders find the strongest protection. Were I to be again reduced to the chains of slavery, next to that enslavement, I should regard being the slave of a religious master the greatest calamity that could befall me. For of all slaveholders with whom I have ever met, religious slaveholders are the worst. I have ever found them the meanest and basest, the most cruel and cowardly, of all others. It was my unhappy lot not only to belong to a religious slaveholder, but to live in a community of such religionists. Very near Mr. Freeland lived the Rev. Daniel Weeden, and in the same neighborhood lived the Rev. Rigby Hopkins. These were members and

ministers in the Reformed Methodist Church. Mr. Weeden owned, among others, a woman slave, whose name I have forgotten. This woman's back, for weeks, was kept literally raw, made so by the lash of this merciless, *religious* wretch. He used to hire hands. His maxim was, Behave well or behave ill, it is the duty of a master occasionally to whip a slave, to remind him of his master's authority. Such was his theory, and such his practice.

Mr. Hopkins was even worse than Mr. Weeden. His chief boast was his ability to manage slaves. The peculiar feature of his government was that of whipping slaves in advance of deserving it. He always managed to have one or more of his slaves to whip every Monday morning. He did this to alarm their fears, and strike terror into those who escaped. His plan was to whip for the smallest offences, to prevent the commission of large ones. Mr. Hopkins could always find some excuse for whipping a slave. It would astonish one, unaccustomed to a slaveholding life, to see with what wonderful ease a slaveholder can find things, of which to make occasion to whip a slave. A mere look, word, or motion,—a mistake, accident, or want of power,—are all matters for which a slave may be whipped at any time. Does a slave look dissatisfied? It is said, he has the devil in him, and it must be whipped out. Does he speak loudly when spoken to by his master? Then he is getting high-minded, and should be taken down a button-hole lower. Does he forget to pull off his hat at the approach of a white person? Then he is wanting in reverence, and should be whipped for it. Does he ever venture to vindicate his conduct, when censured for it? Then he is guilty of impudence,—one of the greatest crimes of which a slave can be guilty. Does he ever venture to suggest a different mode of doing things from that pointed out by his master? He is indeed presumptuous, and getting above himself; and nothing less than a flogging will do for him. Does he, while ploughing, break a plough,—or, while hoeing, break a hoe? It is owing to his carelessness, and for it a slave must always be whipped. Mr. Hopkins could always find something of this sort to justify the use of the lash, and he seldom failed to embrace such opportunities. There was not a man in the whole county, with whom the slaves who had the getting their own home, would not prefer to live, rather than with this Rev. Mr. Hopkins. And yet there was not a man any where round, who made higher professions of religion, or was more active in revivals,—more attentive to the class, love-feast, prayer and preaching meetings, or more devotional in his family,—that prayed earlier, later, louder, and longer,—than this same reverend slave-driver, Rigby Hopkins.

But to return to Mr. Freeland, and to my experience while in his employment. He, like Mr. Covey, gave us enough to eat; but, unlike Mr. Covey, he also gave us sufficient time to take our meals. He worked us hard, but always between sunrise and sunset. He required a good deal of work to be done, but gave us good tools with which to work. His farm was large, but he employed hands enough to work it, and with ease, compared with many of his neighbors. My treatment, while in his employment, was heavenly, compared with what I experienced at the hands of Mr. Edward Covey.

Mr. Freeland was himself the owner of but two slaves. Their names were Henry Harris and John Harris. The rest of his hands he hired. These consisted of myself, Sandy Jenkins,* and Handy Caldwell.

> **This is the same man who gave me th*
> *being whipped by Mr. Covey. He was '*
> *frequently to talk about the fight w*
> *as we did so, he would claim my succ*
> *roots which he gave me. This superst*
> *among the more ignorant slaves. A sl*
> *his death is attributed to trickery.*

Henry and John were quite intelligent, and in a very little while after I went there, I succeeded in creating in them a strong desire to learn how to read. This desire soon sprang up in the others also. They very soon mustered up some old spelling-books, and nothing would do but that I must keep a Sabbath school. I agreed to do so, and accordingly devoted my Sundays to teaching these my loved fellow-slaves how to read. Neither of them knew his letters when I went there. Some of the slaves of the neighboring farms found what was going on, and also availed themselves of this little opportunity to learn to read. It was understood, among all who came, that there must be as little display about it as possible. It was necessary to keep our religious masters at St. Michael's unacquainted with the fact, that, instead of spending the Sabbath in wrestling, boxing, and drinking whisky, we were trying to learn how to read the will of God; for they had much rather see us engaged in those degrading sports, than to see us behaving like intellectual, moral, and accountable beings. My blood boils as I think of the bloody manner in which Messrs. Wright Fairbanks and Garrison West, both class-leaders, in connection with many others, rushed in upon us with sticks and stones, and broke up our virtuous little Sabbath school, at St. Michael's—all calling themselves Christians! humble followers of the Lord Jesus Christ! But I am again digressing.

I held my Sabbath school at the house of a free colored man, whose name I deem it imprudent to mention; for should it be known, it might embarrass him greatly, though the crime of holding the school was committed ten years ago. I had at one time over forty scholars, and those of the right sort, ardently

desiring to learn. They were of all ages, though mostly men and women. I look back to those Sundays with an amount of pleasure not to be expressed. They were great days to my soul. The work of instructing my dear fellow-slaves was the sweetest engagement with which I was ever blessed. We loved each other, and to leave them at the close of the Sabbath was a severe cross indeed. When I think that these precious souls are to-day shut up in the prison-house of slavery, my feelings overcome me, and I am almost ready to ask, "Does a righteous God govern the universe? and for what does he hold the thunders in his right hand, if not to smite the oppressor, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the spoiler?" These dear souls came not to Sabbath school because it was popular to do so, nor did I teach them because it was reputable to be thus engaged. Every moment they spent in that school, they were liable to be taken up, and given thirty-nine lashes. They came because they wished to learn. Their minds had been starved by their cruel masters. They had been shut up in mental darkness. I taught them, because it was the delight of my soul to be doing something that looked like bettering the condition of my race. I kept up my school nearly the whole year I lived with Mr. Freeland; and, beside my Sabbath school, I devoted three evenings in the week, during the winter, to teaching the slaves at home. And I have the happiness to know, that several of those who came to Sabbath school learned how to read; and that one, at least, is now free through my agency.

The year passed off smoothly. It seemed only about half as long as the year which preceded it. I went through it without receiving a single blow. I will give Mr. Freeland the credit of being the best master I ever had, *till I became my own master.* For the ease with which I passed the year, I was, however, somewhat indebted to the society of my fellow-slaves. They were noble souls; they not only possessed loving hearts, but brave ones. We were linked and interlinked with each other. I loved them with a love stronger than any thing I have experienced since. It is sometimes said that we slaves do not love and confide in each other. In answer to this assertion, I can say, I never loved any or confided in any people more than my fellow-slaves, and especially those with whom I lived at Mr. Freeland's. I believe we would have died for each other. We never undertook to do any thing, of any importance, without a mutual consultation. We never moved separately. We were one; and as much so by our tempers and dispositions, as by the mutual hardships to which we were necessarily subjected by our condition as slaves.

At the close of the year 1834, Mr. Freeland again hired me of my master, for the year 1835. But, by this time, I began to want to live *upon free land* as well as *with Freeland;* and I was no longer content, therefore, to live with him or any other slaveholder. I began, with the commencement of the year, to prepare myself for a final struggle, which should decide my fate one way or the other. My tendency was upward. I was fast approaching manhood, and year after year had passed, and I was still a slave. These thoughts roused me—I must do something. I therefore resolved that 1835 should not pass without witnessing an attempt, on my part, to secure my liberty. But I was not willing to cherish this determination alone. My fellow-slaves were dear to me. I was anxious to have them participate with me in this, my life-giving determination. I therefore, though with great prudence, commenced early to ascertain their views and feelings in regard to their condition, and to imbue their minds with thoughts of freedom. I bent myself to devising ways and means for our escape, and meanwhile strove, on all fitting occasions, to impress them with the gross fraud and inhumanity of slavery. I went first to Henry, next to John, then to the others. I found, in them all, warm hearts and noble spirits. They were ready to hear, and ready to act when a feasible plan should be proposed. This was what I wanted. I talked to them of our want of manhood, if we submitted to our enslavement without at least one noble effort to be free. We met often, and consulted frequently, and told our hopes and fears, recounted the difficulties, real and imagined, which we should be called on to meet. At times we were almost disposed to give up, and try to content ourselves with our wretched lot; at others, we were firm and unbending in our determination to go. Whenever we suggested any plan, there was shrinking—the odds were fearful. Our path was beset with the greatest obstacles; and if we succeeded in gaining the end of it, our right to be free was yet questionable—we were yet liable to be returned to bondage. We could see no spot, this side of the ocean, where we could be free. We knew nothing about Canada. Our knowledge of the north did not extend farther than New York; and to go there, and be forever harassed with the frightful liability of being returned to slavery—with the certainty of being treated tenfold worse than before—the thought was truly a horrible one, and one which it was not easy to overcome. The case sometimes stood thus: At every gate through which we were to pass, we saw a watchman—at every ferry a guard—on every bridge a sentinel—and in every wood a patrol. We were hemmed in upon every side. Here were the difficulties, real or imagined—the good to be sought, and the evil to be shunned. On the one hand, there stood slavery, a stern reality, glaring frightfully upon us,—its robes already crimsoned with the blood of millions, and even now feasting itself greedily upon our own flesh. On the other hand, away back in the dim distance, under the flickering light of the north star, behind some craggy hill or snow-covered mountain, stood a doubtful freedom—half frozen—beckoning us to come and share its hospitality. This in itself was sometimes enough to stagger us; but when we permitted ourselves to

survey the road, we were frequently appalled. Upon either side we saw grim death, assuming the most horrid shapes. Now it was starvation, causing us to eat our own flesh;—now we were contending with the waves, and were drowned;—now we were overtaken, and torn to pieces by the fangs of the terrible bloodhound. We were stung by scorpions, chased by wild beasts, bitten by snakes, and finally, after having nearly reached the desired spot,—after swimming rivers, encountering wild beasts, sleeping in the woods, suffering hunger and nakedness, —we were overtaken by our pursuers, and, in our resistance, we were shot dead upon the spot! I say, this picture sometimes appalled us, and made us

> *"rather bear those ills we had,*
> *Than fly to others, that we knew not*

In coming to a fixed determination to run away, we did more than Patrick Henry, when he resolved upon liberty or death. With us it was a doubtful liberty at most, and almost certain death if we failed. For my part, I should prefer death to hopeless bondage.

Sandy, one of our number, gave up the notion, but still encouraged us. Our company then consisted of Henry Harris, John Harris, Henry Bailey, Charles Roberts, and myself. Henry Bailey was my uncle, and belonged to my master. Charles married my aunt: he belonged to my master's father-in-law, Mr. William Hamilton.

The plan we finally concluded upon was, to get a large canoe belonging to Mr. Hamilton, and upon the Saturday night previous to Easter holidays, paddle directly up the Chesapeake Bay. On our arrival at the head of the bay, a distance of seventy or eighty miles from where we lived, it was our purpose to turn our canoe adrift, and follow the guidance of the north star till we got beyond the limits of Maryland. Our reason for taking the water route was, that we were less liable to be suspected as runaways; we hoped to be regarded as fishermen; whereas, if we should take the land route, we should be subjected to interruptions of almost every kind. Any one having a white face, and being so disposed, could stop us, and subject us to examination.

The week before our intended start, I wrote several protections, one for each of us. As well as I can remember, they were in the following words, to wit:—

> *"This is to certify that I, the unde*
> *servant, full liberty to go to Balti*
> *Written with mine own hand, &c., 183*
>
> *"WILLIAM HAMILTON,*

"Near St. Michael's, in Talbot county, Maryland."

We were not going to Baltimore; but, in going up the bay, we went toward Baltimore, and these protections were only intended to protect us while on the bay.

As the time drew near for our departure, our anxiety became more and more intense. It was truly a matter of life and death with us. The strength of our determination was about to be fully tested. At this time, I was very active in explaining every difficulty, removing every doubt, dispelling every fear, and inspiring all with the firmness indispensable to success in our undertaking; assuring them that half was gained the instant we made the move; we had talked long enough; we were now ready to move; if not now, we never should be; and if we did not intend to move now, we had as well fold our arms, sit down, and acknowledge ourselves fit only to be slaves. This, none of us were prepared to acknowledge. Every man stood firm; and at our last meeting, we pledged ourselves afresh, in the most solemn manner, that, at the time appointed, we would certainly start in pursuit of freedom. This was in the middle of the week, at the end of which we were to be off. We went, as usual, to our several fields of labor, but with bosoms highly agitated with thoughts of our truly hazardous undertaking. We tried to conceal our feelings as much as possible; and I think we succeeded very well.

After a painful waiting, the Saturday morning, whose night was to witness our departure, came. I hailed it with joy, bring what of sadness it might. Friday night was a sleepless one for me. I probably felt more anxious than the rest, because I was, by common consent, at the head of the whole affair. The responsibility of success or failure lay heavily upon me. The glory of the one, and the confusion of the other, were alike mine. The first two hours of that morning were such as I never experienced before, and hope never to again. Early in the morning, we went, as usual, to the field. We were spreading manure; and all at once, while thus engaged, I was overwhelmed with an indescribable feeling, in the fulness of which I turned to Sandy, who was near by, and said, "We are betrayed!" "Well," said he, "that thought has this moment struck me." We said no more. I was never more certain of any thing.

The horn was blown as usual, and we went up from the field to the house for breakfast. I went for the form, more than for want of any thing to eat that morning. Just as I got to the house, in looking out at the lane gate, I saw four white men, with two colored men. The white men were on horseback, and the colored ones were walking behind, as if tied. I watched them a few

moments till they got up to our lane gate. Here they halted, and tied the colored men to the gate-post. I was not yet certain as to what the matter was. In a few moments, in rode Mr. Hamilton, with a speed betokening great excitement. He came to the door, and inquired if Master William was in. He was told he was at the barn. Mr. Hamilton, without dismounting, rode up to the barn with extraordinary speed. In a few moments, he and Mr. Freeland returned to the house. By this time, the three constables rode up, and in great haste dismounted, tied their horses, and met Master William and Mr. Hamilton returning from the barn; and after talking awhile, they all walked up to the kitchen door. There was no one in the kitchen but myself and John. Henry and Sandy were up at the barn. Mr. Freeland put his head in at the door, and called me by name, saying, there were some gentlemen at the door who wished to see me. I stepped to the door, and inquired what they wanted. They at once seized me, and, without giving me any satisfaction, tied me—lashing my hands closely together. I insisted upon knowing what the matter was. They at length said, that they had learned I had been in a "scrape," and that I was to be examined before my master; and if their information proved false, I should not be hurt.

In a few moments, they succeeded in tying John. They then turned to Henry, who had by this time returned, and commanded him to cross his hands. "I won't!" said Henry, in a firm tone, indicating his readiness to meet the consequences of his refusal. "Won't you?" said Tom Graham, the constable. "No, I won't!" said Henry, in a still stronger tone. With this, two of the constables pulled out their shining pistols, and swore, by their Creator, that they would make him cross his hands or kill him. Each cocked his pistol, and, with fingers on the trigger, walked up to Henry, saying, at the same time, if he did not cross his hands, they would blow his damned heart out. "Shoot me, shoot me!" said Henry; "you can't kill me but once. Shoot, shoot,—and be damned! *I won't be tied!*" This he said in a tone of loud defiance; and at the same time, with a motion as quick as lightning, he with one single stroke dashed the pistols from the hand of each constable. As he did this, all hands fell upon him, and, after beating him some time, they finally overpowered him, and got him tied.

During the scuffle, I managed, I know not how, to get my pass out, and, without being discovered, put it into the fire. We were all now tied; and just as we were to leave for Easton jail, Betsy Freeland, mother of William Freeland, came to the door with her hands full of biscuits, and divided them between Henry and John. She then delivered herself of a speech, to the following effect:—addressing herself to me, she said, "*You devil! You yellow devil!* it was you that put it into the heads of Henry and John to run away. But for you, you long-legged mulatto devil! Henry nor John would never have thought of such a thing." I made no reply, and was immediately hurried off towards St. Michael's. Just a moment previous to the scuffle with Henry, Mr. Hamilton suggested the propriety of making a search for the protections which he had understood Frederick had written for himself and the rest. But, just at the moment he was about carrying his proposal into effect, his aid was needed in helping to tie Henry; and the excitement attending the scuffle caused them either to forget, or to deem it unsafe, under the circumstances, to search. So we were not yet convicted of the intention to run away.

When we got about half way to St. Michael's, while the constables having us in charge were looking ahead, Henry inquired of me what he should do with his pass. I told him to eat it with his biscuit, and own nothing; and we passed the word around, "*Own nothing;*" and "*Own nothing!*" said we all. Our confidence in each other was unshaken. We were resolved to succeed or fail together, after the calamity had befallen us as much as before. We were now prepared for any thing. We were to be dragged that morning fifteen miles behind horses, and then to be placed in the Easton jail. When we reached St. Michael's, we underwent a sort of examination. We all denied that we ever intended to run away. We did this more to bring out the evidence against us, than from any hope of getting clear of being sold; for, as I have said, we were ready for that. The fact was, we cared but little where we went, so we went together. Our greatest concern was about separation. We dreaded that more than any thing this side of death. We found the evidence against us to be the testimony of one person; our master would not tell who it was; but we came to a unanimous decision among ourselves as to who their informant was. We were sent off to the jail at Easton. When we got there, we were delivered up to the sheriff, Mr. Joseph Graham, and by him placed in jail. Henry, John, and myself, were placed in one room together—Charles, and Henry Bailey, in another. Their object in separating us was to hinder concert.

We had been in jail scarcely twenty minutes, when a swarm of slave traders, and agents for slave traders, flocked into jail to look at us, and to ascertain if we were for sale. Such a set of beings I never saw before! I felt myself surrounded by so many fiends from perdition. A band of pirates never looked more like their father, the devil. They laughed and grinned over us, saying, "Ah, my boys! we have got you, haven't we?" And after taunting us in various ways, they one by one went into an examination of us, with intent to ascertain our value. They would impudently ask us if we would not like to have them for our masters. We would make them no answer, and leave them to find out as best they could. Then they would curse and swear at us, telling us that they could take the devil out of us in a very little while, if we were only in their hands.

While in jail, we found ourselves in much more comfortable quarters than we expected when we went there. We did not get much to eat, nor that which was very good; but we had a good clean room, from the windows of which we could see what was going on in the street, which was very much better than though we had been placed in one of the dark, damp cells. Upon the whole, we got along very well, so far as the jail and its keeper were concerned. Immediately after the holidays were over, contrary to all our expectations, Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Freeland came up to Easton, and took Charles, the two Henrys, and John, out of jail, and carried them home, leaving me alone. I regarded this separation as a final one. It caused me more pain than any thing else in the whole transaction. I was ready for any thing rather than separation. I supposed that they had consulted together, and had decided that, as I was the whole cause of the intention of the others to run away, it was hard to make the innocent suffer with the guilty; and that they had, therefore, concluded to take the others home, and sell me, as a warning to the others that remained. It is due to the noble Henry to say, he seemed almost as reluctant at leaving the prison as at leaving home to come to the prison. But we knew we should, in all probability, be separated, if we were sold; and since he was in their hands, he concluded to go peaceably home.

I was now left to my fate. I was all alone, and within the walls of a stone prison. But a few days before, and I was full of hope. I expected to have been safe in a land of freedom; but now I was covered with gloom, sunk down to the utmost despair. I thought the possibility of freedom was gone. I was kept in this way about one week, at the end of which, Captain Auld, my master, to my surprise and utter astonishment, came up, and took me out, with the intention of sending me, with a gentleman of his acquaintance, into Alabama. But, from some cause or other, he did not send me to Alabama, but concluded to send me back to Baltimore, to live again with his brother Hugh, and to learn a trade.

Thus, after an absence of three years and one month, I was once more permitted to return to my old home at Baltimore. My master sent me away, because there existed against me a very great prejudice in the community, and he feared I might be killed.

In a few weeks after I went to Baltimore, Master Hugh hired me to Mr. William Gardner, an extensive ship-builder, on Fell's Point. I was put there to learn how to calk. It, however, proved a very unfavorable place for the accomplishment of this object. Mr. Gardner was engaged that spring in building two large man-of-war brigs, professedly for the Mexican government. The vessels were to be launched in the July of that year, and in failure thereof, Mr. Gardner was to lose a considerable sum; so that when I entered, all was hurry. There was no time to learn any thing. Every man had to do that which he knew how to do. In entering the shipyard, my orders from Mr. Gardner were, to do whatever the carpenters commanded me to do. This was placing me at the beck and call of about seventy-five men. I was to regard all these as masters. Their word was to be my law. My situation was a most trying one. At times I needed a dozen pair of hands. I was called a dozen ways in the space of a single minute. Three or four voices would strike my ear at the same moment. It was—"Fred., come help me to cant this timber here."—"Fred., come carry this timber yonder."—"Fred., bring that roller here."—"Fred., go get a fresh can of water."—"Fred., come help saw off the end of this timber."—"Fred., go quick, and get the crowbar."—"Fred., hold on the end of this fall."—"Fred., go to the blacksmith's shop, and get a new punch."—"Hurra, Fred! run and bring me a cold chisel."—"I say, Fred., bear a hand, and get up a fire as quick as lightning under that steam-box."—"Halloo, nigger! come, turn this grindstone."—"Come, come! move, move! and *bowse* this timber forward."—"I say, darky, blast your eyes, why don't you heat up some pitch?"—"Halloo! halloo! halloo!" (Three voices at the same time.) "Come here!—Go there!—Hold on where you are! Damn you, if you move, I'll knock your brains out!"

This was my school for eight months; and I might have remained there longer, but for a most horrid fight I had with four of the white apprentices, in which my left eye was nearly knocked out, and I was horribly mangled in other respects. The facts in the case were these: Until a very little while after I went there, white and black ship-carpenters worked side by side, and no one seemed to see any impropriety in it. All hands seemed to be very well satisfied. Many of the black carpenters were freemen. Things seemed to be going on very well. All at once, the white carpenters knocked off, and said they would not work with free colored workmen. Their reason for this, as alleged, was, that if free colored carpenters were encouraged, they would soon take the trade into their own hands, and poor white men would be thrown out of employment. They therefore felt called upon at once to put a stop to it. And, taking advantage of Mr. Gardner's necessities, they broke off, swearing they would work no longer, unless he would discharge his black carpenters. Now, though this did not extend to me in form, it did reach me in fact. My fellow-apprentices very soon began to feel it degrading to them to work with me. They began to put on airs, and talk about the "niggers" taking the country, saying we all ought to be killed; and, being encouraged by the journeymen, they commenced making my condition as hard as they could, by hectoring me around, and sometimes striking me. I, of course, kept the vow I made after the fight with Mr. Covey, and struck back again, regardless of consequences; and while I kept them from combining, I succeeded very well; for I could whip the

whole of them, taking them separately. They, however, at length combined, and came upon me, armed with sticks, stones, and heavy handspikes. One came in front with a half brick. There was one at each side of me, and one behind me. While I was attending to those in front, and on either side, the one behind ran up with the handspike, and struck me a heavy blow upon the head. It stunned me. I fell, and with this they all ran upon me, and fell to beating me with their fists. I let them lay on for a while, gathering strength. In an instant, I gave a sudden surge, and rose to my hands and knees. Just as I did that, one of their number gave me, with his heavy boot, a powerful kick in the left eye. My eyeball seemed to have burst. When they saw my eye closed, and badly swollen, they left me. With this I seized the handspike, and for a time pursued them. But here the carpenters interfered, and I thought I might as well give it up. It was impossible to stand my hand against so many. All this took place in sight of not less than fifty white ship-carpenters, and not one interposed a friendly word; but some cried, "Kill the damned nigger! Kill him! kill him! He struck a white person." I found my only chance for life was in flight. I succeeded in getting away without an additional blow, and barely so; for to strike a white man is death by Lynch law,—and that was the law in Mr. Gardner's ship-yard; nor is there much of any other out of Mr. Gardner's ship-yard.

I went directly home, and told the story of my wrongs to Master Hugh; and I am happy to say of him, irreligious as he was, his conduct was heavenly, compared with that of his brother Thomas under similar circumstances. He listened attentively to my narration of the circumstances leading to the savage outrage, and gave many proofs of his strong indignation at it. The heart of my once overkind mistress was again melted into pity. My puffed-out eye and blood-covered face moved her to tears. She took a chair by me, washed the blood from my face, and, with a mother's tenderness, bound up my head, covering the wounded eye with a lean piece of fresh beef. It was almost compensation for my suffering to witness, once more, a manifestation of kindness from this, my once affectionate old mistress. Master Hugh was very much enraged. He gave expression to his feelings by pouring out curses upon the heads of those who did the deed. As soon as I got a little the better of my bruises, he took me with him to Esquire Watson's, on Bond Street, to see what could be done about the matter. Mr. Watson inquired who saw the assault committed. Master Hugh told him it was done in Mr. Gardner's ship-yard at midday, where there were a large company of men at work. "As to that," he said, "the deed was done, and there was no question as to who did it." His answer was, he could do nothing in the case, unless some white man would come forward and testify. He could issue no warrant on my word. If I had been killed in the presence of a thousand colored people, their testimony combined would have been insufficient to have arrested one of the murderers. Master Hugh, for once, was compelled to say this state of things was too bad. Of course, it was impossible to get any white man to volunteer his testimony in my behalf, and against the white young men. Even those who may have sympathized with me were not prepared to do this. It required a degree of courage unknown to them to do so; for just at that time, the slightest manifestation of humanity toward a colored person was denounced as abolitionism, and that name subjected its bearer to frightful liabilities. The watchwords of the bloody-minded in that region, and in those days, were, "Damn the abolitionists!" and "Damn the niggers!" There was nothing done, and probably nothing would have been done if I had been killed. Such was, and such remains, the state of things in the Christian city of Baltimore.

Master Hugh, finding he could get no redress, refused to let me go back again to Mr. Gardner. He kept me himself, and his wife dressed my wound till I was again restored to health. He then took me into the ship-yard of which he was foreman, in the employment of Mr. Walter Price. There I was immediately set to calking, and very soon learned the art of using my mallet and irons. In the course of one year from the time I left Mr. Gardner's, I was able to command the highest wages given to the most experienced calkers. I was now of some importance to my master. I was bringing him from six to seven dollars per week. I sometimes brought him nine dollars per week: my wages were a dollar and a half a day. After learning how to calk, I sought my own employment, made my own contracts, and collected the money which I earned. My pathway became much more smooth than before; my condition was now much more comfortable. When I could get no calking to do, I did nothing. During these leisure times, those old notions about freedom would steal over me again. When in Mr. Gardner's employment, I was kept in such a perpetual whirl of excitement, I could think of nothing, scarcely, but my life; and in thinking of my life, I almost forgot my liberty. I have observed this in my experience of slavery,—that whenever my condition was improved, instead of its increasing my contentment, it only increased my desire to be free, and set me to thinking of plans to gain my freedom. I have found that, to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason. He must be able to detect no inconsistencies in slavery; he must be made to feel that slavery is right; and he can be brought to that only when he ceases to be a man.

I was now getting, as I have said, one dollar and fifty cents per day. I contracted for it; I earned it; it was paid to me; it was rightfully my own; yet, upon each returning Saturday night, I was compelled to deliver every cent of that money to Master

Hugh. And why? Not because he earned it,—not because he had any hand in earning it,—not because I owed it to him,—nor because he possessed the slightest shadow of a right to it; but solely because he had the power to compel me to give it up. The right of the grim-visaged pirate upon the high seas is exactly the same.

CHAPTER XI

I now come to that part of my life during which I planned, and finally succeeded in making, my escape from slavery. But before narrating any of the peculiar circumstances, I deem it proper to make known my intention not to state all the facts connected with the transaction. My reasons for pursuing this course may be understood from the following: First, were I to give a minute statement of all the facts, it is not only possible, but quite probable, that others would thereby be involved in the most embarrassing difficulties. Secondly, such a statement would most undoubtedly induce greater vigilance on the part of slaveholders than has existed heretofore among them; which would, of course, be the means of guarding a door whereby some dear brother bondman might escape his galling chains. I deeply regret the necessity that impels me to suppress any thing of importance connected with my experience in slavery. It would afford me great pleasure indeed, as well as materially add to the interest of my narrative, were I at liberty to gratify a curiosity, which I know exists in the minds of many, by an accurate statement of all the facts pertaining to my most fortunate escape. But I must deprive myself of this pleasure, and the curious of the gratification which such a statement would afford. I would allow myself to suffer under the greatest imputations which evil-minded men might suggest, rather than exculpate myself, and thereby run the hazard of closing the slightest avenue by which a brother slave might clear himself of the chains and fetters of slavery.

I have never approved of the very public manner in which some of our western friends have conducted what they call the *underground railroad*, but which I think, by their open declarations, has been made most emphatically the *upper-ground railroad*. I honor those good men and women for their noble daring, and applaud them for willingly subjecting themselves to bloody persecution, by openly avowing their participation in the escape of slaves. I, however, can see very little good resulting from such a course, either to themselves or the slaves escaping; while, upon the other hand, I see and feel assured that those open declarations are a positive evil to the slaves remaining, who are seeking to escape. They do nothing towards enlightening the slave, whilst they do much towards enlightening the master. They stimulate him to greater watchfulness, and enhance his power to capture his slave. We owe something to the slave south of the line as well as to those north of it; and in aiding the latter on their way to freedom, we should be careful to do nothing which would be likely to hinder the former from escaping from slavery. I would keep the merciless slaveholder profoundly ignorant of the means of flight adopted by the slave. I would leave him to imagine himself surrounded by myriads of invisible tormentors, ever ready to snatch from his infernal grasp his trembling prey. Let him be left to feel his way in the dark; let darkness commensurate with his crime hover over him; and let him feel that at every step he takes, in pursuit of the flying bondman, he is running the frightful risk of having his hot brains dashed out by an invisible agency. Let us render the tyrant no aid; let us not hold the light by which he can trace the footprints of our flying brother. But enough of this. I will now proceed to the statement of those facts, connected with my escape, for which I am alone responsible, and for which no one can be made to suffer but myself.

In the early part of the year 1838, I became quite restless. I could see no reason why I should, at the end of each week, pour the reward of my toil into the purse of my master. When I carried to him my weekly wages, he would, after counting the money, look me in the face with a robber-like fierceness, and ask, "Is this all?" He was satisfied with nothing less than the last cent. He would, however, when I made him six dollars, sometimes give me six cents, to encourage me. It had the opposite effect. I regarded it as a sort of admission of my right to the whole. The fact that he gave me any part of my wages was proof, to my mind, that he believed me entitled to the whole of them. I always felt worse for having received any thing; for I feared that the giving me a few cents would ease his conscience, and make him feel himself to be a pretty honorable sort of robber. My discontent grew upon me. I was ever on the look-out for means of escape; and, finding no direct means, I determined to try to hire my time, with a view of getting money with which to make my escape. In the spring of 1838, when Master Thomas came to Baltimore to purchase his spring goods, I got an opportunity, and applied to him to allow me to hire my time. He unhesitatingly refused my request, and told me this was another stratagem by which to escape. He told me I could go nowhere but that he could get me; and that, in the event of my running away, he should spare no pains in his efforts to catch me. He exhorted me to content myself, and be obedient. He told me, if I would be happy, I must lay out no plans for the future. He said, if I behaved myself properly, he would take care of me. Indeed, he advised me to complete thoughtlessness of the future, and taught me to depend solely upon him for happiness. He seemed to see fully the pressing necessity of setting aside my intellectual nature, in order to contentment in slavery. But in

spite of him, and even in spite of myself, I continued to think, and to think about the injustice of my enslavement, and the means of escape.

About two months after this, I applied to Master Hugh for the privilege of hiring my time. He was not acquainted with the fact that I had applied to Master Thomas, and had been refused. He too, at first, seemed disposed to refuse; but, after some reflection, he granted me the privilege, and proposed the following terms: I was to be allowed all my time, make all contracts with those for whom I worked, and find my own employment; and, in return for this liberty, I was to pay him three dollars at the end of each week; find myself in calking tools, and in board and clothing. My board was two dollars and a half per week. This, with the wear and tear of clothing and calking tools, made my regular expenses about six dollars per week. This amount I was compelled to make up, or relinquish the privilege of hiring my time. Rain or shine, work or no work, at the end of each week the money must be forthcoming, or I must give up my privilege. This arrangement, it will be perceived, was decidedly in my master's favor. It relieved him of all need of looking after me. His money was sure. He received all the benefits of slaveholding without its evils; while I endured all the evils of a slave, and suffered all the care and anxiety of a freeman. I found it a hard bargain. But, hard as it was, I thought it better than the old mode of getting along. It was a step towards freedom to be allowed to bear the responsibilities of a freeman, and I was determined to hold on upon it. I bent myself to the work of making money. I was ready to work at night as well as day, and by the most untiring perseverance and industry, I made enough to meet my expenses, and lay up a little money every week. I went on thus from May till August. Master Hugh then refused to allow me to hire my time longer. The ground for his refusal was a failure on my part, one Saturday night, to pay him for my week's time. This failure was occasioned by my attending a camp meeting about ten miles from Baltimore. During the week, I had entered into an engagement with a number of young friends to start from Baltimore to the camp ground early Saturday evening; and being detained by my employer, I was unable to get down to Master Hugh's without disappointing the company. I knew that Master Hugh was in no special need of the money that night. I therefore decided to go to camp meeting, and upon my return pay him the three dollars. I staid at the camp meeting one day longer than I intended when I left. But as soon as I returned, I called upon him to pay him what he considered his due. I found him very angry; he could scarce restrain his wrath. He said he had a great mind to give me a severe whipping. He wished to know how I dared go out of the city without asking his permission. I told him I hired my time and while I paid him the price which he asked for it, I did not know that I was bound to ask him when and where I should go. This reply troubled him; and, after reflecting a few moments, he turned to me, and said I should hire my time no longer; that the next thing he should know of, I would be running away. Upon the same plea, he told me to bring my tools and clothing home forthwith. I did so; but instead of seeking work, as I had been accustomed to do previously to hiring my time, I spent the whole week without the performance of a single stroke of work. I did this in retaliation. Saturday night, he called upon me as usual for my week's wages. I told him I had no wages; I had done no work that week. Here we were upon the point of coming to blows. He raved, and swore his determination to get hold of me. I did not allow myself a single word; but was resolved, if he laid the weight of his hand upon me, it should be blow for blow. He did not strike me, but told me that he would find me in constant employment in future. I thought the matter over during the next day, Sunday, and finally resolved upon the third day of September, as the day upon which I would make a second attempt to secure my freedom. I now had three weeks during which to prepare for my journey. Early on Monday morning, before Master Hugh had time to make any engagement for me, I went out and got employment of Mr. Butler, at his ship-yard near the drawbridge, upon what is called the City Block, thus making it unnecessary for him to seek employment for me. At the end of the week, I brought him between eight and nine dollars. He seemed very well pleased, and asked why I did not do the same the week before. He little knew what my plans were. My object in working steadily was to remove any suspicion he might entertain of my intent to run away; and in this I succeeded admirably. I suppose he thought I was never better satisfied with my condition than at the very time during which I was planning my escape. The second week passed, and again I carried him my full wages; and so well pleased was he, that he gave me twenty-five cents, (quite a large sum for a slaveholder to give a slave,) and bade me to make a good use of it. I told him I would.

Things went on without very smoothly indeed, but within there was trouble. It is impossible for me to describe my feelings as the time of my contemplated start drew near. I had a number of warmhearted friends in Baltimore,—friends that I loved almost as I did my life,—and the thought of being separated from them forever was painful beyond expression. It is my opinion that thousands would escape from slavery, who now remain, but for the strong cords of affection that bind them to their friends. The thought of leaving my friends was decidedly the most painful thought with which I had to contend. The love of them was my tender point, and shook my decision more than all things else. Besides the pain of separation, the dread and apprehension of a

failure exceeded what I had experienced at my first attempt. The appalling defeat I then sustained returned to torment me. I felt assured that, if I failed in this attempt, my case would be a hopeless one—it would seal my fate as a slave forever. I could not hope to get off with any thing less than the severest punishment, and being placed beyond the means of escape. It required no very vivid imagination to depict the most frightful scenes through which I should have to pass, in case I failed. The wretchedness of slavery, and the blessedness of freedom, were perpetually before me. It was life and death with me. But I remained firm, and, according to my resolution, on the third day of September, 1838, I left my chains, and succeeded in reaching New York without the slightest interruption of any kind. How I did so,—what means I adopted,—what direction I travelled, and by what mode of conveyance,—I must leave unexplained, for the reasons before mentioned.

I have been frequently asked how I felt when I found myself in a free State. I have never been able to answer the question with any satisfaction to myself. It was a moment of the highest excitement I ever experienced. I suppose I felt as one may imagine the unarmed mariner to feel when he is rescued by a friendly man-of-war from the pursuit of a pirate. In writing to a dear friend, immediately after my arrival at New York, I said I felt like one who had escaped a den of hungry lions. This state of mind, however, very soon subsided; and I was again seized with a feeling of great insecurity and loneliness. I was yet liable to be taken back, and subjected to all the tortures of slavery. This in itself was enough to damp the ardor of my enthusiasm. But the loneliness overcame me. There I was in the midst of thousands, and yet a perfect stranger; without home and without friends, in the midst of thousands of my own brethren—children of a common Father, and yet I dared not to unfold to any one of them my sad condition. I was afraid to speak to any one for fear of speaking to the wrong one, and thereby falling into the hands of money-loving kidnappers, whose business it was to lie in wait for the panting fugitive, as the ferocious beasts of the forest lie in wait for their prey. The motto which I adopted when I started from slavery was this—"Trust no man!" I saw in every white man an enemy, and in almost every colored man cause for distrust. It was a most painful situation; and, to understand it, one must needs experience it, or imagine himself in similar circumstances. Let him be a fugitive slave in a strange land—a land given up to be the hunting-ground for slaveholders—whose inhabitants are legalized kidnappers—where he is every moment subjected to the terrible liability of being seized upon by his fellowmen, as the hideous crocodile seizes upon his prey!—I say, let him place himself in my situation—without home or friends—without money or credit—wanting shelter, and no one to give it—wanting bread, and no money to buy it,—and at the same time let him feel that he is pursued by merciless men-hunters, and in total darkness as to what to do, where to go, or where to stay,—perfectly helpless both as to the means of defence and means of escape,—in the midst of plenty, yet suffering the terrible gnawings of hunger,—in the midst of houses, yet having no home,—among fellow-men, yet feeling as if in the midst of wild beasts, whose greediness to swallow up the trembling and half-famished fugitive is only equalled by that with which the monsters of the deep swallow up the helpless fish upon which they subsist,—I say, let him be placed in this most trying situation,—the situation in which I was placed,—then, and not till then, will he fully appreciate the hardships of, and know how to sympathize with, the toil-worn and whip-scarred fugitive slave.

Thank Heaven, I remained but a short time in this distressed situation. I was relieved from it by the humane hand of *Mr. David Ruggles*, whose vigilance, kindness, and perseverance, I shall never forget. I am glad of an opportunity to express, as far as words can, the love and gratitude I bear him. Mr. Ruggles is now afflicted with blindness, and is himself in need of the same kind offices which he was once so forward in the performance of toward others. I had been in New York but a few days, when Mr. Ruggles sought me out, and very kindly took me to his boarding-house at the corner of Church and Lespenard Streets. Mr. Ruggles was then very deeply engaged in the memorable *Darg* case, as well as attending to a number of other fugitive slaves, devising ways and means for their successful escape; and, though watched and hemmed in on almost every side, he seemed to be more than a match for his enemies.

Very soon after I went to Mr. Ruggles, he wished to know of me where I wanted to go; as he deemed it unsafe for me to remain in New York. I told him I was a calker, and should like to go where I could get work. I thought of going to Canada; but he decided against it, and in favor of my going to New Bedford, thinking I should be able to get work there at my trade. At this time, Anna,* my intended wife, came on; for I wrote to her immediately after my arrival at New York, (notwithstanding my homeless, houseless, and helpless condition,) informing her of my successful flight, and wishing her to come on forthwith. In a few days after her arrival, Mr. Ruggles called in the Rev. J. W. C. Pennington, who, in the presence of Mr. Ruggles, Mrs. Michaels, and two or three others, performed the marriage ceremony, and gave us a certificate, of which the following is an exact copy:—

> *"This may certify, that I joined together*
> *Johnson** and Anna Murray, as man and wif*
> *Ruggles and Mrs. Michaels.*

> *"JAMES W. C. PENNINGTON*
> *"New York, Sept. 15, 1838"*
>
> **She was free.*
>
> ***I had changed my name from Fr*
> *Johnson.*

Upon receiving this certificate, and a five-dollar bill from Mr. Ruggles, I shouldered one part of our baggage, and Anna took up the other, and we set out forthwith to take passage on board of the steamboat John W. Richmond for Newport, on our way to New Bedford. Mr. Ruggles gave me a letter to a Mr. Shaw in Newport, and told me, in case my money did not serve me to New Bedford, to stop in Newport and obtain further assistance; but upon our arrival at Newport, we were so anxious to get to a place of safety, that, notwithstanding we lacked the necessary money to pay our fare, we decided to take seats in the stage, and promise to pay when we got to New Bedford. We were encouraged to do this by two excellent gentlemen, residents of New Bedford, whose names I afterward ascertained to be Joseph Ricketson and William C. Taber. They seemed at once to understand our circumstances, and gave us such assurance of their friendliness as put us fully at ease in their presence.

It was good indeed to meet with such friends, at such a time. Upon reaching New Bedford, we were directed to the house of Mr. Nathan Johnson, by whom we were kindly received, and hospitably provided for. Both Mr. and Mrs. Johnson took a deep and lively interest in our welfare. They proved themselves quite worthy of the name of abolitionists. When the stage-driver found us unable to pay our fare, he held on upon our baggage as security for the debt. I had but to mention the fact to Mr. Johnson, and he forthwith advanced the money.

We now began to feel a degree of safety, and to prepare ourselves for the duties and responsibilities of a life of freedom. On the morning after our arrival at New Bedford, while at the breakfast-table, the question arose as to what name I should be called by. The name given me by my mother was, "Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey." I, however, had dispensed with the two middle names long before I left Maryland so that I was generally known by the name of "Frederick Bailey." I started from Baltimore bearing the name of "Stanley." When I got to New York, I again changed my name to "Frederick Johnson," and thought that would be the last change. But when I got to New Bedford, I found it necessary again to change my name. The reason of this necessity was, that there were so many Johnsons in New Bedford, it was already quite difficult to distinguish between them. I gave Mr. Johnson the privilege of choosing me a name, but told him he must not take from me the name of "Frederick." I must hold on to that, to preserve a sense of my identity. Mr. Johnson had just been reading the "Lady of the Lake," and at once suggested that my name be "Douglass." From that time until now I have been called "Frederick Douglass;" and as I am more widely known by that name than by either of the others, I shall continue to use it as my own.

I was quite disappointed at the general appearance of things in New Bedford. The impression which I had received respecting the character and condition of the people of the north, I found to be singularly erroneous. I had very strangely supposed, while in slavery, that few of the comforts, and scarcely any of the luxuries, of life were enjoyed at the north, compared with what were enjoyed by the slaveholders of the south. I probably came to this conclusion from the fact that northern people owned no slaves. I supposed that they were about upon a level with the non-slaveholding population of the south. I knew *they* were exceedingly poor, and I had been accustomed to regard their poverty as the necessary consequence of their being non-slaveholders. I had somehow imbibed the opinion that, in the absence of slaves, there could be no wealth, and very little refinement. And upon coming to the north, I expected to meet with a rough, hard-handed, and uncultivated population, living in the most Spartan-like simplicity, knowing nothing of the ease, luxury, pomp, and grandeur of southern slaveholders. Such being my conjectures, any one acquainted with the appearance of New Bedford may very readily infer how palpably I must have seen my mistake.

In the afternoon of the day when I reached New Bedford, I visited the wharves, to take a view of the shipping. Here I found myself surrounded with the strongest proofs of wealth. Lying at the wharves, and riding in the stream, I saw many ships of the finest model, in the best order, and of the largest size. Upon the right and left, I was walled in by granite warehouses of the widest dimensions, stowed to their utmost capacity with the necessaries and comforts of life. Added to this, almost every body seemed to be at work, but noiselessly so, compared with what I had been accustomed to in Baltimore. There were no loud songs heard from those engaged in loading and unloading ships. I heard no deep oaths or horrid curses on the laborer. I saw no whipping of men; but all seemed to go smoothly on. Every man appeared to understand his work, and went at it with a sober, yet cheerful earnestness, which betokened the deep interest which he felt in what he was doing, as well as a sense of his own dignity as a man. To me this looked exceedingly strange. From the wharves I strolled around and over the town, gazing with wonder and admiration at the splendid churches, beautiful dwellings, and finely-cultivated gardens; evincing an

amount of wealth, comfort, taste, and refinement, such as I had never seen in any part of slaveholding Maryland.

Every thing looked clean, new, and beautiful. I saw few or no dilapidated houses, with poverty-stricken inmates; no half-naked children and barefooted women, such as I had been accustomed to see in Hillsborough, Easton, St. Michael's, and Baltimore. The people looked more able, stronger, healthier, and happier, than those of Maryland. I was for once made glad by a view of extreme wealth, without being saddened by seeing extreme poverty. But the most astonishing as well as the most interesting thing to me was the condition of the colored people, a great many of whom, like myself, had escaped thither as a refuge from the hunters of men. I found many, who had not been seven years out of their chains, living in finer houses, and evidently enjoying more of the comforts of life, than the average of slaveholders in Maryland. I will venture to assert, that my friend Mr. Nathan Johnson (of whom I can say with a grateful heart, "I was hungry, and he gave me meat; I was thirsty, and he gave me drink; I was a stranger, and he took me in") lived in a neater house; dined at a better table; took, paid for, and read, more newspapers; better understood the moral, religious, and political character of the nation,—than nine tenths of the slaveholders in Talbot county Maryland. Yet Mr. Johnson was a working man. His hands were hardened by toil, and not his alone, but those also of Mrs. Johnson. I found the colored people much more spirited than I had supposed they would be. I found among them a determination to protect each other from the blood-thirsty kidnapper, at all hazards. Soon after my arrival, I was told of a circumstance which illustrated their spirit. A colored man and a fugitive slave were on unfriendly terms. The former was heard to threaten the latter with informing his master of his whereabouts. Straightway a meeting was called among the colored people, under the stereotyped notice, "Business of importance!" The betrayer was invited to attend. The people came at the appointed hour, and organized the meeting by appointing a very religious old gentleman as president, who, I believe, made a prayer, after which he addressed the meeting as follows: "*Friends, we have got him here, and I would recommend that you young men just take him outside the door, and kill him!*" With this, a number of them bolted at him; but they were intercepted by some more timid than themselves, and the betrayer escaped their vengeance, and has not been seen in New Bedford since. I believe there have been no more such threats, and should there be hereafter, I doubt not that death would be the consequence.

I found employment, the third day after my arrival, in stowing a sloop with a load of oil. It was new, dirty, and hard work for me; but I went at it with a glad heart and a willing hand. I was now my own master. It was a happy moment, the rapture of which can be understood only by those who have been slaves. It was the first work, the reward of which was to be entirely my own. There was no Master Hugh standing ready, the moment I earned the money, to rob me of it. I worked that day with a pleasure I had never before experienced. I was at work for myself and newly-married wife. It was to me the starting-point of a new existence. When I got through with that job, I went in pursuit of a job of calking; but such was the strength of prejudice against color, among the white calkers, that they refused to work with me, and of course I could get no employment.*

> * I am told that colored persons car
> calking in New Bedford—a result of a

Finding my trade of no immediate benefit, I threw off my calking habiliments, and prepared myself to do any kind of work I could get to do. Mr. Johnson kindly let me have his wood-horse and saw, and I very soon found myself a plenty of work. There was no work too hard—none too dirty. I was ready to saw wood, shovel coal, carry wood, sweep the chimney, or roll oil casks,—all of which I did for nearly three years in New Bedford, before I became known to the anti-slavery world.

In about four months after I went to New Bedford, there came a young man to me, and inquired if I did not wish to take the "Liberator." I told him I did; but, just having made my escape from slavery, I remarked that I was unable to pay for it then. I, however, finally became a subscriber to it. The paper came, and I read it from week to week with such feelings as it would be quite idle for me to attempt to describe. The paper became my meat and my drink. My soul was set all on fire. Its sympathy for my brethren in bonds—its scathing denunciations of slaveholders—its faithful exposures of slavery—and its powerful attacks upon the upholders of the institution—sent a thrill of joy through my soul, such as I had never felt before!

I had not long been a reader of the "Liberator," before I got a pretty correct idea of the principles, measures and spirit of the anti-slavery reform. I took right hold of the cause. I could do but little; but what I could, I did with a joyful heart, and never felt happier than when in an anti-slavery meeting. I seldom had much to say at the meetings, because what I wanted to say was said so much better by others. But, while attending an anti-slavery convention at Nantucket, on the 11th of August, 1841, I felt strongly moved to speak, and was at the same time much urged to do so by Mr. William C. Coffin, a gentleman who had heard me speak in the colored people's meeting at New Bedford. It was a severe cross, and I took it up reluctantly. The truth was, I felt myself a slave, and the idea of speaking to white people weighed me down. I spoke but a few moments, when I felt a degree of freedom, and said what I desired with considerable

ease. From that time until now, I have been engaged in pleading the cause of my brethren—with what success, and with what devotion, I leave those acquainted with my labors to decide.

APPENDIX

I find, since reading over the foregoing Narrative, that I have, in several instances, spoken in such a tone and manner, respecting religion, as may possibly lead those unacquainted with my religious views to suppose me an opponent of all religion. To remove the liability of such misapprehension, I deem it proper to append the following brief explanation. What I have said respecting and against religion, I mean strictly to apply to the *slaveholding religion* of this land, and with no possible reference to Christianity proper; for, between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference—so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. To be the friend of the one, is of necessity to be the enemy of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land. Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity. I look upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels. Never was there a clearer case of "stealing the livery of the court of heaven to serve the devil in." I am filled with unutterable loathing when I contemplate the religious pomp and show, together with the horrible inconsistencies, which every where surround me. We have men-stealers for ministers, women-whippers for missionaries, and cradle-plunderers for church members. The man who wields the blood-clotted cowskin during the week fills the pulpit on Sunday, and claims to be a minister of the meek and lowly Jesus. The man who robs me of my earnings at the end of each week meets me as a class-leader on Sunday morning, to show me the way of life, and the path of salvation. He who sells my sister, for purposes of prostitution, stands forth as the pious advocate of purity. He who proclaims it a religious duty to read the Bible denies me the right of learning to read the name of the God who made me. He who is the religious advocate of marriage robs whole millions of its sacred influence, and leaves them to the ravages of wholesale pollution. The warm defender of the sacredness of the family relation is the same that scatters whole families,—sundering husbands and wives, parents and children, sisters and brothers, —leaving the hut vacant, and the hearth desolate. We see the thief preaching against theft, and the adulterer against adultery. We have men sold to build churches, women sold to support the gospel, and babes sold to purchase Bibles for the *Poor Heathen! All For The Glory Of God And The Good Of Souls!* The slave auctioneer's bell and the church-going bell chime in with each other, and the bitter cries of the heart-broken slave are drowned in the religious shouts of his pious master. Revivals of religion and revivals in the slave-trade go hand in hand together. The slave prison and the church stand near each other. The clanking of fetters and the rattling of chains in the prison, and the pious psalm and solemn prayer in the church, may be heard at the same time. The dealers in the bodies and souls of men erect their stand in the presence of the pulpit, and they mutually help each other. The dealer gives his blood-stained gold to support the pulpit, and the pulpit, in return, covers his infernal business with the garb of Christianity. Here we have religion and robbery the allies of each other—devils dressed in angels' robes, and hell presenting the semblance of paradise.

> *"Just God! and these are they,*
> *Who minister at thine altar, God of*
> *Men who their hands, with prayer and*
> *On Israel's ark of light.*
>
> *"What! preach, and kidnap men?*
> *Give thanks, and rob thy own afflict*
> *Talk of thy glorious liberty, and th*
> *Bolt hard the captive's door?*
>
> *"What! servants of thy own*
> *Merciful Son, who came to seek and s*
> *The homeless and the outcast, fetter*
> *The tasked and plundered slave!*
>
> *"Pilate and Herod friends!*
> *Chief priests and rulers, as of old,*
> *Just God and holy! is that church wh*
> *Strength to the spoiler thine?"*

The Christianity of America is a Christianity, of whose votaries it may be as truly said, as it was of the ancient scribes and Pharisees, "They bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. All their works they do for to be seen of men.—They love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, ... and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.—But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and

when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.—Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides! which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but within, they are full of extortion and excess.—Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Dark and terrible as is this picture, I hold it to be strictly true of the overwhelming mass of professed Christians in America. They strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Could any thing be more true of our churches? They would be shocked at the proposition of fellowshipping a *sheep*-stealer; and at the same time they hug to their communion a *man*-stealer, and brand me with being an infidel, if I find fault with them for it. They attend with Pharisaical strictness to the outward forms of religion, and at the same time neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. They are always ready to sacrifice, but seldom to show mercy. They are they who are represented as professing to love God whom they have not seen, whilst they hate their brother whom they have seen. They love the heathen on the other side of the globe. They can pray for him, pay money to have the Bible put into his hand, and missionaries to instruct him; while they despise and totally neglect the heathen at their own doors.

Such is, very briefly, my view of the religion of this land; and to avoid any misunderstanding, growing out of the use of general terms, I mean by the religion of this land, that which is revealed in the words, deeds, and actions, of those bodies, north and south, calling themselves Christian churches, and yet in union with slaveholders. It is against religion, as presented by these bodies, that I have felt it my duty to testify.

I conclude these remarks by copying the following portrait of the religion of the south, (which is, by communion and fellowship, the religion of the north,) which I soberly affirm is "true to the life," and without caricature or the slightest exaggeration. It is said to have been drawn, several years before the present anti-slavery agitation began, by a northern Methodist preacher, who, while residing at the south, had an opportunity to see slaveholding morals, manners, and piety, with his own eyes. "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

A PARODY

"Come, saints and sinners, hear me t
How pious priests whip Jack and Nell
And women buy and children sell,
And preach all sinners down to hell,
And sing of heavenly union.

"They'll bleat and baa, dona like go
Gorge down black sheep, and strain a
Array their backs in fine black coat
Then seize their negroes by their th
And choke, for heavenly union.

"They'll church you if you sip a dra
And damn you if you steal a lamb;
Yet rob old Tony, Doll, and Sam,
Of human rights, and bread and ham;
Kidnapper's heavenly union.

"They'll loudly talk of Christ's rew
And bind his image with a cord,
And scold, and swing the lash abhorr
And sell their brother in the Lord
To handcuffed heavenly union.

"They'll read and sing a sacred song
And make a prayer both loud and long
And teach the right and do the wrong
Hailing the brother, sister throng,
With words of heavenly union.

"We wonder how such saints can sing,
Or praise the Lord upon the wing,
Who roar, and scold, and whip, and s
And to their slaves and mammon cling
In guilty conscience union.

"They'll raise tobacco, corn, and ry
And drive, and thieve, and cheat, ar
And lay up treasures in the sky,
By making switch and cowskin fly,
In hope of heavenly union.

"They'll crack old Tony on the skull
And preach and roar like Bashan bull

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Or braying ass, of mischief full,
Then seize old Jacob by the wool,
And pull for heavenly union.

"A roaring, ranting, sleek man-thief
Who lived on mutton, veal, and beef,
Yet never would afford relief
To needy, sable sons of grief,
Was big with heavenly union.

"'Love not the world,' the preacher
And winked his eye, and shook his he
He seized on Tom, and Dick, and Ned,
Cut short their meat, and clothes, a
Yet still loved heavenly union.

"Another preacher whining spoke
Of One whose heart for sinners broke
He tied old Nanny to an oak,
And drew the blood at every stroke,
And prayed for heavenly union.

"Two others oped their iron jaws,
And waved their children-stealing pa
There sat their children in gewgaws;
By stinting negroes' backs and maws,
They kept up heavenly union.

"All good from Jack another takes,
And entertains their flirts and rake
Who dress as sleek as glossy snakes,
And cram their mouths with sweetened
And this goes down for union."

Sincerely and earnestly hoping that this little book may do something toward throwing light on the American slave system, and hastening the glad day of deliverance to the millions of my brethren in bonds—faithfully relying upon the power of truth, love, and justice, for success in my humble efforts—and solemnly pledging my self anew to the sacred cause,—I subscribe myself,

FREDERICK DOUGLASS.
LYNN, *Mass.*, *April* 28, 1845.

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3.6: DuBois, W.E.B. "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" from The Souls of Black Folk (1903)



Black and white photograph of W.E.B. DuBois, cofounder of the NAACP by C.M. Battey (1919). This image is in the public domain.

"Of Our Spiritual Strivings" from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

by W.E.B. DuBois

O water, voice of my heart, crying in the sand,

All night long crying with a mournful cry,

As I lie and listen, and cannot understand

The voice of my heart in my side or the voice of the sea,

O water, crying for rest, is it I, is it I?

All night long the water is crying to me.

Unresting water, there shall never be rest

Till the last moon droop and the last tide fail,

And the fire of the end begin to burn in the west;

And the heart shall be weary and wonder and cry like the sea,

All life long crying without avail,

As the water all night long is crying to me.

--ARTHUR SYMONS.

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

And yet, being a problem is a strange experience,—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe. It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. That sky was bluest when I could beat my mates at examination-time, or beat them at a foot-race, or even beat their stringy heads. Alas, with the years all this fine contempt began to fade; for the words I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine. But they should not keep these prizes, I said; some, all, I would wrest from them. Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head,—some way. With other black boys the strife was not so fiercely sunny: their youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white; or wasted itself in a bitter cry, Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house? The shades of the prison-house closed round about us all: walls strait and stubborn to the whitest, but relentlessly narrow, tall, and unscalable to sons of night who must plod darkly on in resignation, or beat unavailing palms against the stone, or steadily, half hopelessly, watch the streak of blue above.

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit

upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius. These powers of body and mind have in the past been strangely wasted, dispersed, or forgotten. The shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through the tale of Ethiopia the Shadowy and of Egypt the Sphinx. Through history, the powers of single black men flash here and there like falling stars, and die sometimes before the world has rightly gauged their brightness. Here in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man's turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness,—it is the contradiction of double aims. The double-aimed struggle of the black artisan—on the one hand to escape white contempt for a nation of mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, and on the other hand to plough and nail and dig for a poverty-stricken horde—could only result in making him a poor craftsman, for he had but half a heart in either cause. By the poverty and ignorance of his people, the Negro minister or doctor was tempted toward quackery and demagogy; and by the criticism of the other world, toward ideals that made him ashamed of his lowly tasks. The would-be black savant was confronted by the paradox that the knowledge his people needed was a twice-told tale to his white neighbors, while the knowledge which would teach the white world was Greek to his own flesh and blood. The innate love of harmony and beauty that set the ruder souls of his people a-dancing and a-singing raised but confusion and doubt in the soul of the black artist; for the beauty revealed to him was the soul-beauty of a race which his larger audience despised, and he could not articulate the message of another people. This waste of double aims, this seeking to satisfy two unreconciled ideals, has wrought sad havoc with the courage and faith and deeds of ten thousand thousand people,—has sent them often wooing false gods and invoking false means of salvation, and at times has even seemed about to make them ashamed of themselves.

Away back in the days of bondage they thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment; few men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites. In song and exhortation swelled one refrain—Liberty; in his tears and curses the God he implored had Freedom in his right hand. At last it came,—suddenly, fearfully, like a dream. With one wild carnival of blood and passion came the message in his own plaintive cadences:—

"Shout, O children!

Shout, you're free!

For God has bought your liberty!"

Years have passed away since then,—ten, twenty, forty; forty years of national life, forty years of renewal and development, and yet the swarthy spectre sits in its accustomed seat at the Nation's feast. In vain do we cry to this our vastest social problem:—

"Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves

Shall never tremble!"

The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people,—a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people.

The first decade was merely a prolongation of the vain search for freedom, the boon that seemed ever barely to elude their grasp,—like a tantalizing will-o'-the-wisp, maddening and misleading the headless host. The holocaust of war, the terrors of the Ku-Klux Klan, the lies of carpet-baggers, the disorganization of industry, and the contradictory advice of friends and foes, left the bewildered serf with no new watchword beyond the old cry for freedom. As the time flew, however, he began to grasp a new idea. The ideal of liberty demanded for its attainment powerful means, and these the Fifteenth Amendment gave him. The ballot, which before he had looked upon as a visible sign of freedom, he now regarded as the chief means of gaining and perfecting the liberty with which war had partially endowed him. And why not? Had not votes made war and emancipated millions? Had not votes enfranchised the freedmen? Was anything impossible to a power that had done all this? A million black men started with renewed zeal to vote themselves into the kingdom. So the decade flew away, the revolution of 1876 came, and left the half-free serf weary, wondering, but still inspired. Slowly but steadily, in the following years, a new vision began gradually to replace the dream of political power,—a powerful movement, the rise of another ideal to guide the unguided, another pillar of fire by night after a clouded day. It was the ideal of "book-learning"; the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance, to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know. Here at last seemed to have been discovered the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of

Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life.

Up the new path the advance guard toiled, slowly, heavily, doggedly; only those who have watched and guided the faltering feet, the misty minds, the dull understandings, of the dark pupils of these schools know how faithfully, how piteously, this people strove to learn. It was weary work. The cold statistician wrote down the inches of progress here and there, noted also where here and there a foot had slipped or some one had fallen. To the tired climbers, the horizon was ever dark, the mists were often cold, the Canaan was always dim and far away. If, however, the vistas disclosed as yet no goal, no resting-place, little but flattery and criticism, the journey at least gave leisure for reflection and self-examination; it changed the child of Emancipation to the youth with dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect. In those sombre forests of his striving his own soul rose before him, and he saw himself,—darkly as through a veil; and yet he saw in himself some faint revelation of his power, of his mission. He began to have a dim feeling that, to attain his place in the world, he must be himself, and not another. For the first time he sought to analyze the burden he bore upon his back, that dead-weight of social degradation partially masked behind a half-named Negro problem. He felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships. He felt the weight of his ignorance,—not simply of letters, but of life, of business, of the humanities; the accumulated sloth and shirking and awkwardness of decades and centuries shackled his hands and feet. Nor was his burden all poverty and ignorance. The red stain of bastardy, which two centuries of systematic legal defilement of Negro women had stamped upon his race, meant not only the loss of ancient African chastity, but also the hereditary weight of a mass of corruption from white adulterers, threatening almost the obliteration of the Negro home.

A people thus handicapped ought not to be asked to race with the world, but rather allowed to give all its time and thought to its own social problems. But alas! while sociologists gleefully count his bastards and his prostitutes, the very soul of the toiling, sweating black man is darkened by the shadow of a vast despair. Men call the shadow prejudice, and learnedly explain it as the natural defence of culture against barbarism, learning against ignorance, purity against crime, the "higher" against the "lower" races. To which the Negro cries Amen! and swears that to so much of this strange prejudice as is founded on just homage to civilization, culture, righteousness, and progress, he humbly bows and meekly does obeisance. But before that nameless prejudice that leaps beyond all this he stands helpless, dismayed, and well-nigh speechless; before that personal disrespect and mockery, the ridicule and systematic humiliation, the distortion of fact and wanton license of fancy, the cynical ignoring of the better and the boisterous welcoming of the worse, the all-pervading desire to inculcate disdain for everything black, from Toussaint to the devil,—before this there rises a sickening despair that would disarm and discourage any nation save that black host to whom "discouragement" is an unwritten word.

But the facing of so vast a prejudice could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which ever accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate. Whisperings and portents came home upon the four winds: Lo! we are diseased and dying, cried the dark hosts; we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education, since we must always cook and serve? And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men? Away with the black man's ballot, by force or fraud,—and behold the suicide of a race! Nevertheless, out of the evil came something of good,—the more careful adjustment of education to real life, the clearer perception of the Negroes' social responsibilities, and the sobering realization of the meaning of progress.

So dawned the time of Sturm und Drang: storm and stress to-day rocks our little boat on the mad waters of the world-sea; there is within and without the sound of conflict, the burning of body and rending of soul; inspiration strives with doubt, and faith with vain questionings. The bright ideals of the past,—physical freedom, political power, the training of brains and the training of hands,—all these in turn have waxed and waned, until even the last grows dim and overcast. Are they all wrong,—all false? No, not that, but each alone was over-simple and incomplete,—the dreams of a credulous race-childhood, or the fond imaginings of the other world which does not know and does not want to know our power. To be really true, all these ideals must be melted and welded into one. The training of the schools we need to-day more than ever,—the training of deft hands, quick eyes and ears, and above all the broader, deeper, higher culture of gifted minds and pure hearts. The power of the ballot we need in sheer self-defence,—else what shall save us from a second slavery? Freedom, too, the long-sought, we still seek,—the freedom of life and limb, the freedom to work and think, the freedom to love and aspire. Work, culture, liberty,—all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race;

the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic, in order that some day on American soil two world-races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack. We the darker ones come even now not altogether empty-handed: there are to-day no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes; there is no true American music but the wild sweet melodies of the Negro slave; the American fairy tales and folklore are Indian and African; and, all in all, we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness. Will America be poorer if she replace her brutal dyspeptic blundering with light-hearted but determined Negro humility? or her coarse and cruel wit with loving jovial good-humor? or her vulgar music with the soul of the Sorrow Songs?

Merely a concrete test of the underlying principles of the great republic is the Negro Problem, and the spiritual striving of the freedmen's sons is the travail of souls whose burden is almost beyond the measure of their strength, but who bear it in the name of an historic race, in the name of this the land of their fathers' fathers, and in the name of human opportunity.

And now what I have briefly sketched in large outline let me on coming pages tell again in many ways, with loving emphasis and deeper detail, that men may listen to the striving in the souls of black folk.

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3.7: Oomen, Anne-Marie "The Blue" (2018)



"Yarn Tree!" by knittinandnoodlin is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

In the end, the creatures found it. They were the ones who knew what to do.

A couple decades ago my dear friend Mimi gave me a blue sweater. Not just any blue sweater but one that had been knitted by her mother in Denmark. When her mother died, Mimi—who had gone to be with her—brought it back, and gave it to me. Open stitches, soft wool, equally soft shape—that loose pullover style meant for cuddling. And blue, a stunning, singing, deep song. Winter blue, dark sapphire blue, ah yes, Scandinavian blue.

I cherished the sweater. Each winter, I anticipated pulling it out of storage on the coldest mornings of our Michigan darkness. The warmth and color never faded; I could rely on it when things were unreliable. When I wore it, I always looked to the sky for a match, and found it finally in those clear-hued December evenings. That blue, strongest just before real dark fell.

The winter after I lost my father, I pulled the sweater off the shelf, shook it out, and was shocked and saddened to find moths had invaded. A handful of holes blinked in the weave. I mended it and wore it two more winters, but the yarn had weakened. More holes laced the knit. The sweater was done. Was that the spring I lost two more friends: one, heart attack; another, cerebral hemorrhage?

Finally, I took the blue into my arms, apologized to Mimi's mother, and threw it over the back clothesline hoping maybe the Waxwings would raid it; they like string and single strands of stuff. That sacre bleu hung all summer and early fall; no waxwings. The blue never faded, and with the first snows, it shone against the white of a thin new snow. I looked at it every morning I came to the porch, coffee in hand. Its shabby obstinacy drew my eyes.
I missed my father, my friends more than I could say.

One day, the sweater disappeared. Gone. I can't articulate the contradictions I felt. Relief—some thing had taken it at last, and loss—all over again. That swath of ultramarine had hung like a spirit friendship with a woman I never knew, but I did know because of her skill and her daughter's gift. It also stood for my lost friends. Their spirits, that blue. I studied the ground under the clothesline, scuffed through the garden, searching for the remnants. Nothing.

Later, while packing up the garden one rough-winded day, I caught sight of a blue strand. It led under the woodshed. When I dislodged an old clay pot, there, a blue tangle woven with dry leaves in a nest where a mouse or vole had kept warm. All through late fall, I found traces, a strand hooked in the wood pile, a filament caught in the window box, and once, what might have been a clump in a tree. A squirrels' nest woven blue into the cross-hatch of high-tree debris?

They were using it, but I had not seen. Like grief I suppose, eventually we weave it in, but invisibly.

Around Thanksgiving, I found what remained of the sweater in the ravine below our house. Just tatters, but identifiable. It had finally faded to the tired blue after storm. What remained fell apart in my hands; those warm mornings frayed in my fingertips. I stood on the hillside, amazed. Here was a piece of sky, now of earth, scattered by chance winds and the choices of wild creatures. What was lost? Warmth, color, connection? What was gained? A nest, a coil of new meaning, some organic fiber woven into a home. I leave it there in the wild. I'm a fool for loss, but there's also beauty: sky on a partly sunny morning, light warming the winter garden, the ecology of being human with mouse, squirrel, sweater and winter.
That deep blue dusk as dark comes on.

It's not done yet. Nearing Solstice, as we move wood out of the woodshed, I discover a phoebe nest in the eaves. Left from summer. When I pull it down to check if the nest had been a success, there, a thin filament of blue looping in the grassy bowl of emptiness. All through our woods, that blue has been knitted a second time. This is how creatures do it, making useful those faded but enduring fibers. Here, just before the year turns, I tug a single-strand from spiraled grasses. I let it catch the wind. Here's what matters, the way this cast-off never fully decays, the way friendship lives on in memory, and then becomes sacred in its adaptive use—blue thread still linking an endless sky to a battered but vital earth.

Anne-Marie Oomen is author of *Lake Michigan Mermaid* with Linda Nemec Foster (Michigan Notable Book for 2018), *Love, Sex and 4-H* (Next Generation Indie Award for Memoir), *Pulling Down the Barn* (Michigan Notable Book); and *Uncoded Woman* (poetry), among others. She edited *ELEMENTAL: A Collection of Michigan Nonfiction*. She teaches at Solstice MFA at Pine Manor College (MA), Interlochen's College of Creative Arts (MI), and at conferences throughout the country.



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3.8: Plato "The Allegory of the Cave" excerpt from The Republic (360 BC)

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3.9: Sun Tzu. The Art of War (5th Century B.C.)

Translated from the Chinese
By LIONEL GILES, M.A. (1910)

I. LAYING PLANS

1. Sun Tzu said: The art of war is of vital importance to the State.

2. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected.

3. The art of war, then, is governed by five constant factors, to be taken into account in one's deliberations, when seeking to determine the conditions obtaining in the field.

4. These are: (1) The Moral Law; (2) Heaven; (3) Earth; (4) The Commander; (5) Method and discipline.

5,6. The Moral Law causes the people to be in complete accord with their ruler, so that they will follow him regardless of their lives, undismayed by any danger.

7. Heaven signifies night and day, cold and heat, times and seasons.

8. Earth comprises distances, great and small; danger and security; open ground and narrow passes; the chances of life and death.

9. The Commander stands for the virtues of wisdom, sincerity, benevolence, courage and strictness.

10. By method and discipline are to be understood the marshaling of the army in its proper subdivisions, the graduations of rank among the officers, the maintenance of roads by which supplies may reach the army, and the control of military expenditure.

11. These five heads should be familiar to every general: he who knows them will be victorious; he who knows them not will fail.

12. Therefore, in your deliberations, when seeking to determine the military conditions, let them be made the basis of a comparison, in this wise:--

13. (1) Which of the two sovereigns is imbued with the Moral law?
(2) Which of the two generals has most ability?
(3) With whom lie the advantages derived from Heaven and Earth?
(4) On which side is discipline most rigorously enforced?
(5) Which army is stronger?
(6) On which side are officers and men more highly trained?
(7) In which army is there the greater constancy both in reward and punishment?

14. By means of these seven considerations I can forecast victory or defeat.

15. The general that hearkens to my counsel and acts upon it, will conquer: let such a one be retained in command! The general that hearkens not to my counsel nor acts upon it, will suffer defeat:--let such a one be dismissed!

16. While heading the profit of my counsel, avail yourself also of any helpful circumstances over and beyond the ordinary rules.

17. According as circumstances are favorable, one should modify one's plans.

18. All warfare is based on deception.

19. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near.

20. Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and crush him.

21. If he is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If he is in superior strength, evade him.

22. If your opponent is of choleric temper, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant.

23. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest. If his forces are united, separate them.

24. Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected.

25. These military devices, leading to victory, must not be divulged beforehand.

26. Now the general who wins a battle makes many calculations in his temple ere the battle is fought. The general who loses a battle makes but few calculations beforehand. Thus do many calculations lead to victory, and few calculations to defeat: how much more no calculation at all! It is by attention to this point that I can foresee who is likely to win or lose.

II. WAGING WAR

1. Sun Tzu said: In the operations of war, where there are in the field a thousand swift chariots, as many heavy chariots, and a hundred thousand mail-clad soldiers, with provisions enough to carry them a thousand li, the expenditure at home and at the front, including entertainment of guests, small items such as glue and paint, and sums spent on chariots and armor, will reach the total of a thousand ounces of silver per day. Such is the cost of raising an army of 100,000 men.

2. When you engage in actual fighting, if victory is long in coming, then men's weapons will grow dull and their ardor will be damped. If you lay siege to a town, you will exhaust your strength.

3. Again, if the campaign is protracted, the resources of the State will not be equal to the strain.

4. Now, when your weapons are dulled, your ardor damped, your strength exhausted and your treasure spent, other chieftains will spring up to take advantage of your extremity. Then no man, however wise, will be able to avert the consequences that must ensue.

5. Thus, though we have heard of stupid haste in war, cleverness has never been seen associated with long delays.

6. There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare.

7. It is only one who is thoroughly acquainted with the evils of war that can thoroughly understand the profitable way of carrying it on.

8. The skillful soldier does not raise a second levy, neither are his supply-wagons loaded more than twice.

9. Bring war material with you from home, but forage on the enemy. Thus the army will have food enough for its needs.

10. Poverty of the State exchequer causes an army to be maintained by contributions from a distance. Contributing to maintain an army at a distance causes the people to be impoverished.

11. On the other hand, the proximity of an army causes prices to go up; and high prices cause the people's substance to be drained away.

12. When their substance is drained away, the peasantry will be afflicted by heavy exactions.

13,14. With this loss of substance and exhaustion of strength, the homes of the people will be stripped bare, and three-tenths of their income will be dissipated; while government expenses for broken chariots, worn-out horses, breast-plates and helmets, bows and arrows, spears and shields, protective mantles, draught-oxen and heavy wagons, will amount to four-tenths of its total revenue.

15. Hence a wise general makes a point of foraging on the enemy. One cartload of the enemy's provisions is equivalent to twenty of one's own, and likewise a single picul of his provender is equivalent to twenty from one's own store.

16. Now in order to kill the enemy, our men must be roused to anger; that there may be advantage from defeating the enemy, they must have their rewards.

17. Therefore in chariot fighting, when ten or more chariots have been taken, those should be rewarded who took the first. Our own flags should be substituted for those of the enemy, and the chariots mingled and used in conjunction with ours. The captured soldiers should be kindly treated and kept.

18. This is called, using the conquered foe to augment one's own strength.

19. In war, then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns.

20. Thus it may be known that the leader of armies is the arbiter of the people's fate, the man on whom it depends whether the nation shall be in peace or in peril.

III. ATTACK BY STRATAGEM

1. Sun Tzu said: In the practical art of war, the best thing of all is to take the enemy's country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good. So, too, it is better to recapture an army entire than to destroy it, to capture a regiment, a detachment or a company entire than to destroy them.

2. Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.

3. Thus the highest form of generalship is to balk the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.

4. The rule is, not to besiege walled cities if it can possibly be avoided. The preparation of mantlets, movable shelters, and various implements of war, will take up three whole months; and the piling up of mounds over against the walls will take three months more.

5. The general, unable to control his irritation, will launch his men to the assault like swarming ants, with the result that one-third of his men are slain, while the town still remains untaken. Such are the disastrous effects of a siege.

6. Therefore the skillful leader subdues the enemy's troops without any fighting; he captures their cities without laying siege to them; he overthrows their kingdom without lengthy operations in the field.

7. With his forces intact he will dispute the mastery of the Empire, and thus, without losing a man, his triumph will be complete. This is the method of attacking by stratagem.

8. It is the rule in war, if our forces are ten to the enemy's one, to surround him; if five to one, to attack him; if twice as numerous, to divide our army into two.

9. If equally matched, we can offer battle; if slightly inferior in numbers, we can avoid the enemy; if quite unequal in every way, we can flee from him.

10. Hence, though an obstinate fight may be made by a small force, in the end it must be captured by the larger force.

11. Now the general is the bulwark of the State; if the bulwark is complete at all points; the State will be strong; if the bulwark is defective, the State will be weak.

12. There are three ways in which a ruler can bring misfortune upon his army:--

13. (1) By commanding the army to advance or to retreat, being ignorant of the fact that it cannot obey. This is called hobbling the army.

14. (2) By attempting to govern an army in the same way as he administers a kingdom, being ignorant of the conditions which obtain in an army. This causes restlessness in the soldier's minds.

15. (3) By employing the officers of his army without discrimination, through ignorance of the military principle of adaptation to circumstances. This shakes the confidence of the soldiers.

16. But when the army is restless and distrustful, trouble is sure to come from the other feudal princes. This is simply bringing anarchy into the army, and flinging victory away.

17. Thus we may know that there are five essentials for victory:
(1) He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight.
(2) He will win who knows how to handle both superior and inferior forces.
(3) He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all its ranks.
(4) He will win who, prepared himself, waits to take the enemy unprepared.
(5) He will win who has military capacity and is not interfered with by the sovereign.

18. Hence the saying: If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.

IV. TACTICAL DISPOSITIONS

1. Sun Tzu said: The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy.

2. To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself.

3. Thus the good fighter is able to secure himself against defeat, but cannot make certain of defeating the enemy.

4. Hence the saying: One may know how to conquer without being able to do it.

5. Security against defeat implies defensive tactics; ability to defeat the enemy means taking the offensive.

6. Standing on the defensive indicates insufficient strength; attacking, a superabundance of strength.

7. The general who is skilled in defense hides in the most secret recesses of the earth; he who is skilled in attack flashes forth from the topmost heights of heaven. Thus on the one hand we have ability to protect ourselves; on the other, a victory that is complete.

8. To see victory only when it is within the ken of the common herd is not the acme of excellence.

9. Neither is it the acme of excellence if you fight and conquer and the whole Empire says, "Well done!"

10. To lift an autumn hair is no sign of great strength; to see the sun and moon is no sign of sharp sight; to hear the noise of thunder is no sign of a quick ear.

11. What the ancients called a clever fighter is one who not only wins, but excels in winning with ease.

12. Hence his victories bring him neither reputation for wisdom nor credit for courage.

13. He wins his battles by making no mistakes. Making no mistakes is what establishes the certainty of victory, for it means conquering an enemy that is already defeated.

14. Hence the skillful fighter puts himself into a position which makes defeat impossible, and does not miss the moment for defeating the enemy.

15. Thus it is that in war the victorious strategist only seeks battle after the victory has been won, whereas he who is destined to defeat first fights and afterwards looks for victory.

16. The consummate leader cultivates the moral law, and strictly adheres to method and discipline; thus it is in his power to control success.

17. In respect of military method, we have, firstly, Measurement; secondly, Estimation of quantity; thirdly, Calculation; fourthly, Balancing of chances; fifthly, Victory.

18. Measurement owes its existence to Earth; Estimation of quantity to Measurement; Calculation to Estimation of quantity; Balancing of chances to Calculation; and Victory to Balancing of chances.

19. A victorious army opposed to a routed one, is as a pound's weight placed in the scale against a single grain.

20. The onrush of a conquering force is like the bursting of pent-up waters into a chasm a thousand fathoms deep.

V. ENERGY

1. Sun Tzu said: The control of a large force is the same principle as the control of a few men: it is merely a question of dividing up their numbers.

2. Fighting with a large army under your command is nowise different from fighting with a small one: it is merely a question of

instituting signs and signals.

3. To ensure that your whole host may withstand the brunt of the enemy's attack and remain unshaken-- this is effected by maneuvers direct and indirect.

4. That the impact of your army may be like a grindstone dashed against an egg--this is effected by the science of weak points and strong.

5. In all fighting, the direct method may be used for joining battle, but indirect methods will be needed in order to secure victory.

6. Indirect tactics, efficiently applied, are inexhaustible as Heaven and Earth, unending as the flow of rivers and streams; like the sun and moon, they end but to begin anew; like the four seasons, they pass away to return once more.

7. There are not more than five musical notes, yet the combinations of these five give rise to more melodies than can ever be heard.

8. There are not more than five primary colors (blue, yellow, red, white, and black), yet in combination they produce more hues than can ever been seen.

9. There are not more than five cardinal tastes (sour, acrid, salt, sweet, bitter), yet combinations of them yield more flavors than can ever be tasted.

10. In battle, there are not more than two methods of attack--the direct and the indirect; yet these two in combination give rise to an endless series of maneuvers.

11. The direct and the indirect lead on to each other in turn. It is like moving in a circle--you never come to an end. Who can exhaust the possibilities of their combination?

12. The onset of troops is like the rush of a torrent which will even roll stones along in its course.

13. The quality of decision is like the well-timed swoop of a falcon which enables it to strike and destroy its victim.

14. Therefore the good fighter will be terrible in his onset, and prompt in his decision.

15. Energy may be likened to the bending of a crossbow; decision, to the releasing of a trigger.

16. Amid the turmoil and tumult of battle, there may be seeming disorder and yet no real disorder at all; amid confusion and chaos, your array may be without head or tail, yet it will be proof against defeat.

17. Simulated disorder postulates perfect discipline, simulated fear postulates courage; simulated weakness postulates strength.

18. Hiding order beneath the cloak of disorder is simply a question of subdivision; concealing courage under a show of timidity presupposes a fund of latent energy; masking strength with weakness is to be effected by tactical dispositions.

19. Thus one who is skillful at keeping the enemy on the move maintains deceitful appearances, according to which the enemy will act. He sacrifices something, that the enemy may snatch at it.

20. By holding out baits, he keeps him on the march; then with a body of picked men he lies in wait for him.

21. The clever combatant looks to the effect of combined energy, and does not require too much from individuals. Hence his ability to pick out the right men and utilize combined energy.

22. When he utilizes combined energy, his fighting men become as it were like unto rolling logs or stones. For it is the nature of a log or stone to remain motionless on level ground, and to move when on a slope; if four-cornered, to come to a standstill, but if round-shaped, to go rolling down.

23. Thus the energy developed by good fighting men is as the momentum of a round stone rolled down a mountain thousands of feet in height. So much on the subject of energy.

VI. WEAK POINTS AND STRONG

1. Sun Tzu said: Whoever is first in the field and awaits the coming of the enemy, will be fresh for the fight; whoever is second in the field and has to hasten to battle will arrive exhausted.

2. Therefore the clever combatant imposes his will on the enemy, but does not allow the enemy's will to be imposed on him.

3. By holding out advantages to him, he can cause the enemy to approach of his own accord; or, by inflicting damage, he can make it impossible for the enemy to draw near.

4. If the enemy is taking his ease, he can harass him; if well supplied with food, he can starve him out; if quietly encamped, he can force him to move.

5. Appear at points which the enemy must hasten to defend; march swiftly to places where you are not expected.

6. An army may march great distances without distress, if it marches through country where the enemy is not.

7. You can be sure of succeeding in your attacks if you only attack places which are undefended.You can ensure the safety of your defense if you only hold positions that cannot be attacked.

8. Hence that general is skillful in attack whose opponent does not know what to defend; and he is skillful in defense whose opponent does not know what to attack.

9. O divine art of subtlety and secrecy! Through you we learn to be invisible, through you inaudible; and hence we can hold the enemy's fate in our hands.

10. You may advance and be absolutely irresistible, if you make for the enemy's weak points; you may retire and be safe from pursuit if your movements are more rapid than those of the enemy.

11. If we wish to fight, the enemy can be forced to an engagement even though he be sheltered behind a high rampart and a deep ditch. All we need do is attack some other place that he will be obliged to relieve.

12. If we do not wish to fight, we can prevent the enemy from engaging us even though the lines of our encampment be merely traced out on the ground. All we need do is to throw something odd and unaccountable in his way.

13. By discovering the enemy's dispositions and remaining invisible ourselves, we can keep our forces concentrated, while the enemy's must be divided.

14. We can form a single united body, while the enemy must split up into fractions. Hence there will be a whole pitted against separate parts of a whole, which means that we shall be many to the enemy's few.

15. And if we are able thus to attack an inferior force with a superior one, our opponents will be in dire straits.

16. The spot where we intend to fight must not be made known; for then the enemy will have to prepare against a possible attack at several different points; and his forces being thus distributed in many directions, the numbers we shall have to face at any given point will be proportionately few.

17. For should the enemy strengthen his van, he will weaken his rear; should he strengthen his rear, he will weaken his van; should he strengthen his left, he will weaken his right; should he strengthen his right, he will weaken his left. If he sends reinforcements everywhere, he will everywhere be weak.

18. Numerical weakness comes from having to prepare against possible attacks; numerical strength, from compelling our adversary to make these preparations against us.

19. Knowing the place and the time of the coming battle, we may concentrate from the greatest distances in order to fight.

20. But if neither time nor place be known, then the left wing will be impotent to succor the right, the right equally impotent to succor the left, the van unable to relieve the rear, or the rear to support the van. How much more so if the furthest portions of the army are anything under a hundred LI apart, and even the nearest are separated by several LI!

21. Though according to my estimate the soldiers of Yueh exceed our own in number, that shall advantage them nothing in the matter of victory. I say then that victory can be achieved.

22. Though the enemy be stronger in numbers, we may prevent him from fighting. Scheme so as to discover his plans and the likelihood of their success.

23. Rouse him, and learn the principle of his activity or inactivity. Force him to reveal himself, so as to find out his vulnerable spots.

24. Carefully compare the opposing army with your own, so that you may know where strength is superabundant and where it is deficient.

25. In making tactical dispositions, the highest pitch you can attain is to conceal them; conceal your dispositions, and you will be safe from the prying of the subtlest spies, from the machinations of the wisest brains.

26. How victory may be produced for them out of the enemy's own tactics--that is what the multitude cannot comprehend.

27. All men can see the tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.

28. Do not repeat the tactics which have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances.

29. Military tactics are like unto water; for water in its natural course runs away from high places and hastens downwards.

30. So in war, the way is to avoid what is strong and to strike at what is weak.

31. Water shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows; the soldier works out his victory in relation to the foe whom he is facing.

32. Therefore, just as water retains no constant shape, so in warfare there are no constant conditions.

33. He who can modify his tactics in relation to his opponent and thereby succeed in winning, may be called a heaven-born captain.

34. The five elements (water, fire, wood, metal, earth) are not always equally predominant; the four seasons make way for each other in turn. There are short days and long; the moon has its periods of waning and waxing.

VII. MANEUVERING

1. Sun Tzu said: In war, the general receives his commands from the sovereign.

2. Having collected an army and concentrated his forces, he must blend and harmonize the different elements thereof before pitching his camp.

3. After that, comes tactical maneuvering, than which there is nothing more difficult. The difficulty of tactical maneuvering consists in turning the devious into the direct, and misfortune into gain.

4. Thus, to take a long and circuitous route, after enticing the enemy out of the way, and though starting after him, to contrive to reach the goal before him, shows knowledge of the artifice of DEVIATION.

5. Maneuvering with an army is advantageous; with an undisciplined multitude, most dangerous.

6. If you set a fully equipped army in march in order to snatch an advantage, the chances are that you will be too late. On the other hand, to detach a flying column for the purpose involves the sacrifice of its baggage and stores.

7. Thus, if you order your men to roll up their buff-coats, and make forced marches without halting day or night, covering double the usual distance at a stretch, doing a hundred LI in order to wrest an advantage, the leaders of all your three divisions will fall into the hands of the enemy.

8. The stronger men will be in front, the jaded ones will fall behind, and on this plan only one-tenth of your army will reach its destination.

9. If you march fifty LI in order to outmaneuver the enemy, you will lose the leader of your first division, and only half your force will reach the goal.

10. If you march thirty LI with the same object, two-thirds of your army will arrive.

11. We may take it then that an army without its baggage-train is lost; without provisions it is lost; without bases of supply it is lost.

12. We cannot enter into alliances until we are acquainted with the designs of our neighbors.

13. We are not fit to lead an army on the march unless we are familiar with the face of the country--its mountains and forests, its pitfalls and precipices, its marshes and swamps.

14. We shall be unable to turn natural advantage to account unless we make use of local guides.

15. In war, practice dissimulation, and you will succeed.

16. Whether to concentrate or to divide your troops, must be decided by circumstances.

17. Let your rapidity be that of the wind, your compactness that of the forest.

18. In raiding and plundering be like fire, in immovability like a mountain.

19. Let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night, and when you move, fall like a thunderbolt.

20. When you plunder a countryside, let the spoil be divided amongst your men; when you capture new territory, cut it up into allotments for the benefit of the soldiery.

21. Ponder and deliberate before you make a move.

22. He will conquer who has learnt the artifice of deviation. Such is the art of maneuvering.

23. The Book of Army Management says: On the field of battle, the spoken word does not carry far enough: hence the institution of gongs and drums. Nor can ordinary objects be seen clearly enough: hence the institution of banners and flags.

24. Gongs and drums, banners and flags, are means whereby the ears and eyes of the host may be focused on one particular point.

25. The host thus forming a single united body, is it impossible either for the brave to advance alone, or for the cowardly to retreat alone. This is the art of handling large masses of men.

26. In night-fighting, then, make much use of signal-fires and drums, and in fighting by day, of flags and banners, as a means of influencing the ears and eyes of your army.

27. A whole army may be robbed of its spirit; a commander-in-chief may be robbed of his presence of mind.

28. Now a soldier's spirit is keenest in the morning; by noonday it has begun to flag; and in the evening, his mind is bent only on returning to camp.

29. A clever general, therefore, avoids an army when its spirit is keen, but attacks it when it is sluggish and inclined to return. This is the art of studying moods.

30. Disciplined and calm, to await the appearance of disorder and hubbub amongst the enemy:--this is the art of retaining self-possession.

31. To be near the goal while the enemy is still far from it, to wait at ease while the enemy is toiling and struggling, to be well-fed while the enemy is famished:--this is the art of husbanding one's strength.

32. To refrain from intercepting an enemy whose banners are in perfect order, to refrain from attacking an army drawn up in calm and confident array:--this is the art of studying circumstances.

33. It is a military axiom not to advance uphill against the enemy, nor to oppose him when he comes downhill.

34. Do not pursue an enemy who simulates flight; do not attack soldiers whose temper is keen.

35. Do not swallow bait offered by the enemy. Do not interfere with an army that is returning home.

36. When you surround an army, leave an outlet free. Do not press a desperate foe too hard.

37. Such is the art of warfare.

VIII. VARIATION IN TACTICS

1. Sun Tzu said: In war, the general receives his commands from the sovereign, collects his army and concentrates his forces

2. When in difficult country, do not encamp. In country where high roads intersect, join hands with your allies. Do not linger in dangerously isolated positions. In hemmed-in situations, you must resort to stratagem. In desperate position, you must fight.

3. There are roads which must not be followed, armies which must be not attacked, towns which must not be besieged, positions which must not be contested, commands of the sovereign which must not be obeyed.

4. The general who thoroughly understands the advantages that accompany variation of tactics knows how to handle his troops.

5. The general who does not understand these, may be well acquainted with the configuration of the country, yet he will not be able to turn his knowledge to practical account.

6. So, the student of war who is unversed in the art of war of varying his plans, even though he be acquainted with the Five Advantages, will fail to make the best use of his men.

7. Hence in the wise leader's plans, considerations of advantage and of disadvantage will be blended together.

8. If our expectation of advantage be tempered in this way, we may succeed in accomplishing the essential part of our schemes.

9. If, on the other hand, in the midst of difficulties we are always ready to seize an advantage, we may extricate ourselves from misfortune.

10. Reduce the hostile chiefs by inflicting damage on them; and make trouble for them, and keep them constantly engaged; hold out specious allurements, and make them rush to any given point.

11. The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy's not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable.

12. There are five dangerous faults which may affect a general:
(1) Recklessness, which leads to destruction;
(2) cowardice, which leads to capture;
(3) a hasty temper, which can be provoked by insults;
(4) a delicacy of honor which is sensitive to shame;
(5) over-solicitude for his men, which exposes him to worry and trouble.

13. These are the five besetting sins of a general, ruinous to the conduct of war.

14. When an army is overthrown and its leader slain, the cause will surely be found among these five dangerous faults. Let them be a subject of meditation.

IX. THE ARMY ON THE MARCH

1. Sun Tzu said: We come now to the question of encamping the army, and observing signs of the enemy. Pass quickly over mountains, and keep in the neighborhood of valleys.

2. Camp in high places, facing the sun. Do not climb heights in order to fight. So much for mountain warfare.

3. After crossing a river, you should get far away from it.

4. When an invading force crosses a river in its onward march, do not advance to meet it in mid-stream. It will be best to let half the army get across, and then deliver your attack.

5. If you are anxious to fight, you should not go to meet the invader near a river which he has to cross.

6. Moor your craft higher up than the enemy, and facing the sun. Do not move up-stream to meet the enemy. So much for river warfare.

7. In crossing salt-marshes, your sole concern should be to get over them quickly, without any delay.

8. If forced to fight in a salt-marsh, you should have water and grass near you, and get your back to a clump of trees. So much for operations in salt-marches.

9. In dry, level country, take up an easily accessible position with rising ground to your right and on your rear, so that the danger may be in front, and safety lie behind. So much for campaigning in flat country.

10. These are the four useful branches of military knowledge which enabled the Yellow Emperor to vanquish four several sovereigns.

11. All armies prefer high ground to low and sunny places to dark.

12. If you are careful of your men, and camp on hard ground, the army will be free from disease of every kind, and this will spell victory.

13. When you come to a hill or a bank, occupy the sunny side, with the slope on your right rear. Thus you will at once act for the benefit of your soldiers and utilize the natural advantages of the ground.

14. When, in consequence of heavy rains up-country, a river which you wish to ford is swollen and flecked with foam, you must wait until it subsides.

15. Country in which there are precipitous cliffs with torrents running between, deep natural hollows, confined places, tangled thickets, quagmires and crevasses, should be left with all possible speed and not approached.

16. While we keep away from such places, we should get the enemy to approach them; while we face them, we should let the enemy have them on his rear.

17. If in the neighborhood of your camp there should be any hilly country, ponds surrounded by aquatic grass, hollow basins filled with reeds, or woods with thick undergrowth, they must be carefully routed out and searched; for these are places where men in ambush or insidious spies are likely to be lurking.

18. When the enemy is close at hand and remains quiet, he is relying on the natural strength of his position.

19. When he keeps aloof and tries to provoke a battle, he is anxious for the other side to advance.

20. If his place of encampment is easy of access, he is tendering a bait.

21. Movement amongst the trees of a forest shows that the enemy is advancing. The appearance of a number of screens in the midst of thick grass means that the enemy wants to make us suspicious.

22. The rising of birds in their flight is the sign of an ambuscade. Startled beasts indicate that a sudden attack is coming.

23. When there is dust rising in a high column, it is the sign of chariots advancing; when the dust is low, but spread over a wide area, it betokens the approach of infantry. When it branches out in different directions, it shows that parties have been sent to collect firewood. A few clouds of dust moving to and fro signify that the army is encamping.

24. Humble words and increased preparations are signs that the enemy is about to advance. Violent language and driving forward as if to the attack are signs that he will retreat.

25. When the light chariots come out first and take up a position on the wings, it is a sign that the enemy is forming for battle.

26. Peace proposals unaccompanied by a sworn covenant indicate a plot.

27. When there is much running about and the soldiers fall into rank, it means that the critical moment has come.

28. When some are seen advancing and some retreating, it is a lure.

29. When the soldiers stand leaning on their spears, they are faint from want of food.

30. If those who are sent to draw water begin by drinking themselves, the army is suffering from thirst.

31. If the enemy sees an advantage to be gained and makes no effort to secure it, the soldiers are exhausted.

32. If birds gather on any spot, it is unoccupied. Clamor by night betokens nervousness.

33. If there is disturbance in the camp, the general's authority is weak. If the banners and flags are shifted about, sedition is afoot. If the officers are angry, it means that the men are weary.

34. When an army feeds its horses with grain and kills its cattle for food, and when the men do not hang their cooking-pots over the camp-fires, showing that they will not return to their tents, you may know that they are determined to fight to the death.

35. The sight of men whispering together in small knots or speaking in subdued tones points to disaffection amongst the rank and file.

36. Too frequent rewards signify that the enemy is at the end of his resources; too many punishments betray a condition of dire distress.

37. To begin by bluster, but afterwards to take fright at the enemy's numbers, shows a supreme lack of intelligence.

38. When envoys are sent with compliments in their mouths, it is a sign that the enemy wishes for a truce.

39. If the enemy's troops march up angrily and remain facing ours for a long time without either joining battle or taking themselves off again, the situation is one that demands great vigilance and circumspection.

40. If our troops are no more in number than the enemy, that is amply sufficient; it only means that no direct attack can be made. What we can do is simply to concentrate all our available strength, keep a close watch on the enemy, and obtain reinforcements.

41. He who exercises no forethought but makes light of his opponents is sure to be captured by them.

42. If soldiers are punished before they have grown attached to you, they will not prove submissive; and, unless submissive, then will be practically useless. If, when the soldiers have become attached to you, punishments are not enforced, they will still be useless.

43. Therefore soldiers must be treated in the first instance with humanity, but kept under control by means of iron discipline. This is a certain road to victory.

44. If in training soldiers commands are habitually enforced, the army will be well-disciplined; if not, its discipline will be bad.

45. If a general shows confidence in his men but always insists on his orders being obeyed, the gain will be mutual.

X. TERRAIN

1. Sun Tzu said: We may distinguish six kinds of terrain, to wit: (1) Accessible ground; (2) entangling ground; (3) temporizing ground; (4) narrow passes; (5) precipitous heights; (6) positions at a great distance from the enemy.

2. Ground which can be freely traversed by both sides is called accessible.

3. With regard to ground of this nature, be before the enemy in occupying the raised and sunny spots, and carefully guard your line of supplies. Then you will be able to fight with advantage.

4. Ground which can be abandoned but is hard to re-occupy is called entangling.

5. From a position of this sort, if the enemy is unprepared, you may sally forth and defeat him. But if the enemy is prepared for your coming, and you fail to defeat him, then, return being impossible, disaster will ensue.

6. When the position is such that neither side will gain by making the first move, it is called temporizing ground.

7. In a position of this sort, even though the enemy should offer us an attractive bait, it will be advisable not to stir forth, but rather to retreat, thus enticing the enemy in his turn; then, when part of his army has come out, we may deliver our attack with advantage.

8. With regard to narrow passes, if you can occupy them first, let them be strongly garrisoned and await the advent of the enemy.

9. Should the army forestall you in occupying a pass, do not go after him if the pass is fully garrisoned, but only if it is weakly garrisoned.

10. With regard to precipitous heights, if you are beforehand with your adversary, you should occupy the raised and sunny spots, and there wait for him to come up.

11. If the enemy has occupied them before you, do not follow him, but retreat and try to entice him away.

12. If you are situated at a great distance from the enemy, and the strength of the two armies is equal, it is not easy to provoke a battle, and fighting will be to your disadvantage.

13. These six are the principles connected with Earth. The general who has attained a responsible post must be careful to study them.

14. Now an army is exposed to six several calamities, not arising from natural causes, but from faults for which the general is

responsible. These are: (1) Flight; (2) insubordination; (3) collapse; (4) ruin; (5) disorganization; (6) rout.

15. Other conditions being equal, if one force is hurled against another ten times its size, the result will be the flight of the former.

16. When the common soldiers are too strong and their officers too weak, the result is insubordination. When the officers are too strong and the common soldiers too weak, the result is collapse.

17. When the higher officers are angry and insubordinate, and on meeting the enemy give battle on their own account from a feeling of resentment, before the commander-in-chief can tell whether or not he is in a position to fight, the result is ruin.

18. When the general is weak and without authority; when his orders are not clear and distinct; when there are no fixes duties assigned to officers and men, and the ranks are formed in a slovenly haphazard manner, the result is utter disorganization.

19. When a general, unable to estimate the enemy's strength, allows an inferior force to engage a larger one, or hurls a weak detachment against a powerful one, and neglects to place picked soldiers in the front rank, the result must be rout.

20. These are six ways of courting defeat, which must be carefully noted by the general who has attained a responsible post.

21. The natural formation of the country is the soldier's best ally; but a power of estimating the adversary, of controlling the forces of victory, and of shrewdly calculating difficulties, dangers and distances, constitutes the test of a great general.

22. He who knows these things, and in fighting puts his knowledge into practice, will win his battles. He who knows them not, nor practices them, will surely be defeated.

23. If fighting is sure to result in victory, then you must fight, even though the ruler forbid it; if fighting will not result in victory, then you must not fight even at the ruler's bidding.

24. The general who advances without coveting fame and retreats without fearing disgrace, whose only thought is to protect his country and do good service for his sovereign, is the jewel of the kingdom.

25. Regard your soldiers as your children, and they will follow you into the deepest valleys; look upon them as your own beloved sons, and they will stand by you even unto death.

26. If, however, you are indulgent, but unable to make your authority felt; kind-hearted, but unable to enforce your commands; and incapable, moreover, of quelling disorder: then your soldiers must be likened to spoilt children; they are useless for any practical purpose.

27. If we know that our own men are in a condition to attack, but are unaware that the enemy is not open to attack, we have gone only halfway towards victory.

28. If we know that the enemy is open to attack, but are unaware that our own men are not in a condition to attack, we have gone only halfway towards victory.

29. If we know that the enemy is open to attack, and also know that our men are in a condition to attack, but are unaware that the nature of the ground makes fighting impracticable, we have still gone only halfway towards victory.

30. Hence the experienced soldier, once in motion, is never bewildered; once he has broken camp, he is never at a loss.

31. Hence the saying: If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt; if you know Heaven and know Earth, you may make your victory complete.

XI. THE NINE SITUATIONS

1. Sun Tzu said: The art of war recognizes nine varieties of ground: (1) Dispersive ground; (2) facile ground; (3) contentious ground; (4) open ground; (5) ground of intersecting highways; (6) serious ground; (7) difficult ground; (8) hemmed-in ground; (9) desperate ground.

2. When a chieftain is fighting in his own territory, it is dispersive ground.

3. When he has penetrated into hostile territory, but to no great distance, it is facile ground.

4. Ground the possession of which imports great advantage to either side, is contentious ground.

5. Ground on which each side has liberty of movement is open ground.

6. Ground which forms the key to three contiguous states, so that he who occupies it first has most of the Empire at his command, is a ground of intersecting highways.

7. When an army has penetrated into the heart of a hostile country, leaving a number of fortified cities in its rear, it is serious ground.

8. Mountain forests, rugged steeps, marshes and fens--all country that is hard to traverse: this is difficult ground.

9. Ground which is reached through narrow gorges, and from which we can only retire by tortuous paths, so that a small number of the enemy would suffice to crush a large body of our men: this is hemmed in ground.

10. Ground on which we can only be saved from destruction by fighting without delay, is desperate ground.

11. On dispersive ground, therefore, fight not. On facile ground, halt not. On contentious ground, attack not.

12. On open ground, do not try to block the enemy's way. On the ground of intersecting highways, join hands with your allies.

13. On serious ground, gather in plunder. In difficult ground, keep steadily on the march.

14. On hemmed-in ground, resort to stratagem. On desperate ground, fight.

15. Those who were called skillful leaders of old knew how to drive a wedge between the enemy's front and rear; to prevent co-operation between his large and small divisions; to hinder the good troops from rescuing the bad, the officers from rallying their men.

16. When the enemy's men were united, they managed to keep them in disorder.

17. When it was to their advantage, they made a forward move; when otherwise, they stopped still.

18. If asked how to cope with a great host of the enemy in orderly array and on the point of marching to the attack, I should say: "Begin by seizing something which your opponent holds dear; then he will be amenable to your will."

19. Rapidity is the essence of war: take advantage of the enemy's unreadiness, make your way by unexpected routes, and attack unguarded spots.

20. The following are the principles to be observed by an invading force: The further you penetrate into a country, the greater will be the solidarity of your troops, and thus the defenders will not prevail against you.

21. Make forays in fertile country in order to supply your army with food.

22. Carefully study the well-being of your men, and do not overtax them. Concentrate your energy and hoard your strength. Keep your army continually on the move, and devise unfathomable plans.

23. Throw your soldiers into positions whence there is no escape, and they will prefer death to flight. If they will face death, there is nothing they may not achieve. Officers and men alike will put forth their uttermost strength.

24. Soldiers when in desperate straits lose the sense of fear. If there is no place of refuge, they will stand firm. If they are in hostile country, they will show a stubborn front. If there is no help for it, they will fight hard.

25. Thus, without waiting to be marshaled, the soldiers will be constantly on the qui vive; without waiting to be asked, they will do your will; without restrictions, they will be faithful; without giving orders, they can be trusted.

26. Prohibit the taking of omens, and do away with superstitious doubts. Then, until death itself comes, no calamity need be feared.

27. If our soldiers are not overburdened with money, it is not because they have a distaste for riches; if their lives are not unduly long, it is not because they are disinclined to longevity.

28. On the day they are ordered out to battle, your soldiers may weep, those sitting up bedewing their garments, and those lying down letting the tears run down their cheeks. But let them once be brought to bay, and they will display the courage of a Chu or a Kuei.

29. The skillful tactician may be likened to the shuai-jan. Now the shuai-jan is a snake that is found in the ChUng mountains. Strike at its head, and you will be attacked by its tail; strike at its tail, and you will be attacked by its head; strike at its middle, and you will be attacked by head and tail both.

30. Asked if an army can be made to imitate the shuai-jan, I should answer, Yes. For the men of Wu and the men of Yueh are enemies; yet if they are crossing a river in the same boat and are caught by a storm, they will come to each other's assistance just as the left hand helps the right.

31. Hence it is not enough to put one's trust in the tethering of horses, and the burying of chariot wheels in the ground.

32. The principle on which to manage an army is to set up one standard of courage which all must reach.

33. How to make the best of both strong and weak--that is a question involving the proper use of ground.

34. Thus the skillful general conducts his army just as though he were leading a single man, willy-nilly, by the hand.

35. It is the business of a general to be quiet and thus ensure secrecy; upright and just, and thus maintain order.

36. He must be able to mystify his officers and men by false reports and appearances, and thus keep them in total ignorance.

37. By altering his arrangements and changing his plans, he keeps the enemy without definite knowledge. By shifting his camp and taking circuitous routes, he prevents the enemy from anticipating his purpose.

38. At the critical moment, the leader of an army acts like one who has climbed up a height and then kicks away the ladder behind

him. He carries his men deep into hostile territory before he shows his hand.

39. He burns his boats and breaks his cooking-pots; like a shepherd driving a flock of sheep, he drives his men this way and that, and nothing knows whither he is going.

40. To muster his host and bring it into danger:--this may be termed the business of the general.

41. The different measures suited to the nine varieties of ground; the expediency of aggressive or defensive tactics; and the fundamental laws of human nature: these are things that must most certainly be studied.

42. When invading hostile territory, the general principle is, that penetrating deeply brings cohesion; penetrating but a short way means dispersion.

43. When you leave your own country behind, and take your army across neighborhood territory, you find yourself on critical ground. When there are means of communication on all four sides, the ground is one of intersecting highways.

44. When you penetrate deeply into a country, it is serious ground. When you penetrate but a little way, it is facile ground.

45. When you have the enemy's strongholds on your rear, and narrow passes in front, it is hemmed-in ground. When there is no place of refuge at all, it is desperate ground.

46. Therefore, on dispersive ground, I would inspire my men with unity of purpose. On facile ground, I would see that there is close connection between all parts of my army.

47. On contentious ground, I would hurry up my rear.

48. On open ground, I would keep a vigilant eye on my defenses. On ground of intersecting highways, I would consolidate my alliances.

49. On serious ground, I would try to ensure a continuous stream of supplies. On difficult ground, I would keep pushing on along the road.

50. On hemmed-in ground, I would block any way of retreat. On desperate ground, I would proclaim to my soldiers the hopelessness of saving their lives.

51. For it is the soldier's disposition to offer an obstinate resistance when surrounded, to fight hard when he cannot help himself, and to obey promptly when he has fallen into danger.

52. We cannot enter into alliance with neighboring princes until we are acquainted with their designs. We are not fit to lead an army on the march unless we are familiar with the face of the country--its mountains and forests, its pitfalls and precipices, its marshes and swamps. We shall be unable to turn natural advantages to account unless we make use of local guides.

53. To be ignored of any one of the following four or five principles does not befit a warlike prince.

54. When a warlike prince attacks a powerful state, his generalship shows itself in preventing the concentration of the enemy's forces. He overawes his opponents, and their allies are prevented from joining against him.

55. Hence he does not strive to ally himself with all and sundry, nor does he foster the power of other states. He carries out his own secret designs, keeping his antagonists in awe. Thus he is able to capture their cities and overthrow their kingdoms.

56. Bestow rewards without regard to rule, issue orders without regard to previous arrangements; and you will be able to handle a whole army as though you had to do with but a single man.

57. Confront your soldiers with the deed itself; never let them know your design. When the outlook is bright, bring it before their eyes; but tell them nothing when the situation is gloomy.

58. Place your army in deadly peril, and it will survive; plunge it into desperate straits, and it will come off in safety.

59. For it is precisely when a force has fallen into harm's way that is capable of striking a blow for victory.

60. Success in warfare is gained by carefully accommodating ourselves to the enemy's purpose.

61. By persistently hanging on the enemy's flank, we shall succeed in the long run in killing the commander-in-chief.

62. This is called ability to accomplish a thing by sheer cunning.

63. On the day that you take up your command, block the frontier passes, destroy the official tallies, and stop the passage of all emissaries.

64. Be stern in the council-chamber, so that you may control the situation.

65. If the enemy leaves a door open, you must rush in.

66. Forestall your opponent by seizing what he holds dear, and subtly contrive to time his arrival on the ground.

67. Walk in the path defined by rule, and accommodate yourself to the enemy until you can fight a decisive battle.

68. At first, then, exhibit the coyness of a maiden, until the enemy gives you an opening; afterwards emulate the rapidity of a running hare, and it will be too late for the enemy to oppose you.

XII. THE ATTACK BY FIRE

1. Sun Tzu said: There are five ways of attacking with fire. The first is to burn soldiers in their camp; the second is to burn stores; the third is to burn baggage trains; the fourth is to burn arsenals and magazines; the fifth is to hurl dropping fire amongst the enemy.

2. In order to carry out an attack, we must have means available. The material for raising fire should always be kept in readiness.

3. There is a proper season for making attacks with fire, and special days for starting a conflagration.

4. The proper season is when the weather is very dry; the special days are those when the moon is in the constellations of the Sieve, the Wall, the Wing or the Cross-bar; for these four are all days of rising wind.

5. In attacking with fire, one should be prepared to meet five possible developments:

6. (1) When fire breaks out inside to enemy's camp, respond at once with an attack from without.

7. (2) If there is an outbreak of fire, but the enemy's soldiers remain quiet, bide your time and do not attack.

8. (3) When the force of the flames has reached its height, follow it up with an attack, if that is practicable; if not, stay where you are.

9. (4) If it is possible to make an assault with fire from without, do not wait for it to break out within, but deliver your attack at a favorable moment.

10. (5) When you start a fire, be to windward of it. Do not attack from the leeward.

11. A wind that rises in the daytime lasts long, but a night breeze soon falls.

12. In every army, the five developments connected with fire must be known, the movements of the stars calculated, and a watch kept for the proper days.

13. Hence those who use fire as an aid to the attack show intelligence; those who use water as an aid to the attack gain an accession of strength.

14. By means of water, an enemy may be intercepted, but not robbed of all his belongings.

15. Unhappy is the fate of one who tries to win his battles and succeed in his attacks without cultivating the spirit of enterprise; for the result is waste of time and general stagnation.

16. Hence the saying: The enlightened ruler lays his plans well ahead; the good general cultivates his resources.

17. Move not unless you see an advantage; use not your troops unless there is something to be gained; fight not unless the position is critical.

18. No ruler should put troops into the field merely to gratify his own spleen; no general should fight a battle simply out of pique.

19. If it is to your advantage, make a forward move; if not, stay where you are.

20. Anger may in time change to gladness; vexation may be succeeded by content.

21. But a kingdom that has once been destroyed can never come again into being; nor can the dead ever be brought back to life.

22. Hence the enlightened ruler is heedful, and the good general full of caution. This is the way to keep a country at peace and an army intact.

XIII. THE USE OF SPIES

1. Sun Tzu said: Raising a host of a hundred thousand men and marching them great distances entails heavy loss on the people and a drain on the resources of the State. The daily expenditure will amount to a thousand ounces of silver. There will be commotion at home and abroad, and men will drop down exhausted on the highways. As many as seven hundred thousand families will be impeded in their labor.

2. Hostile armies may face each other for years, striving for the victory which is decided in a single day. This being so, to remain in ignorance of the enemy's condition simply because one grudges the outlay of a hundred ounces of silver in honors and emoluments, is the height of inhumanity.

3. One who acts thus is no leader of men, no present help to his sovereign, no master of victory.

4. Thus, what enables the wise sovereign and the good general to strike and conquer, and achieve things beyond the reach of ordinary men, is foreknowledge.

5. Now this foreknowledge cannot be elicited from spirits; it cannot be obtained inductively from experience, nor by any deductive calculation.

6. Knowledge of the enemy's dispositions can only be obtained from other men.

7. Hence the use of spies, of whom there are five classes: (1) Local spies; (2) inward spies; (3) converted spies; (4) doomed spies; (5) surviving spies.

8. When these five kinds of spy are all at work, none can discover the secret system. This is called "divine manipulation of the threads." It is the sovereign's most precious faculty.

9. Having local spies means employing the services of the inhabitants of a district.

10. Having inward spies, making use of officials of the enemy.

11. Having converted spies, getting hold of the enemy's spies and using them for our own purposes.

12. Having doomed spies, doing certain things openly for purposes of deception, and allowing our spies to know of them and report them to the enemy.

13. Surviving spies, finally, are those who bring back news from the enemy's camp.

14. Hence it is that which none in the whole army are more intimate relations to be maintained than with spies. None should be more liberally rewarded. In no other business should greater secrecy be preserved.

15. Spies cannot be usefully employed without a certain intuitive sagacity.

16. They cannot be properly managed without benevolence and straightforwardness.

17. Without subtle ingenuity of mind, one cannot make certain of the truth of their reports.

18. Be subtle! be subtle! and use your spies for every kind of business.

19. If a secret piece of news is divulged by a spy before the time is ripe, he must be put to death together with the man to whom the secret was told.

20. Whether the object be to crush an army, to storm a city, or to assassinate an individual, it is always necessary to begin by finding out the names of the attendants, the aides-de-camp, and door-keepers and sentries of the general in command. Our spies must be commissioned to ascertain these.

21. The enemy's spies who have come to spy on us must be sought out, tempted with bribes, led away and comfortably housed. Thus they will become converted spies and available for our service.

22. It is through the information brought by the converted spy that we are able to acquire and employ local and inward spies.

23. It is owing to his information, again, that we can cause the doomed spy to carry false tidings to the enemy.

24. Lastly, it is by his information that the surviving spy can be used on appointed occasions.

25. The end and aim of spying in all its five varieties is knowledge of the enemy; and this knowledge can only be derived, in the first instance, from the converted spy. Hence it is essential that the converted spy be treated with the utmost liberality.

26. Of old, the rise of the Yin dynasty was due to I Chih who had served under the Hsia. Likewise, the rise of the Chou dynasty was due to Lu Ya who had served under the Yin.

27. Hence it is only the enlightened ruler and the wise general who will use the highest intelligence of the army for purposes of spying and thereby they achieve great results. Spies are a most important element in water, because on them depends an army's ability to move.

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3.10: Swift, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal." (1729)



Title page of Jonathan Swift's Works, by artist George Faulkner in 1735. This picture is in the Public Domain

A Modest Proposal

For preventing the children of poor people in Ireland,
from being a burden on their parents or country,
and for making them beneficial to the publick.

by Dr. Jonathan Swift

1729

It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabbin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers, instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in stroling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants who, as they grow up, either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country, to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.

I think it is agreed by all parties, that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore whoever could find out a fair, cheap and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the publick, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars: it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age, who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them, as those who demand our charity in the streets.

As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of our projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true, a child just dropt from its dam, may be supported by her milk, for a solar year, with little other nourishment: at most not above the value of two shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the clothing of many thousands.

There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, alas! too frequent among us, sacrificing the poor innocent babes, I doubt, more to avoid the expence than the shame, which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast.

The number of souls in this kingdom being usually reckoned one million and a half, of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couple, whose wives are breeders; from which number I subtract thirty thousand couple, who are able to maintain their own children, (although I apprehend there cannot be so many under the present distresses of the kingdom) but this being granted, there will remain a hundred and seventy thousand breeders. I again subtract fifty thousand, for those women who miscarry, or whose children die by accident or disease within the year. There only remain a hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents annually born. The question therefore is, How this number shall be reared and provided for? which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed. For we can neither employ them in handicraft or agriculture; they neither build houses, (I mean in the country) nor cultivate land: they can very seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing till they arrive at six years old; except where they are of towardly parts, although I confess they learn the rudiments much earlier; during which time they can however be properly looked upon only as probationers; as I have been informed by a principal gentleman in the county of Cavan, who protested to me, that he never knew above one or two instances under the age of six, even in a part of the kingdom so renowned for the quickest proficiency in that art.

I am assured by our merchants, that a boy or a girl, before twelve years old, is no saleable commodity, and even when they come to this age, they will not yield above three pounds, or three pounds and half a crown at most, on the exchange; which cannot turn to account either to the parents or kingdom, the charge of nutriments and rags having been at least four times that value.

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome

food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricasee, or a ragoust.

I do therefore humbly offer it to publick consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children, already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle, or swine, and my reason is, that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages, therefore, one male will be sufficient to serve four females. That the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune, through the kingdom, always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump, and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

I have reckoned upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh 12 pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, encreaseth to 28 pounds.

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

Infant's flesh will be in season throughout the year, but more plentiful in March, and a little before and after; for we are told by a grave author, an eminent French physician, that fish being a prolifick dyet, there are more children born in Roman Catholick countries about nine months after Lent, than at any other season; therefore, reckoning a year after Lent, the markets will be more glutted than usual, because the number of Popish infants, is at least three to one in this kingdom, and therefore it will have one other collateral advantage, by lessening the number of Papists among us.

I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar's child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, labourers, and four-fifths of the farmers) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included; and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat, when he hath only some particular friend, or his own family to dine with him. Thus the squire will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among his tenants, the mother will have eight shillings neat profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child.

Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require) may flay the carcass; the skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.

As to our City of Dublin, shambles may be appointed for this purpose, in the most convenient parts of it, and butchers we may be assured will not be wanting; although I rather recommend buying the children alive, and dressing them hot from the knife, as we do roasting pigs.

A very worthy person, a true lover of his country, and whose virtues I highly esteem, was lately pleased in discoursing on this matter, to offer a refinement upon my scheme. He said, that many gentlemen of this kingdom, having of late destroyed their deer, he conceived that the want of venison might be well supplied by the bodies of young lads and maidens, not exceeding fourteen years of age, nor under twelve; so great a number of both sexes in every county being now ready to starve for want of work and service: and these to be disposed of by their parents if alive, or otherwise by their nearest relations. But with due deference to so excellent a friend, and so deserving a patriot, I cannot be altogether in his sentiments; for as to the males, my American acquaintance assured me from frequent experience, that their flesh was generally tough and lean, like that of our schoolboys, by continual exercise, and their taste disagreeable, and to fatten them would not answer the charge. Then as to the females, it would, I think, with humble submission, be a loss to the publick, because they soon would become breeders themselves: and besides, it is not improbable that some scrupulous people might be apt to censure such a practice, (although indeed very unjustly) as a little bordering upon cruelty, which, I confess, hath always been with me the strongest objection against any project, how well soever intended.

But in order to justify my friend, he confessed, that this expedient was put into his head by the famous Psalmanaazor, a native of the island Formosa, who came from thence to London, above twenty years ago, and in conversation told my friend, that in his country, when any young person happened to be put to death, the executioner sold the carcass to persons of quality, as a prime dainty; and that, in his time, the body of a plump girl of fifteen, who was crucified for an attempt to poison the Emperor, was sold to his imperial majesty's prime minister of state, and other great mandarins of the court in joints from the gibbet, at four hundred crowns. Neither indeed can I deny, that if the same use were made of several plump young girls in this town, who without one single groat to their fortunes, cannot stir abroad without a chair, and appear at a playhouse and assemblies in foreign fineries which they never will pay for, the kingdom would not be the worse.

Some persons of a desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people, who are aged, diseased, or maimed; and I have been desired to employ my thoughts what course may be taken, to ease the nation of so grievous an

incumbrance. But I am not in the least pain upon that matter, because it is very well known, that they are every day dying, and rotting, by cold and famine, and filth, and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected. And as to the young labourers, they are now in almost as hopeful a condition. They cannot get work, and consequently pine away from want of nourishment, to a degree, that if at any time they are accidentally hired to common labour, they have not strength to perform it, and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evils to come.

I have too long digressed, and therefore shall return to my subject. I think the advantages by the proposal which I have made are obvious and many, as well as of the highest importance.

For first, as I have already observed, it would greatly lessen the number of Papists, with whom we are yearly overrun, being the principal breeders of the nation, as well as our most dangerous enemies, and who stay at home on purpose with a design to deliver the kingdom to the Pretender, hoping to take their advantage by the absence of so many good Protestants, who have chosen rather to leave their country, than stay at home and pay tithes against their conscience to an episcopal curate.

Secondly, The poorer tenants will have something valuable of their own, which by law may be made liable to a distress, and help to pay their landlord's rent, their corn and cattle being already seized, and money a thing unknown.

Thirdly, Whereas the maintainance of a hundred thousand children, from two years old, and upwards, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings a piece per annum, the nation's stock will be thereby increased fifty thousand pounds per annum, besides the profit of a new dish, introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune in the kingdom, who have any refinement in taste. And the money will circulate among our selves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture.

Fourthly, The constant breeders, besides the gain of eight shillings sterling per annum by the sale of their children, will be rid of the charge of maintaining them after the first year.

Fifthly, This food would likewise bring great custom to taverns, where the vintners will certainly be so prudent as to procure the best receipts for dressing it to perfection; and consequently have their houses frequented by all the fine gentlemen, who justly value themselves upon their knowledge in good eating; and a skilful cook, who understands how to oblige his guests, will contrive to make it as expensive as they please.

Sixthly, This would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards, or enforced by laws and penalties. It would encrease the care and tenderness of mothers towards their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the publick, to their annual profit instead of expence. We should soon see an honest emulation among the married women, which of them could bring the fattest child to the market. Men would become as fond of their wives, during the time of their pregnancy, as they are now of their mares in foal, their cows in calf, or sows when they are ready to farrow; nor offer to beat or kick them (as is too frequent a practice) for fear of a miscarriage.

Many other advantages might be enumerated. For instance, the addition of some thousand carcasses in our exportation of barrel'd beef: the propagation of swine's flesh, and improvement in the art of making good bacon, so much wanted among us by the great destruction of pigs, too frequent at our tables; which are no way comparable in taste or magnificence to a well grown, fat yearling child, which roasted whole will make a considerable figure at a Lord Mayor's feast, or any other publick entertainment. But this, and many others, I omit, being studious of brevity.

Supposing that one thousand families in this city, would be constant customers for infants flesh, besides others who might have it at merry meetings, particularly at weddings and christenings, I compute that Dublin would take off annually about twenty thousand carcasses; and the rest of the kingdom (where probably they will be sold somewhat cheaper) the remaining eighty thousand.

I can think of no one objection, that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged, that the number of people will be thereby much lessened in the kingdom. This I freely own, and was indeed one principal design in offering it to the world. I desire the reader will observe, that I calculate my remedy for this one individual Kingdom of Ireland, and for no other that ever was, is, or, I think, ever can be upon Earth. Therefore let no man talk to me of other expedients: Of taxing our absentees at five shillings a pound: Of using neither clothes, nor houshold furniture, except what is of our own growth and manufacture: Of utterly rejecting the materials and instruments that promote foreign luxury: Of curing the expensiveness of pride, vanity, idleness, and gaming in our women: Of introducing a vein of parsimony, prudence and temperance: Of learning to love our country, wherein we differ even from Laplanders, and the inhabitants of Topinamboo: Of quitting our animosities and factions, nor acting any longer like the Jews, who were murdering one another at the very moment their city was taken: Of being a little cautious not to sell our country and consciences for nothing: Of teaching landlords to have at least one degree of mercy towards their tenants. Lastly, of putting a spirit of honesty, industry, and skill into our shopkeepers, who, if a resolution could now be taken to buy only our native goods,

would immediately unite to cheat and exact upon us in the price, the measure, and the goodness, nor could ever yet be brought to make one fair proposal of just dealing, though often and earnestly invited to it.

Therefore I repeat, let no man talk to me of these and the like expedients, till he hath at least some glympse of hope, that there will ever be some hearty and sincere attempt to put them into practice.

But, as to myself, having been wearied out for many years with offering vain, idle, visionary thoughts, and at length utterly despairing of success, I fortunately fell upon this proposal, which, as it is wholly new, so it hath something solid and real, of no expence and little trouble, full in our own power, and whereby we can incur no danger in disobliging England. For this kind of commodity will not bear exportation, and flesh being of too tender a consistence, to admit a long continuance in salt, although perhaps I could name a country, which would be glad to eat up our whole nation without it.

After all, I am not so violently bent upon my own opinion, as to reject any offer, proposed by wise men, which shall be found equally innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual. But before something of that kind shall be advanced in contradiction to my scheme, and offering a better, I desire the author or authors will be pleased maturely to consider two points. First, As things now stand, how they will be able to find food and raiment for a hundred thousand useless mouths and backs. And secondly, There being a round million of creatures in humane figure throughout this kingdom, whose whole subsistence put into a common stock, would leave them in debt two million of pounds sterling, adding those who are beggars by profession, to the bulk of farmers, cottagers and labourers, with their wives and children, who are beggars in effect; I desire those politicians who dislike my overture, and may perhaps be so bold to attempt an answer, that they will first ask the parents of these mortals, whether they would not at this day think it a great happiness to have been sold for food at a year old, in the manner I prescribe, and thereby have avoided such a perpetual scene of misfortunes, as they have since gone through, by the oppression of landlords, the impossibility of paying rent without money or trade, the want of common sustenance, with neither house nor clothes to cover them from the inclemencies of the weather, and the most inevitable prospect of intailing the like, or greater miseries, upon their breed for ever.

I profess in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the publick good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children, by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.

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3.11: Wordsworth, Dorothy "Daffodils" entry from Grasmere journal (1802)

This journal entry by Dorothy Wordsworth was written during an 1802 trip to the Lake District with her brother, the famed poet William Wordsworth. Wordsworth would use this journal entry as inspiration for his poem called "Daffodils" or "I wandered lonely as a cloud" (1807). While William Wordsworth achieved fame and eventually became the Poet Laureate of England, Dorothy Wordsworth is often relegated to footnotes and her title as role as Wordsworth's sister, despite her striking naturalistic prose. Some question whether Wordsworth's poem constitutes plagiarism. Compare this journal entry to Wordsworth's poem and see what you think.

"April 15th, 1802" from the Journal Written at Grasmere

by Dorothy Wordsworth

Thursday, 15th.

It was a threatening, misty morning, but mild. We set off after dinner from Eusemere. Mrs. Clarkson went a short way with us, but turned back. The wind was furious, and we thought we must have returned. We first rested in the large boathouse, then under a furze bush opposite Mr. Clarkson's. Saw the plough going in the field. The wind seized our breath. The lake was rough. There was a boat by itself floating in the middle of the bay below Water Millock. We rested again in the Water Millock Lane. The hawthorns are black and green, the birches here and there greenish, but there is yet more of purple to be seen on the twigs. We got over into a field to avoid some cows—people working. A few primroses by the roadside—woodsorrel flower, the anemone, scentless violets, strawberries, and that starry, yellow flower which Mrs. C. calls pile wort. When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. We fancied that the sea had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and above them; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway. We rested again and again. The bays were stormy, and we heard the waves at different distances, and in the middle of the water, like the sea.... All was cheerless and gloomy, so we faced the storm. At Dobson's I was very kindly treated by a young woman. The landlady looked sour, but it is her way.... William was sitting by a good fire when I came downstairs. He soon made his way to the library, piled up in a corner of the window. He brought out a volume of Enfield's Speaker, another miscellany, and an odd volume of Congreve's plays. We had a glass of warm rum and water. We enjoyed ourselves, and wished for Mary. It rained and blew, when we went to bed.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: About Fiction - Short Stories and the Novel

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to:

- explain the difference between fiction and non-fiction, short stories and novels.
- describe the key elements of fiction.
- discuss the meanings of “tone,” “diction,” and “syntax."
- identify the major elements of a plot.
- identify character, setting, and theme.
- differentiate between internal and external conflict.

4.1: What is Fiction?

4.2: Short Stories versus the Novel

4.3: Types of Novels

4.4: How to Read Fiction

4.5: How to Analyze Fiction - Elements of Literature

4.6: Character

4.7: Plot

4.8: Setting

4.9: Narration, Point of View, Dialogue

4.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice and Style

4.11: Rhetorical and Literary Devices

4.12: Theme

4.13: A Review and Questions

4.14: Match and Learn Quiz

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4.1: What is Fiction?

Overview



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Fiction refers to literature created from the imagination. Mysteries, science fiction, romance, fantasy, chick lit, and crime thrillers are all fiction genres. Whether or not all of these genres should be considered “literature” is a matter of opinion. Some of these fiction genres are taught in literature classrooms and some are not usually taught, considered more to be reading for entertainment. Works often taught in literature classrooms are referred to as “literary fiction” including classics by Dickens, Austen, Twain, and Poe, for example. We will be studying primarily literary fiction in our readings, unless your instructor decides otherwise.

Difference Between Fiction and Nonfiction

While nonfiction and creative nonfiction are true, fiction is **not true**. Fiction may chronicle real events that happened in a convincing way using **verisimilitude**, but for categorization purposes the literature is still fiction. For example, historical fiction adapts real events and historical figures into a compelling narrative. But even if 95% of the story is true, the 5% of imagination renders the narrative into fiction. Meanwhile, nonfiction and creative nonfiction must tell the truth. The flexibility in creative nonfiction comes in how the story is told. Fiction writers are not constrained by the truth in this way.

If an author presents untrue events as nonfiction, they are at risk of losing their reputation as writers or falling prey to lawsuits. For example, James Frey's "memoir" *A Million Little Pieces* is an example of what can happen when an author presents fictional events as nonfiction. His career was tanked. He was even kicked out of Oprah Winfrey's book club (Wyatt)! As creative nonfiction expert Lee Gutkind writes, "by virtue of the fact that some of the stuff in Frey’s book never happened, it should be catalogued as fiction—not creative nonfiction" (Gutkind).

Fiction writers are not constrained by reality in the same way that creative nonfiction authors might be. They are only bound by the limits of their imaginations.

Why Should We Read Fiction?

Prose fiction, whether in the form of the novel or the short story, is one of the most popular and widely consumed literary **genres**. One only has to see the proliferation of bookstalls at railway stations and airports, for example, and the predominance of novels over other forms of writing made available in such locations, to realize the appeal of fiction.

Take a few moments to think about *Why* we read fiction. *What* do we hope to gain from reading stories about imagined events that happen to imaginary people?

Robert DiYanni begins his impressively wide-ranging study *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and the Essay* (1997) with the following assertion about why we read:

> *We read stories for pleasure; they entertain us. And we read them for profit; they enlighten us. Stories draw us into their imaginative worlds and engage us with the power of their invention. They provide us with more than the immediate interest of narrative – of something happening – and more than the pleasures of imagination: they enlarge our understanding of ourselves and deepen our appreciation of life. (p. 27)*

Did your own answers to the question of why we read touch on any of the reasons DiYanni gives? I wouldn't be at all surprised if they did. It is, I think, true for all of us that there is an element of sheer escapism in our desire to read stories, to imaginatively engage with the incidents and events that befall the characters we read about. We often come to identify with these fictional characters, and think perhaps about how we would react and respond to the situations they find themselves in.

We can immerse ourselves in a fictional world in this way without necessarily applying a great deal of critical or intellectual effort, of course. But if fictional narratives are, as DiYanni puts it, to "enlarge our understanding of ourselves and

deepen our appreciation of life," we need, perhaps, to read them in a more objective way, to subject them to a more critical scrutiny to see if they reinforce or challenge our existing ideas about the world around us. Close attention to the texts we read can only enhance our understanding, and this in turn can increase our pleasure in reading. In this section we will concentrate largely on the various elements that make up a fictional **narrative**; the events that make up a **story** and how they are arranged (the **plot**); the perspectives from which stories can be narrated; the act of **characterisation**; the importance of **setting**, both in terms of time and place; and the actual language and style which writers adopt to tell their narratives. Above all, in what follows, and in your own readings of fictional narratives, you need to always keep in mind the question of *why* you think writers use particular narrative strategies. There are an infinite number of ways in which stories can be told; the choices made by individual writers of individual texts are not randomly made. We need to think about why those choices might have been made. There is no single authoritative answer to such questions. How we read is dictated largely by the experiences and contexts we each of us bring to a particular text, and for that reason no two readings are likely to be the same, even though we may be applying the same critical processes to our reading.



Video 4.1.1 : Introduction to Fiction

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Wyatt, Edward. "Author Is Kicked Out of Oprah Winfrey's Book Club." *The New York Times*, 27 January 2006.

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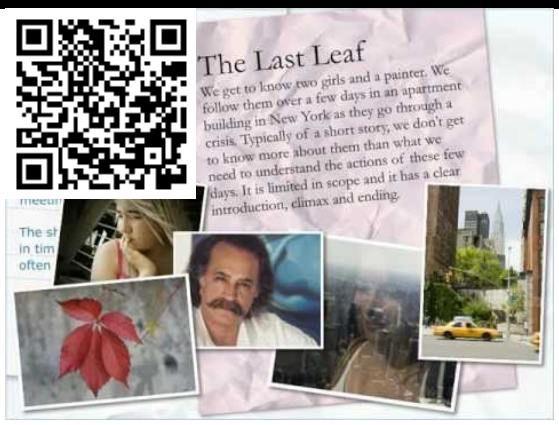
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4.2: Short Stories versus the Novel

Short Story

Short stories are works of fiction that usually fall between 1,000 to 10,000 words. On the shorter end of the short story classification we have flash fiction (500-1,000 words). On the longer end, we might approach a novella (17,500-40,000 words). Aside from length, there are some other characteristics which qualify a work of fiction as a short story. It is written in prose, meaning sentences and paragraphs rather than the lines and stanzas of poetry. There is usually a clear storyline, or plot, that unfolds over time. In short stories, the plot usually stretches over a relatively short time span, and will involve fewer characters than a novel. Like in drama and novels, a short story will have a certain structure with a turning point or climax which brings the plot in an unexpected direction.

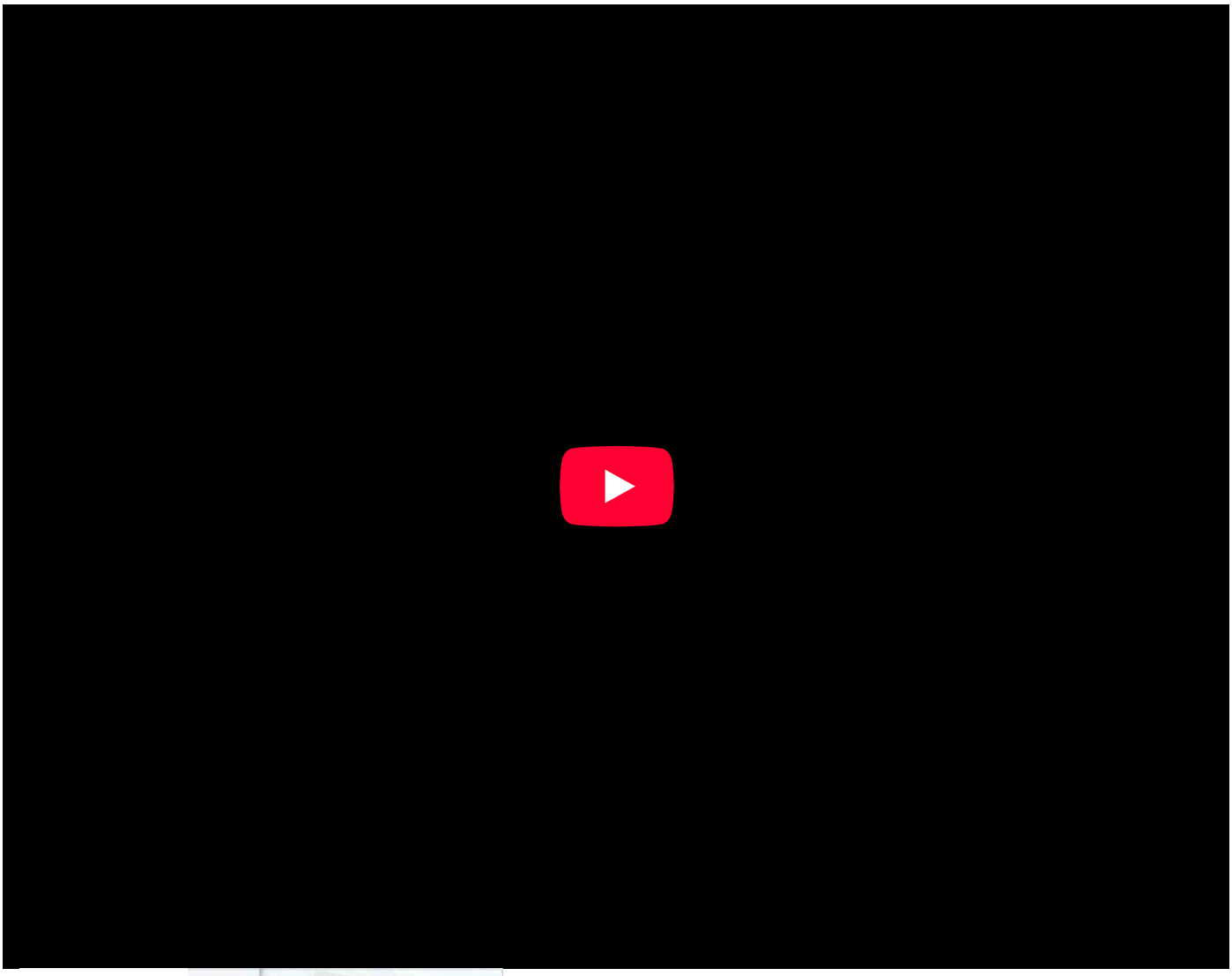


Video 4.2.1 : Short Story

The Novel

A novel is a work of fiction. This means that it is made up and not factual. Unlike the short story, it is NOT short: it usually focuses on many events and places as well as more characters than the short story. Also, the time span depicted in a novel is often longer than that of a short story.

In literary history, the novel is a fairly new form. Scholars count *Don Quixote* by Miguel Cervantes (1605) as the first narrative that fits modern criteria of a novel. Usually a novel is defined by its length, or, more precisely, the extension of its plot, which can span over longer time than, for example, a short story. But that is not always the case; there are many famous (and long) novels where the narrative evolves over a very short span of time, for example a couple of hours or a day. In addition, a novel often has an extensive cast of characters, and the plot may take place in many different settings. There are a number of subgenres that will identify a novel more specifically, such as fantasy, romance, historical, or bildungsroman.





Video 4.2.2 : Introduction to the Novel

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4.3: Types of Novels

Types of Novels

Satire

A satire is biting literary form. It can be a striking tool to pinpoint and raise criticism against political practices or other official activities.

The satire may as such be a strong weapon for opponents who want to reveal faulty, silly, or immoral practices by the authorities. It is also a way to highlight common proceedings that in fact are questionable or even foolish. But writing effective satire takes some skill and one will have to step lightly not to overexpose the object and give away the point too early. A well-written satire will cunningly strip down a certain practice and make it come out as the folly it really is.

To write a satire you have to take a step back and create some distance to the phenomenon you want to focus on, and describe it in an objective and unbiased manner. The narrative must be set in a credible context. That is, the satire will only work when the story or plot comes as an unpretentious presentation, and is told in a natural and effortless style without lecturing or exaggerating. A relevant technique is to let the narrator be either a somewhat naive observer, for example, a visitor from a foreign country or different culture, or someone who is given the chance to describe a phenomenon to an inquisitive audience. The clue is not to give away the critical attitude, but just to give an objective account and leave the rest to the reader. It is also important that the topic is both familiar and recognizable for the reader.

The optimal effect of a satire comes when the reader, after being entertained by the presentation, gradually or eventually gets the message. The good satire is a parallel so close to the real-life phenomenon that it will take some reflection to understand its satirical nature. The satire should not be confused with irony or parody which may be used for the same critical purpose, but are quite different approaches to the object.



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Humor: Irony vs. Satire

Famous writers often use humor in their works, and they do it quite deliberately. For example, Charles Dickens often chose to highlight the comical sides of characters he wanted to criticize. Ridiculing certain characters or institutions is a skillful way of manipulating readers. In general, it is liberating to laugh at authorities, and in that way humor can be an effective literary technique. Both irony and satire are widely used by writers to make a point and to lead the readers to draw their own conclusions. Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, was a classic master of satire and humor. He had many friends, but his writing certainly made him some enemies as well. The ultimate aim of a satire is to present a certain phenomenon in a way that makes the readers laugh but at the same time respond to the serious issue behind the text. But for writers there is pitfall here, because humor may distort the thematic message in a text and move the readers' focus and intellectual understanding of the text. So a writer with a message must pick his method carefully and will often have to make a choice – because being funny and serious at the same time is not easy.

Crime

It is an interesting fact that crime literature never achieved any due respect or acclaim by literary scholars and critics. It is considered a simple and trivial genre without much literary merit. One reason may be that the universe of a traditional crime story is displayed within a fairly predictable framework. When you pick up a crime story, you, to some extent, know what you will get. Certain elements are mandatory ingredients of the genre; number one is evident – there has to be a crime committed. Number two – there must be a criminal, and number three – there must be someone who goes after him.



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Science Fiction

Science fiction literature revolves around science and technology that does not yet exist and may never exist. But to keep the attention of most readers, it has to be plausible; therefore the science and technology described is based on the principles of science. These stories are most often set in the future. Sometimes they are about life on a changed Earth, but they also often deal with aliens, life on other planets, parallel worlds, or even time travel.

The main concern for many science fiction authors is not the scientific and technological developments themselves, but how they affect mankind. In fact, some science fiction stories depict situations arising mainly from the social or political change resulting from these developments. In other words, a lot of science fiction can also be seen as comments on important societal issues.

It was the editor Hugo Gernsbach who coined the expression “science fiction” in the 1920s. Not very successful himself as an author, he launched the first science fiction magazine in 1926, in which he published the works of other science fiction authors. Since then, the science fiction genre has become increasingly more popular and has developed into several sub-genres. These sub-genres are not, however, surrounded by impermeable genre borders; most sci-fi stories cross over into other sub-genres – and even other genres.

Books and stories in the science fiction genre can focus on hard science fiction (revolving around science and technology), apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic worlds, dystopian societies, time-travel, and space exploration and first contact, among other topics.

Children's Literature

The first English literature intended for children appeared during the Victorian age. Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) have become classics of fantasy literature for children. The characters Alice encounters in her underworld adventure have become immortal, like the Rabbit, the Mad Hatter and the Walrus, who is behind the famous quote, “The Time has come, the Walrus said, to talk of many things.” Much of the literature produced for children at the time was meant to be educational with a clear moralist Christian motive. Children were seen as small people apt to a sinful life if they were not taught the correct ways. Moral education may be good, but it is not entertaining. So literature for children had to be more than that. Towards the turn of the century writers like Oscar Wilde, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Rudyard Kipling contributed with books for children that are still read and cherished today. Who has not read or seen the animated film version of Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*? Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* have also gained their positions as classics and have been successfully adapted to film. During the first half of the 20th century, literature for children gradually established itself as a genuine and fully recognized literary genre; and now one celebrated fiction writer after another came up with memorable and great literature for children. Examples include J.R.R. Tolkien’s substantial epic *The Lord of the Rings* (1937-49), C.S. Lewis’s wonderful *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56), A.A. Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh*, the magical world of Harry Potter created by J.K

Rowling, and the popular stories by Roald Dahl and the Swedish Astrid Lindgren. In today's fiction it is seen as sign of an author's versatility to be able to write both for children and for a grown-up audience.

Historical Fiction

History is an interesting and at the same time difficult subject. Researchers spend their time studying source material, and then draw their conclusions after having presented theories and discussed with colleagues. Our knowledge of history is based on extensive and collective research by historians and archaeologists. So an author of fiction has to respect what these scholars have established as historical facts.

One way for the author to go is to "fill in" what history does not tell us, that is, to create a story about what "might have happened." As long as the author steers clear of established historical facts this might work, but as soon as a character or a setting can be identified as factual history, he cannot tamper with it. For example, changing the fate of Napoleon or Hitler, or introducing hand guns in the Middle Ages would simply be a falsification, even if it is presented as fiction.

Another approach for writers of historical material is to use a factual setting and create one or more characters who take their places in a plot developing against a historical backdrop. This will give the author a framework that will be historically correct while his character(s) are purely fictional; they may even relate to and communicate with historical and factual characters. This has been done successfully by the Norwegian writer Kjartan Fløgstad in *Grense Jacobselv* where he creates a plot about how ex-Nazis were so smoothly re-established as clean and respectable citizens after the war. Another prime example of this approach is Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* which is the story of a failed insurrection during the French Revolution.

Reading stories set in history gives us a feeling of truth and authenticity. Such books (and films) may also bring about a sense of unification with the past and a rooting in our national identity. This is why historical novels were so popular during the Romantic Period. Stories about national heroes, chivalry, and bravery would spark the feeling of national pride and the urge for independence. Good examples are the historical plays of German playwright Friedrich Schiller and Scottish Sir Walter Scott's stories about *Rob Roy* and *Ivanhoe*.



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Mass or Light Literature

In one of his essays, author George Orwell raised the question of whether "bad" literature can still be readable. The issue may seem far-fetched and indicate a rather highbrow attitude to literature, but who should be the judge of what is good and bad literature – the literary scholar or the reader? Critics might classify "bad" books as sub-standard writing that does not appeal to the intellect. They would probably claim that taste and popularity are not the same as quality. They may have a point, but it seems a bit pretentious to discard the literary preference of millions of readers.

Some of the most popular sub-genres of what is staple reading for the masses are available at a newsagent or in the supermarket rather than a bookstore. And this kind of literature has been and still is enjoyed by millions who just seek the pure entertainment of a reading experience. Examples of such literature are the western, hospital romance, family chronicle, science fiction, and crime, among others.

> Exercise 4.3.1

How would you categorize these **extracts**, all of which are taken from novels? Think about your reasons for suggesting a particular category.

Answer

How did you get on? The first extract is from an historical novel (Dunnett, 1993, p. 11). We can guess that it's set in the past because the detailed description of Edinburgh doesn't sound like a modern town. We know it's from a novel since, in the last paragraph of the extract, we are allowed to share a piece of information that one of the characters has been given: 'The King's Wark, Anselm Adorne had been told.' Anselm Adorne did exist – he was a merchant and magistrate in Bruges in the second half of the fifteenth century – but Edinburgh is described as he sees it, and this we know can only be a fictional reconstruction. This is a good example of what historical novels can do: they can imaginatively recreate the past, peopling it both with characters who really existed and with characters who are completely fictional.

The second extract is from a popular romance (Mortimer, 1980, pp. 12-13). We know this, I think, because of the emphasis on the smouldering sexuality of the male character and the admiring response of the female character to him. They are stereotypes, placed in a stereotypical situation, although it's perhaps worth pointing out that the male figure has sound literary antecedents in the form of Heathcliff and Mr. Rochester, from Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* respectively.

The third extract is science fiction (May, 1982, p. 11). We might deduce this from the unfamiliar situation, the use of strange words such as 'superficies' and 'normal space' and the fact that the Ship is a space ship, surrounded by stars.

I hope you could classify these extracts without too much difficulty, because you were able to draw on concepts of various kinds of fictional writing, based on your knowledge and experience of reading. This is the kind of classification that Dennis Walder summarises on page 9 of *The Realist Novel*, although he also points out that these classifications are not fixed or rigid.

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How to Read and Analyze Fiction



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> *Novels are exciting machines (verbal machines) which transport their readers in space and time. They challenge us to meet the unfamiliar. They offer us a share in the pleasure*

The above quote by Dr. Milligan shows us the pleasure a reader can get not only by reading a novel, but also analyzing it. The ultimate reading experience comes as a result of the collaboration between the writer and the reader; they both will have to contribute for the reading experience to be a success. So, once the writer has completed his task, the reader must do his bit for the literary universe to unfold. What happens in this process has occupied writers and scholars over the years. Many authors, including Virginia Woolf, have written extensive essays on the nature of literature, and how a literary text should be read. It is of course hard to define which basic elements are essential for the "correct" perception of a text, firstly because reading is a very private and individual experience. Secondly, writers are different and have their individual literary approach and style. But here lies the essence of a complete understanding of a literary text – the symbiotic unity of writing and reading.

The Act of Reading

The act of reading has been characterized by Robert DiYanni as involving three interrelated processes: experience, interpretation, and evaluation. The first thing we do when we read a novel is to experience it, that is to say, we respond to the development of the narrative and the characters presented to us. The story we read if it does its job effectively affects us on certain levels. We become involved in the events and incidents that befall the characters. The language of the narrative forces us to respond to it, maybe with pleasure or admiration, or sometimes with confusion. If we are engaged by the story on any level we will have feelings one way or the other about the outcome; we will all respond in different ways. That response is shaped by our reaction to the interplay of various narrative elements, which will be outlined now and discussed in detail later.

To read and appreciate a short story fully, you need to read it at least twice, especially if you are going to analyze it. You can follow the steps below:

1. Read the story in its entirety for enjoyment.
2. Read the story again, pausing often to reflect on what the description/events/language is trying to tell you.
3. Once you reach the end on the second read, you can reflect on the story as a whole based on your interpretations.

How to Read a Novel: Advice from Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf's essay, "How Should One Read a Book?" is still useful today to understand one reads a novel.



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About the Author: Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

Until she was 13, Adeline Virginia Stephen led a happy and carefree life in a harmonious Victorian family. Then a series of events threw her life into an accelerating downward spiral. Her mother died, which for her was “the greatest tragedy that could ever happen”. But there was more to come. After this her father despaired and was unable to take care of his three children, so Virginia and her sister had to be looked after by their half-sister Stella. In this new family setting the Stephen sisters were exposed to sexual advances by both Stella’s husband and their half-brother, George Duckworth. Virginia withdrew into a state of “frozen and defensive panic” and became a shy individual, feeling that the next shock would drive her mad. This came when her father soon after died of cancer, and Virginia had her first of a series of nervous breakdowns. She was on the brink of madness, wandering in and out of hallucinations and fighting with self-destructive thoughts.

Literature became her refuge. She and her sister Vanessa became the leading figures of the so-called Bloomsbury Group, an avant-garde circle based at their home in Bloomsbury, London. It was a group of intellectuals discussing social, cultural and political issues of the time – anti-imperialism, modernist literature and art, and feminism. She later married another member of the group, Leonard Woolf.

Her first writing was fairly conventional and straightforward, but gradually she developed a more experimental style influenced by modernist writers, such as James Joyce. She wanted to challenge the conventional concept of a novel and traditional narrative style. Some of her most famous works include *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), and *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

Virginia Woolf published two volumes of literary essays, *The Common Reader* (1925) and *The Second Common Reader* (1932), which are, as the titles indicate, written to encourage reading among common people as opposed to critics and literary scholars. She reflects on the style and approach of different writers, the criteria of literary quality, and most importantly, as in this excerpt from *The Second Common Reader* – the role of the reader.

How Should One Read a Book?: *An Essay by Virginia Woolf*

In the first place, I want to emphasize the note of interrogation at the end of my title. Even if I could answer the question for myself, the answer would apply only to me and not to you. The only advice, indeed, that one person can give another about reading is to take no advice, to follow your own instincts, to use your own reason, to come to your own conclusions. If this is agreed between us, then I feel at liberty to put forward a few ideas and suggestions because you will not allow them to fetter that independence which is the most important quality that a reader can possess. After all, what laws can be laid down about books? The battle of Waterloo was certainly fought on a certain day; but is Hamlet a better play than Lear? Nobody can say. To admit authorities, however heavily furred and gowned, into our libraries and let them tell us how to read, what value to place upon what

we read, is to destroy the spirit of freedom which is the breath of these sanctuaries. Everywhere else we may be bound by laws and conventions, there we have none.

(…)

Yet few people ask from books what books can give us. Most commonly we come to books with blurred and divided minds, asking of fiction that it shall be true, of poetry that it shall be false, of biography that it shall be flattering, of history that it shall enforce our own prejudices. If we could banish all such preconceptions when we read, that would be an admirable beginning. Do not dictate to your author; try to become him. Be his fellow-worker and accomplice. If you hang back, and reserve and criticize at first, you are preventing yourself from getting the fullest possible value from what you read. But if you open your mind as widely as possible, then signs and hints of almost imperceptible fineness, from the twist and turn of sentences, will bring you into the presence of a human being unlike any other. Steep yourself in this, acquaint yourself with this, and soon you will find that your author is giving you, attempting to give you something far more definite. The thirty-two chapters of a novel – if we consider how to read a novel first – are an attempt to make something as formed and controlled as a building: But words are more impalpable than bricks; reading is a longer and more complicated process than seeing. Perhaps the quickest way to understand the elements of what a novelist is doing is not to read, but to write; to make your own experiment with the dangers and difficulties of words. Recall, then, some event that has left a distinct impression on you – how at the corner of a street, you passed two people talking. A tree shook; an electric light danced; the tone of the talk was comic, but also tragic; a whole vision, an entire conception contained in that moment.

But when you attempt to reconstruct it in words, you will find that it breaks into a thousand conflicting impressions. Some must be subdued; others emphasized; in the process you will lose, probably, all grasp upon the emotion itself. Then turn from your blurred and littered pages to the opening pages of some great novelist – Defoe, Jane Austen, Hardy. Now you will be better able to appreciate their mastery. It is not merely that we are in the presence of a different person – Defoe, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy – but we are living a different world. Here in Robinson Crusoe, we are trudging a plain highroad; one thing happens after another; the fact and the order of the fact is enough. But if the open air and adventure mean everything to Defoe they mean nothing to Jane Austen. Here is the drawing-room, and people talking, and by the many mirrors of their talk revealing their characters. And if, when we have accustomed ourselves to the drawing-room and its reflections, we turn to Hardy, we are once more spun round. The moors are round us and the stars are above out heads. The other side of the mind is now exposed – the dark side that comes uppermost in solitude, not the light side that shows in company. Our relations are not towards people, but towards Nature and Destiny. Yet different as these worlds are, each is consistent with itself. The maker of each is careful to observe the laws of his own perspective, and however great a strain they may put upon you they will never confuse us, as lesser writers so frequently do, by introducing two different kinds of reality into the same book.

Exercise 4.4.1

- What does Virginia Woolf say about the relation between reader and writer?
- What is her advice about what to read?
- What does she say about defining "good" literature?
- What does she mean by saying that “few people ask from books what books can give us”?
- How is “reading a more complicated process than seeing”?
- In addition to an open mind, what does she suggest as a good starting point if we want to appreciate good literature?
- She mentions three famous English novelists; how does she describe their different styles?
- Explain the last sentence of the essay.

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4.5: How to Analyze Fiction - Elements of Literature

Elements of Literature

Before you dive straight into your analysis of symbolism, diction, imagery, or any other rhetorical device, you need to have a grasp of the basic elements of what you're reading. When we read critically or analytically, we might disregard character, plot, setting, and theme as surface elements of a text. Aside from noting what they are and how they drive a story, we sometimes don't pay much attention to these elements. However, characters and their interactions can reveal a great deal about the story's themes. Plot can act as a stand-in for real-world events just as setting can represent our world or an allegorical one. Theme is the heart of literature, exploring everything from love and war to childhood and aging.

With this in mind, you can begin your examination of literature with a “who, what, when, where, how?” approach. Ask yourself “Who are the characters?” “What is happening?” “When and where is it happening?” and “How does it happen?” The answers will give you character (who), plot (what and how), and setting (when and where). When you put these answers together, you can begin to figure out theme, and you will have a solid foundation on which to base your analysis.

We will be exploring several of the following literary elements in the following pages so that we can have a common vocabulary to talk about fiction:

- Tone
- Character
- Plot
- Setting
- Narration
- Rhetorical Devices
- Theme
- Imagery
- Symbolism

Here are a few questions to ask when looking at some of the main elements of fiction. We will be looking at each of these in more detail in the following pages.

Setting

Setting is a description of where and when the story takes place.

- What aspects make up the setting?
  - Geography, weather, time of day, social conditions?
- What role does setting play in the story? Is it an important part of the plot or theme? Or is it just a backdrop against which the action takes place?
- Study the time period which is also part of the setting
- When was the story written?
  - Does it take place in the present, the past, or the future?
  - How does the time period affect the language, atmosphere, or social circumstances of the novel?

Characterization

Characterization deals with how the characters are described.

- through dialogue?
- by the way they speak?
- physical appearance? thoughts and feelings?
- interaction – the way they act towards other characters?
- Are they static characters who do not change?
- Do they develop by the end of the story?
- What type of characters are they?

- What qualities stand out?
- Are they stereotypes?
- Are the characters believable?

Plot and structure

The *plot* is the main sequence of events that make up the story.

- What are the most important events?
- How is the plot structured? Is it linear and chronological or does it move back and forth?
- Are there turning points, a climax, and/or an anticlimax?
- Is the plot believable?

Narrator and Point of View

The *narrator* is the person telling the story.
Point of view: whose eyes the story is being told through.

- Who is the narrator or speaker in the story?
- Is the narrator the main character?
- Does the author speak through one of the characters?
- Is the story written in the first person “I” point of view?
- Is the story written in a detached third person “he/she/they” point of view?
- Is the story written in an “all-knowing” third person who can reveal what all the characters are thinking and doing at all times and in all places?

Conflict

Conflict or tension is usually the heart of the novel and is related to the main character.

- How would you describe the main conflict?
  - Is it internal where the character suffers inwardly?
  - Is it external, caused by the surroundings or environment the main character finds themself in?

Theme

The *theme* is the main idea, lesson, or message in the novel. It is usually an abstract, universal idea about the human condition, society or life, to name a few.

- How does the theme shine through in the story?
- Are any elements repeated that may suggest a theme?
- What other themes are there?

Style

The author’s style has to do with the author’s vocabulary, use of imagery, tone, or feeling of the story. It has to do with his attitude towards the subject. In some novels the tone can be ironic, humorous, cold, or dramatic.

- Is the text full of figurative language?
- Does the author use a lot of symbolism? Metaphors, similes?
  An example of a metaphor is when someone says, "My love, you *are* a rose." An example of a simile is "My darling, you are *like* a rose."
- What images are used?

Your literary analysis of a novel will often be in the form of an essay or book report where you will be asked to give your opinions of the novel at the end. To conclude, choose the elements that made the greatest impression on you. Point out which characters you liked best or least and always support your arguments. Try to view the novel as a whole and try to give a balanced analysis.

These are the Elements of Literature, the things that make up every story. This is the first of two videos.



Video 4.5.1 : Elements of literature with Mr. Taylor: Part I



Video 4.5.2 Elements of literature with Mr. Taylor: Part II

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4.6: Character

Characters and Characterization

How do writers of prose fiction make us respond to the imaginary people they create? In order to encourage us to continue reading, writers must force us to react in some way to their characters, whether it is to identify, empathise, or sympathise with them; to dislike or disapprove of them; or to pass judgement on their actions, behaviour and values. As we have already seen, the fundamental question we repeatedly ask when we read a story is what happened next. Equally importantly we want to know to whom it happened, and we will only want to know this if we feel strongly one way or another about the characters in the story. In this respect the author's skill at characterisation is crucial.

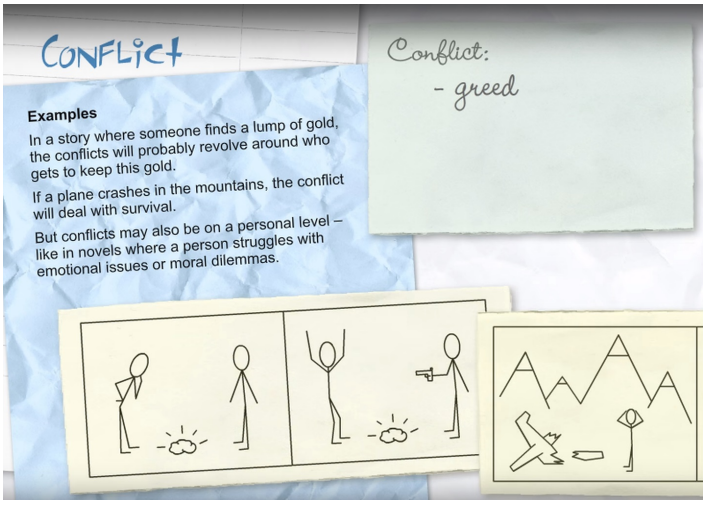
We use the term characterisation to describe the strategies that an author uses to present and develop the characters in a narrative. This use of descriptive techniques will vary from character to character. Some characters are central to a story; often there will be one main character around whom the narrative revolves: Pip in *Great Expectations*, for example, or, we may reasonably surmise from the opening paragraph we looked at earlier, Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*. We expect that such characters, and others close to the heart of narrative events, will be presented to us in great detail; we may be allowed access to their consciousness, either by the use of first-person narration or third-person **focalisation**, and it is extremely likely that they will undergo some sort of significant personal change (for better or worse) as a result of their experiences. These kinds of characters are sometimes known as *dynamic*. Other characters, often described as *static*, may be much less thoroughly-drawn; they may be introduced to the narrative primarily to perform a particular narrative or thematic function, and will probably undergo little or no change in the course of the story.

Terms Related to Characterization

You are probably already adept at identifying the characters of a story, but there are some terms that will be helpful in your literary analysis. Keep in mind that characters aren't necessarily people. They can be animals, divine beings, personifications, etc.

One of the most important terms you will use is **conflict.** Conflict occurs between two opposing sides in a story, usually centering on characters' values, needs, or interests. A conflict can be internal or external. **Internal conflict** takes place within an individual, such as when a character is torn between duty to his family and duty to the state. **External conflict** occurs when two individuals or groups of individuals clash. A struggle between a character and his best friend is an example of an external conflict.

Video



Click for video to discuss that conflict is a struggle between opposing forces.

By examining the conflict, we can determine the **protagonist** and **antagonist.** The protagonist is the focal point of the conflict, meaning that he or she is the main character of the story. All the action in a story will revolve around its protagonist. In addition, a story that contains a series of conflicts can contain several protagonists – no story is limited to just one. The antagonist is the

character who stands in opposition of the protagonist. The antagonist is the other half of the conflict. Remember that an antagonist doesn't have to be a person – it can be a nation, a group, or even a set of ideas.

Sometimes, the protagonist can take the form of the **antihero.** The antihero is a protagonist who does not embody traditional "heroic" values. However, the reader will still sympathize with an antihero. For instance, a protagonist who is a scoundrel is an antihero, as a traditional hero would embody virtue.

In addition to the protagonist and antagonist, most stories have **secondary** or **minor characters.** These are the other characters in the story. They sometimes support the protagonist or antagonist in their struggles, and they sometimes never come into contact with the main characters.

Authors use minor characters for a variety of reasons. For instance, they can illustrate a different side of the main conflict, or they can highlight the traits of the main characters. One important type of minor character is called a **foil.** This character emphasizes the traits of a main character (usually the protagonist) through contrast. Thus, a foil will often be the polar opposite of the main character he or she highlights. Sometimes, the foil can take the form of a sidekick or friend. Other times, he or she might be someone who contends against the protagonist. For example, an author might use a decisive and determined foil to draw attention to a protagonist's lack of resolve and motivation.

Finally, any character in a story can be an **archetype.** We can define archetype as an original model for a type of character, but that doesn't fully explain the term. One way to think of an archetype is to think of how a bronze statue is made. First, the sculptor creates his design out of wax or clay. Next, he creates a fireproof mold around the original. After this is done, the sculptor can make as many of the same sculpture as he pleases. The original model is the equivalent to the archetype. Some popular archetypes are the trickster figure, such as Coyote in Native American myth or Brer Rabbit in African American folklore, and the femme fatale, like Pandora in Greek myth. Keep in mind that archetype simply means original pattern and does not always apply to characters. It can come in the form of an object, a narrative, etc. For instance, the apple in the Garden of Eden provides the object-based forbidden fruit archetype, and Odysseus's voyage gives us the narrative-based journey home archetype.

Flat and Round Characters

Another useful distinction between types of characters was proposed by E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel*. "We may divide characters into flat and round," Forster suggested (1927, p. 65). What do you think he meant by these terms?

I expect you found this rather straightforward. The word "flat" suggests a one-dimensional figure, and what Forster meant by "flat" characters were those who are largely taken to represent a particular idea, human trait, or set of values, much like the static characters described above. They are caricatures who can be easily and quickly summarised; Forster gives an example:

> *The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence such as "I will never desert Mr Micawber." There is Mrs Micawber – she says she won't desert Mr Micawber; she doesn't, and there she is.*
>
> *(ibid.)*

The reference is to a character in Dickens' *David Copperfield* who does not change in any significant way in spite of the varied experiences she and her family encounter. "Round" characters, by contrast, are described and developed in such a way as to achieve three-dimensionality, a physical and psychological complexity that mimics that of the real people we come to know in our everyday lives.

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* provides some interesting examples of "flat" and "round" characters. Note, however, that identifying those examples will largely depend on the reader's response to Austen's characters, but we might well place figures such as Mrs. Bennett in the former category, and the central character, her daughter Elizabeth, in the latter. As you may know, Austen sums up Mrs. Bennet in three short, direct sentences at the end of the opening chapter of the novel:

> *She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.*

> *(Austen, 1813, p. 3)*

Compare this with the opening of the final chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*:

> *Happy for all her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters. With what delighted pride she afterwards visited Mrs. Bingley and talked of Mrs. Darcy may be guessed. I wish I could say, for the sake of her family, that the accomplishment of her earnest desire in the establishment of so many of her children, produced so happy an effect as to make her a sensible, amiable woman for the rest of her life; though perhaps it was lucky for her husband, who might not have relished domestic felicity in so unusual a form, that she still was occasionally nervous and invariably silly.*
>
> *(ibid., p. 295)*

These two descriptions of Mrs. Bennet, at the beginning and end of the novel are rare examples of Austen "telling" us about this particular character. More often, she "shows" us Mrs. Bennett by reporting her speech directly and allowing us to draw our own conclusions about Mrs. Bennet's attitudes and values. We are never given access to Mrs. Bennett's consciousness; events are never "focalised" through her. Why do you think this is?

It is probably because Mrs. Bennet's main function in the story is to represent a particular attitude of the period in which the novel is set, that the best, or only chance for women's social advancement and financial security was through marriage. By representing this view from the outside, as it were, Austen leads us to scrutinise it in a more rigorous way. To describe Mrs. Bennet as "flat" or "static" is not to imply that she is necessarily a negligible character. She may perform only one function in the novel, but it is a function that draws attention to the constrained position of women in the society Austen depicts.

That Elizabeth is a "round," or "dynamic," character is surely not in doubt. The entire novel revolves around her and we perceive much of the action through her eyes. The changes she experiences conform to Forster's template of "roundness," and the contrast with Mrs. Bennet demonstrates the necessity for combinations of "flat" and "round" that Forster sees as necessary for the successful creation of fictional narrative:

> *The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is a flat pretending to be round. It has the incalculability of life about it – life within the pages of a book. And by using it sometimes alone, more often in combination with the other kind, the novelist achieves his task of acclimatization, and harmonizes the human race with the other aspects of his work.*
>
> *(Forster, 1927, p. 75)*

Activity: Character Analysis

Most novels will have a hero, a good guy. There is no doubt that Harry Potter is the hero and protagonist, and he has a lot of good friends. How do we know that they are good? We have to depend on information about looks, behavior, and speech.

Study the extracts and then answer the questions which follow.

Extracts from the first chapter of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* used in the analysis.

EXTRACT 1

If the motorcycle was huge, it was nothing to the man sitting astride it. He was almost twice as tall as a normal man and at least five times as wide. He looked simply too big to be allowed, and so wild – long tangles of bushy black hair and beard hid

most of his face, he had hands the size of trash can lids, and his feet in their leather boots were like baby dolphins. In his vast, muscular arms he was holding a bundle of blankets. (Description of Hagrid)

EXTRACT 2

"S-s-sorry," sobbed Hagrid, taking out a large, spotted handkerchief and burying his face in it. "But I c-c-can't stand it – Lily and James dead – an' poor little Harry off ter live with Muggles–" (Hagrid talks about Harry's dead parents and how he has to stay with the humans, the Muggles)

EXTRACT 3

"Yes, yes, it's all very sad, but get a grip on yourself, Hagrid, or we'll be found," Professor McGonagall whispered, patting Hagrid gingerly on the arm as Dumbledore stepped over the low garden wall and walked to the front door. He laid Harry gently on the doorstep, took a letter out of his cloak, tucked it inside Harry's blankets, and then came back to the other two. For a full minute the three of them stood and looked at the little bundle; Hagrid's shoulders shook, Professor McGonagall blinked furiously, and the twinkling light that usually shone from Dumbledore's eyes seemed to have gone out. (From the delivery of the orphan Harry at the Dursleys' doorstep)

EXTRACT 4

"Look"– he murmured, holding out his arm to stop Malfoy. Something bright white was gleaming on the ground. They inched closer. It was the unicorn, all right, and it was dead. Harry had never seen anything so beautiful and sad. Its long, slender legs were stuck out at odd angles where it had fallen and its mane was spread pearly white on the dark leaves. Harry had taken one step toward it when a slithering sound made him freeze where he stood. A bush on the edge of the clearing quivered… Then, out of the shadows, a hooded figure came crawling across the ground like some stalking beast. Harry, Malfoy, and Fang stood transfixed. The cloaked figure reached the unicorn, lowered its head over the wound in the animal's side, and began to drink its blood. (From the first time Harry meets Voldemort)

EXERCISES

Study Extracts 1, 2, and 3

1. How does the author introduce us to Hagrid and Professor Dumbledore? What kind of impression do you get? Do you like them? Why?
2. Describe in your own words Hagrid's looks.
3. How is speech used to describe the characters?

Villains/Antagonists

In most novels we will also meet some "bad guys." They are often called villains or antagonists. How do we know that they are evil? Study **Extract 4** above.

1. Describe in your own words Voldemort's looks and behavior.
2. How does the author tell us that Voldemort is an evil character (an antagonist)?

Character Development

Throughout the story Harry changes a lot. He develops from a loner into a sociable, more mature guy, and he also has to admit that he is mistaken. One of the characters that he thinks is "a bad guy" is actually "a good guy"! In most reports you will be asked to write a characterization of one of the main characters and to comment if they have changed or not.



Video 4.6.1 : Character

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4.7: Plot

Plot



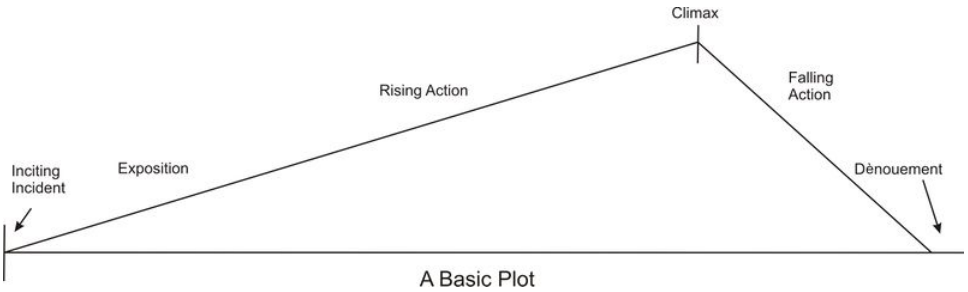
Image from Pixabay

Before you can write an in-depth explanation of the themes, motives, or diction of a book, you need to be able to discuss one of its most basic elements: the story. If you can't identify what has happened in a story, your writing will lack context. Writing your paper will be like trying to put together a complex puzzle without looking at the picture you're supposed to create. Each piece is important, but without the bigger picture for reference, you and anyone watching will have a hard time understanding what is being assembled. Thus, you should look for “the bigger picture” in a book, poem, or play by reading for plot.

A plot is a storyline. We can define plot as the main events of a book, short story, play, poem, etc. and the way those events connect to one another. Conflicts act as the driving forces behind a plot.

A plot has several main elements: **inciting incident, exposition, rising action, climax, falling action,** and **dénouement.** These elements often appear in the order listed here, but you should be aware that some works deviate from this form.

A Diagram of the Components of a Basic Plot



Inciting Incident: This is the event that sets the main conflict into motion. Without it, we could have no plot, as all the characters would already be living “happily ever after,” so to speak. Most stories contain many conflicts, so you will have to identify the main conflict before you can identify the inciting incident. Remember, the inciting incident and conflict are two separate things – the inciting incident is a moment in a story that starts the main conflict. For instance, a person throwing the first punch can be considered the inciting incident to the conflict of a long fistfight. In addition, the inciting incident can happen before a story takes place, in which case it is related to the reader as a past event.

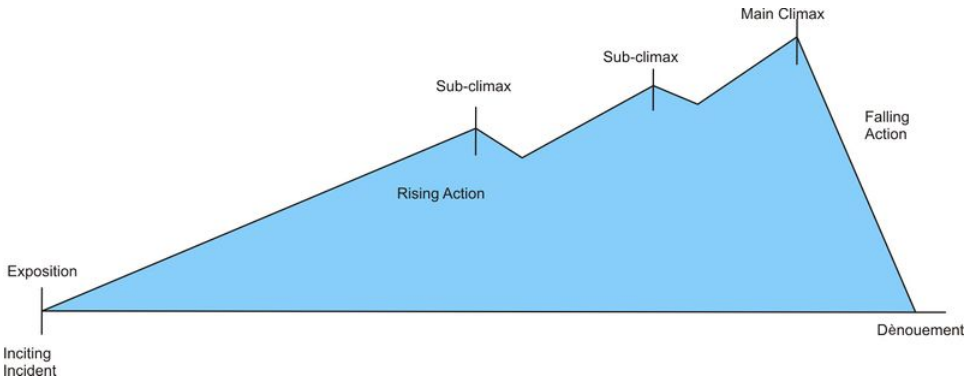
Exposition: This is the part of the story that tells us the setting. We find out who the main characters are and where the story takes place. The exposition also hints at the themes and conflicts that will develop later in the story. Exposition can take place throughout a story as characters reveal more about themselves.

Rising Action: The rising action is comprised of a series of events that build up to the climax of the story. It introduces us to secondary conflicts and creates tension in the story. You can think of the rising action as the series of events that make the climax of the story possible.

Climax: The climax has often been described as the “turning point” of a story. A good way to think of it is the incident that allows the main conflict of a story to resolve. The climax allows characters to solve a problem. It take many forms, such as an epiphany the protagonist has about himself, a battle between the protagonist and antagonist, or the culmination of an internal struggle.

Many stories actually have smaller climaxes before the main one. Like the main climax, these are turning points in the story. These sub-climaxes can be minor turning points in the main conflict that help build and release suspense during the rising action. They can also be the main turning points for secondary conflicts within a story. You might diagram a plot containing sub-climaxes and a main climax like this:

A Diagram of a Complex Plot, or a Plot that Contains Sub-climaxes



Falling Action: The events that take place after the climax are called the falling action. These events show the results of the climax, and they act as a bridge between the climax and the dénouement.

Dénouement: The word dénouement comes from the French “to untie” and the Latin “knot,” which gives us an indication of its purpose. It serves as the unraveling of a plot – a resolution to a story. In the dénouement, the central conflict is resolved. However, conflicts aren't always resolved. Some stories leave secondary conflicts unsettled, and a rare few even leave doubt about the resolution of the main conflict. The dénouement can also leave the story and characters in the same state they were in before the story began. This often occurs when an epilogue tells the reader that all the conflicts in the story have been resolved. Thus, we can see the dénouement as a kind of mirror to the exposition, showing us the same situation at both the beginning and end of a story.

A **flashback** (not shown in the diagram) is a device used to give the reader background information that happened in the past.

The first video below gives an overview about plot:

Video 4.7.1 : Plot



The second video talks about climax and turning point:



Video 4.7.2 : Climax and Turning Point

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4.8: Setting

Setting in Fiction



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If a story has characters and a plot, these elements must exist within some context. The frame of reference in which the story occurs is known as **setting**. The most basic definition of setting is one of place and time. You want to ask yourself, “Where and when does the story take place?” *Gone With the Wind*, for example, takes place in Georgia during the American Civil War. Setting can be very important in discovering and highlighting the **mood**, or the general feeling we get from a story. (Note: Be careful not to mix up mood and tone, as they are not the same thing. Mood is the feeling we get from a story; tone is a way of getting that feeling across.) For instance, Edgar Allan Poe portrays a very dark, oppressive setting in “The Fall of the House of Usher,” which makes the reader share the narrator's feelings of confinement and depression. In addition, the house in Poe's story can be seen as a kind of **internalized setting.** In this kind of setting, an aspect of the story external to a character represents the character's internal development. For instance, the cracked face of the house can be said to represent the cracked minds of the Usher siblings.

Setting as Geographical Entity

We can define the "setting" of a story as the geographical location or locations in which the events of the narrative takes place, as well as the time in which those events are set. Location can refer to wider geographical entities such as countries or cities as well as to smaller entities such as households or domestic interiors. Time can refer to a general historical period or to the chronological boundaries of the story's events.

Let's look again at the beginning of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. How important is setting in this case? How does Rushdie's narrative style help us to evaluate the significance of the setting?

> *I was born in the city of Bombay … once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more … On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds. A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe; but his accident was a mere trifle when set beside what had befallen me in that benighted moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape. Soothsayers had prophesied me, newspapers celebrated my arrival, politicos ratified my authenticity.*

> *(1981, p. 9)*

Did you feel that setting was clearly very important here? We may not know exactly *why* at this stage, but the implication is that the time and place at which the narrator's story begins is of great significance. He describes himself as "handcuffed to history" by the circumstances of his birth, and, as I suggested earlier, we are alerted to the possibility of a story to come which will have historical and political associations, reinforced by the assertion that the narrator's "destinies" were "indissolubly chained" to the future of his country. Location is surely important here; the place of the narrator's birth is the first thing we are told. You might further have noticed that the specific cultural environment is suggested by the image of "Clock-hands join(ing) palms in respectful greeting," mimicking the Indian gesture of *namaste*. The references to "soothsayers," "newspapers," and "politicos" further enhances our sense of a culturally significant environment, where traditional and modern values interact. The American writer Eudora Welty has claimed that "every story would be another story, and unrecognizable as art, if it took up its characters and plot and happened somewhere else" (quoted in DiYanni, 1997, p. 67). Rushdie's use of place and time in this extract from *Midnight's Children* seems to bear this out; the narrative's entire meaning and significance rests on its setting, I hope you'll agree.

Setting as Time and Place

The surroundings in which characters are placed and in which narrative events take place can have other, more subtle effects on how we read and interpret stories. Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1862) is another novel rooted very specifically in time and place. Much of the action takes place in various country house settings, which represent different aspects of Russian society at the time. Into that environment comes the anarchist Bazarov, influenced by the ideas he has absorbed in the very different settings of the city and the university. As you will see from your study of the novel, the various settings come to represent different values, ideas and attitudes. This is equally true of smaller scale settings. We associate particular characters with the environments in which we encounter them, and the values associated with those places; characters often seem "at home" in specific places, but not elsewhere. In *Great Expectations*, Joe Gargery is uncomfortable when visiting Miss Havisham at Statis House, and awkward in Pip's London dwelling. Other characters, like Turgenev's Bazarov, are **characterized** by their failure to "belong" in any of the locations they inhabit in the course of the story. Pavel Petrovich, seemingly the antithesis of Bazarov, also often seems ill-at-ease in his surroundings. He lives on the estate of his brother Nikolai, but is not originally from this sort of rural background.

Exercise 4.8.1

Read the following description of Pavel's room and try to decide what the setting tells us about him.

> *But Pavel Petrovich returned to his elegant room, hung with fine dark-grey wallpaper and decorated with guns fixed on a colourful Persian rug, with walnut furniture upholstered in dark-green velveteen, a Renaissance-style bookcase in old dark oak, bronze statuettes on a magnificent desk and a fireplace. He flung himself on his sofa, folded his hands behind his head and remained there motionless, gazing almost with despair at the ceiling. Whether it was that he wanted to hide from the very walls themselves what was happening to his face, or for some other reason, he stood up, undid the loops holding the heavy window curtains and once again flung himself down on the sofa.*
>
> *(1862, pp. 40-1)*

Answer

The overall impression given by the very detailed inventory of Pavel's room is one of a bewildering array of cultural styles and influences, from different times and places. It is undoubtedly the room of someone with a well-developed aesthetic sense, but does it appear at all comfortable or inviting? The very diversity of the décor seems to suggest a sense of rootlessness, reinforced by Pavel's behaviour here; the possibility that he is trying to "hide from the very walls themselves what was happening to his face." Even in the sanctuary of his own rooms on his brother's estate he seems to find himself alienated amongst the no doubt impressive, yet strangely soulless artefacts he has gathered around him.

> The significance of setting will vary from novel to novel, or from story to story, of course, and one of the questions you should continually ask yourself as you read is *how* important to the narrative events and characterisation are the dual factors of time and place.



Video 4.8.1 : Setting in fiction

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4.9: Narration, Point of View, Dialogue

Narration



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When doing a close reading, you also need to keep the big picture in mind. You already know how to look for major plot points, identify the setting, and list possible themes, but you should also keep in mind who is telling you the story. The **narrator**, or the person telling the story, is one of the most important aspects of a text. A narrator can be a character in the story, or he or she might not appear in the story at all. In addition, a text can have multiple narrators, providing the reader with a variety of viewpoints on the text. And finally, a story can be related by an **unreliable narrator** – a narrator the reader cannot trust to tell the facts of a story correctly or in an unbiased manner.

Note: One thing you should always keep in mind is that the narrator and author are different. The narrator exists within the context of the text and only exists in the story. However, in most non-fiction and some fiction, the author can model the narrator after him or her self; in this case, the author and narrator are different people sharing the same viewpoint.



Image from Pixabay

Unreliable Narrators

In reading a first-person narration we encounter a potential problem that we do not have when we encounter an omniscient third-person narrative such as Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. Can you think what that might be?

The factor I was hoping you would identify is that of the degree of reliability we can attach to a first-person narrative. As we read and discover more about a narrator we receive more and more indications that determine the extent to which we can trust the voice telling us the story. Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989) is narrated by its central character, an English butler called Stevens, who recalls various events and incidents from the past in such a way as to constantly cast doubt on the dependability of his narration. At one point we are presented with a prolonged and heated argument between Stevens and the

housekeeper Miss Kenton about the butler's ailing father, also a member of the staff of the same country house. The argument is narrated in direct speech, suggesting an authentic recreation of the actual incident, but is followed by a piece of narration by Stevens that immediately undermines our trust in his version of events:

> *But now that I think further about it, I am not sure Miss Kenton spoke quite so boldly that day. We did, of course, over the years of working closely together come to have some very frank exchanges, but the afternoon I am recalling was still early in our relationship and I cannot see even Miss Kenton having been so forward. I am not sure she could actually have gone so far as to say things like: 'these errors may be trivial in themselves, but you must yourself realise their larger significance'. In fact, now that I come to think of it, I have a feeling it may have been Lord Darlington himself who made that particular remark to me that time he called me into his study some two months after that exchange with Miss Kenton outside the billiard room. By that time, the situation as regards my father had changed significantly following his fall. (p. 60)*

There are numerous such examples of Stevens' "unreliability" throughout the novel. These become more significant when placed against the wider historical and political backdrop of the story. Stevens had been butler to Lord Darlington, devoting his life to the service of someone he saw as a "great man." However, as the narrative unfolds, and in spite of Stevens' selective and constantly revised memory, Darlington is revealed as an unwitting pawn of Nazism. The unreliability of Stevens' narration draws an implicit parallel between memory and history and shows both to be liable to distortion and manipulation, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Fragmented Narration

We can see, then, that even when the identity of the narrator of a prose fiction is made clear to us, there are possibilities for uncertainty and ambiguity. So what are we to make of the next extract?

Exercise 4.9.1

Please read the extract from **A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man** by James Joyce now and consider what the narrative is describing, and try to characterize the narrative voice and perspective.

Answer

This is not at all an easy narrative voice to characterise. Indeed, it is difficult to define who is narrating at various points in the opening section of this novel. However, I hope you realised at least that, as with the other two extracts, this is an account of childhood experience. It even begins with the time-honoured phrase used for telling stories to children – "Once upon a time." The diction of the remainder of the opening sentence seems very childlike, an excited-sounding unpunctuated flow with repetitions of childish terms such as "moocow" and nonsense words like "nicens." We are a long way from narrative "**realism**" here. As the novelist Anthony Burgess has implied, a more conventional representation of the child's impressions–"My first memories are of my father, a monocled hirsute man who told me stories"–would have a very different effect on us as readers. Burgess described the beginning of *Portrait* as "the first big technical breakthrough of twentieth-century prose-writing" (1965, p. 50) and I hope you were able to identify aspects of the extract that might warrant such a description.

The narrative seems to be made up of fragmented, unrelated associations; the father's "hairy face"; the mysterious Betty Byrne and her even more mysterious "lemon platt"; the random and sometimes distorted snatches of song and the sinister nursery-rhyme-like refrain "Pull out his eyes /Apologise"; and the unexpected reference to Michael Davitt and Parnell, which we need some knowledge of Irish politics to understand fully.

But can we detect some sort of order or pattern here? I think we can, though it is by no means obvious. The passage gives me the impression of an attempt to replicate a child's growing awareness of his world, the relationships between those who populate it, and the development of his facility for language. The novel begins with an episode of storytelling as we have

seen, though we can't be sure whether the child or the father is the actual speaker at that point. The child's stumbling attempts at language are suggested by the nonsensical line of song–"O, the green wothe botheth"–which seems to be a corruption of the two lines quoted prior to that. A world of sensations, sight, sound, touch, smell, and movement is invoked and gradually the wider world begins to impinge and we can see the child beginning to categorise and impose order on his growing knowledge, recognising different smells and the ages of the adults around him. The family unit is then transcended as mention is made of the Vances and the "different father and mother," again implying a developing awareness on the part of the child-narrator. The sense of fragmentation remains strong, however, with the unexplained incident of the child hiding under the table (we are not told why he is there or why he must apologise). The critic Hugh Kenner has described the opening of *Portrait* as "contrapuntal," and there are certainly at least two contrasting perspectives revealed in this extract: what Kenner calls "an Aristotelian catalogue of senses, faculties, and mental activities" combined with "the unfolding of the infant conscience" (quoted in Beja, 1973, p. 126).

Narrative Organization

The way a story unfolds is as important as who tells it. Even though prose is just “regular writing,” there are many different kinds of prose. Some prose is written as short stories, while other prose is written as novels and novellas. Each type of prose has its own organizational scheme as well. For instance, some stories are organized into large sections, while others are organized into chapters. Some prose is even organized into sections of journal entries or letters between characters.

It is important to note how an author divides a story. Ask yourself why a chapter ends where it does. Does the chapter ending add suspense to the story, or does it just provide a place to transition to another character's point of view? Does each section of a story have its own theme, or is there only one overarching theme? If you are reading an epistolary novel, why do you think one character chose to reveal certain information to another? Paying attention to how a text is organized, divided, and sub-divided will provide you insight into the plot and theme.

Points of View

All prose is written in one of three points of view: first-person narration, third-person limited narration, and third-person omniscient narration.

First Person

First-person narration is written in the first person mode, meaning that that story is told from the viewpoint of one person who often uses language like “I,” “you,” or “we.” A first-person narrator can even be a character in the story she is narrating. Furthermore, the narrator will have a limited perspective; he cannot tell what the other characters are thinking or doing, and his telling of the story is influenced by his feelings about the other characters, the setting of the story, and the plot. When you read prose related by a first-person narrator, pay attention to the narrator's biases – they can tell you a great deal about the other elements of the story. For instance, here's an example of first-person narration:

As I walked home from the store, I could feel the cool spring breeze stir my hair. It was getting warm, and I had been looking forward to the end of snow, sleet, and rain for the past few months. I saw Charley coming down the sidewalk towards me. He was a nice guy, that Charley, but I always thought he was a few bulbs short of a chandelier. He waved at me, and I nodded in return.

As you can see, in the first-person mode, the narrator tells the story directly from his point-of-view. He has the ability to influence the reader's opinions of characters through his narration – here the narrator explains Charley is not a very intelligent person. However, for all the reader knows, this could just be the narrator's bias, not fact. Thus, when you read a story written in the first-person mode, look for evidence to support the narrator's claims.

Exercise 4.9.1

How would you describe the narrative voice and perspective of this extract?

Click to read the opening of **Great Expectations by Charles Dickens**.

Answer

This is an example of first-person narration. The story is told by a character who is also a protagonist in the narrative. In *Great Expectations*, as in most **first person** narratives, the narrator is also the central character. The opening paragraph, with its emphasis on the narrator's family background, and the repetitions of his name – "So I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip" – are an immediate suggestion that the character telling us the story is likely to be at the heart of it. This is further reinforced as we are then given more information about his family and his circumstances.

The story begins, then, with the narrator giving us an introduction to his own childhood, moving rapidly from the general to the particular and his meeting with the "fearful man" he met in the churchyard. Again, the relation of this incident at the start of the novel leads us to attach some significance to the episode and its participants, raising expectations that are not fulfilled until much later in the narrative.

Here, and throughout *Great Expectations*, there is in a sense a dual narrative perspective, presenting events narrated by the adult Pip which are at times mediated through the perceptions of the child Pip. The opening encounter in the churchyard, for instance, is enacted with a vivid immediacy. Look again at the point at which the narrative shifts from description to direct speech. The rapidity of the exchanges, with further repetitions of the main character's name and the allusion to his feelings of terror, engage us much more directly with the boy's feelings of horror and dismay.

Third-Person Limited and Omniscient

Third-person narration is related by someone who does not refer to him or her self and does not use “I,” “you,” or “we” when addressing the reader. Here's the same story as above, told in third-person narration:

As Bill walked home from the store, he could feel the cool spring breeze stir his hair. It was getting warm, and he had been looking forward to the end of snow, sleet, and rain for the past few months. He saw Charley coming down the sidewalk towards him. Charley was a nice guy, but he was a few bulbs short of a chandelier. Charley waved at Bill, and he nodded in return.

In this example, the story is told by someone looking at the characters from an outside perspective. A third-person narrator will not be a character in a story, but an outside entity relating the story's events. Third-person narrators rarely give biased accounts of events, but sometimes you will encounter an unreliable third-person narrator.

Some third-person narrators tell from a limited perspective. These narrators relate a story from one point of view, which is often the main character's point of view. Because readers can only tell what that character is thinking and feeling, they have a limited perspective of what other characters are thinking and feeling. In addition, since only one character's perspective is narrated, the audience gets to see the world through that character's eyes; this can be good for revealing certain facts about setting and character, but it can also present a slightly biased story.

The other type of third-person narration is told from an omniscient perspective. This means that the narrator relates the story in third person but has access to all information in the story. The third-person omniscient mode is often used when an author wants to relate a text through the viewpoints of several characters. Third-person omniscient narrators tend to be the most reliable narrators, as they can present all the facts of a story.

Finally, you will sometimes encounter a story that is told in first-person narration by multiple narrators. When reading a multi-narrator text, you must always be aware of who is speaking. Multi-narrator prose provides the reader with as much insight about the characters as third-person omniscient narration does. However, because the reader only receives first-person accounts from each character, this kind of narration tends to be very biased. Thus, it is up to the reader to analyze the information provided by the narrators to reach conclusions about the story.

Omniscient Narrators

This would perhaps be a good point at which to say a little more about third-person narrators. These are often known as an "**omniscient**" narrators. An omniscient narrator is one that exhibits full knowledge of the actions, thoughts and feelings of each of the characters in the story. Austen invariably used this omniscient perspective, and it remains a popular means of narration amongst contemporary writers. Indeed, more recent authors have made great play of drawing attention to the narrator's role as an all-powerful figure, an embodiment of the author who has full control of the characters at his or her mercy. The beginning of Martin Amis' novel *London Fields* demonstrates this well:

> *This is a true story but I can't believe it's really happening.*
>
> *It's a murder story, too. I can't believe my luck.*
>
> *And a love story (I think), of all strange things, so late in the century, so late in the goddamned day.*
>
> *This is the story of a murder. It hasn't happened yet. But it will. (It had better.) I know the murderer, I know the murderee. I know the time, I know the place. I know the motive (her motive) and I know the means. I know who will be the foil, the fool, the poor foal, also utterly destroyed. And I couldn't stop them, I don't think, even if I wanted to. The girl will die. It's what she always wanted. You can't stop people, once they start creating.*
>
> *What a gift. This page is briefly stained by my tears of gratitude. Novelists don't usually have it so good, do they, when something real happens (something unified, dramatic and pretty saleable), and they just write it down? (1989, p. 1)*

We might be forgiven for thinking that this is the direct voice of Martin Amis himself. After all, he is the author of the novel, the manipulator of events and characters. But as we read on we realise that this narrator is another character, an American writer called Samson Young, who is living in London in the flat of yet another fictional writer, Mark Asprey (note the initials). To further confuse matters a writer called Martin Amis also makes a cameo appearance in the novel! *London Fields* uses a variety of narrative perspectives. When Samson Young is actually present at the events described first-person narration is used; when he is not we have something akin to the omniscient narrator of the Austen extract in Activity 2, but we also have the sense that that narrator has a name and a role in the novel.



Video 4.9.1 : Point of view/narrator

Dialogue/Dialog

Dialogue is defined as a conversation between two or more people in a movie. In addition, a fictional piece could have a monologue where a character is speaking out loud when he or she is alone. A character, for example, may contemplate the pros and cons of taking some form of action in a monologue. Dialogue, monologue, and narration progresses the story in literature.

When analyzing **character** , the terms **dialogue**, **monologue**, and **soliloquy** take on increased importance. Conversation between two or more characters is referred to as **dialogue** (usually the majority of speech in plays consists of dialogue). A **monologue** is when one character delivers a speech to convey his or her thoughts, although other characters may remain on stage in scene. Similar to a monologue, a **soliloquy** is a speech made by one character but delivered when he or she is alone on stage. Knowing the root words of each term can help clarify the distinction. Monologue comes from the Greek words *monos* (single) and *legein* (to speak); soliloquy comes from the Latin words *solus* (alone) and *Ioqui* (to speak).

What would fiction be without dialogue? Take a look at the following example of a scene with and without dialogue.

Jack, Suzie and Alec are walking home after work. Jack begins the conversation, as he always does. Suzie speaks, as she is always the first one to respond. Alec is silent for a moment and the other two stop walking. Alec notices that they stopped so he stops walking too. Bewildered, Alec mumbles. Jack retorts. Alec looks at them both. Suzie interjects. Alec returns a comment. After a brief moment of silence where all three look at one another, they shrug their shoulders and begin to walk again.

Suzie questions. Alec comments again. There is silence again and Suzie stops the other two. Suzie speaks. Jack interjects again. Alec calmly states. Jack and Suzie look at each other stunned.

The above scene, with no dialogue but just a description, is only a group of actions with no meaning. They could refer to almost any type of situation. As a viewer, after watching the above scene, would you be interested enough in watching the rest of the movie with no dialogue?

Now read the scene with dialogue.

Jack, Suzie and Alec are walking home after work.

Jack begins a conversation as he always does, “How was the work day?”

“All right,” Suzie says as she is always the first one to respond.

Looking at Alec, Jack asks, “How was your day, Alec?”

Alec is silent for a moment as the other two stop walking. Alec notices that they stopped walking so he stops. Bewildered, Alec mumbles, “What?”

“How was your day?” Jack retorts.

“Fine, fine.” Alec looks at them both. “How do you think it was?”

“I don’t know. That’s why I asked.”

Suzie interjects, “That’s why we asked. We like to know how your day was.”

“Oh,” Alec returns.

After a brief moment of silence, where all three look at one another, they shrug their shoulders and begin to walk again.

“Wait a minute! You never did tell us how your day was,” Suzie questions. “Yeah!” agrees Jack.

“Oh,” Alec comments again. There is silence again and Suzie stops the other two.

“Well…” Suzie says. “Yeah,” interjects Jack again.

“I quit my job,” Alec calmly states. Jack and Suzie look at each other stunned.

The dialogue gives the viewer an understanding of what is going on. If the above scene was at a beginning of the fiction piece, the viewer would have an idea what the conflict in the story was going to be.

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4.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice and Style

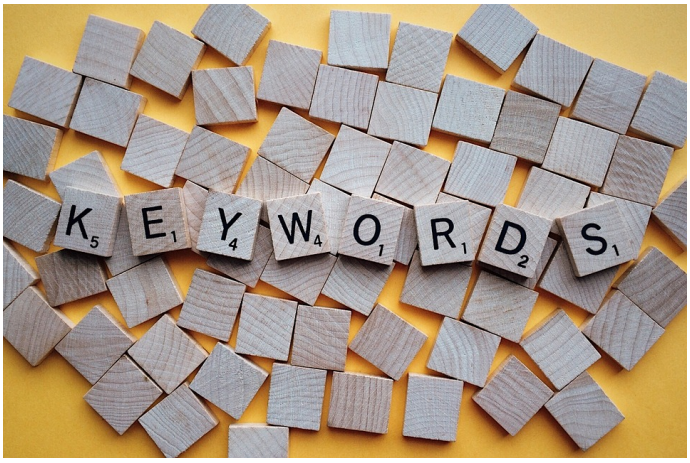


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Word Choice

Connotation Versus Denotation

When we read something, we first understand it at its most basic, literal level. This is called **denotation.** You can think of the denotation of a word as its dictionary definition. For instance, when you read the word “cow,” you think of a four-legged herbivorous mammal. However, every word carries a **connotation** as well as a denotation. A connotation is the non-literal meaning we associate with words. To continue our example, “cow” might connotate farm life, the countryside, or a glass of fresh milk.

Examples

Here are a few more examples of connotations and their possible denotations.

Word(s)	Denotation	Connotation
George Washington	First U.S. President	Never told a lie, cut down a cherry tree, wooden teeth, crossed the Delaware
Rose	A flower	Love, affection, romance, sensuality, beauty, the color red
New York City	A major U.S. city	Crowded, center of art and culture, night life, traffic, Statue of Liberty
Green	A color	Vegetation, fertility, growth, envy, money, life, springtime, prosperity

As you can see, words have many connotations. Every person will find different connotations for a word, as connotation depends on a person's background, cultural setting, emotions, and subjective opinions. For instance, while the color green often represents prosperity to Western cultures, Eastern cultures associate the color red with wealth and good fortune. However, there are often a number of connotations that are widely accepted as connected to a word. People from all over the world, for example, associate snow with winter and heat waves with summer.

So, how do we apply this to reading? Well, when people read, certain words often stand out to them. This is usually because those words carry strong connotations for the reader. Thus, when you read, look for words whose meanings stand out, especially if they relate to a recurring theme in the text. As an example, read through the following excerpt from Edgar Allan Poe's “The Fall of the House of Usher.” Some words that stand out have been italicized.

I looked upon the scene before me–upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain–upon the bleak walls–upon the *vacant eye-like* windows–upon a few *rank* sedges–and upon a few *white trunks of decayed trees*–with an *utter depression* of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the *reveller upon opium*–the *bitter lapse* into everyday life–the *hideous dropping off* of the veil.

When reading a passage like this, you might get a general impression that its mood is gloomy and depressing. Certain key words in the passage are what create that impression, and if we look at the italicized text, we can see a pattern. The narrator is describing a house, but “vacant eye-like windows” has a denotation of dark or empty windows, but it also brings up the connotation of corpses. “Rank” means overgrown, but it brings up connotations of abandonment and possible decay. Continue looking at the connotations behind each word, and see if you can detect any patterns. For instance, do the italicized words in this passage make you think of death, decline, and decay? Does the comparison to “the after-dream of the reveller upon opium” make you question the narrator's state of mind? By asking these kinds of questions, you're on your way to doing a close reading.

Tone

You will also want to keep an author's **tone** in mind as you read. Tone is the attitude writing can take towards its subject or audience. For instance, writing can be informal, formal, sarcastic, or playful. These are just a few examples of tone. When trying to figure out a story's tone, ask yourself how the writing is actually put together. Does the author use **diction**, or the overall word choice, to convey a specific tone? For instance, is there any reason to say “joyful” instead of “happy” or “seething” instead of “angry”?

Table

The following table provides examples of the same scene written in different tones. Pay special attention to the italicized words.

Joyful	Unhappy
The sound of their *revelry rang* throughout the town. The sun *gleamed brightly* on the parade, and colorful streamers *floated* through the air like *dazzling rainbows*.	The noise of the *cacophony shrilled* throughout the town. The sun *glared harshly* on the parade, and colorful streamers *rained* through the air like *falling debris*.

In addition, ask yourself if the author uses unusual **syntax** – the order in which the sentence is put together grammatically. (Look at “money is the root of all evil” versus “the root of all evil is money.” Does each sentence imply something different to you?) Keeping tone, diction, and syntax in mind will help in your analysis of literature.

With that said, we should always look at every aspect of these elements, from the most basic to the most complex when we read. Thus, this chapter will begin by giving you a broad overview of character, plot, setting, and theme then provide some examples of how you can use these elements to illustrate some of the more complex ideas in a story.

Narrative Voice

Two of the most fundamental choices that face the author of a fictional narrative is to decide *who* is to be the narrator and *how* the story is to be narrated. Along with tone, the authorial "voice" is one of the key distinguishing factors of a piece of writing and can range from aloof and distant to warm and personable.

Exercise 4.10.1

Click to read the attached extract from the opening of **Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey** (1818). Who is the narrator? How would you characterize the narrative "voice"?

Answer

This is what is known as third-person narration. The voice does not belong to a particular character in the novel, and in the extract it does not assume the perspective of any of the characters, merely describing their physical appearance, social status and relationships, and, in Catherine's case, her likes and dislikes, her accomplishments and pastimes. You will probably have noticed that this extract comprises a single, extremely long paragraph and is mostly concerned with

describing the young Catherine Morland. This amount of detail at the start of the novel suggests to us that Catherine is likely to be the central character, and so it proves.

At first sight the narrative voice seems to be fairly neutral and undemonstrative, like that at the beginning of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* above. But a closer inspection reveals greater subtleties. Indeed, it appears that the narrative voice is doing everything in its power to undermine our possible interest, while also drawing our attention to the kinds of expectations and conventions that often attend the process of reading particular kinds of fiction. Everything about Catherine seems to militate against the possibility of her being an interesting central character. According to the narrator, she was no one's idea of a heroine, and her social and family connections are of little assistance in this respect too. Austen is poking fun here at the idea of the tragic heroine. The narrator sounds almost disappointed at the fact that Catherine is not a motherless waif whose plight can tug at our heartstrings:

> *Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on – lived to have six children more – to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself.*

Neither does Catherine have the classical beauty of the novelistic heroine, her unprepossessing looks in themselves rendering her "unpropitious" for such a role. Furthermore, she clearly lacks aptitude and enthusiasm for the kind of accomplishments which young girls of this time were expected to acquire.

The overriding tone of this extract could perhaps be best described as coolly detached and above all ironic. As you will discover from reading further in Austen, irony was invariably the main feature of her narrative voices. In the case of the opening to *Northanger Abbey*, would you agree that this ironic strategy of seeming to deflate our enthusiasm is in fact a subtle device to heighten the reader's interest? If Catherine is such unlikely heroine material, what kind of narrative will it be that can feature her as its central character?

Style and language

What do we mean when we talk of a particular writer's style? It might help us to think of style as a way of organising and expressing narrative unique to the writer, as distinctive and personal a characteristic as the writer's handwriting or the prints on the fingers holding the pen. Just as no two sets of fingerprints are alike, so no two writers are alike. Writers write in a style that reflects their individual view of the world.

The word "style" can generally be used to encompass the various literary devices that authors combine to convey their themes and the content of their narratives. Some of those devices, such as narrative perspectives and the representation of character, have already been discussed, so I want to focus here on the language writers use and the effects of that language.

Exercise 4.10.1

Please read the attached extract from a short story, "**Kew Gardens**" (1919), by Virginia Woolf. How would you characterise the descriptive language Woolf uses here and the way in which she presents the thoughts and speech of her characters?

Answer

The descriptive language of the first and final paragraphs is intensely detailed. Various human figures pass by and butterflies flit from flower bed to flower bed – a scene we can easily visualize. But Woolf's use of terms such as "curiously irregular" to describe the movement of the humans and "zig-zag" to depict the flight of the butterflies suggests a sense of vagueness and randomness. The change of focus, from the general scene to the positioning and attitudes of a man, a woman–he "strolling carelessly," she moving "with greater purpose"–alerts us to anticipate that they will be the subject of what is to follow. Would you agree that there is almost a filmic quality to this narrative description? When I read this I imagine a camera panning across a wide screen before closing in on the two characters. The final paragraph of the extract, which describes how the husband and wife and their children "diminished in size […] as the sunlight and shade swam over

their backs in large trembling irregular patches" seems to me to suggest a gradually dissolving image, such as we might see when a film deliberately loses focus. In spite of the plethora of detail and description, then, I feel there is nevertheless a somewhat impressionistic feel to Woolf's scene-setting.

Did you notice how a similar "blurring" effect seems to result from the second paragraph's shifts, first to the man's internal consciousness, as we are given access to his thoughts, and then to direct speech right at the end of the paragraph with "Tell me, Eleanor, d'you ever think of the past?" There is only a dash to denote this second shift; on a first reading we may not even notice that Woolf has moved from a depiction of thoughts to the representation of speech.

And what of the conversation between the man and woman? Does this strike you as a naturalistic representation of dialogue? Probably not, I would suggest. There is something artificial and heightened about the woman's speech in particular:

> *'Doesn't one always think of the past, in a garden with men and women lying under the trees? Aren't they one's past, all that remains of it, those men and women, those ghosts lying under the trees … one's happiness, one's reality?'*

We might think that no one would really speak like this, or relate a memory of "the mother of all my kisses all my life" in quite such a mannered fashion. Only with the brisk command to her children – "Come Caroline, come Hubert" – does the woman's speech appear naturalistic. I think it's safe to assume that this is not merely bad writing on Woolf's part; she has chosen her language and her means of representing it for a reason. Indeed, it may seem as though the language itself, rather than the actual narrative, is the main focus of this piece of writing. Woolf was one of a number of authors in the early twentieth-century who sought new ways of writing, challenging the conventions of previous generations that gave a primacy to realistic and naturalistic representation and foregrounded narrative events; stories that had a beginning, middle and end, a strong sense of closure, and a fixed authorial point of view. The narrative, such as it is, of Woolf's story 'Kew Gardens' is episodic rather than linear, and is a good early example of a style of writing that later came to be labeled 'Modernist' (James Joyce, whose opening to *Portrait of the Artist* we looked at earlier was another dominant figure in this movement). We could say, then, that "style" seems to take precedence over subject matter in writing such as this, and I hope you can see how Woolf's particular use of language contributes to this.

Exercise 4.10.1

Now look at another extract, the closing section of a much more recent work, a short story, "**Gazebo**," by the American writer Raymond Carver. Think again about the questions I asked you to consider in Activity 7 before reading the Woolf extract. How does Carver's style differ from that of Woolf?

Answer

The language is minimalist, pared down to the absolute basics, and heavily dialogue-led. We are given no indication of speech intonation; the only verb used to describe the dialogue is the verb "to go," which gives us no clue as to how the words are spoken. This breeds a sense of uncertainty in the reader, I think, and as with Woolf's elevated tone and language this strategy is deliberate, I would suggest. Although the story is narrated in the first person I get a strong impression that the narrator, Duane, does not fully understand the situation he is describing: "I pray for a sign from Holly. I pray for Holly to show me." Similarly, the sparseness of Carver's writing leaves the reader in a state of uncertainty. Although the dialogue is, I think you'll agree, much more colloquial and naturalistic than that of Woolf's characters, there seems to me to be a great deal left unsaid, and a sense that the two characters, while conversing, are not communicating. This is, I would argue, a direct consequence of Carver's choice of style and language.

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4.11: Rhetorical and Literary Devices



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Rhetorical Devices

Now you know how to search for connotation and denotation in a text, but how do you tell which words you should examine closely? If you were to spend time doing a close reading of every word in a story, you would never finish. Thus, you want to look for **rhetorical devices** when you read. Rhetorical devices are words that serve a special function in the text. Authors include them in order to convey a meaning to the reader. Listed below are some of the most common rhetorical devices.

Metaphors and Similes

Two of the most common rhetorical devices are **metaphors** and **similes.** These are both means of comparison. A metaphor compares two things by saying they are the same, while a simile uses the words “like” or “as.”

Table

The following table contains a list of examples.

Metaphor	Simile
My Great Dane is a vacuum.	My Great Dane is like a vacuum.
That linebacker is a wall.	That linebacker is like a wall.
She is a cheetah.	She runs as fast as a cheetah.

In the first example, we know that the Great Dane isn't really a vacuum. Both the metaphor and simile, however, imply that the dog consumes a large amount. The main difference is that the metaphor creates a stronger comparison. However, in the last example, only the context will tell you that the metaphor is not talking about a real cheetah. If we were talking about a runner, saying “she is a cheetah” would carry the denotations of speed, grace, agility, litheness, et cetera. But if we are looking at the simile, we only see that the runner is fast.

Repetition

Repetition is another powerful rhetorical device. When you read, you should always keep your eyes open for repeated words and phrases. This can be tricky, as sometimes the repeated words appear close together and other times they are spread out in a text as a motif. For instance, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, a green light is mentioned repeatedly; however, these references are spread throughout the text, never appearing more than once or twice per chapter. Therefore, you will need to keep your eyes open for repetition while reading a story. If you see a word or phrase appear more than once, make a note of it – it is likely that the author included the repetition intentionally.

Literary Devices

Imagery

Imagery is language that makes an appeal to the senses. It can apply to any of the five senses or a combination of multiple senses. Although imagery often comes in phrases or complete sentences, a word can evoke the senses.

Here are some examples.

Touch	The dog's fur was smooth and silky, as though it had just been brushed.
Smell	The delicious scent of freshly-baked cookies wafted out of the window.
Taste	Dinner was mouthwatering! We ate buttery rolls and a savory chicken dish with a side of rich gravy.
Sound	1st Street was a cacophony of car horns, people on cell phones, and police sirens.
Sight	The apple was a deep red, like the sky moments before the sun comes up.

Every time you find imagery in a text, it brings up a set of connotations. For instance, the scent of freshly-baked cookies might bring up connotations of childhood, comfort, or home. When you see a particularly striking image in a text, think of what it denotes to you. Ask yourself, “Why describe *this* thing in detail instead of describing something else?” An author often uses imagery to call attention to a particular idea, character, setting, or plot point. Imagery can also be used to create the mood of a text. For instance, a story that includes a great deal of rain imagery might have a very dark, dreary mood.

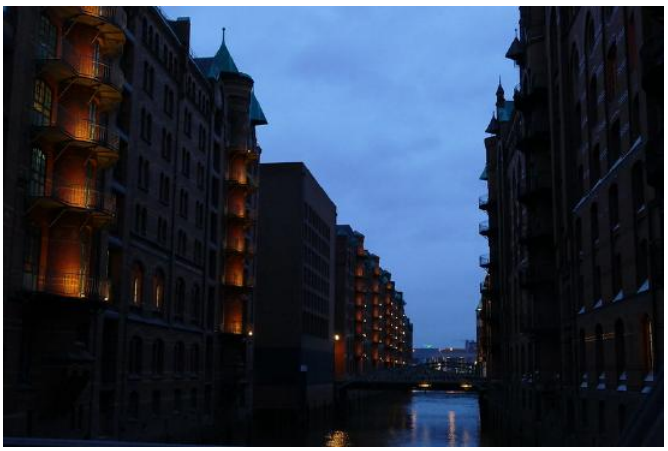


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Symbolism

Symbolism is a practice of using symbols, or anything that represents something larger than itself. Common examples of symbols are a country's flag and a heart symbol, which represent the country and love. Each has suggestive meanings – the flag brings up thoughts of patriotism and a unified country while a heart symbol indicates care and affection.

What is the value of using symbols in a literary text? Symbols in literature allow a writer to express a lot in a condensed manner. The meaning of a symbol is connotative or suggestive rather than definitive which allows for multiple interpretations.

Allegory

An allegory, on the other hand, has a fixed meaning. According to Dictionary.com, an allegory is "a representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning through concrete or material forms; figurative treatment of one subject under the guise of another."

Exercise 4.11.1

Ralph Waldo Ellison was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Ellison’s father, Lewis, a manual laborer who delivered ice and coal, was an avid reader who named his son after Ralph Waldo Emerson and who hoped that his son would grow up to be a poet. Unfortunately he died of a work-related accident when Ellison was three, which left the two brothers, Robert and Herbert, to be raised by their single mother, Ida. The absence of his father would remain a recurring theme in Ellison's work.

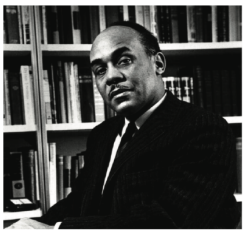


Image 6.5 | Ralph Ellison, 1961
Photographer | Houghton Mifflin
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Read the first chapter of Invisible Man, "Battle Royale," by Ralph Ellison.

Questions

1.What is the significance of the protagonist’s dream? What does his grandfather’s appearance symbolize?

2. Why do you think the protagonist still gives his speech even after he’s been humiliated?





Video 4.11.1 : Symbols in Literature

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4.12: Theme



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Theme

Finally, you must examine theme in your basic analysis of literature. **Theme** is the unifying idea behind a story. It connects the plot points, conflicts, and characters to a major idea. It usually provides a broad statement about humanity, life, or our universe. We can think of theme, in its most basic definition, as the message the author tries to send their readers.

One thing you should remember about theme is that it must be expressed in a complete sentence. For instance, “discrimination” is not a theme; however, “genetic modification in humans is dangerous because it can result in discrimination” is a complete theme.

A story can have more than one theme, and it is often useful to question and analyze how the themes interact. For instance, does the story have conflicting themes? Or do a number of slightly different themes point the reader toward one conclusion? Sometimes the themes don't have to connect – many stories use multiple themes in order to bring multiple ideas to the readers' attention.

So how do we find theme in a work? One way is to examine **motifs,** or recurring elements in a story. If something appears a number of times within a story, it is likely of significance. A motif can be a statement, a place, an object, or even a sound. Motifs often lead us to discern a theme by drawing attention to it through repetition. In addition, motifs are often symbolic. They can represent any number of things, from a character's childhood to the loss of a loved one. By examining what a motif symbolizes, you can extrapolate a story's possible themes. For instance, a story might use a park to represent a character's childhood. If the author makes constant references to the park, but we later see it replaced by a housing complex, we might draw conclusions about what the story is saying about childhood and the transition to adulthood.



Video 4.12.1 : Introduction to theme in fiction

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4.13: A Review and Questions

How to Analyze a Short Story



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Old Fence. A short story has a structure and a message. Can you analyze this picture in much the same way as a short story?

What Is a Short Story (a review)?

A short story is a work of short, narrative prose that is usually centered around one single event. It is limited in scope and has an introduction, body, and conclusion. Although a short story has much in common with a novel (see How to Analyze a Novel), it is written with much greater precision. You will often be asked to write a literary analysis. An analysis of a short story requires basic knowledge of literary elements. The following guide and questions may help you:

Setting

Setting is a description of where and when the story takes place. In a short story there are fewer settings compared to a novel. The time is more limited. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How is the setting created? Consider geography, weather, time of day, social conditions, et cetera.
- What role does setting play in the story? Is it an important part of the plot or theme? Or is it just a backdrop against which the action takes place?

Study the time period, which is also part of the setting, and ask yourself the following:

- When was the story written?
- Does it take place in the present, the past, or the future?
- How does the time period affect the language, atmosphere, or social circumstances of the short story?

Characterization

Characterization deals with how the characters in the story are described. In short stories there are usually fewer characters compared to a novel. They usually focus on one central character or protagonist. Ask yourself the following:

- Who is the main character?
- Are the main character and other characters described through dialogue – by the way they speak (dialect or slang for instance)?
- Has the author described the characters by physical appearance, thoughts and feelings, and interaction (the way they act towards others)?
- Are they static/flat characters who do not change?
- Are they dynamic/round characters who DO change?
- What type of characters are they? What qualities stand out? Are they stereotypes?
- Are the characters believable?

Plot and structure

The plot is the main sequence of events that make up the story. In short stories the plot is usually centered around one experience or significant moment. Consider the following questions:

- What is the most important event?
- How is the plot structured? Is it linear and chronological or does it move around?
- Is the plot believable?

Narrator and Point of View

The narrator is the person telling the story. Consider this question: Are the narrator and the main character the same?

By point of view we mean from whose eyes the story is being told. Short stories tend to be told through one character's point of view. The following are important questions to consider:

- Who is the narrator or speaker in the story?
- Does the author speak through the main character?
- Is the story written in the first person "I" point of view?
- Is the story written in a detached third person "he/she/they" point of view?
- Is there an "all-knowing" third person who can reveal what all the characters are thinking and doing at all times and in all places?

Conflict

Conflict or tension is usually the heart of the short story and is related to the main character. In a short story there is usually one main struggle.

- How would you describe the main conflict?
- Is it an internal conflict within the character?
- Is it an external conflict caused by the surroundings or environment the main character finds themself in?

Climax

The climax is the point of greatest tension or intensity in the short story. It can also be the point where events take a major turn as the story races towards its conclusion. Ask yourself:

- Is there a turning point in the story?
- When does the climax take place?

Theme

The theme is the main idea, lesson, or message in the short story. It may be an abstract idea about the human condition, society, or life. Ask yourself:

- How is the theme expressed?
- Are any elements repeated and therefore suggest a theme?
- Is there more than one theme?

Style

The author's style has to do with their vocabulary, use of imagery, tone, or the feeling of the story. It has to do with the author's attitude toward the subject. In some short stories the tone can be ironic, humorous, cold, or dramatic.

- Is the author's language full of figurative language?
- What images are used?
- Does the author use a lot of symbolism? Metaphors (comparisons that do not use "as" or "like") or similes (comparisons that use "as" or "like")?

Your literary analysis of a short story will often be in the form of an essay where you may be asked to give your opinions of the short story at the end. Choose the elements that made the greatest impression on you. Point out which character/characters you liked best or least and always support your arguments.

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4.14: Match and Learn Quiz

Literary Terms - Task

Drag the words into the correct boxes

1. _____ = the author's vocabulary, use of imagery, tone or feeling in the story.
2. _____ = the main idea, lesson or message in the short story.
3. _____ = through whose eyes the story is being told.
4. _____ = the point of greatest tension or intensity in the short story, also called the turning point.
5. _____ = a description of where and when the story takes place.
6. _____ = a work of short, narrative prose centered around one single event.
7. _____ = the main sequence of events that make up the story.
8. _____ = the tension at the heart of the short story usually related to the main character.
9. _____ = the person telling the story.
10. _____ = how the characters are described through dialogue, physical appearance, thoughts, feelings and interaction.

Setting
Climax
Characterization
Conflict
Narrator
Theme
Point of view
Style
Short Story
Plot

Check

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Fiction Readings

For an extensive list of American fiction, ordered chronologically, please refer to Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865- present by Berke, Bleil, & Cofer, sourced from University of North Georgia Press, CC-BY-SA.

Readings

5.1: Bierce, Ambrose "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (1890)

5.2: Chopin, Kate "The Story of an Hour" (1894)

5.3: Gilman, Charlotte Perkins "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892)

5.4: Hawthorne, Nathaniel "The Birthmark" (1846)

5.5: Irving, Washington "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820)

5.6: Melville, Herman. "Bartleby, The Scrivener" (1853)

5.7: Moore, Alice Ruth "Violets" (1895)

5.8: Poe, Edgar Allan "The Purloined Letter" (1844)

5.9: Wilde, Oscar "The Nightingale and the Rose" (1888)

5.10: Woolf, Virginia "Kew Gardens" (1921)

5.11: Cather, Willa. "On the Gull's Road" (1908)

5.12: Davis, Rebecca Harding. "Life in the Iron-Mills" (1861)

5.13: Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt"

5.14: A Hunger Artist by Franz Kafka

5.15: Flannery O'Connor's A Good Man is Hard to Find and Good Country People

5.16: William Faulker's "A Rose for Emily" and "Barn Burning"

5.17: Zora Neale Hurston's The Sweat

Supplemental Readings

(links to external websites)

Short Stories

Atwood, Margaret. "Lusus Naturae" (2014)

Baldwin, James. "Sonny's Blues" (1954)

Erdrich, Louise. "Matchimanito" (1988)

Faulkner, William "A Rose for Emily" (1930)

Henríquez, Cristina. "Everything is Far From Here" (2017)

Johnson, Denis. "Emergency" (1992)

Kincaid, Jamaica. "Girl" (1978)

Lahiri, Jhumpa "A Temporary Matter" (1999)

Lorde, Audre. "The Fourth of July"

Márquez, Gabriel García. "A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings" (1955)

O'Brien, Tim. "The Things They Carried" (1990)

Orange, Tommy. "The State." (2018)

Wallace, David Foster "Good People" (2007)

Woolf, Tobias. "Bullet in the Brain" (1995)

Novels

To conserve space in this textbook and keep it printable, there are not any novels included in the textbook. Students are recommended to use online resources or their library to find novels to read. Below are a few recommendations.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. (1813)

Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening.* (1899)

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. (1983)

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov.* (1880)

Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*. (1851)

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye.* (1970)

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein.* (1831)

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club.* (1989)

Toomer, Jean. *Cane.* (1923)

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* (1890)

Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. (1927)

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5.1: Bierce, Ambrose "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (1890)

I

A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man's hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope closely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his head and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the sleepers supporting the metals of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners—two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. At a short remove upon the same temporary platform was an officer in the uniform of his rank, armed. He was a captain. A sentinel at each end of the bridge stood with his rifle in the position known as "support," that is to say, vertical in front of the left shoulder, the hammer resting on the forearm thrown straight across the chest—a formal and unnatural position, enforcing an erect carriage of the body. It did not appear to be the duty of these two men to know what was occurring at the centre of the bridge; they merely blockaded the two ends of the foot planking that traversed it.

Beyond one of the sentinels nobody was in sight; the railroad ran straight away into a forest for a hundred yards, then, curving, was lost to view. Doubtless there was an outpost farther along. The other bank of the stream was open ground—a gentle acclivity topped with a stockade of vertical tree trunks, loop-holed for rifles, with a single embrasure through which protruded the muzzle of a brass cannon commanding the bridge. Mid-way of the slope between bridge and fort were the spectators—a single company of infantry in line, at "parade rest," the butts of the rifles on the ground, the barrels inclining slightly backward against the right shoulder, the hands crossed upon the stock. A lieutenant stood at the right of the line, the point of his sword upon the ground, his left hand resting upon his right. Excepting the group of four at the centre of the bridge, not a man moved. The company faced the bridge, staring stonily, motionless. The sentinels, facing the banks of the stream, might have been statues to adorn the bridge. The captain stood with folded arms, silent, observing the work of his subordinates, but making no sign. Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military etiquette silence and fixity are forms of deference.

The man who was engaged in being hanged was apparently about thirty-five years of age. He was a civilian, if one might judge from his habit, which was that of a planter. His features were good—a straight nose, firm mouth, broad forehead, from which his long, dark hair was combed straight back, falling behind his ears to the collar of his well-fitting frock-coat. He wore a mustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark gray, and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of persons, and gentlemen are not excluded.

The preparations being complete, the two private soldiers stepped aside and each drew away the plank upon which he had been standing. The sergeant turned to the captain, saluted and placed himself immediately behind that officer, who in turn moved apart one pace. These movements left the condemned man and the sergeant standing on the two ends of the same plank, which spanned three of the cross-ties of the bridge. The end upon which the civilian stood almost, but not quite, reached a fourth. This plank had been held in place by the weight of the captain; it was now held by that of the sergeant. At a signal from the former the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt and the condemned man go down between two ties. The arrangement commended itself to his judgment as simple and effective. His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged. He looked a moment at his "unsteadfast footing," then let his gaze wander to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. A piece of dancing driftwood caught his attention and his eyes followed it down the current. How slowly it appeared to move! What a sluggish stream!

He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children. The water, touched to gold by the early sun, the brooding mists under the banks at some distance down the stream, the fort, the soldiers, the piece of drift—all had distracted him. And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was a sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith's hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or near by—it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular, but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each stroke with impatience and he knew not why—apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer; the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the thrust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.

He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. "If I could free my hands," he thought, "I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods and get away home. My home, thank God, is as yet outside their lines; my wife and little ones are still beyond the invader's farthest advance."

As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man's brain rather than evolved from it the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside.

II

Peyton Farquhar was a well-to-do planter, of an old and highly respected Alabama family. Being a slave owner and like other slave owners a politician he was naturally an original secessionist and ardently devoted to the Southern cause. Circumstances of an imperious nature, which it is unnecessary to relate here, had prevented him from taking service with the gallant army that had fought the disastrous campaigns ending with the fall of Corinth, and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction. That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in war time. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in aid of the South, no adventure too perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier, and who in good faith and without too much qualification assented to at least a part of the frankly villainous dictum that all is fair in love and war.

One evening while Farquhar and his wife were sitting on a rustic bench near the entrance to his grounds, a gray-clad soldier rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water. Mrs. Farquhar was only too happy to serve him with her own white hands. While she was fetching the water her husband approached the dusty horseman and inquired eagerly for news from the front.

"The Yanks are repairing the railroads," said the man, "and are getting ready for another advance. They have reached the Owl Creek bridge, put it in order and built a stockade on the north bank. The commandant has issued an order, which is posted everywhere, declaring that any civilian caught interfering with the railroad, its bridges, tunnels or trains will be summarily hanged. I saw the order."

"How far is it to the Owl Creek bridge?" Farquhar asked.

"About thirty miles."

"Is there no force on this side the creek?"

"Only a picket post half a mile out, on the railroad, and a single sentinel at this end of the bridge."

"Suppose a man —a civilian and student of hanging— should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel," said Farquhar, smiling, "what could he accomplish?"

The soldier reflected. "I was there a month ago," he replied. "I observed that the flood of last winter had lodged a great quantity of driftwood against the wooden pier at this end of the bridge. It is now dry and would burn like tow."

The lady had now brought the water, which the soldier drank. He thanked her ceremoniously, bowed to her husband and rode away. An hour later, after nightfall, he repassed the plantation, going northward in the direction from which he had come. He was a Federal scout.

III

As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened—ages later, it seemed to him—by the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through every fibre of his body and limbs. These pains appeared to flash along well-defined lines of ramification and to beat with an inconceivably rapid periodicity. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature. As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fulness—of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. He was conscious of motion. Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum. Then all at once, with terrible suddenness, the light about him shot upward with the noise of a loud plash; a frightful roaring was in his ears, and all was cold and dark. The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream. There was no additional strangulation; the noose about his neck was already suffocating him and kept the water from his lungs. To die of hanging at the bottom of a river!—the idea seemed to him ludicrous. He opened his eyes in the darkness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking, for the light became fainter and fainter until it was a mere glimmer. Then it began to grow and brighten, and he knew that he was rising toward the surface —knew it with reluctance, for he was now very comfortable. "To be hanged and drowned," he thought, "that is not so bad; but I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair."

He was not conscious of an effort, but a sharp pain in his wrist apprised him that he was trying to free his hands. He gave the struggle his attention, as an idler might observe the feat of a juggler, without interest in the outcome. What splendid effort!—what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavor! Bravo! The cord fell away; his arms parted and floated upward, the hands dimly seen on each side in the growing light. He watched them with a new interest as first one and then the other pounced upon the noose at his neck. They tore it away and thrust it fiercely aside, its undulations resembling those of a water-snake. "Put it back, put it back!" He thought he shouted these words to his hands, for the undoing of the noose had been succeeded by the direst pang that he had yet experienced. His neck ached horribly; his brain was on fire; his heart, which had been fluttering faintly, gave a great leap, trying to force itself out at his mouth. His whole body was racked and wrenched with an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command. They beat the water vigorously with quick, downward strokes, forcing him to the surface. He felt his head emerge; his eyes were blinded by the sunlight; his chest expanded convulsively, and with a supreme and crowning agony his lungs engulfed a great draught of air, which instantly he expelled in a shriek!

He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally keen and alert. Something in the awful disturbance of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf—saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the gray spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colors in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragon-flies' wings, the strokes of the water-spiders' legs, like oars which had lifted their boat—all these made audible music. A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water.

He had come to the surface facing down the stream; in a moment the visible world seemed to wheel slowly round, himself the pivotal point, and he saw the bridge, the fort, the soldiers upon the bridge, the captain, the sergeant, the two privates, his executioners. They were in silhouette against the blue sky. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him. The captain had drawn his pistol, but did not fire; the others were unarmed. Their movements were grotesque and horrible, their forms gigantic.

Suddenly he heard a sharp report and something struck the water smartly within a few inches of his head, spattering his face with spray. He heard a second report, and saw one of the sentinels with his rifle at his shoulder, a light cloud of blue smoke rising from the muzzle. The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a gray eye and remembered having read that gray eyes were keenest, and that all famous markmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed.

A counter-swirl had caught Farquhar and turned him half round; he was again looking into the forest on the bank opposite the fort. The sound of a clear, high voice in a monotonous singsong now rang out behind him and came across the water with a distinctness that pierced and subdued all other sounds, even the beating of the ripples in his ears. Although no soldier, he had frequented camps enough to know the dread significance of that deliberate, drawling, aspirated chant; the lieutenant on shore was taking a part in the morning's work. How coldly and pitilessly—with what an even, calm intonation, presaging, and enforcing tranquillity in the men—with what accurately measured intervals fell those cruel words:

"Attention, company! . . . Shoulder arms! . . . Ready! . . . Aim! . . . Fire!"

Farquhar dived—dived as deeply as he could. The water roared in his ears like the voice of Niagara, yet he heard the dulled thunder of the volley and, rising again toward the surface, met shining bits of metal, singularly flattened, oscillating slowly downward. Some of them touched him on the face and hands, then fell away, continuing their descent. One lodged between his collar and neck; it was uncomfortably warm and he snatched it out.

As he rose to the surface, gasping for breath, he saw that he had been a long time under water; he was perceptibly farther down stream—nearer to safety. The soldiers had almost finished reloading; the metal ramrods flashed all at once in the sunshine as they were drawn from the barrels, turned in the air, and thrust into their sockets. The two sentinels fired again, independently and ineffectually.

The hunted man saw all this over his shoulder; he was now swimming vigorously with the current. His brain was as energetic as his arms and legs; he thought with the rapidity of lightning.

"The officer," he reasoned, "will not make that martinet's error a second time. It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot. He has probably already given the command to fire at will. God help me, I cannot dodge them all!"

An appalling plash within two yards of him was followed by a loud, rushing sound, *diminuendo*, which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its deeps! A rising sheet of water curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him! The cannon had taken a hand in the game. As he shook his head free from the commotion of the smitten water he heard the deflected shot humming through the air ahead, and in an instant it was cracking and smashing the branches in the forest beyond.

"They will not do that again," he thought; "the next time they will use a charge of grape. I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me—the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. That is a good gun."

Suddenly he felt himself whirled round and round—spinning like a top. The water, the banks, the forests, the now distant bridge, fort and men—all were commingled and blurred. Objects were represented by their colors only; circular horizontal streaks of color—that was all he saw. He had been caught in a vortex and was being whirled on with a velocity of advance and gyration that made him giddy and sick. In a few moments he was flung upon the gravel at the foot of the left bank of the stream—the southern bank—and behind a projecting point which concealed him from his enemies. The sudden arrest of his motion, the abrasion of one of his hands on the gravel, restored him, and he wept with delight. He dug his fingers into the sand, threw it over himself in handfuls and audibly blessed it. It looked like diamonds, rubies, emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms. A strange, roseate light shone through the spaces among their trunks and the wind made in their branches the music of aeolian harps. He had no wish to perfect his escape—was content to remain in that enchanting spot until re-taken.

A whiz and rattle of grapeshot among the branches high above his head roused him from his dream. The baffled cannoneer had fired him a random farewell. He sprang to his feet, rushed up the sloping bank, and plunged into the forest.

All that day he traveled, laying his course by the rounding sun. The forest seemed interminable; nowhere did he discover a break in it, not even a woodman's road. He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation.

By nightfall he was fatigued, footsore, famishing. The thought of his wife and children urged him on. At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction. It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untraveled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere. Not so much as the barking of a dog suggested human habitation. The black bodies of the trees formed a straight wall on both sides, terminating on the horizon in a point, like a diagram in a lesson in perspective. Overhead, as he looked up through this rift in the wood, shone great golden stars looking unfamiliar and grouped in strange constellations. He was sure they were arranged in some order which had a secret and malign significance. The wood on either side was full of singular noises, among which—once, twice, and again—he distinctly heard whispers in an unknown tongue.

His neck was in pain and lifting his hand to it he found it horribly swollen. He knew that it had a circle of black where the rope had bruised it. His eyes felt congested; he could no longer close them. His tongue was swollen with thirst; he relieved its fever by thrusting it forward from between his teeth into the cold air. How softly the turf had carpeted the untraveled avenue—he could no longer feel the roadway beneath his feet!

Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene—perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine. He must have traveled the entire night. As he pushes open the gate and passes up the wide white walk, he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet, steps down from the veranda to meet him. At the bottom of the steps she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is! He springs forward with extended arms. As he is about to clasp her he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon—then all is darkness and silence!

Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge.

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5.2: Chopin, Kate "The Story of an Hour" (1894)

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The Story of an Hour

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will--as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under hte breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him--sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhold, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door--you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease--of the joy that kills.

Exercise 5.2.1

Questions

1. What is the significance of Mrs. Mallard's "heart trouble"?
2. What is the significance of freedom in the story? How does the author portray this idea?
3. Describe Mrs. Mallard's reaction to the death of her husband. Why do you think she feels this way?
4. What does Richards represent in the story?
5. What does Josephine represent in the story?
6. What view of marriage is portrayed in the story? Can this view still apply today?
7. Describe Mrs. Mallard's journey in the story.

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5.3: Gilman, Charlotte Perkins "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892)

The Yelllow Wallpaper

by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

1

It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer.

A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity—but that would be asking too much of fate!

Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it.

Else, why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted?

John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.

John is a physician, and *perhaps*—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)—*perhaps* that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see, he does not believe I am sick!

And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing.

So I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again.

Personally, I disagree with their ideas.

Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.

But what is one to do?

I did write for a while in spite of them; but it *does* exhaust me a good deal—having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition.

I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus—but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad.

So I will let it alone and talk about the house.

The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people.

There is a *delicious* garden! I never saw such a garden—large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them.

There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now.

There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and co-heirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years.

That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid; but I don't care—there is something strange about the house—I can feel it.

I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a *draught*, and shut the window.

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition.

But John says if I feel so I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself,—before him, at least,—and that makes me very tired.

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! But John would not hear of it.

He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.

He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more.

He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. "Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear," said he, "and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time." So we took the nursery, at the top of the house.

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was a nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off—the paper—in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life.

One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.

It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate, and provoke study, and when you follow the lame, uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard-of contradictions.

The color is repellant, almost revolting; a smouldering, unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others.

No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long.

There comes John, and I must put this away,—he hates to have me write a word.

2

We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first day.

I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious nursery, and there is nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength.

John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious.

I am glad my case is not serious!

But these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing.

John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no *reason* to suffer, and that satisfies him.

Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!

I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!

Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able—to dress and entertain, and order things.

It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!

And yet I *cannot* be with him, it makes me so nervous.

I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wallpaper!

At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterwards he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies.

He said that after the wallpaper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs, and so on.

“You know the place is doing you good,” he said, “and really, dear, I don’t care to renovate the house just for a three months’ rental.”

“Then do let us go downstairs,” I said, “there are such pretty rooms there.”

Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down cellar if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain.

But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things.

It is as airy and comfortable a room as any one need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim.

I’m really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.

Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deep-shaded arbors, the riotous old-fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees.

Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a little private wharf belonging to the estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.

I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me.

But I find I get pretty tired when I try.

It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work. When I get really well John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says he would as soon put fire-works in my pillow-case as to let me have those stimulating people about now.

I wish I could get well faster.

But I must not think about that. This paper looks to me as if it *knew* what a vicious influence it had!

There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside-down.

I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breadths didn’t match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other.

I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy-store.

I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.

I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe.

The furniture in this room is no worse than inharmonious, however, for we had to bring it all from downstairs. I suppose when this was used as a playroom they had to take the nursery things out, and no wonder! I never saw such ravages as the children have made here.

The wallpaper, as I said before, is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother—they must have had perseverance as well as hatred.

Then the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed, which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.

But I don't mind it a bit—only the paper.

There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing.

She is a perfect, and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!

But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows.

There is one that commands the road, a lovely, shaded, winding road, and one that just looks off over the country. A lovely country, too, full of great elms and velvet meadows.

This wallpaper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then.

But in the places where it isn't faded, and where the sun is just so, I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.

There's sister on the stairs!

3

Well, the Fourth of July is over! The people are gone and I am tired out. John thought it might do me good to see a little company, so we just had mother and Nellie and the children down for a week.

Of course I didn't do a thing. Jennie sees to everything now.

But it tired me all the same.

John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall.

But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so!

Besides, it is such an undertaking to go so far.

I don't feel as if it was worth while to turn my hand over for anything, and I'm getting dreadfully fretful and querulous.

I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.

Of course I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone.

And I am alone a good deal just now. John is kept in town very often by serious cases, and Jennie is good and lets me alone when I want her to.

So I walk a little in the garden or down that lovely lane, sit on the porch under the roses, and lie down up here a good deal.

I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wallpaper. Perhaps *because* of the wallpaper.

It dwells in my mind so!

I lie here on this great immovable bed—it is nailed down, I believe—and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we'll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I *will* follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of.

It is repeated, of course, by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes—a kind of "debased Romanesque" with *delirium tremens*—go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity.

But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.

The whole thing goes horizontally, too, at least it seems so, and I exhaust myself in trying to distinguish the order of its going in that direction.

They have used a horizontal breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion.

There is one end of the room where it is almost intact, and there, when the cross-lights fade and the low sun shines directly upon it, I can almost fancy radiation after all,—the interminable grotesques seem to form around a common center and rush off in headlong plunges of equal distraction.

It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap, I guess.

4

I don't know why I should write this.

I don't want to.

I don't feel able.

And I know John would think it absurd. But I *must* say what I feel and think in some way—it is such a relief!

But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief.

Half the time now I am awfully lazy, and lie down ever so much.

John says I musn't lose my strength, and has me take cod-liver oil and lots of tonics and things, to say nothing of ale and wine and rare meat.

Dear John! He loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick. I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia.

But he said I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there; and I did not make out a very good case for myself, for I was crying before I had finished.

It is getting to be a great effort for me to think straight. Just this nervous weakness, I suppose.

And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head.

He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of myself for his sake, and keep well.

He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me.

There's one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wallpaper.

If we had not used it that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn't have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds.

I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all. I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

Of course I never mention it to them any more,—I am too wise,—but I keep watch of it all the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.

Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.

It is always the same shape, only very numerous.

And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here!

5

It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so.

But I tried it last night.

It was moonlight. The moon shines in all around, just as the sun does.

I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another.

John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wallpaper till I felt creepy.

The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.

I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper *did* move, and when I came back John was awake.

“What is it, little girl?” he said. “Don’t go walking about like that—you’ll get cold.”

I though it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished he would take me away.

“Why darling!” said he, “our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can’t see how to leave before.

“The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course if you were in any danger I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better. I feel really much easier about you.”

“I don’t weigh a bit more,” said I, “nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening, when you are here, but it is worse in the morning when you are away.”

“Bless her little heart!” said he with a big hug; “she shall be as sick as she pleases! But now let’s improve the shining hours by going to sleep, and talk about it in the morning!”

“And you won’t go away?” I asked gloomily.

“Why, how can I, dear? It is only three weeks more and then we will take a nice little trip of a few days while Jennie is getting the house ready. Really, dear, you are better!”

“Better in body perhaps”—I began, and stopped short, for he sat up straight and looked at me with such a stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word.

“My darling,” said he, “I beg of you, for my sake and for our child’s sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?”

So of course I said no more on that score, and we went to sleep before long. He thought I was asleep first, but I wasn’t,—I lay there for hours trying to decide whether that front pattern and the back pattern really did move together or separately.

On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind.

The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing.

You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well under way in following, it turns a back somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.

The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions,—why, that is something like it.

That is, sometimes!

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.

When the sun shoots in through the east window—I always watch for that first long, straight ray—it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it.

That is why I watch it always.

By moonlight—the moon shines in all night when there is a moon—I wouldn't know it was the same paper.

At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.

I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind,—that dim sub-pattern,—but now I am quite sure it is a woman.

By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.

I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can.

Indeed, he started the habit by making me lie down for an hour after each meal.

It is a very bad habit, I am convinced, for, you see, I don't sleep.

And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake,—oh, no!

The fact is, I am getting a little afraid of John.

He seems very queer sometimes, and even Jennie has an inexplicable look.

It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis, that perhaps it is the paper!

I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times *looking at the paper!* And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once.

She didn't know I was in the room, and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper she turned around as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry—asked me why I should frighten her so!

Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow smooches on all my clothes and John's, and she wished we would be more careful!

Did not that sound innocent? But I know she was studying that pattern, and I am determined that nobody shall find it out but myself!

6

Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet than I was.

John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wallpaper.

I turned it off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was *because* of the wallpaper—he would make fun of me. He might even want to take me away.

I don't want to leave now until I have found it out. There is a week more, and I think that will be enough.

7

I'm feeling ever so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime.

In the daytime it is tiresome and perplexing.

There are always new shoots on the fungus, and new shades of yellow all over it. I cannot keep count of them, though I have tried conscientiously.

It is the strangest yellow, that wallpaper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw—not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things.

But there is something else about that paper—the smell! I noticed it the moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open or not, the smell is here.

It creeps all over the house.

I find it hovering in the dining-room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs.

It gets into my hair.

Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it—there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like.

It is not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful. I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me.

It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house—to reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the *color* of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mopboard. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even *smooch*, as if it had been rubbed over and over.

I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round—round and round and round—it makes me dizzy!

8

I really have discovered something at last.

Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out.

The front pattern *does* move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!

Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over.

Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard.

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads.

They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside-down, and makes their eyes white!

If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.

9

I think that woman gets out in the daytime!

And I'll tell you why—privately—I've seen her!

I can see her out of every one of my windows!

It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.

I see her on that long shaded lane, creeping up and down. I see her in those dark grape arbors, creeping all around the garden.

I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines.

I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight!

I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once.

And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another room! Besides, I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.

I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once.

But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time.

And though I always see her she *may* be able to creep faster than I can turn!

I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind.

10

If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little.

I have found out another funny thing, but I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much.

There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes.

And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give.

She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.

John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet!

He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind.

As if I couldn't see through him!

Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months.

It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are secretly affected by it.

11

Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John is to stay in town over night, and won't be out until this evening.

Jennie wanted to sleep with me—the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight, and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.

I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

A strip about as high as my head and half around the room.

And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me I declared I would finish it to-day!

We go away to-morrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before.

Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing.

She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired.

How she betrayed herself that time!

But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me—not *alive!*

She tried to get me out of the room—it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner—I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it.

We shall sleep downstairs to-night, and take the boat home to-morrow.

I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.

How those children did tear about here!

This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work.

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path.

I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes.

I want to astonish him.

I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her!

But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on!

This bed will *not* move!

I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner—but it hurt my teeth.

Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing on the floor. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it! All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek with derision!

I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try.

Besides I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued.

I don't like to *look* out of the windows even—there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.

I wonder if they all come out of that wallpaper as I did?

But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope—you don't get *me* out in the road there!

I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard!

It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please!

I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jennie asks me to.

For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow.

But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way.

Why, there's John at the door!

It is no use, young man, you can't open it!

How he does call and pound!

Now he's crying for an axe.

It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door!

"John dear!" said I in the gentlest voice, "the key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf!"

That silenced him for a few moments.

Then he said—very quietly indeed, "Open the door, my darling!"

"I can't," said I. "The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!"

And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it, of course, and came in. He stopped short by the door.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "For God's sake, what are you doing!"

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

"I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane! And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!

Exercise 5.3.1

Questions

1. What is the meaning of the title? Why did Gilman use first person narration? Why is the female protagonist unnamed throughout the text?

2. How would you describe the narrator's voice in this text? How does that voice evolve over the course of the novella? How does the fragmented style of the narrative influence you as a reader?

3. How does Gilman engage with traditional ideas of femininity in this story? What do the house and wallpaper symbolize? What does the woman/women in the wallpaper represent?

4. What is the meaning of the last scene? Has this woman liberated herself from patriarchy as an individual through her madness or has she experienced the ultimate victimization?

5. Gilman was very much an activist writer and authored texts in many different voices (the social scientist, the journalist, the utopian writer, the Gothic writer). What is she advocating in this story? What are the risks of this narrative strategy for a politically-oriented feminist writer?

6. What contemporary issues does "The Yellow Wallpaper" evoke? Why do you think it has become one of the five most popular readings in college courses?

Optional Reading

Readings about the author and literary analysis of the story can be found here.

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5.4: Hawthorne, Nathaniel "The Birthmark" (1846)

The Birthmark

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

In the latter part of the last century there lived a man of science, an eminent proficient in every branch of natural philosophy, who not long before our story opens had made experience of a spiritual affinity more attractive than any chemical one. He had left his laboratory to the care of an assistant, cleared his fine countenance from the furnace smoke, washed the stain of acids from his fingers, and persuaded a beautiful woman to become his wife. In those days when the comparatively recent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open paths into the region of miracle, it was not unusual for the love of science to rival the love of woman in its depth and absorbing energy. The higher intellect, the imagination, the spirit, and even the heart might all find their congenial aliment in pursuits which, as some of their ardent votaries believed, would ascend from one step of powerful intelligence to another, until the philosopher should lay his hand on the secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself. We know not whether Aylmer possessed this degree of faith in man's ultimate control over Nature. He had devoted himself, however, too unreservedly to scientific studies ever to be weaned from them by any second passion. His love for his young wife might prove the stronger of the two; but it could only be by intertwining itself with his love of science, and uniting the strength of the latter to his own.

Such a union accordingly took place, and was attended with truly remarkable consequences and a deeply impressive moral. One day, very soon after their marriage, Aylmer sat gazing at his wife with a trouble in his countenance that grew stronger until he spoke.

"Georgiana," said he, "has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your cheek might be removed?"

"No, indeed," said she, smiling; but perceiving the seriousness of his manner, she blushed deeply. "To tell you the truth it has been so often called a charm that I was simple enough to imagine it might be so."

"Ah, upon another face perhaps it might," replied her husband; "but never on yours. No, dearest Georgiana, you came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature that this slightest possible defect, which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a beauty, shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection."

"Shocks you, my husband!" cried Georgiana, deeply hurt; at first reddening with momentary anger, but then bursting into tears. "Then why did you take me from my mother's side? You cannot love what shocks you!"

To explain this conversation it must be mentioned that in the centre of Georgiana's left cheek there was a singular mark, deeply interwoven, as it were, with the texture and substance of her face. In the usual state of her complexion—a healthy though delicate bloom—the mark wore a tint of deeper crimson, which imperfectly defined its shape amid the surrounding rosiness. When she blushed it gradually became more indistinct, and finally vanished amid the triumphant rush of blood that bathed the whole cheek with its brilliant glow. But if any shifting motion caused her to turn pale there was the mark again, a crimson stain upon the snow, in what Aylmer sometimes deemed an almost fearful distinctness. Its shape bore not a little similarity to the human hand, though of the smallest pygmy size. Georgiana's lovers were wont to say that some fairy at her birth hour had laid her tiny hand upon the infant's cheek, and left this impress there in token of the magic endowments that were to give her such sway over all hearts. Many a desperate swain would have risked life for the privilege of pressing his lips to the mysterious hand. It must not be concealed, however, that the impression wrought by this fairy sign manual varied exceedingly, according to the difference of temperament in the beholders. Some fastidious persons—but they were exclusively of her own sex—affirmed that the bloody hand, as they chose to call it, quite destroyed the effect of Georgiana's beauty, and rendered her countenance even hideous. But it would be as reasonable to say that one of those small blue stains which sometimes occur in the purest statuary marble would convert the Eve of Powers to a monster. Masculine observers, if the birthmark did not heighten their admiration, contented themselves with wishing it away, that the world might possess one living specimen of ideal loveliness without the semblance of a flaw. After his marriage,—for he thought little or nothing of the matter before,—Aylmer discovered that this was the case with himself.

Had she been less beautiful,—if Envy's self could have found aught else to sneer at,—he might have felt his affection heightened by the prettiness of this mimic hand, now vaguely portrayed, now lost, now stealing forth again and glimmering to and fro with every pulse of emotion that throbbed within her heart; but seeing her otherwise so perfect, he found this one defect grow more and more intolerable with every moment of their united lives. It was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain. The

crimson hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to dust. In this manner, selecting it as the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death, Aylmer's sombre imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than ever Georgiana's beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight.

At all the seasons which should have been their happiest, he invariably and without intending it, nay, in spite of a purpose to the contrary, reverted to this one disastrous topic. Trifling as it at first appeared, it so connected itself with innumerable trains of thought and modes of feeling that it became the central point of all. With the morning twilight Aylmer opened his eyes upon his wife's face and recognized the symbol of imperfection; and when they sat together at the evening hearth his eyes wandered stealthily to her cheek, and beheld, flickering with the blaze of the wood fire, the spectral hand that wrote mortality where he would fain have worshipped. Georgiana soon learned to shudder at his gaze. It needed but a glance with the peculiar expression that his face often wore to change the roses of her cheek into a deathlike paleness, amid which the crimson hand was brought strongly out, like a bass-relief of ruby on the whitest marble.

Late one night when the lights were growing dim, so as hardly to betray the stain on the poor wife's cheek, she herself, for the first time, voluntarily took up the subject.

"Do you remember, my dear Aylmer," said she, with a feeble attempt at a smile, "have you any recollection of a dream last night about this odious hand?"

"None! none whatever!" replied Aylmer, starting; but then he added, in a dry, cold tone, affected for the sake of concealing the real depth of his emotion, "I might well dream of it; for before I fell asleep it had taken a pretty firm hold of my fancy."

"And you did dream of it?" continued Georgiana, hastily; for she dreaded lest a gush of tears should interrupt what she had to say. "A terrible dream! I wonder that you can forget it. Is it possible to forget this one expression?—'It is in her heart now; we must have it out!' Reflect, my husband; for by all means I would have you recall that dream."

The mind is in a sad state when Sleep, the all-involving, cannot confine her spectres within the dim region of her sway, but suffers them to break forth, affrighting this actual life with secrets that perchance belong to a deeper one. Aylmer now remembered his dream. He had fancied himself with his servant Aminadab, attempting an operation for the removal of the birthmark; but the deeper went the knife, the deeper sank the hand, until at length its tiny grasp appeared to have caught hold of Georgiana's heart; whence, however, her husband was inexorably resolved to cut or wrench it away.

When the dream had shaped itself perfectly in his memory, Aylmer sat in his wife's presence with a guilty feeling. Truth often finds its way to the mind close muffled in robes of sleep, and then speaks with uncompromising directness of matters in regard to which we practise an unconscious self-deception during our waking moments. Until now he had not been aware of the tyrannizing influence acquired by one idea over his mind, and of the lengths which he might find in his heart to go for the sake of giving himself peace.

"Aylmer," resumed Georgiana, solemnly, "I know not what may be the cost to both of us to rid me of this fatal birthmark. Perhaps its removal may cause cureless deformity; or it may be the stain goes as deep as life itself. Again: do we know that there is a possibility, on any terms, of unclasping the firm gripe of this little hand which was laid upon me before I came into the world?"

"Dearest Georgiana, I have spent much thought upon the subject," hastily interrupted Aylmer. "I am convinced of the perfect practicability of its removal."

"If there be the remotest possibility of it," continued Georgiana, "let the attempt be made at whatever risk. Danger is nothing to me; for life, while this hateful mark makes me the object of your horror and disgust,—life is a burden which I would fling down with joy. Either remove this dreadful hand, or take my wretched life! You have deep science. All the world bears witness of it. You have achieved great wonders. Cannot you remove this little, little mark, which I cover with the tips of two small fingers? Is this beyond your power, for the sake of your own peace, and to save your poor wife from madness?"

"Noblest, dearest, tenderest wife," cried Aylmer, rapturously, "doubt not my power. I have already given this matter the deepest thought—thought which might almost have enlightened me to create a being less perfect than yourself. Georgiana, you have led me deeper than ever into the heart of science. I feel myself fully competent to render this dear cheek as faultless as its fellow; and then, most beloved, what will be my triumph when I shall have corrected what Nature left imperfect in her fairest work! Even Pygmalion, when his sculptured woman assumed life, felt not greater ecstasy than mine will be."

"It is resolved, then," said Georgiana, faintly smiling. "And, Aylmer, spare me not, though you should find the birthmark take refuge in my heart at last."

Her husband tenderly kissed her cheek—her right cheek—not that which bore the impress of the crimson hand.

The next day Aylmer apprised his wife of a plan that he had formed whereby he might have opportunity for the intense thought and constant watchfulness which the proposed operation would require; while Georgiana, likewise, would enjoy the perfect repose essential to its success. They were to seclude themselves in the extensive apartments occupied by Aylmer as a laboratory, and where, during his toilsome youth, he had made discoveries in the elemental powers of Nature that had roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe. Seated calmly in this laboratory, the pale philosopher had investigated the secrets of the highest cloud region and of the profoundest mines; he had satisfied himself of the causes that kindled and kept alive the fires of the volcano; and had explained the mystery of fountains, and how it is that they gush forth, some so bright and pure, and others with such rich medicinal virtues, from the dark bosom of the earth. Here, too, at an earlier period, he had studied the wonders of the human frame, and attempted to fathom the very process by which Nature assimilates all her precious influences from earth and air, and from the spiritual world, to create and foster man, her masterpiece. The latter pursuit, however, Aylmer had long laid aside in unwilling recognition of the truth—against which all seekers sooner or later stumble—that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and, in spite of her pretended openness, shows us nothing but results. She permits us, indeed, to mar, but seldom to mend, and, like a jealous patentee, on no account to make. Now, however, Aylmer resumed these half-forgotten investigations; not, of course, with such hopes or wishes as first suggested them; but because they involved much physiological truth and lay in the path of his proposed scheme for the treatment of Georgiana.

As he led her over the threshold of the laboratory, Georgiana was cold and tremulous. Aylmer looked cheerfully into her face, with intent to reassure her, but was so startled with the intense glow of the birthmark upon the whiteness of her cheek that he could not restrain a strong convulsive shudder. His wife fainted.

"Aminadab! Aminadab!" shouted Aylmer, stamping violently on the floor.

Forthwith there issued from an inner apartment a man of low stature, but bulky frame, with shaggy hair hanging about his visage, which was grimed with the vapors of the furnace. This personage had been Aylmer's underworker during his whole scientific career, and was admirably fitted for that office by his great mechanical readiness, and the skill with which, while incapable of comprehending a single principle, he executed all the details of his master's experiments. With his vast strength, his shaggy hair, his smoky aspect, and the indescribable earthiness that incrusted him, he seemed to represent man's physical nature; while Aylmer's slender figure, and pale, intellectual face, were no less apt a type of the spiritual element.

"Throw open the door of the boudoir, Aminadab," said Aylmer, "and burn a pastil."

"Yes, master," answered Aminadab, looking intently at the lifeless form of Georgiana; and then he muttered to himself, "If she were my wife, I'd never part with that birthmark."

When Georgiana recovered consciousness she found herself breathing an atmosphere of penetrating fragrance, the gentle potency of which had recalled her from her deathlike faintness. The scene around her looked like enchantment. Aylmer had converted those smoky, dingy, sombre rooms, where he had spent his brightest years in recondite pursuits, into a series of beautiful apartments not unfit to be the secluded abode of a lovely woman. The walls were hung with gorgeous curtains, which imparted the combination of grandeur and grace that no other species of adornment can achieve; and as they fell from the ceiling to the floor, their rich and ponderous folds, concealing all angles and straight lines, appeared to shut in the scene from infinite space. For aught Georgiana knew, it might be a pavilion among the clouds. And Aylmer, excluding the sunshine, which would have interfered with his chemical processes, had supplied its place with perfumed lamps, emitting flames of various hue, but all uniting in a soft, impurpled radiance. He now knelt by his wife's side, watching her earnestly, but without alarm; for he was confident in his science, and felt that he could draw a magic circle round her within which no evil might intrude.

"Where am I? Ah, I remember," said Georgiana, faintly; and she placed her hand over her cheek to hide the terrible mark from her husband's eyes.

"Fear not, dearest!" exclaimed he. "Do not shrink from me! Believe me, Georgiana, I even rejoice in this single imperfection, since it will be such a rapture to remove it."

"Oh, spare me!" sadly replied his wife. "Pray do not look at it again. I never can forget that convulsive shudder."

In order to soothe Georgiana, and, as it were, to release her mind from the burden of actual things, Aylmer now put in practice some of the light and playful secrets which science had taught him among its profounder lore. Airy figures, absolutely bodiless ideas, and forms of unsubstantial beauty came and danced before her, imprinting their momentary footsteps on beams of light. Though she had some indistinct idea of the method of these optical phenomena, still the illusion was almost perfect enough to warrant the belief that her husband possessed sway over the spiritual world. Then again, when she felt a wish to look forth from her seclusion, immediately, as if her thoughts

were answered, the procession of external existence flitted across a screen. The scenery and the figures of actual life were perfectly represented, but with that bewitching, yet indescribable difference which always makes a picture, an image, or a shadow so much more attractive than the original. When wearied of this, Aylmer bade her cast her eyes upon a vessel containing a quantity of earth. She did so, with little interest at first; but was soon startled to perceive the germ of a plant shooting upward from the soil. Then came the slender stalk; the leaves gradually unfolded themselves; and amid them was a perfect and lovely flower.

"It is magical!" cried Georgiana. "I dare not touch it."

"Nay, pluck it," answered Aylmer,—"pluck it, and inhale its brief perfume while you may. The flower will wither in a few moments and leave nothing save its brown seed vessels; but thence may be perpetuated a race as ephemeral as itself."

But Georgiana had no sooner touched the flower than the whole plant suffered a blight, its leaves turning coal-black as if by the agency of fire.

"There was too powerful a stimulus," said Aylmer, thoughtfully.

To make up for this abortive experiment, he proposed to take her portrait by a scientific process of his own invention. It was to be effected by rays of light striking upon a polished plate of metal. Georgiana assented; but, on looking at the result, was affrighted to find the features of the portrait blurred and indefinable; while the minute figure of a hand appeared where the cheek should have been. Aylmer snatched the metallic plate and threw it into a jar of corrosive acid.

Soon, however, he forgot these mortifying failures. In the intervals of study and chemical experiment he came to her flushed and exhausted, but seemed invigorated by her presence, and spoke in glowing language of the resources of his art. He gave a history of the long dynasty of the alchemists, who spent so many ages in quest of the universal solvent by which the golden principle might be elicited from all things vile and base. Aylmer appeared to believe that, by the plainest scientific logic, it was altogether within the limits of possibility to discover this long-sought medium; "but," he added, "a philosopher who should go deep enough to acquire the power would attain too lofty a wisdom to stoop to the exercise of it." Not less singular were his opinions in regard to the elixir vitae. He more than intimated that it was at his option to concoct a liquid that should prolong life for years, perhaps interminably; but that it would produce a discord in Nature which all the world, and chiefly the quaffer of the immortal nostrum, would find cause to curse.

"Aylmer, are you in earnest?" asked Georgiana, looking at him with amazement and fear. "It is terrible to possess such power, or even to dream of possessing it."

"Oh, do not tremble, my love," said her husband. "I would not wrong either you or myself by working such inharmonious effects upon our lives; but I would have you consider how trifling, in comparison, is the skill requisite to remove this little hand."

At the mention of the birthmark, Georgiana, as usual, shrank as if a redhot iron had touched her cheek.

Again Aylmer applied himself to his labors. She could hear his voice in the distant furnace room giving directions to Aminadab, whose harsh, uncouth, misshapen tones were audible in response, more like the grunt or growl of a brute than human speech. After hours of absence, Aylmer reappeared and proposed that she should now examine his cabinet of chemical products and natural treasures of the earth. Among the former he showed her a small vial, in which, he remarked, was contained a gentle yet most powerful fragrance, capable of impregnating all the breezes that blow across a kingdom. They were of inestimable value, the contents of that little vial; and, as he said so, he threw some of the perfume into the air and filled the room with piercing and invigorating delight.

"And what is this?" asked Georgiana, pointing to a small crystal globe containing a gold-colored liquid. "It is so beautiful to the eye that I could imagine it the elixir of life."

"In one sense it is," replied Aylmer; "or, rather, the elixir of immortality. It is the most precious poison that ever was concocted in this world. By its aid I could apportion the lifetime of any mortal at whom you might point your finger. The strength of the dose would determine whether he were to linger out years, or drop dead in the midst of a breath. No king on his guarded throne could keep his life if I, in my private station, should deem that the welfare of millions justified me in depriving him of it."

"Why do you keep such a terrific drug?" inquired Georgiana in horror.

"Do not mistrust me, dearest," said her husband, smiling; "its virtuous potency is yet greater than its harmful one. But see! here is a powerful cosmetic. With a few drops of this in a vase of water, freckles may be washed away as easily as the hands are cleansed. A stronger infusion would take the blood out of the cheek, and leave the rosiest beauty a pale ghost."

"Is it with this lotion that you intend to bathe my cheek?" asked Georgiana, anxiously.

"Oh, no," hastily replied her husband; "this is merely superficial. Your case demands a remedy that shall go deeper."

In his interviews with Georgiana, Aylmer generally made minute inquiries as to her sensations and whether the confinement of the rooms and the temperature of the atmosphere agreed with her. These questions had such a particular drift that Georgiana began to conjecture that she was already subjected to certain physical influences, either breathed in with the fragrant air or taken with her food. She fancied likewise, but it might be altogether fancy, that there was a stirring up of her system—a strange, indefinite sensation creeping through her veins, and tingling, half painfully, half pleasurably, at her heart. Still, whenever she dared to look into the mirror, there she beheld herself pale as a white rose and with the crimson birthmark stamped upon her cheek. Not even Aylmer now hated it so much as she.

To dispel the tedium of the hours which her husband found it necessary to devote to the processes of combination and analysis, Georgiana turned over the volumes of his scientific library. In many dark old tomes she met with chapters full of romance and poetry. They were the works of philosophers of the middle ages, such as Albertus Magnus, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and the famous friar who created the prophetic Brazen Head. All these antique naturalists stood in advance of their centuries, yet were imbued with some of their credulity, and therefore were believed, and perhaps imagined themselves to have acquired from the investigation of Nature a power above Nature, and from physics a sway over the spiritual world. Hardly less curious and imaginative were the early volumes of the Transactions of the Royal Society, in which the members, knowing little of the limits of natural possibility, were continually recording wonders or proposing methods whereby wonders might be wrought.

But to Georgiana the most engrossing volume was a large folio from her husband's own hand, in which he had recorded every experiment of his scientific career, its original aim, the methods adopted for its development, and its final success or failure, with the circumstances to which either event was attributable. The book, in truth, was both the history and emblem of his ardent, ambitious, imaginative, yet practical and laborious life. He handled physical details as if there were nothing beyond them; yet spiritualized them all, and redeemed himself from materialism by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite. In his grasp the veriest clod of earth assumed a soul. Georgiana, as she read, reverenced Aylmer and loved him more profoundly than ever, but with a less entire dependence on his judgment than heretofore. Much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe that his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed. His brightest diamonds were the merest pebbles, and felt to be so by himself, in comparison with the inestimable gems which lay hidden beyond his reach. The volume, rich with achievements that had won renown for its author, was yet as melancholy a record as ever mortal hand had penned. It was the sad confession and continual exemplification of the shortcomings of the composite man, the spirit burdened with clay and working in matter, and of the despair that assails the higher nature at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part. Perhaps every man of genius in whatever sphere might recognize the image of his own experience in Aylmer's journal.

So deeply did these reflections affect Georgiana that she laid her face upon the open volume and burst into tears. In this situation she was found by her husband.

"It is dangerous to read in a sorcerer's books," said he with a smile, though his countenance was uneasy and displeased. "Georgiana, there are pages in that volume which I can scarcely glance over and keep my senses. Take heed lest it prove as detrimental to you."

"It has made me worship you more than ever," said she.

"Ah, wait for this one success," rejoined he, "then worship me if you will. I shall deem myself hardly unworthy of it. But come, I have sought you for the luxury of your voice. Sing to me, dearest."

So she poured out the liquid music of her voice to quench the thirst of his spirit. He then took his leave with a boyish exuberance of gayety, assuring her that her seclusion would endure but a little longer, and that the result was already certain. Scarcely had he departed when Georgiana felt irresistibly impelled to follow him. She had forgotten to inform Aylmer of a symptom which for two or three hours past had begun to excite her attention. It was a sensation in the fatal birthmark, not painful, but which induced a restlessness throughout her system. Hastening after her husband, she intruded for the first time into the laboratory.

The first thing that struck her eye was the furnace, that hot and feverish worker, with the intense glow of its fire, which by the quantities of soot clustered above it seemed to have been burning for ages. There was a distilling apparatus in full operation. Around the room were retorts, tubes, cylinders, crucibles, and other apparatus of chemical research. An electrical machine stood ready for immediate use. The atmosphere felt oppressively close, and was tainted with gaseous odors which had been tormented forth by the processes of science. The severe and homely simplicity of the apartment, with its naked walls and brick pavement, looked strange, accustomed as Georgiana had become to the fantastic elegance of her boudoir. But what chiefly, indeed almost solely, drew her attention, was the aspect of Aylmer himself.

He was pale as death, anxious and absorbed, and hung over the furnace as if it depended upon his utmost watchfulness whether the liquid which it was distilling should be the draught of immortal happiness or misery. How different from the sanguine and joyous mien that he had assumed for Georgiana's encouragement!

"Carefully now, Aminadab; carefully, thou human machine; carefully, thou man of clay!" muttered Aylmer, more to himself than his assistant. "Now, if there be a thought too much or too little, it is all over."

"Ho! ho!" mumbled Aminadab. "Look, master! look!"

Aylmer raised his eyes hastily, and at first reddened, then grew paler than ever, on beholding Georgiana. He rushed towards her and seized her arm with a gripe that left the print of his fingers upon it.

"Why do you come hither? Have you no trust in your husband?" cried he, impetuously. "Would you throw the blight of that fatal birthmark over my labors? It is not well done. Go, prying woman, go!"

"Nay, Aylmer," said Georgiana with the firmness of which she possessed no stinted endowment, "it is not you that have a right to complain. You mistrust your wife; you have concealed the anxiety with which you watch the development of this experiment. Think not so unworthily of me, my husband. Tell me all the risk we run, and fear not that I shall shrink; for my share in it is far less than your own."

"No, no, Georgiana!" said Aylmer, impatiently; "it must not be."

"I submit," replied she calmly. "And, Aylmer, I shall quaff whatever draught you bring me; but it will be on the same principle that would induce me to take a dose of poison if offered by your hand."

"My noble wife," said Aylmer, deeply moved, "I knew not the height and depth of your nature until now. Nothing shall be concealed. Know, then, that this crimson hand, superficial as it seems, has clutched its grasp into your being with a strength of which I had no previous conception. I have already administered agents powerful enough to do aught except to change your entire physical system. Only one thing remains to be tried. If that fail us we are ruined."

"Why did you hesitate to tell me this?" asked she.

"Because, Georgiana," said Aylmer, in a low voice, "there is danger."

"Danger? There is but one danger—that this horrible stigma shall be left upon my cheek!" cried Georgiana. "Remove it, remove it, whatever be the cost, or we shall both go mad!"

"Heaven knows your words are too true," said Aylmer, sadly. "And now, dearest, return to your boudoir. In a little while all will be tested."

He conducted her back and took leave of her with a solemn tenderness which spoke far more than his words how much was now at stake. After his departure Georgiana became rapt in musings. She considered the character of Aylmer, and did it completer justice than at any previous moment. Her heart exulted, while it trembled, at his honorable love—so pure and lofty that it would accept nothing less than perfection nor miserably make itself contented with an earthlier nature than he had dreamed of. She felt how much more precious was such a sentiment than that meaner kind which would have borne with the imperfection for her sake, and have been guilty of treason to holy love by degrading its perfect idea to the level of the actual; and with her whole spirit she prayed that, for a single moment, she might satisfy his highest and deepest conception. Longer than one moment she well knew it could not be; for his spirit was ever on the march, ever ascending, and each instant required something that was beyond the scope of the instant before.

The sound of her husband's footsteps aroused her. He bore a crystal goblet containing a liquor colorless as water, but bright enough to be the draught of immortality. Aylmer was pale; but it seemed rather the consequence of a highly-wrought state of mind and tension of spirit than of fear or doubt.

"The concoction of the draught has been perfect," said he, in answer to Georgiana's look. "Unless all my science have deceived me, it cannot fail."

"Save on your account, my dearest Aylmer," observed his wife, "I might wish to put off this birthmark of mortality by relinquishing mortality itself in preference to any other mode. Life is but a sad possession to those who have attained precisely the degree of moral advancement at which I stand. Were I weaker and blinder it might be happiness. Were I stronger, it might be endured hopefully. But, being what I find myself, methinks I am of all mortals the most fit to die."

"You are fit for heaven without tasting death!" replied her husband "But why do we speak of dying? The draught cannot fail. Behold its effect upon this plant."

On the window seat there stood a geranium diseased with yellow blotches, which had overspread all its leaves. Aylmer poured a small quantity of the liquid upon the soil in which it grew. In a little time, when the roots of the plant had taken up the moisture, the unsightly blotches began to be extinguished in a living verdure.

"There needed no proof," said Georgiana, quietly. "Give me the goblet I joyfully stake all upon your word."

"Drink, then, thou lofty creature!" exclaimed Aylmer, with fervid admiration. "There is no taint of imperfection on thy spirit. Thy sensible frame, too, shall soon be all perfect."

She quaffed the liquid and returned the goblet to his hand.

"It is grateful," said she with a placid smile. "Methinks it is like water from a heavenly fountain; for it contains I know not what of unobtrusive fragrance and deliciousness. It allays a feverish thirst that had parched me for many days. Now, dearest, let me sleep. My earthly senses are closing over my spirit like the leaves around the heart of a rose at sunset."

She spoke the last words with a gentle reluctance, as if it required almost more energy than she could command to pronounce the faint and lingering syllables. Scarcely had they loitered through her lips ere she was lost in slumber. Aylmer sat by her side, watching her aspect with the emotions proper to a man the whole value of whose existence was involved in the process now to be tested. Mingled with this mood, however, was the philosophic investigation characteristic of the man of science. Not the minutest symptom escaped him. A heightened flush of the cheek, a slight irregularity of breath, a quiver of the eyelid, a hardly perceptible tremor through the frame,—such were the details which, as the moments passed, he wrote down in his folio volume. Intense thought had set its stamp upon every previous page of that volume, but the thoughts of years were all concentrated upon the last.

While thus employed, he failed not to gaze often at the fatal hand, and not without a shudder. Yet once, by a strange and unaccountable impulse he pressed it with his lips. His spirit recoiled, however, in the very act, and Georgiana, out of the midst of her deep sleep, moved uneasily and murmured as if in remonstrance. Again Aylmer resumed his watch. Nor was it without avail. The crimson hand, which at first had been strongly visible upon the marble paleness of Georgiana's cheek, now grew more faintly outlined. She remained not less pale than ever; but the birthmark with every breath that came and went, lost somewhat of its former distinctness. Its presence had been awful; its departure was more awful still. Watch the stain of the rainbow fading out the sky, and you will know how that mysterious symbol passed away.

"By Heaven! it is well-nigh gone!" said Aylmer to himself, in almost irrepressible ecstasy. "I can scarcely trace it now. Success! success! And now it is like the faintest rose color. The lightest flush of blood across her cheek would overcome it. But she is so pale!"

He drew aside the window curtain and suffered the light of natural day to fall into the room and rest upon her cheek. At the same time he heard a gross, hoarse chuckle, which he had long known as his servant Aminadab's expression of delight.

"Ah, clod! ah, earthly mass!" cried Aylmer, laughing in a sort of frenzy, "you have served me well! Matter and spirit—earth and heaven—have both done their part in this! Laugh, thing of the senses! You have earned the right to laugh."

These exclamations broke Georgiana's sleep. She slowly unclosed her eyes and gazed into the mirror which her husband had arranged for that purpose. A faint smile flitted over her lips when she recognized how barely perceptible was now that crimson hand which had once blazed forth with such disastrous brilliancy as to scare away all their happiness. But then her eyes sought Aylmer's face with a trouble and anxiety that he could by no means account for.

"My poor Aylmer!" murmured she.

"Poor? Nay, richest, happiest, most favored!" exclaimed he. "My peerless bride, it is successful! You are perfect!"

"My poor Aylmer," she repeated, with a more than human tenderness, "you have aimed loftily; you have done nobly. Do not repent that with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best the earth could offer. Aylmer, dearest Aylmer, I am dying!"

Alas! it was too true! The fatal hand had grappled with the mystery of life, and was the bond by which an angelic spirit kept itself in union with a mortal frame. As the last crimson tint of the birthmark—that sole token of human imperfection—faded from her cheek, the parting breath of the now perfect woman passed into the atmosphere, and her soul, lingering a moment near her husband, took its heavenward flight. Then a hoarse, chuckling laugh was heard again! Thus ever does the gross fatality of earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence which, in this dim sphere of half development, demands the completeness of a higher state. Yet, had Alymer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the selfsame texture with the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and, living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present.

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5.5: Irving, Washington "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820)

Found Among the Paper of the Late Diedrich Knickerbocker

> ***A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,***
> ***Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;***
> ***And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,***
> ***Forever flushing round a summer sky.***
> ***CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.***

In the bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent the eastern shore of the Hudson, at that broad expansion of the river denominated by the ancient Dutch navigators the Tappan Zee, and where they always prudently shortened sail and implored the protection of St. Nicholas when they crossed, there lies a small market town or rural port, which by some is called Greensburgh, but which is more generally and properly known by the name of Tarry Town. This name was given, we are told, in former days, by the good housewives of the adjacent country, from the inveterate propensity of their husbands to linger about the village tavern on market days. Be that as it may, I do not vouch for the fact, but merely advert to it, for the sake of being precise and authentic. Not far from this village, perhaps about two miles, there is a little valley or rather lap of land among high hills, which is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small brook glides through it, with just murmur enough to lull one to repose; and the occasional whistle of a quail or tapping of a woodpecker is almost the only sound that ever breaks in upon the uniform tranquillity.

I recollect that, when a stripling, my first exploit in squirrel-shooting was in a grove of tall walnut-trees that shades one side of the valley. I had wandered into it at noontime, when all nature is peculiarly quiet, and was startled by the roar of my own gun, as it broke the Sabbath stillness around and was prolonged and reverberated by the angry echoes. If ever I should wish for a retreat whither I might steal from the world and its distractions, and dream quietly away the remnant of a troubled life, I know of none more promising than this little valley.

From the listless repose of the place, and the peculiar character of its inhabitants, who are descendants from the original Dutch settlers, this sequestered glen has long been known by the name of SLEEPY HOLLOW, and its rustic lads are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys throughout all the neighboring country. A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land, and to pervade the very atmosphere. Some say that the place was bewitched by a High German doctor, during the early days of the settlement; others, that an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe, held his powwows there before the country was discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson. Certain it is, the place still continues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual reverie. They are given to all kinds of marvellous beliefs, are subject to trances and visions, and frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighborhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions; stars shoot and meteors glare oftener across the valley than in any other part of the country, and the nightmare, with her whole ninefold, seems to make it the favorite scene of her gambols.

The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander-in-chief of all the powers of the air, is the apparition of a figure on horseback, without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the Revolutionary War, and who is ever and anon seen by the country folk hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wings of the wind. His haunts are not confined to the valley, but extend at times to the adjacent roads, and especially to the vicinity of a church at no great distance. Indeed, certain of the most authentic historians of those parts, who have been careful in collecting and collating the floating facts concerning this spectre, allege that the body of the trooper having been buried in the churchyard, the ghost rides forth to the scene of battle in nightly quest of his head, and that the rushing speed with which he sometimes passes along the Hollow, like a midnight blast, is owing to his being belated, and in a hurry to get back to the churchyard before daybreak.

Such is the general purport of this legendary superstition, which has furnished materials for many a wild story in that region of shadows; and the spectre is known at all the country firesides, by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

It is remarkable that the visionary propensity I have mentioned is not confined to the native inhabitants of the valley, but is unconsciously imbibed by every one who resides there for a time. However wide awake they may have been before they entered that sleepy region, they are sure, in a little time, to inhale the witching influence of the air, and begin to grow imaginative, to dream dreams, and see apparitions.

I mention this peaceful spot with all possible laud, for it is in such little retired Dutch valleys, found here and there embosomed in the great State of New York, that population, manners, and customs remain fixed, while the great torrent of migration and improvement, which is making such incessant changes in other parts of this restless country, sweeps by them unobserved. They are like those little nooks of still water, which border a rapid stream, where we may see the straw and bubble riding quietly at anchor, or slowly revolving in their mimic harbor, undisturbed by the rush of the passing current. Though many years have elapsed since I trod the drowsy shades of Sleepy Hollow, yet I question whether I should not still find the same trees and the same families vegetating in its sheltered bosom.

In this by-place of nature there abode, in a remote period of American history, that is to say, some thirty years since, a worthy wight of the name of Ichabod Crane, who sojourned, or, as he expressed it, “tarried,” in Sleepy Hollow, for the purpose of instructing the children of the vicinity. He was a native of Connecticut, a State which supplies the Union with pioneers for the mind as well as for the forest, and sends forth yearly its legions of frontier woodmen and country schoolmasters. The cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable to his person. He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weather-cock perched upon his spindle neck to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield.

His schoolhouse was a low building of one large room, rudely constructed of logs; the windows partly glazed, and partly patched with leaves of old copybooks. It was most ingeniously secured at vacant hours, by a withe twisted in the handle of the door, and stakes set against the window shutters; so that though a thief might get in with perfect ease, he would find some embarrassment in getting out,—an idea most probably borrowed by the architect, Yost Van Houten, from the mystery of an eelpot. The schoolhouse stood in a rather lonely but pleasant situation, just at the foot of a woody hill, with a brook running close by, and a formidable birch-tree growing at one end of it. From hence the low murmur of his pupils’ voices, conning over their lessons, might be heard in a drowsy summer’s day, like the hum of a beehive; interrupted now and then by the authoritative voice of the master, in the tone of menace or command, or, peradventure, by the appalling sound of the birch, as he urged some tardy loiterer along the flowery path of knowledge. Truth to say, he was a conscientious man, and ever bore in mind the golden maxim, “Spare the rod and spoil the child.” Ichabod Crane’s scholars certainly were not spoiled.

I would not have it imagined, however, that he was one of those cruel potentates of the school who joy in the smart of their subjects; on the contrary, he administered justice with discrimination rather than severity; taking the burden off the backs of the weak, and laying it on those of the strong. Your mere puny stripling, that winced at the least flourish of the rod, was passed by with indulgence; but the claims of justice were satisfied by inflicting a double portion on some little tough wrong-headed, broad-skirted Dutch urchin, who sulked and swelled and grew dogged and sullen beneath the birch. All this he called “doing his duty by their parents;” and he never inflicted a chastisement without following it by the assurance, so consolatory to the smarting urchin, that “he would remember it and thank him for it the longest day he had to live.”

When school hours were over, he was even the companion and playmate of the larger boys; and on holiday afternoons would convoy some of the smaller ones home, who happened to have pretty sisters, or good housewives for mothers, noted for the comforts of the cupboard. Indeed, it behooved him to keep on good terms with his pupils. The revenue arising from his school was small, and would have been scarcely sufficient to furnish him with daily bread, for he was a huge feeder, and, though lank, had the dilating powers of an anaconda; but to help out his maintenance, he was, according to country custom in those parts, boarded and lodged at the houses of the farmers whose children he instructed. With these he lived successively a week at a time, thus going the rounds of the neighborhood, with all his worldly effects tied up in a cotton handkerchief.

That all this might not be too onerous on the purses of his rustic patrons, who are apt to consider the costs of schooling a grievous burden, and schoolmasters as mere drones, he had various ways of rendering himself both useful and agreeable. He assisted the farmers occasionally in the lighter labors of their farms, helped to make hay, mended the fences, took the horses to water, drove the

cows from pasture, and cut wood for the winter fire. He laid aside, too, all the dominant dignity and absolute sway with which he lorded it in his little empire, the school, and became wonderfully gentle and ingratiating. He found favor in the eyes of the mothers by petting the children, particularly the youngest; and like the lion bold, which whilom so magnanimously the lamb did hold, he would sit with a child on one knee, and rock a cradle with his foot for whole hours together.

In addition to his other vocations, he was the singing-master of the neighborhood, and picked up many bright shillings by instructing the young folks in psalmody. It was a matter of no little vanity to him on Sundays, to take his station in front of the church gallery, with a band of chosen singers; where, in his own mind, he completely carried away the palm from the parson. Certain it is, his voice resounded far above all the rest of the congregation; and there are peculiar quavers still to be heard in that church, and which may even be heard half a mile off, quite to the opposite side of the millpond, on a still Sunday morning, which are said to be legitimately descended from the nose of Ichabod Crane. Thus, by divers little makeshifts, in that ingenious way which is commonly denominated “by hook and by crook,” the worthy pedagogue got on tolerably enough, and was thought, by all who understood nothing of the labor of headwork, to have a wonderfully easy life of it.

The schoolmaster is generally a man of some importance in the female circle of a rural neighborhood; being considered a kind of idle, gentlemanlike personage, of vastly superior taste and accomplishments to the rough country swains, and, indeed, inferior in learning only to the parson. His appearance, therefore, is apt to occasion some little stir at the tea-table of a farmhouse, and the addition of a supernumerary dish of cakes or sweetmeats, or, peradventure, the parade of a silver teapot. Our man of letters, therefore, was peculiarly happy in the smiles of all the country damsels. How he would figure among them in the churchyard, between services on Sundays; gathering grapes for them from the wild vines that overran the surrounding trees; reciting for their amusement all the epitaphs on the tombstones; or sauntering, with a whole bevy of them, along the banks of the adjacent millpond; while the more bashful country bumpkins hung sheepishly back, envying his superior elegance and address.

From his half-itinerant life, also, he was a kind of travelling gazette, carrying the whole budget of local gossip from house to house, so that his appearance was always greeted with satisfaction. He was, moreover, esteemed by the women as a man of great erudition, for he had read several books quite through, and was a perfect master of Cotton Mather’s “History of New England Witchcraft,” in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed.

He was, in fact, an odd mixture of small shrewdness and simple credulity. His appetite for the marvellous, and his powers of digesting it, were equally extraordinary; and both had been increased by his residence in this spell-bound region. No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow. It was often his delight, after his school was dismissed in the afternoon, to stretch himself on the rich bed of clover bordering the little brook that whimpered by his schoolhouse, and there con over old Mather’s direful tales, until the gathering dusk of evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes. Then, as he wended his way by swamp and stream and awful woodland, to the farmhouse where he happened to be quartered, every sound of nature, at that witching hour, fluttered his excited imagination,—the moan of the whip-poor-will from the hillside, the boding cry of the tree toad, that harbinger of storm, the dreary hooting of the screech owl, or the sudden rustling in the thicket of birds frightened from their roost. The fireflies, too, which sparkled most vividly in the darkest places, now and then startled him, as one of uncommon brightness would stream across his path; and if, by chance, a huge blockhead of a beetle came winging his blundering flight against him, the poor varlet was ready to give up the ghost, with the idea that he was struck with a witch’s token. His only resource on such occasions, either to drown thought or drive away evil spirits, was to sing psalm tunes and the good people of Sleepy Hollow, as they sat by their doors of an evening, were often filled with awe at hearing his nasal melody, “in linked sweetness long drawn out,” floating from the distant hill, or along the dusky road.

Another of his sources of fearful pleasure was to pass long winter evenings with the old Dutch wives, as they sat spinning by the fire, with a row of apples roasting and spluttering along the hearth, and listen to their marvellous tales of ghosts and goblins, and haunted fields, and haunted brooks, and haunted bridges, and haunted houses, and particularly of the headless horseman, or Galloping Hessian of the Hollow, as they sometimes called him. He would delight them equally by his anecdotes of witchcraft, and of the direful omens and portentous sights and sounds in the air, which prevailed in the earlier times of Connecticut; and would frighten them woefully with speculations upon comets and shooting stars; and with the alarming fact that the world did absolutely turn round, and that they were half the time topsy-turvy!

But if there was a pleasure in all this, while snugly cuddling in the chimney corner of a chamber that was all of a ruddy glow from the crackling wood fire, and where, of course, no spectre dared to show its face, it was dearly purchased by the terrors of his subsequent walk homewards. What fearful shapes and shadows beset his path, amidst the dim and ghastly glare of a snowy night!

With what wistful look did he eye every trembling ray of light streaming across the waste fields from some distant window! How often was he appalled by some shrub covered with snow, which, like a sheeted spectre, beset his very path! How often did he shrink with curdling awe at the sound of his own steps on the frosty crust beneath his feet; and dread to look over his shoulder, lest he should behold some uncouth being tramping close behind him! And how often was he thrown into complete dismay by some rushing blast, howling among the trees, in the idea that it was the Galloping Hessian on one of his nightly scourings!

All these, however, were mere terrors of the night, phantoms of the mind that walk in darkness; and though he had seen many spectres in his time, and been more than once beset by Satan in divers shapes, in his lonely perambulations, yet daylight put an end to all these evils; and he would have passed a pleasant life of it, in despite of the Devil and all his works, if his path had not been crossed by a being that causes more perplexity to mortal man than ghosts, goblins, and the whole race of witches put together, and that was—a woman.

Among the musical disciples who assembled, one evening in each week, to receive his instructions in psalmody, was Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter and only child of a substantial Dutch farmer. She was a blooming lass of fresh eighteen; plump as a partridge; ripe and melting and rosy-cheeked as one of her father's peaches, and universally famed, not merely for her beauty, but her vast expectations. She was withal a little of a coquette, as might be perceived even in her dress, which was a mixture of ancient and modern fashions, as most suited to set off her charms. She wore the ornaments of pure yellow gold, which her great-great-grandmother had brought over from Saardam; the tempting stomacher of the olden time, and withal a provokingly short petticoat, to display the prettiest foot and ankle in the country round.

Ichabod Crane had a soft and foolish heart towards the sex; and it is not to be wondered at that so tempting a morsel soon found favor in his eyes, more especially after he had visited her in her paternal mansion. Old Baltus Van Tassel was a perfect picture of a thriving, contented, liberal-hearted farmer. He seldom, it is true, sent either his eyes or his thoughts beyond the boundaries of his own farm; but within those everything was snug, happy and well-conditioned. He was satisfied with his wealth, but not proud of it; and piqued himself upon the hearty abundance, rather than the style in which he lived. His stronghold was situated on the banks of the Hudson, in one of those green, sheltered, fertile nooks in which the Dutch farmers are so fond of nestling. A great elm tree spread its broad branches over it, at the foot of which bubbled up a spring of the softest and sweetest water, in a little well formed of a barrel; and then stole sparkling away through the grass, to a neighboring brook, that babbled along among alders and dwarf willows. Hard by the farmhouse was a vast barn, that might have served for a church; every window and crevice of which seemed bursting forth with the treasures of the farm; the flail was busily resounding within it from morning to night; swallows and martins skimmed twittering about the eaves; and rows of pigeons, some with one eye turned up, as if watching the weather, some with their heads under their wings or buried in their bosoms, and others swelling, and cooing, and bowing about their dames, were enjoying the sunshine on the roof. Sleek unwieldy porkers were grunting in the repose and abundance of their pens, from whence sallied forth, now and then, troops of sucking pigs, as if to snuff the air. A stately squadron of snowy geese were riding in an adjoining pond, convoying whole fleets of ducks; regiments of turkeys were gobbling through the farmyard, and Guinea fowls fretting about it, like ill-tempered housewives, with their peevish, discontented cry. Before the barn door strutted the gallant cock, that pattern of a husband, a warrior and a fine gentleman, clapping his burnished wings and crowing in the pride and gladness of his heart,—sometimes tearing up the earth with his feet, and then generously calling his ever-hungry family of wives and children to enjoy the rich morsel which he had discovered.

The pedagogue's mouth watered as he looked upon this sumptuous promise of luxurious winter fare. In his devouring mind's eye, he pictured to himself every roasting-pig running about with a pudding in his belly, and an apple in his mouth; the pigeons were snugly put to bed in a comfortable pie, and tucked in with a coverlet of crust; the geese were swimming in their own gravy; and the ducks pairing cosily in dishes, like snug married couples, with a decent competency of onion sauce. In the porkers he saw carved out the future sleek side of bacon, and juicy relishing ham; not a turkey but he beheld daintily trussed up, with its gizzard under its wing, and, peradventure, a necklace of savory sausages; and even bright chanticleer himself lay sprawling on his back, in a side dish, with uplifted claws, as if craving that quarter which his chivalrous spirit disdained to ask while living.

As the enraptured Ichabod fancied all this, and as he rolled his great green eyes over the fat meadow lands, the rich fields of wheat, of rye, of buckwheat, and Indian corn, and the orchards burdened with ruddy fruit, which surrounded the warm tenement of Van Tassel, his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these domains, and his imagination expanded with the idea, how they might be readily turned into cash, and the money invested in immense tracts of wild land, and shingle palaces in the wilderness. Nay, his busy fancy already realized his hopes, and presented to him the blooming Katrina, with a whole family of children,

mounted on the top of a wagon loaded with household trumpery, with pots and kettles dangling beneath; and he beheld himself bestriding a pacing mare, with a colt at her heels, setting out for Kentucky, Tennessee,—or the Lord knows where!

When he entered the house, the conquest of his heart was complete. It was one of those spacious farmhouses, with high-ridged but lowly sloping roofs, built in the style handed down from the first Dutch settlers; the low projecting eaves forming a piazza along the front, capable of being closed up in bad weather. Under this were hung flails, harness, various utensils of husbandry, and nets for fishing in the neighboring river. Benches were built along the sides for summer use; and a great spinning-wheel at one end, and a churn at the other, showed the various uses to which this important porch might be devoted. From this piazza the wondering Ichabod entered the hall, which formed the centre of the mansion, and the place of usual residence. Here rows of resplendent pewter, ranged on a long dresser, dazzled his eyes. In one corner stood a huge bag of wool, ready to be spun; in another, a quantity of linsey-woolsey just from the loom; ears of Indian corn, and strings of dried apples and peaches, hung in gay festoons along the walls, mingled with the gaud of red peppers; and a door left ajar gave him a peep into the best parlor, where the claw-footed chairs and dark mahogany tables shone like mirrors; andirons, with their accompanying shovel and tongs, glistened from their covert of asparagus tops; mock-oranges and conch-shells decorated the mantelpiece; strings of various-colored birds eggs were suspended above it; a great ostrich egg was hung from the centre of the room, and a corner cupboard, knowingly left open, displayed immense treasures of old silver and well-mended china.

From the moment Ichabod laid his eyes upon these regions of delight, the peace of his mind was at an end, and his only study was how to gain the affections of the peerless daughter of Van Tassel. In this enterprise, however, he had more real difficulties than generally fell to the lot of a knight-errant of yore, who seldom had anything but giants, enchanters, fiery dragons, and such like easily conquered adversaries, to contend with and had to make his way merely through gates of iron and brass, and walls of adamant to the castle keep, where the lady of his heart was confined; all which he achieved as easily as a man would carve his way to the centre of a Christmas pie; and then the lady gave him her hand as a matter of course. Ichabod, on the contrary, had to win his way to the heart of a country coquette, beset with a labyrinth of whims and caprices, which were forever presenting new difficulties and impediments; and he had to encounter a host of fearful adversaries of real flesh and blood, the numerous rustic admirers, who beset every portal to her heart, keeping a watchful and angry eye upon each other, but ready to fly out in the common cause against any new competitor.

Among these, the most formidable was a burly, roaring, roystering blade, of the name of Abraham, or, according to the Dutch abbreviation, Brom Van Brunt, the hero of the country round, which rang with his feats of strength and hardihood. He was broad-shouldered and double-jointed, with short curly black hair, and a bluff but not unpleasant countenance, having a mingled air of fun and arrogance. From his Herculean frame and great powers of limb he had received the nickname of BROM BONES, by which he was universally known. He was famed for great knowledge and skill in horsemanship, being as dexterous on horseback as a Tartar. He was foremost at all races and cock fights; and, with the ascendancy which bodily strength always acquires in rustic life, was the umpire in all disputes, setting his hat on one side, and giving his decisions with an air and tone that admitted of no gainsay or appeal. He was always ready for either a fight or a frolic; but had more mischief than ill-will in his composition; and with all his overbearing roughness, there was a strong dash of waggish good humor at bottom. He had three or four boon companions, who regarded him as their model, and at the head of whom he scoured the country, attending every scene of feud or merriment for miles round. In cold weather he was distinguished by a fur cap, surmounted with a flaunting fox's tail; and when the folks at a country gathering descried this well-known crest at a distance, whisking about among a squad of hard riders, they always stood by for a squall. Sometimes his crew would be heard dashing along past the farmhouses at midnight, with whoop and halloo, like a troop of Don Cossacks; and the old dames, startled out of their sleep, would listen for a moment till the hurry-scurry had clattered by, and then exclaim, "Ay, there goes Brom Bones and his gang!" The neighbors looked upon him with a mixture of awe, admiration, and good-will; and, when any madcap prank or rustic brawl occurred in the vicinity, always shook their heads, and warranted Brom Bones was at the bottom of it.

This rantipole hero had for some time singled out the blooming Katrina for the object of his uncouth gallantries, and though his amorous toyings were something like the gentle caresses and endearments of a bear, yet it was whispered that she did not altogether discourage his hopes. Certain it is, his advances were signals for rival candidates to retire, who felt no inclination to cross a lion in his amours; insomuch, that when his horse was seen tied to Van Tassel's paling, on a Sunday night, a sure sign that his master was courting, or, as it is termed, "sparking," within, all other suitors passed by in despair, and carried the war into other quarters.

Such was the formidable rival with whom Ichabod Crane had to contend, and, considering all things, a stouter man than he would have shrunk from the competition, and a wiser man would have despaired. He had, however, a happy mixture of pliability and perseverance in his nature; he was in form and spirit like a supple-jack—yielding, but tough; though he bent, he never broke; and though he bowed beneath the slightest pressure, yet, the moment it was away—jerk!—he was as erect, and carried his head as high as ever.

To have taken the field openly against his rival would have been madness; for he was not a man to be thwarted in his amours, any more than that stormy lover, Achilles. Ichabod, therefore, made his advances in a quiet and gently insinuating manner. Under cover of his character of singing-master, he made frequent visits at the farmhouse; not that he had anything to apprehend from the meddlesome interference of parents, which is so often a stumbling-block in the path of lovers. Balt Van Tassel was an easy indulgent soul; he loved his daughter better even than his pipe, and, like a reasonable man and an excellent father, let her have her way in everything. His notable little wife, too, had enough to do to attend to her housekeeping and manage her poultry; for, as she sagely observed, ducks and geese are foolish things, and must be looked after, but girls can take care of themselves. Thus, while the busy dame bustled about the house, or plied her spinning-wheel at one end of the piazza, honest Balt would sit smoking his evening pipe at the other, watching the achievements of a little wooden warrior, who, armed with a sword in each hand, was most valiantly fighting the wind on the pinnacle of the barn. In the mean time, Ichabod would carry on his suit with the daughter by the side of the spring under the great elm, or sauntering along in the twilight, that hour so favorable to the lover's eloquence.

I profess not to know how women's hearts are wooed and won. To me they have always been matters of riddle and admiration. Some seem to have but one vulnerable point, or door of access; while others have a thousand avenues, and may be captured in a thousand different ways. It is a great triumph of skill to gain the former, but a still greater proof of generalship to maintain possession of the latter, for man must battle for his fortress at every door and window. He who wins a thousand common hearts is therefore entitled to some renown; but he who keeps undisputed sway over the heart of a coquette is indeed a hero. Certain it is, this was not the case with the redoubtable Brom Bones; and from the moment Ichabod Crane made his advances, the interests of the former evidently declined: his horse was no longer seen tied to the palings on Sunday nights, and a deadly feud gradually arose between him and the preceptor of Sleepy Hollow.

Brom, who had a degree of rough chivalry in his nature, would fain have carried matters to open warfare and have settled their pretensions to the lady, according to the mode of those most concise and simple reasoners, the knights-errant of yore,—by single combat; but Ichabod was too conscious of the superior might of his adversary to enter the lists against him; he had overheard a boast of Bones, that he would "double the schoolmaster up, and lay him on a shelf of his own schoolhouse;" and he was too wary to give him an opportunity. There was something extremely provoking in this obstinately pacific system; it left Brom no alternative but to draw upon the funds of rustic waggery in his disposition, and to play off boorish practical jokes upon his rival. Ichabod became the object of whimsical persecution to Bones and his gang of rough riders. They harried his hitherto peaceful domains; smoked out his singing school by stopping up the chimney; broke into the schoolhouse at night, in spite of its formidable fastenings of withe and window stakes, and turned everything topsy-turvy, so that the poor schoolmaster began to think all the witches in the country held their meetings there. But what was still more annoying, Brom took all opportunities of turning him into ridicule in presence of his mistress, and had a scoundrel dog whom he taught to whine in the most ludicrous manner, and introduced as a rival of Ichabod's, to instruct her in psalmody.

In this way matters went on for some time, without producing any material effect on the relative situations of the contending powers. On a fine autumnal afternoon, Ichabod, in pensive mood, sat enthroned on the lofty stool from whence he usually watched all the concerns of his little literary realm. In his hand he swayed a ferule, that sceptre of despotic power; the birch of justice reposed on three nails behind the throne, a constant terror to evil doers, while on the desk before him might be seen sundry contraband articles and prohibited weapons, detected upon the persons of idle urchins, such as half-munched apples, popguns, whirligigs, fly-cages, and whole legions of rampant little paper gamecocks. Apparently there had been some appalling act of justice recently inflicted, for his scholars were all busily intent upon their books, or slyly whispering behind them with one eye kept upon the master; and a kind of buzzing stillness reigned throughout the schoolroom. It was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a negro in tow-cloth jacket and trowsers, a round-crowned fragment of a hat, like the cap of Mercury, and mounted on the back of a ragged, wild, half-broken colt, which he managed with a rope by way of halter. He came clattering up to the school door with an invitation to Ichabod to attend a merry-making or "quilting frolic," to be held that evening at Mynheer Van Tassel's; and having

delivered his message with that air of importance, and effort at fine language, which a negro is apt to display on petty embassies of the kind, he dashed over the brook, and was seen scampering away up the hollow, full of the importance and hurry of his mission.

All was now bustle and hubbub in the late quiet schoolroom. The scholars were hurried through their lessons without stopping at trifles; those who were nimble skipped over half with impunity, and those who were tardy had a smart application now and then in the rear, to quicken their speed or help them over a tall word. Books were flung aside without being put away on the shelves, inkstands were overturned, benches thrown down, and the whole school was turned loose an hour before the usual time, bursting forth like a legion of young imps, yelping and racketing about the green in joy at their early emancipation.

The gallant Ichabod now spent at least an extra half hour at his toilet, brushing and furbishing up his best, and indeed only suit of rusty black, and arranging his locks by a bit of broken looking-glass that hung up in the schoolhouse. That he might make his appearance before his mistress in the true style of a cavalier, he borrowed a horse from the farmer with whom he was domiciliated, a choleric old Dutchman of the name of Hans Van Ripper, and, thus gallantly mounted, issued forth like a knight-errant in quest of adventures. But it is meet I should, in the true spirit of romantic story, give some account of the looks and equipments of my hero and his steed. The animal he bestrode was a broken-down plow-horse, that had outlived almost everything but its viciousness. He was gaunt and shagged, with a ewe neck, and a head like a hammer; his rusty mane and tail were tangled and knotted with burs; one eye had lost its pupil, and was glaring and spectral, but the other had the gleam of a genuine devil in it. Still he must have had fire and mettle in his day, if we may judge from the name he bore of Gunpowder. He had, in fact, been a favorite steed of his master's, the choleric Van Ripper, who was a furious rider, and had infused, very probably, some of his own spirit into the animal; for, old and broken-down as he looked, there was more of the lurking devil in him than in any young filly in the country.

Ichabod was a suitable figure for such a steed. He rode with short stirrups, which brought his knees nearly up to the pommel of the saddle; his sharp elbows stuck out like grasshoppers'; he carried his whip perpendicularly in his hand, like a sceptre, and as his horse jogged on, the motion of his arms was not unlike the flapping of a pair of wings. A small wool hat rested on the top of his nose, for so his scanty strip of forehead might be called, and the skirts of his black coat fluttered out almost to the horses tail. Such was the appearance of Ichabod and his steed as they shambled out of the gate of Hans Van Ripper, and it was altogether such an apparition as is seldom to be met with in broad daylight.

It was, as I have said, a fine autumnal day; the sky was clear and serene, and nature wore that rich and golden livery which we always associate with the idea of abundance. The forests had put on their sober brown and yellow, while some trees of the tenderer kind had been nipped by the frosts into brilliant dyes of orange, purple, and scarlet. Streaming files of wild ducks began to make their appearance high in the air; the bark of the squirrel might be heard from the groves of beech and hickory-nuts, and the pensive whistle of the quail at intervals from the neighboring stubble field.

The small birds were taking their farewell banquets. In the fullness of their revelry, they fluttered, chirping and frolicking from bush to bush, and tree to tree, capricious from the very profusion and variety around them. There was the honest cock robin, the favorite game of stripling sportsmen, with its loud querulous note; and the twittering blackbirds flying in sable clouds; and the golden-winged woodpecker with his crimson crest, his broad black gorget, and splendid plumage; and the cedar bird, with its red-tipt wings and yellow-tipt tail and its little monteiro cap of feathers; and the blue jay, that noisy coxcomb, in his gay light blue coat and white underclothes, screaming and chattering, nodding and bobbing and bowing, and pretending to be on good terms with every songster of the grove.

As Ichabod jogged slowly on his way, his eye, ever open to every symptom of culinary abundance, ranged with delight over the treasures of jolly autumn. On all sides he beheld vast store of apples; some hanging in oppressive opulence on the trees; some gathered into baskets and barrels for the market; others heaped up in rich piles for the cider-press. Farther on he beheld great fields of Indian corn, with its golden ears peeping from their leafy coverts, and holding out the promise of cakes and hasty-pudding; and the yellow pumpkins lying beneath them, turning up their fair round bellies to the sun, and giving ample prospects of the most luxurious of pies; and anon he passed the fragrant buckwheat fields breathing the odor of the beehive, and as he beheld them, soft anticipations stole over his mind of dainty slapjacks, well buttered, and garnished with honey or treacle, by the delicate little dimpled hand of Katrina Van Tassel.

Thus feeding his mind with many sweet thoughts and "sugared suppositions," he journeyed along the sides of a range of hills which look out upon some of the goodliest scenes of the mighty Hudson. The sun gradually wheeled his broad disk down in the west. The wide bosom of the Tappan Zee lay motionless and glassy, excepting that here and there a gentle undulation waved and

prolonged the blue shadow of the distant mountain. A few amber clouds floated in the sky, without a breath of air to move them. The horizon was of a fine golden tint, changing gradually into a pure apple green, and from that into the deep blue of the mid-heaven. A slanting ray lingered on the woody crests of the precipices that overhung some parts of the river, giving greater depth to the dark gray and purple of their rocky sides. A sloop was loitering in the distance, dropping slowly down with the tide, her sail hanging uselessly against the mast; and as the reflection of the sky gleamed along the still water, it seemed as if the vessel was suspended in the air.

It was toward evening that Ichabod arrived at the castle of the Heer Van Tassel, which he found thronged with the pride and flower of the adjacent country. Old farmers, a spare leathern-faced race, in homespun coats and breeches, blue stockings, huge shoes, and magnificent pewter buckles. Their brisk, withered little dames, in close-crimped caps, long-waisted short gowns, homespun petticoats, with scissors and pincushions, and gay calico pockets hanging on the outside. Buxom lasses, almost as antiquated as their mothers, excepting where a straw hat, a fine ribbon, or perhaps a white frock, gave symptoms of city innovation. The sons, in short square-skirted coats, with rows of stupendous brass buttons, and their hair generally queued in the fashion of the times, especially if they could procure an eel-skin for the purpose, it being esteemed throughout the country as a potent nourisher and strengthener of the hair.

Brom Bones, however, was the hero of the scene, having come to the gathering on his favorite steed Daredevil, a creature, like himself, full of mettle and mischief, and which no one but himself could manage. He was, in fact, noted for preferring vicious animals, given to all kinds of tricks which kept the rider in constant risk of his neck, for he held a tractable, well-broken horse as unworthy of a lad of spirit.

Fain would I pause to dwell upon the world of charms that burst upon the enraptured gaze of my hero, as he entered the state parlor of Van Tassel's mansion. Not those of the bevy of buxom lasses, with their luxurious display of red and white; but the ample charms of a genuine Dutch country tea-table, in the sumptuous time of autumn. Such heaped up platters of cakes of various and almost indescribable kinds, known only to experienced Dutch housewives! There was the doughty doughnut, the tender oly koek, and the crisp and crumbling cruller; sweet cakes and short cakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes, and the whole family of cakes. And then there were apple pies, and peach pies, and pumpkin pies; besides slices of ham and smoked beef; and moreover delectable dishes of preserved plums, and peaches, and pears, and quinces; not to mention broiled shad and roasted chickens; together with bowls of milk and cream, all mingled higgledy-piggledy, pretty much as I have enumerated them, with the motherly teapot sending up its clouds of vapor from the midst—Heaven bless the mark! I want breath and time to discuss this banquet as it deserves, and am too eager to get on with my story. Happily, Ichabod Crane was not in so great a hurry as his historian, but did ample justice to every dainty.

He was a kind and thankful creature, whose heart dilated in proportion as his skin was filled with good cheer, and whose spirits rose with eating, as some men's do with drink. He could not help, too, rolling his large eyes round him as he ate, and chuckling with the possibility that he might one day be lord of all this scene of almost unimaginable luxury and splendor. Then, he thought, how soon he'd turn his back upon the old schoolhouse; snap his fingers in the face of Hans Van Ripper, and every other niggardly patron, and kick any itinerant pedagogue out of doors that should dare to call him comrade!

Old Baltus Van Tassel moved about among his guests with a face dilated with content and good humor, round and jolly as the harvest moon. His hospitable attentions were brief, but expressive, being confined to a shake of the hand, a slap on the shoulder, a loud laugh, and a pressing invitation to "fall to, and help themselves."

And now the sound of the music from the common room, or hall, summoned to the dance. The musician was an old gray-headed negro, who had been the itinerant orchestra of the neighborhood for more than half a century. His instrument was as old and battered as himself. The greater part of the time he scraped on two or three strings, accompanying every movement of the bow with a motion of the head; bowing almost to the ground, and stamping with his foot whenever a fresh couple were to start.

Ichabod prided himself upon his dancing as much as upon his vocal powers. Not a limb, not a fibre about him was idle; and to have seen his loosely hung frame in full motion, and clattering about the room, you would have thought St. Vitus himself, that blessed patron of the dance, was figuring before you in person. He was the admiration of all the negroes; who, having gathered, of all ages and sizes, from the farm and the neighborhood, stood forming a pyramid of shining black faces at every door and window, gazing with delight at the scene, rolling their white eyeballs, and showing grinning rows of ivory from ear to ear. How could the flogger of

urchins be otherwise than animated and joyous? The lady of his heart was his partner in the dance, and smiling graciously in reply to all his amorous oglings; while Brom Bones, sorely smitten with love and jealousy, sat brooding by himself in one corner.

When the dance was at an end, Ichabod was attracted to a knot of the sager folks, who, with Old Van Tassel, sat smoking at one end of the piazza, gossiping over former times, and drawing out long stories about the war.

This neighborhood, at the time of which I am speaking, was one of those highly favored places which abound with chronicle and great men. The British and American line had run near it during the war; it had, therefore, been the scene of marauding and infested with refugees, cowboys, and all kinds of border chivalry. Just sufficient time had elapsed to enable each storyteller to dress up his tale with a little becoming fiction, and, in the indistinctness of his recollection, to make himself the hero of every exploit.

There was the story of Doffue Martling, a large blue-bearded Dutchman, who had nearly taken a British frigate with an old iron nine-pounder from a mud breastwork, only that his gun burst at the sixth discharge. And there was an old gentleman who shall be nameless, being too rich a mynheer to be lightly mentioned, who, in the battle of White Plains, being an excellent master of defence, parried a musket-ball with a small sword, insomuch that he absolutely felt it whiz round the blade, and glance off at the hilt; in proof of which he was ready at any time to show the sword, with the hilt a little bent. There were several more that had been equally great in the field, not one of whom but was persuaded that he had a considerable hand in bringing the war to a happy termination.

But all these were nothing to the tales of ghosts and apparitions that succeeded. The neighborhood is rich in legendary treasures of the kind. Local tales and superstitions thrive best in these sheltered, long-settled retreats; but are trampled under foot by the shifting throng that forms the population of most of our country places. Besides, there is no encouragement for ghosts in most of our villages, for they have scarcely had time to finish their first nap and turn themselves in their graves, before their surviving friends have travelled away from the neighborhood; so that when they turn out at night to walk their rounds, they have no acquaintance left to call upon. This is perhaps the reason why we so seldom hear of ghosts except in our long-established Dutch communities.

The immediate cause, however, of the prevalence of supernatural stories in these parts, was doubtless owing to the vicinity of Sleepy Hollow. There was a contagion in the very air that blew from that haunted region; it breathed forth an atmosphere of dreams and fancies infecting all the land. Several of the Sleepy Hollow people were present at Van Tassel's, and, as usual, were doling out their wild and wonderful legends. Many dismal tales were told about funeral trains, and mourning cries and wailings heard and seen about the great tree where the unfortunate Major André was taken, and which stood in the neighborhood. Some mention was made also of the woman in white, that haunted the dark glen at Raven Rock, and was often heard to shriek on winter nights before a storm, having perished there in the snow. The chief part of the stories, however, turned upon the favorite spectre of Sleepy Hollow, the Headless Horseman, who had been heard several times of late, patrolling the country; and, it was said, tethered his horse nightly among the graves in the churchyard.

The sequestered situation of this church seems always to have made it a favorite haunt of troubled spirits. It stands on a knoll, surrounded by locust-trees and lofty elms, from among which its decent, whitewashed walls shine modestly forth, like Christian purity beaming through the shades of retirement. A gentle slope descends from it to a silver sheet of water, bordered by high trees, between which, peeps may be caught at the blue hills of the Hudson. To look upon its grass-grown yard, where the sunbeams seem to sleep so quietly, one would think that there at least the dead might rest in peace. On one side of the church extends a wide woody dell, along which raves a large brook among broken rocks and trunks of fallen trees. Over a deep black part of the stream, not far from the church, was formerly thrown a wooden bridge; the road that led to it, and the bridge itself, were thickly shaded by overhanging trees, which cast a gloom about it, even in the daytime; but occasioned a fearful darkness at night. Such was one of the favorite haunts of the Headless Horseman, and the place where he was most frequently encountered. The tale was told of old Brouwer, a most heretical disbeliever in ghosts, how he met the Horseman returning from his foray into Sleepy Hollow, and was obliged to get up behind him; how they galloped over bush and brake, over hill and swamp, until they reached the bridge; when the Horseman suddenly turned into a skeleton, threw old Brouwer into the brook, and sprang away over the tree-tops with a clap of thunder.

This story was immediately matched by a thrice marvellous adventure of Brom Bones, who made light of the Galloping Hessian as an arrant jockey. He affirmed that on returning one night from the neighboring village of Sing Sing, he had been overtaken by this midnight trooper; that he had offered to race with him for a bowl of punch, and should have won it too, for Daredevil beat the goblin horse all hollow, but just as they came to the church bridge, the Hessian bolted, and vanished in a flash of fire.

All these tales, told in that drowsy undertone with which men talk in the dark, the countenances of the listeners only now and then receiving a casual gleam from the glare of a pipe, sank deep in the mind of Ichabod. He repaid them in kind with large extracts from his invaluable author, Cotton Mather, and added many marvellous events that had taken place in his native State of Connecticut, and fearful sights which he had seen in his nightly walks about Sleepy Hollow.

The revel now gradually broke up. The old farmers gathered together their families in their wagons, and were heard for some time rattling along the hollow roads, and over the distant hills. Some of the damsels mounted on pillions behind their favorite swains, and their light-hearted laughter, mingling with the clatter of hoofs, echoed along the silent woodlands, sounding fainter and fainter, until they gradually died away,—and the late scene of noise and frolic was all silent and deserted. Ichabod only lingered behind, according to the custom of country lovers, to have a tête-à-tête with the heiress; fully convinced that he was now on the high road to success. What passed at this interview I will not pretend to say, for in fact I do not know. Something, however, I fear me, must have gone wrong, for he certainly sallied forth, after no very great interval, with an air quite desolate and chapfallen. Oh, these women! these women! Could that girl have been playing off any of her coquettish tricks? Was her encouragement of the poor pedagogue all a mere sham to secure her conquest of his rival? Heaven only knows, not I! Let it suffice to say, Ichabod stole forth with the air of one who had been sacking a henroost, rather than a fair lady's heart. Without looking to the right or left to notice the scene of rural wealth, on which he had so often gloated, he went straight to the stable, and with several hearty cuffs and kicks roused his steed most uncourteously from the comfortable quarters in which he was soundly sleeping, dreaming of mountains of corn and oats, and whole valleys of timothy and clover.

It was the very witching time of night that Ichabod, heavy-hearted and crestfallen, pursued his travels homewards, along the sides of the lofty hills which rise above Tarry Town, and which he had traversed so cheerily in the afternoon. The hour was as dismal as himself. Far below him the Tappan Zee spread its dusky and indistinct waste of waters, with here and there the tall mast of a sloop, riding quietly at anchor under the land. In the dead hush of midnight, he could even hear the barking of the watchdog from the opposite shore of the Hudson; but it was so vague and faint as only to give an idea of his distance from this faithful companion of man. Now and then, too, the long-drawn crowing of a cock, accidentally awakened, would sound far, far off, from some farmhouse away among the hills—but it was like a dreaming sound in his ear. No signs of life occurred near him, but occasionally the melancholy chirp of a cricket, or perhaps the guttural twang of a bullfrog from a neighboring marsh, as if sleeping uncomfortably and turning suddenly in his bed.

All the stories of ghosts and goblins that he had heard in the afternoon now came crowding upon his recollection. The night grew darker and darker; the stars seemed to sink deeper in the sky, and driving clouds occasionally hid them from his sight. He had never felt so lonely and dismal. He was, moreover, approaching the very place where many of the scenes of the ghost stories had been laid. In the centre of the road stood an enormous tulip-tree, which towered like a giant above all the other trees of the neighborhood, and formed a kind of landmark. Its limbs were gnarled and fantastic, large enough to form trunks for ordinary trees, twisting down almost to the earth, and rising again into the air. It was connected with the tragical story of the unfortunate André, who had been taken prisoner hard by; and was universally known by the name of Major André's tree. The common people regarded it with a mixture of respect and superstition, partly out of sympathy for the fate of its ill-starred namesake, and partly from the tales of strange sights, and doleful lamentations, told concerning it.

As Ichabod approached this fearful tree, he began to whistle; he thought his whistle was answered; it was but a blast sweeping sharply through the dry branches. As he approached a little nearer, he thought he saw something white, hanging in the midst of the tree: he paused and ceased whistling but, on looking more narrowly, perceived that it was a place where the tree had been scathed by lightning, and the white wood laid bare. Suddenly he heard a groan—his teeth chattered, and his knees smote against the saddle: it was but the rubbing of one huge bough upon another, as they were swayed about by the breeze. He passed the tree in safety, but new perils lay before him.

About two hundred yards from the tree, a small brook crossed the road, and ran into a marshy and thickly-wooded glen, known by the name of Wiley's Swamp. A few rough logs, laid side by side, served for a bridge over this stream. On that side of the road where the brook entered the wood, a group of oaks and chestnuts, matted thick with wild grape-vines, threw a cavernous gloom over it. To pass this bridge was the severest trial. It was at this identical spot that the unfortunate André was captured, and under the covert of those chestnuts and vines were the sturdy yeomen concealed who surprised him. This has ever since been considered a haunted stream, and fearful are the feelings of the schoolboy who has to pass it alone after dark.

As he approached the stream, his heart began to thump; he summoned up, however, all his resolution, gave his horse half a score of kicks in the ribs, and attempted to dash briskly across the bridge; but instead of starting forward, the perverse old animal made a lateral movement, and ran broadside against the fence. Ichabod, whose fears increased with the delay, jerked the reins on the other side, and kicked lustily with the contrary foot: it was all in vain; his steed started, it is true, but it was only to plunge to the opposite side of the road into a thicket of brambles and alder bushes. The schoolmaster now bestowed both whip and heel upon the starveling ribs of old Gunpowder, who dashed forward, snuffling and snorting, but came to a stand just by the bridge, with a suddenness that had nearly sent his rider sprawling over his head. Just at this moment a plashy tramp by the side of the bridge caught the sensitive ear of Ichabod. In the dark shadow of the grove, on the margin of the brook, he beheld something huge, misshapen and towering. It stirred not, but seemed gathered up in the gloom, like some gigantic monster ready to spring upon the traveller.

The hair of the affrighted pedagogue rose upon his head with terror. What was to be done? To turn and fly was now too late; and besides, what chance was there of escaping ghost or goblin, if such it was, which could ride upon the wings of the wind? Summoning up, therefore, a show of courage, he demanded in stammering accents, “Who are you?” He received no reply. He repeated his demand in a still more agitated voice. Still there was no answer. Once more he cudgelled the sides of the inflexible Gunpowder, and, shutting his eyes, broke forth with involuntary fervor into a psalm tune. Just then the shadowy object of alarm put itself in motion, and with a scramble and a bound stood at once in the middle of the road. Though the night was dark and dismal, yet the form of the unknown might now in some degree be ascertained. He appeared to be a horseman of large dimensions, and mounted on a black horse of powerful frame. He made no offer of molestation or sociability, but kept aloof on one side of the road, jogging along on the blind side of old Gunpowder, who had now got over his fright and waywardness.

Ichabod, who had no relish for this strange midnight companion, and bethought himself of the adventure of Brom Bones with the Galloping Hessian, now quickened his steed in hopes of leaving him behind. The stranger, however, quickened his horse to an equal pace. Ichabod pulled up, and fell into a walk, thinking to lag behind,—the other did the same. His heart began to sink within him; he endeavored to resume his psalm tune, but his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he could not utter a stave. There was something in the moody and dogged silence of this pertinacious companion that was mysterious and appalling. It was soon fearfully accounted for. On mounting a rising ground, which brought the figure of his fellow-traveller in relief against the sky, gigantic in height, and muffled in a cloak, Ichabod was horror-struck on perceiving that he was headless!—but his horror was still more increased on observing that the head, which should have rested on his shoulders, was carried before him on the pommel of his saddle! His terror rose to desperation; he rained a shower of kicks and blows upon Gunpowder, hoping by a sudden movement to give his companion the slip; but the spectre started full jump with him. Away, then, they dashed through thick and thin; stones flying and sparks flashing at every bound. Ichabod’s flimsy garments fluttered in the air, as he stretched his long lank body away over his horse’s head, in the eagerness of his flight.

They had now reached the road which turns off to Sleepy Hollow; but Gunpowder, who seemed possessed with a demon, instead of keeping up it, made an opposite turn, and plunged headlong downhill to the left. This road leads through a sandy hollow shaded by trees for about a quarter of a mile, where it crosses the bridge famous in goblin story; and just beyond swells the green knoll on which stands the whitewashed church.

As yet the panic of the steed had given his unskilful rider an apparent advantage in the chase, but just as he had got half way through the hollow, the girths of the saddle gave way, and he felt it slipping from under him. He seized it by the pommel, and endeavored to hold it firm, but in vain; and had just time to save himself by clasping old Gunpowder round the neck, when the saddle fell to the earth, and he heard it trampled under foot by his pursuer. For a moment the terror of Hans Van Ripper’s wrath passed across his mind,—for it was his Sunday saddle; but this was no time for petty fears; the goblin was hard on his haunches; and (unskilful rider that he was!) he had much ado to maintain his seat; sometimes slipping on one side, sometimes on another, and sometimes jolted on the high ridge of his horse’s backbone, with a violence that he verily feared would cleave him asunder.

An opening in the trees now cheered him with the hopes that the church bridge was at hand. The wavering reflection of a silver star in the bosom of the brook told him that he was not mistaken. He saw the walls of the church dimly glaring under the trees beyond. He recollected the place where Brom Bones’s ghostly competitor had disappeared. “If I can but reach that bridge,” thought Ichabod, “I am safe.” Just then he heard the black steed panting and blowing close behind him; he even fancied that he felt his hot breath. Another convulsive kick in the ribs, and old Gunpowder sprang upon the bridge; he thundered over the resounding planks; he gained the opposite side; and now Ichabod cast a look behind to see if his pursuer should vanish, according to rule, in a flash of

fire and brimstone. Just then he saw the goblin rising in his stirrups, and in the very act of hurling his head at him. Ichabod endeavored to dodge the horrible missile, but too late. It encountered his cranium with a tremendous crash,—he was tumbled headlong into the dust, and Gunpowder, the black steed, and the goblin rider, passed by like a whirlwind.

The next morning the old horse was found without his saddle, and with the bridle under his feet, soberly cropping the grass at his master's gate. Ichabod did not make his appearance at breakfast; dinner-hour came, but no Ichabod. The boys assembled at the schoolhouse, and strolled idly about the banks of the brook; but no schoolmaster. Hans Van Ripper now began to feel some uneasiness about the fate of poor Ichabod, and his saddle. An inquiry was set on foot, and after diligent investigation they came upon his traces. In one part of the road leading to the church was found the saddle trampled in the dirt; the tracks of horses' hoofs deeply dented in the road, and evidently at furious speed, were traced to the bridge, beyond which, on the bank of a broad part of the brook, where the water ran deep and black, was found the hat of the unfortunate Ichabod, and close beside it a shattered pumpkin.

The brook was searched, but the body of the schoolmaster was not to be discovered. Hans Van Ripper as executor of his estate, examined the bundle which contained all his worldly effects. They consisted of two shirts and a half; two stocks for the neck; a pair or two of worsted stockings; an old pair of corduroy small-clothes; a rusty razor; a book of psalm tunes full of dog's-ears; and a broken pitch-pipe. As to the books and furniture of the schoolhouse, they belonged to the community, excepting Cotton Mather's "History of Witchcraft," a "New England Almanac," and a book of dreams and fortune-telling; in which last was a sheet of foolscap much scribbled and blotted in several fruitless attempts to make a copy of verses in honor of the heiress of Van Tassel. These magic books and the poetic scrawl were forthwith consigned to the flames by Hans Van Ripper; who, from that time forward, determined to send his children no more to school, observing that he never knew any good come of this same reading and writing. Whatever money the schoolmaster possessed, and he had received his quarter's pay but a day or two before, he must have had about his person at the time of his disappearance.

The mysterious event caused much speculation at the church on the following Sunday. Knots of gazers and gossips were collected in the churchyard, at the bridge, and at the spot where the hat and pumpkin had been found. The stories of Brouwer, of Bones, and a whole budget of others were called to mind; and when they had diligently considered them all, and compared them with the symptoms of the present case, they shook their heads, and came to the conclusion that Ichabod had been carried off by the Galloping Hessian. As he was a bachelor, and in nobody's debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him; the school was removed to a different quarter of the hollow, and another pedagogue reigned in his stead.

It is true, an old farmer, who had been down to New York on a visit several years after, and from whom this account of the ghostly adventure was received, brought home the intelligence that Ichabod Crane was still alive; that he had left the neighborhood partly through fear of the goblin and Hans Van Ripper, and partly in mortification at having been suddenly dismissed by the heiress; that he had changed his quarters to a distant part of the country; had kept school and studied law at the same time; had been admitted to the bar; turned politician; electioneered; written for the newspapers; and finally had been made a justice of the Ten Pound Court. Brom Bones, too, who, shortly after his rival's disappearance conducted the blooming Katrina in triumph to the altar, was observed to look exceedingly knowing whenever the story of Ichabod was related, and always burst into a hearty laugh at the mention of the pumpkin; which led some to suspect that he knew more about the matter than he chose to tell.

The old country wives, however, who are the best judges of these matters, maintain to this day that Ichabod was spirited away by supernatural means; and it is a favorite story often told about the neighborhood round the winter evening fire. The bridge became more than ever an object of superstitious awe; and that may be the reason why the road has been altered of late years, so as to approach the church by the border of the millpond. The schoolhouse being deserted soon fell to decay, and was reported to be haunted by the ghost of the unfortunate pedagogue and the plowboy, loitering homeward of a still summer evening, has often fancied his voice at a distance, chanting a melancholy psalm tune among the tranquil solitudes of Sleepy Hollow.

Postscript. Found in the Handwriting of Mr. Knickerbocker.

The preceding tale is given almost in the precise words in which I heard it related at a Corporation meeting at the ancient city of Manhattoes, at which were present many of its sagest and most illustrious burghers. The narrator was a pleasant, shabby, gentlemanly old fellow, in pepper-and-salt clothes, with a sadly humourous face, and one whom I strongly suspected of being poor--he made such efforts to be entertaining. When his story was concluded, there was much laughter and approbation, particularly from two or three deputy aldermen, who had been asleep the greater part of the time. There was, however, one tall, dry-looking old

gentleman, with beetling eyebrows, who maintained a grave and rather severe face throughout, now and then folding his arms, inclining his head, and looking down upon the floor, as if turning a doubt over in his mind. He was one of your wary men, who never laugh but upon good grounds--when they have reason and law on their side. When the mirth of the rest of the company had subsided, and silence was restored, he leaned one arm on the elbow of his chair, and sticking the other akimbo, demanded, with a slight, but exceedingly sage motion of the head, and contraction of the brow, what was the moral of the story, and what it went to prove?

The story-teller, who was just putting a glass of wine to his lips, as a refreshment after his toils, paused for a moment, looked at his inquirer with an air of infinite deference, and, lowering the glass slowly to the table, observed that the story was intended most logically to prove--

“That there is no situation in life but has its advantages and pleasures--provided we will but take a joke as we find it:

“That, therefore, he that runs races with goblin troopers is likely to have rough riding of it.

“Ergo, for a country schoolmaster to be refused the hand of a Dutch heiress is a certain step to high preferment in the state.”

The cautious old gentleman knit his brows tenfold closer after this explanation, being sorely puzzled by the ratiocination of the syllogism, while, methought, the one in pepper-and-salt eyed him with something of a triumphant leer. At length he observed that all this was very well, but still he thought the story a little on the extravagant--there were one or two points on which he had his doubts.

“Faith, sir,” replied the story-teller, “as to that matter, I don’t believe one-half of it myself.” D. K.

THE END.

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5.6: Melville, Herman. "Bartleby, The Scrivener" (1853)

I am a rather elderly man. The nature of my avocations for the last thirty years has brought me into more than ordinary contact with what would seem an interesting and somewhat singular set of men, of whom as yet nothing that I know of has ever been written:—I mean the law-copyists or scriveners. I have known very many of them, professionally and privately, and if I pleased, could relate divers histories, at which good-natured gentlemen might smile, and sentimental souls might weep. But I waive the biographies of all other scriveners for a few passages in the life of Bartleby, who was a scrivener of the strangest I ever saw or heard of. While of other law-copyists I might write the complete life, of Bartleby nothing of that sort can be done. I believe that no materials exist for a full and satisfactory biography of this man. It is an irreparable loss to literature. Bartleby was one of those beings of whom nothing is ascertainable, except from the original sources, and in his case those are very small. What my own astonished eyes saw of Bartleby, *that* is all I know of him, except, indeed, one vague report which will appear in the sequel.

Ere introducing the scrivener, as he first appeared to me, it is fit I make some mention of myself, my *employees*, my business, my chambers, and general surroundings; because some such description is indispensable to an adequate understanding of the chief character about to be presented.

Imprimis: I am a man who, from his youth upwards, has been filled with a profound conviction that the easiest way of life is the best. Hence, though I belong to a profession proverbially energetic and nervous, even to turbulence, at times, yet nothing of that sort have I ever suffered to invade my peace. I am one of those unambitious lawyers who never addresses a jury, or in any way draws down public applause; but in the cool tranquility of a snug retreat, do a snug business among rich men's bonds and mortgages and title-deeds. All who know me, consider me an eminently *safe* man. The late John Jacob Astor, a personage little given to poetic enthusiasm, had no hesitation in pronouncing my first grand point to be prudence; my next, method. I do not speak it in vanity, but simply record the fact, that I was not unemployed in my profession by the late John Jacob Astor; a name which, I admit, I love to repeat, for it hath a rounded and orbicular sound to it, and rings like unto bullion. I will freely add, that I was not insensible to the late John Jacob Astor's good opinion.

Some time prior to the period at which this little history begins, my avocations had been largely increased. The good old office, now extinct in the State of New York, of a Master in Chancery, had been conferred upon me. It was not a very arduous office, but very pleasantly remunerative. I seldom lose my temper; much more seldom indulge in dangerous indignation at wrongs and outrages; but I must be permitted to be rash here and declare, that I consider the sudden and violent abrogation of the office of Master in Chancery, by the new Constitution, as a—premature act; inasmuch as I had counted upon a life-lease of the profits, whereas I only received those of a few short years. But this is by the way.

My chambers were up stairs at No.—Wall-street. At one end they looked upon the white wall of the interior of a spacious sky-light shaft, penetrating the building from top to bottom. This view might have been considered rather tame than otherwise, deficient in what landscape painters call "life." But if so, the view from the other end of my chambers offered, at least, a contrast, if nothing more. In that direction my windows commanded an unobstructed view of a lofty brick wall, black by age and everlasting shade; which wall required no spy-glass to bring out its lurking beauties, but for the benefit of all near-sighted spectators, was pushed up to within ten feet of my window panes. Owing to the great height of the surrounding buildings, and my chambers being on the second floor, the interval between this wall and mine not a little resembled a huge square cistern.

At the period just preceding the advent of Bartleby, I had two persons as copyists in my employment, and a promising lad as an office-boy. First, Turkey; second, Nippers; third, Ginger Nut. These may seem names, the like of which are not usually found in the Directory. In truth they were nicknames, mutually conferred upon each other by my three clerks, and were deemed expressive of their respective persons or characters. Turkey was a short, pursy Englishman of about my own age, that is, somewhere not far from sixty. In the morning, one might say, his face was of a fine florid hue, but after twelve o'clock, meridian—his dinner hour—it blazed like a grate full of Christmas coals; and continued blazing—but, as it were, with a gradual wane—till 6 o'clock, P.M. or thereabouts, after which I saw no more of the proprietor of the face, which gaining its meridian with the sun, seemed to set with it, to rise, culminate, and decline the following day, with the like regularity and undiminished glory. There are many singular coincidences I have known in the course of my life, not the least among which was the fact, that exactly when Turkey displayed his fullest beams from his red and radiant countenance, just then, too, at that critical moment, began the daily period when I considered his business capacities as seriously disturbed for the remainder of the twenty-four hours. Not that he was absolutely idle, or averse to business then; far from it. The difficulty was, he was

apt to be altogether too energetic. There was a strange, inflamed, flurried, flighty recklessness of activity about him. He would be incautious in dipping his pen into his inkstand. All his blots upon my documents, were dropped there after twelve o'clock, meridian. Indeed, not only would he be reckless and sadly given to making blots in the afternoon, but some days he went further, and was rather noisy. At such times, too, his face flamed with augmented blazonry, as if cannel coal had been heaped on anthracite. He made an unpleasant racket with his chair; spilled his sand-box; in mending his pens, impatiently split them all to pieces, and threw them on the floor in a sudden passion; stood up and leaned over his table, boxing his papers about in a most indecorous manner, very sad to behold in an elderly man like him. Nevertheless, as he was in many ways a most valuable person to me, and all the time before twelve o'clock, meridian, was the quickest, steadiest creature too, accomplishing a great deal of work in a style not easy to be matched—for these reasons, I was willing to overlook his eccentricities, though indeed, occasionally, I remonstrated with him. I did this very gently, however, because, though the civilest, nay, the blandest and most reverential of men in the morning, yet in the afternoon he was disposed, upon provocation, to be slightly rash with his tongue, in fact, insolent. Now, valuing his morning services as I did, and resolved not to lose them; yet, at the same time made uncomfortable by his inflamed ways after twelve o'clock; and being a man of peace, unwilling by my admonitions to call forth unseemly retorts from him; I took upon me, one Saturday noon (he was always worse on Saturdays), to hint to him, very kindly, that perhaps now that he was growing old, it might be well to abridge his labors; in short, he need not come to my chambers after twelve o'clock, but, dinner over, had best go home to his lodgings and rest himself till teatime. But no; he insisted upon his afternoon devotions. His countenance became intolerably fervid, as he oratorically assured me—gesticulating with a long ruler at the other end of the room—that if his services in the morning were useful, how indispensable, then, in the afternoon?

"With submission, sir," said Turkey on this occasion, "I consider myself your right-hand man. In the morning I but marshal and deploy my columns; but in the afternoon I put myself at their head, and gallantly charge the foe, thus!"—and he made a violent thrust with the ruler.

"But the blots, Turkey," intimated I.

"True,—but, with submission, sir, behold these hairs! I am getting old. Surely, sir, a blot or two of a warm afternoon is not to be severely urged against gray hairs. Old age—even if it blot the page—is honorable. With submission, sir, we *both* are getting old."

This appeal to my fellow-feeling was hardly to be resisted. At all events, I saw that go he would not. So I made up my mind to let him stay, resolving, nevertheless, to see to it, that during the afternoon he had to do with my less important papers.

Nippers, the second on my list, was a whiskered, sallow, and, upon the whole, rather piratical-looking young man of about five and twenty. I always deemed him the victim of two evil powers—ambition and indigestion. The ambition was evinced by a certain impatience of the duties of a mere copyist, an unwarrantable usurpation of strictly professional affairs, such as the original drawing up of legal documents. The indigestion seemed betokened in an occasional nervous testiness and grinning irritability, causing the teeth to audibly grind together over mistakes committed in copying; unnecessary maledictions, hissed, rather than spoken, in the heat of business; and especially by a continual discontent with the height of the table where he worked. Though of a very ingenious mechanical turn, Nippers could never get this table to suit him. He put chips under it, blocks of various sorts, bits of pasteboard, and at last went so far as to attempt an exquisite adjustment by final pieces of folded blotting paper. But no invention would answer. If, for the sake of easing his back, he brought the table lid at a sharp angle well up towards his chin, and wrote there like a man using the steep roof of a Dutch house for his desk:—then he declared that it stopped the circulation in his arms. If now he lowered the table to his waistbands, and stooped over it in writing, then there was a sore aching in his back. In short, the truth of the matter was, Nippers knew not what he wanted. Or, if he wanted any thing, it was to be rid of a scrivener's table altogether. Among the manifestations of his diseased ambition was a fondness he had for receiving visits from certain ambiguous-looking fellows in seedy coats, whom he called his clients. Indeed I was aware that not only was he, at times, considerable of a ward-politician, but he occasionally did a little business at the Justices' courts, and was not unknown on the steps of the Tombs. I have good reason to believe, however, that one individual who called upon him at my chambers, and who, with a grand air, he insisted was his client, was no other than a dun, and the alleged title-deed, a bill. But with all his failings, and the annoyances he caused me, Nippers, like his compatriot Turkey, was a very useful man to me; wrote a neat, swift hand; and, when he chose, was not deficient in a gentlemanly sort of deportment. Added to this, he always dressed in a gentlemanly sort of way; and so, incidentally, reflected credit upon my chambers. Whereas with respect to Turkey, I had much ado to keep him from being a reproach to me. His clothes were apt to look oily and smell of eating-houses. He wore his pantaloons very loose and baggy in summer. His coats were execrable; his hat not to be handled. But while the hat was a thing of indifference to me, inasmuch as

his natural civility and deference, as a dependent Englishman, always led him to doff it the moment he entered the room, yet his coat was another matter. Concerning his coats, I reasoned with him; but with no effect. The truth was, I suppose, that a man of so small an income, could not afford to sport such a lustrous face and a lustrous coat at one and the same time. As Nippers once observed, Turkey's money went chiefly for red ink. One winter day I presented Turkey with a highly-respectable looking coat of my own, a padded gray coat, of a most comfortable warmth, and which buttoned straight up from the knee to the neck. I thought Turkey would appreciate the favor, and abate his rashness and obstreperousness of afternoons. But no. I verily believe that buttoning himself up in so downy and blanket-like a coat had a pernicious effect upon him; upon the same principle that too much oats are bad for horses. In fact, precisely as a rash, restive horse is said to feel his oats, so Turkey felt his coat. It made him insolent. He was a man whom prosperity harmed.

Though concerning the self-indulgent habits of Turkey I had my own private surmises, yet touching Nippers I was well persuaded that whatever might be his faults in other respects, he was, at least, a temperate young man. But indeed, nature herself seemed to have been his vintner, and at his birth charged him so thoroughly with an irritable, brandy-like disposition, that all subsequent potations were needless. When I consider how, amid the stillness of my chambers, Nippers would sometimes impatiently rise from his seat, and stooping over his table, spread his arms wide apart, seize the whole desk, and move it, and jerk it, with a grim, grinding motion on the floor, as if the table were a perverse voluntary agent, intent on thwarting and vexing him; I plainly perceive that for Nippers, brandy and water were altogether superfluous.

It was fortunate for me that, owing to its peculiar cause—indigestion—the irritability and consequent nervousness of Nippers, were mainly observable in the morning, while in the afternoon he was comparatively mild. So that Turkey's paroxysms only coming on about twelve o'clock, I never had to do with their eccentricities at one time. Their fits relieved each other like guards. When Nippers' was on, Turkey's was off; and *vice versa*. This was a good natural arrangement under the circumstances.

Ginger Nut, the third on my list, was a lad some twelve years old. His father was a carman, ambitious of seeing his son on the bench instead of a cart, before he died. So he sent him to my office as student at law, errand boy, and cleaner and sweeper, at the rate of one dollar a week. He had a little desk to himself, but he did not use it much. Upon inspection, the drawer exhibited a great array of the shells of various sorts of nuts. Indeed, to this quick-witted youth the whole noble science of the law was contained in a nut-shell. Not the least among the employments of Ginger Nut, as well as one which he discharged with the most alacrity, was his duty as cake and apple purveyor for Turkey and Nippers. Copying law papers being proverbially dry, husky sort of business, my two scriveners were fain to moisten their mouths very often with Spitzenbergs to be had at the numerous stalls nigh the Custom House and Post Office. Also, they sent Ginger Nut very frequently for that peculiar cake—small, flat, round, and very spicy—after which he had been named by them. Of a cold morning when business was but dull, Turkey would gobble up scores of these cakes, as if they were mere wafers—indeed they sell them at the rate of six or eight for a penny—the scrape of his pen blending with the crunching of the crisp particles in his mouth. Of all the fiery afternoon blunders and flurried rashnesses of Turkey, was his once moistening a ginger-cake between his lips, and clapping it on to a mortgage for a seal. I came within an ace of dismissing him then. But he mollified me by making an oriental bow, and saying—"With submission, sir, it was generous of me to find you in stationery on my own account."

Now my original business—that of a conveyancer and title hunter, and drawer-up of recondite documents of all sorts—was considerably increased by receiving the master's office. There was now great work for scriveners. Not only must I push the clerks already with me, but I must have additional help. In answer to my advertisement, a motionless young man one morning, stood upon my office threshold, the door being open, for it was summer. I can see that figure now—pallidly neat, pitiably respectable, incurably forlorn! It was Bartleby.

After a few words touching his qualifications, I engaged him, glad to have among my corps of copyists a man of so singularly sedate an aspect, which I thought might operate beneficially upon the flighty temper of Turkey, and the fiery one of Nippers.

I should have stated before that ground glass folding-doors divided my premises into two parts, one of which was occupied by my scriveners, the other by myself. According to my humor I threw open these doors, or closed them. I resolved to assign Bartleby a corner by the folding-doors, but on my side of them, so as to have this quiet man within easy call, in case any trifling thing was to be done. I placed his desk close up to a small side-window in that part of the room, a window which originally had afforded a lateral view of certain grimy back-yards and bricks, but which, owing to subsequent erections, commanded at present no view at all, though it gave some light. Within three feet of the panes was a wall, and the light came down from far above, between two lofty buildings, as from a very small opening in a dome. Still further to a satisfactory arrangement, I procured a high green folding screen, which might entirely isolate Bartleby from my sight, though not remove him from my

voice. And thus, in a manner, privacy and society were conjoined.

At first Bartleby did an extraordinary quantity of writing. As if long famishing for something to copy, he seemed to gorge himself on my documents. There was no pause for digestion. He ran a day and night line, copying by sun-light and by candle-light. I should have been quite delighted with his application, had he been cheerfully industrious. But he wrote on silently, palely, mechanically.

It is, of course, an indispensable part of a scrivener's business to verify the accuracy of his copy, word by word. Where there are two or more scriveners in an office, they assist each other in this examination, one reading from the copy, the other holding the original. It is a very dull, wearisome, and lethargic affair. I can readily imagine that to some sanguine temperaments it would be altogether intolerable. For example, I cannot credit that the mettlesome poet Byron would have contentedly sat down with Bartleby to examine a law document of, say five hundred pages, closely written in a crimpy hand.

Now and then, in the haste of business, it had been my habit to assist in comparing some brief document myself, calling Turkey or Nippers for this purpose. One object I had in placing Bartleby so handy to me behind the screen, was to avail myself of his services on such trivial occasions. It was on the third day, I think, of his being with me, and before any necessity had arisen for having his own writing examined, that, being much hurried to complete a small affair I had in hand, I abruptly called to Bartleby. In my haste and natural expectancy of instant compliance, I sat with my head bent over the original on my desk, and my right hand sideways, and somewhat nervously extended with the copy, so that immediately upon emerging from his retreat, Bartleby might snatch it and proceed to business without the least delay.

In this very attitude did I sit when I called to him, rapidly stating what it was I wanted him to do—namely, to examine a small paper with me. Imagine my surprise, nay, my consternation, when without moving from his privacy, Bartleby in a singularly mild, firm voice, replied, "I would prefer not to."

I sat awhile in perfect silence, rallying my stunned faculties. Immediately it occurred to me that my ears had deceived me, or Bartleby had entirely misunderstood my meaning. I repeated my request in the clearest tone I could assume. But in quite as clear a one came the previous reply, "I would prefer not to."

"Prefer not to," echoed I, rising in high excitement, and crossing the room with a stride. "What do you mean? Are you moon-struck? I want you to help me compare this sheet here—take it," and I thrust it towards him.

"I would prefer not to," said he.

I looked at him steadfastly. His face was leanly composed; his gray eye dimly calm. Not a wrinkle of agitation rippled him. Had there been the least uneasiness, anger, impatience or impertinence in his manner; in other words, had there been any thing ordinarily human about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from the premises. But as it was, I should have as soon thought of turning my pale plaster-of-paris bust of Cicero out of doors. I stood gazing at him awhile, as he went on with his own writing, and then reseated myself at my desk. This is very strange, thought I. What had one best do? But my business hurried me. I concluded to forget the matter for the present, reserving it for my future leisure. So calling Nippers from the other room, the paper was speedily examined.

A few days after this, Bartleby concluded four lengthy documents, being quadruplicates of a week's testimony taken before me in my High Court of Chancery. It became necessary to examine them. It was an important suit, and great accuracy was imperative. Having all things arranged I called Turkey, Nippers and Ginger Nut from the next room, meaning to place the four copies in the hands of my four clerks, while I should read from the original. Accordingly Turkey, Nippers and Ginger Nut had taken their seats in a row, each with his document in hand, when I called to Bartleby to join this interesting group.

"Bartleby! quick, I am waiting."

I heard a slow scrape of his chair legs on the uncarpeted floor, and soon he appeared standing at the entrance of his hermitage.

"What is wanted?" said he mildly.

"The copies, the copies," said I hurriedly. "We are going to examine them. There"—and I held towards him the fourth quadruplicate.

"I would prefer not to," he said, and gently disappeared behind the screen.

For a few moments I was turned into a pillar of salt, standing at the head of my seated column of clerks. Recovering myself, I advanced towards the screen, and demanded the reason for such extraordinary conduct.

"*Why* do you refuse?"

"I would prefer not to."

With any other man I should have flown outright into a dreadful passion, scorned all further words, and thrust him ignominiously from my presence. But there was something about Bartleby that not only strangely disarmed me, but in a wonderful manner touched and disconcerted me. I began to reason with him.

"These are your own copies we are about to examine. It is labor saving to you, because one examination will answer for your four papers. It is common usage. Every copyist is bound to help examine his copy. Is it not so? Will you not speak? Answer!"

"I prefer not to," he replied in a flute-like tone. It seemed to me that while I had been addressing him, he carefully revolved every statement that I made; fully comprehended the meaning; could not gainsay the irresistible conclusions; but, at the same time, some paramount consideration prevailed with him to reply as he did.

"You are decided, then, not to comply with my request—a request made according to common usage and common sense?"

He briefly gave me to understand that on that point my judgment was sound. Yes: his decision was irreversible.

It is not seldom the case that when a man is browbeaten in some unprecedented and violently unreasonable way, he begins to stagger in his own plainest faith. He begins, as it were, vaguely to surmise that, wonderful as it may be, all the justice and all the reason is on the other side. Accordingly, if any disinterested persons are present, he turns to them for some reinforcement for his own faltering mind.

"Turkey," said I, "what do you think of this? Am I not right?"

"With submission, sir," said Turkey, with his blandest tone, "I think that you are."

"Nippers," said I, "what do *you* think of it?"

"I think I should kick him out of the office."

(The reader of nice perceptions will here perceive that, it being morning, Turkey's answer is couched in polite and tranquil terms, but Nippers replies in ill-tempered ones. Or, to repeat a previous sentence, Nippers' ugly mood was on duty and Turkey's off.)

"Ginger Nut," said I, willing to enlist the smallest suffrage in my behalf, "what do you think of it?"

"I think, sir, he's a little *luny*," replied Ginger Nut with a grin.

"You hear what they say," said I, turning towards the screen, "come forth and do your duty."

But he vouchsafed no reply. I pondered a moment in sore perplexity. But once more business hurried me. I determined again to postpone the consideration of this dilemma to my future leisure. With a little trouble we made out to examine the papers without Bartleby, though at every page or two, Turkey deferentially dropped his opinion that this proceeding was quite out of the common; while Nippers, twitching in his chair with a dyspeptic nervousness, ground out between his set teeth occasional hissing maledictions against the stubborn oaf behind the screen. And for his (Nippers') part, this was the first and the last time he would do another man's business without pay.

Meanwhile Bartleby sat in his hermitage, oblivious to every thing but his own peculiar business there.

Some days passed, the scrivener being employed upon another lengthy work. His late remarkable conduct led me to regard his ways narrowly. I observed that he never went to dinner; indeed that he never went any where. As yet I had never of my personal knowledge known him to be outside of my office. He was a perpetual sentry in the corner. At about eleven o'clock though, in the morning, I noticed that Ginger Nut would advance toward the opening in Bartleby's screen, as if silently beckoned thither by a gesture invisible to me where I sat. The boy would then leave the office jingling a few pence, and reappear with a handful of ginger-nuts which he delivered in the hermitage, receiving two of the cakes for his trouble.

He lives, then, on ginger-nuts, thought I; never eats a dinner, properly speaking; he must be a vegetarian then; but no; he never eats even vegetables, he eats nothing but ginger-nuts. My mind then ran on in reveries concerning the probable effects upon the human constitution of living entirely on ginger-nuts. Ginger-nuts are so called because they contain ginger as one of their peculiar constituents, and the final flavoring one. Now what was ginger? A hot, spicy thing. Was Bartleby hot and spicy? Not at all. Ginger, then, had no effect upon Bartleby. Probably he preferred it should have none.

Nothing so aggravates an earnest person as a passive resistance. If the individual so resisted be of a not inhumane temper, and the resisting one perfectly harmless in his passivity; then, in the better moods of the former, he will endeavor charitably to construe to his imagination what proves impossible to be solved by his judgment. Even so, for the most part, I regarded Bartleby and his ways. Poor fellow! thought I, he means no mischief; it is plain he intends no insolence; his aspect sufficiently evinces that his eccentricities are involuntary. He is useful to me. I can get along with him. If I turn him away, the chances are he will fall in with some less indulgent employer, and then he will be rudely treated, and perhaps driven forth miserably to starve. Yes. Here I can cheaply purchase a delicious self-approval. To befriend Bartleby; to humor him in his strange willfulness, will cost me little or nothing, while I lay up in my soul what will eventually prove a sweet morsel for my conscience. But this mood was not invariable with me. The passiveness of Bartleby sometimes irritated me. I felt strangely goaded on to encounter him in new opposition, to elicit some angry spark from him answerable to my own. But indeed I might as well have essayed to strike fire with my knuckles against a bit of Windsor soap. But one

afternoon the evil impulse in me mastered me, and the following little scene ensued:

"Bartleby," said I, "when those papers are all copied, I will compare them with you."

"I would prefer not to."

"How? Surely you do not mean to persist in that mulish vagary?"

No answer.

I threw open the folding-doors near by, and turning upon Turkey and
Nippers, exclaimed in an excited manner—

"He says, a second time, he won't examine his papers. What do you think of it, Turkey?"

It was afternoon, be it remembered. Turkey sat glowing like a brass boiler, his bald head steaming, his hands reeling among his blotted papers.

"Think of it?" roared Turkey; "I think I'll just step behind his screen, and black his eyes for him!"

So saying, Turkey rose to his feet and threw his arms into a pugilistic position. He was hurrying away to make good his promise, when I detained him, alarmed at the effect of incautiously rousing Turkey's combativeness after dinner.

"Sit down, Turkey," said I, "and hear what Nippers has to say. What do you think of it, Nippers? Would I not be justified in immediately dismissing Bartleby?"

"Excuse me, that is for you to decide, sir. I think his conduct quite unusual, and indeed unjust, as regards Turkey and myself. But it may only be a passing whim."

"Ah," exclaimed I, "you have strangely changed your mind then —you speak very gently of him now."

"All beer," cried Turkey; "gentleness is effects of beer—Nippers and I dined together to-day. You see how gentle *I* am, sir. Shall I go and black his eyes?"

"You refer to Bartleby, I suppose. No, not to-day, Turkey," I replied; "pray, put up your fists."

I closed the doors, and again advanced towards Bartleby. I felt additional incentives tempting me to my fate. I burned to be rebelled against again. I remembered that Bartleby never left the office.

"Bartleby," said I, "Ginger Nut is away; just step round to the Post Office, won't you? (it was but a three minute walk,) and see if there is any thing for me."

"I would prefer not to."

"You *will* not?"

"I *prefer* not."

I staggered to my desk, and sat there in a deep study. My blind inveteracy returned. Was there any other thing in which I could procure myself to be ignominiously repulsed by this lean, penniless wight?—my hired clerk? What added thing is there, perfectly reasonable, that he will be sure to refuse to do?

"Bartleby!"

No answer.

"Bartleby," in a louder tone.

No answer.

"Bartleby," I roared.

Like a very ghost, agreeably to the laws of magical invocation, at the third summons, he appeared at the entrance of his hermitage.

"Go to the next room, and tell Nippers to come to me."

"I prefer not to," he respectfully and slowly said, and mildly disappeared.

"Very good, Bartleby," said I, in a quiet sort of serenely severe self-possessed tone, intimating the unalterable purpose of some terrible retribution very close at hand. At the moment I half intended something of the kind. But upon the whole, as it was drawing towards my dinner-hour, I thought it best to put on my hat and walk home for the day, suffering much from perplexity and distress of mind.

Shall I acknowledge it? The conclusion of this whole business was, that it soon became a fixed fact of my chambers, that a pale young scrivener, by the name of Bartleby, and a desk there; that he copied for me at the usual rate of four cents a folio (one hundred words); but he was permanently exempt from examining the work done by him, that duty being transferred to Turkey and Nippers, one of compliment doubtless to their superior acuteness; moreover, said Bartleby was never on any account to be dispatched on the most trivial errand of any sort; and that even if entreated to take upon him such a matter, it was generally understood that he would prefer not to—in other words, that he would refuse pointblank.

As days passed on, I became considerably reconciled to Bartleby. His steadiness, his freedom from all dissipation, his incessant industry (except when he chose to throw himself into a standing revery behind his screen), his great stillness, his unalterableness of demeanor under all circumstances, made him a valuable acquisition. One prime thing was this,—*he was always there;*—first in the morning, continually through the day, and the last at night. I had a singular confidence in his honesty. I

felt my most precious papers perfectly safe in his hands. Sometimes to be sure I could not, for the very soul of me, avoid falling into sudden spasmodic passions with him. For it was exceeding difficult to bear in mind all the time those strange peculiarities, privileges, and unheard of exemptions, forming the tacit stipulations on Bartleby's part under which he remained in my office. Now and then, in the eagerness of dispatching pressing business, I would inadvertently summon Bartleby, in a short, rapid tone, to put his finger, say, on the incipient tie of a bit of red tape with which I was about compressing some papers. Of course, from behind the screen the usual answer, "I prefer not to," was sure to come; and then, how could a human creature with the common infirmities of our nature, refrain from bitterly exclaiming upon such perverseness—such unreasonableness. However, every added repulse of this sort which I received only tended to lessen the probability of my repeating the inadvertence.

Here it must be said, that according to the custom of most legal gentlemen occupying chambers in densely-populated law buildings, there were several keys to my door. One was kept by a woman residing in the attic, which person weekly scrubbed and daily swept and dusted my apartments. Another was kept by Turkey for convenience sake. The third I sometimes carried in my own pocket. The fourth I knew not who had.

Now, one Sunday morning I happened to go to Trinity Church, to hear a celebrated preacher, and finding myself rather early on the ground, I thought I would walk around to my chambers for a while. Luckily I had my key with me; but upon applying it to the lock, I found it resisted by something inserted from the inside. Quite surprised, I called out; when to my consternation a key was turned from within; and thrusting his lean visage at me, and holding the door ajar, the apparition of Bartleby appeared, in his shirt sleeves, and otherwise in a strangely tattered dishabille, saying quietly that he was sorry, but he was deeply engaged just then, and—preferred not admitting me at present. In a brief word or two, he moreover added, that perhaps I had better walk round the block two or three times, and by that time he would probably have concluded his affairs.

Now, the utterly unsurmised appearance of Bartleby, tenanting my law-chambers of a Sunday morning, with his cadaverously gentlemanly *nonchalance*, yet withal firm and self-possessed, had such a strange effect upon me, that incontinently I slunk away from my own door, and did as desired. But not without sundry twinges of impotent rebellion against the mild effrontery of this unaccountable scrivener. Indeed, it was his wonderful mildness chiefly, which not only disarmed me, but unmanned me, as it were. For I consider that one, for the time, is a sort of unmanned when he tranquilly permits his hired clerk to dictate to him, and order him away from his own premises. Furthermore, I was full of uneasiness as to what Bartleby could possibly be doing in my office in his shirt sleeves, and in an otherwise dismantled condition of a Sunday morning. Was any thing amiss going on? Nay, that was out of the question. It was not to be thought of for a moment that Bartleby was an immoral person. But what could he be doing there?—copying? Nay again, whatever might be his eccentricities, Bartleby was an eminently decorous person. He would be the last man to sit down to his desk in any state approaching to nudity. Besides, it was Sunday; and there was something about Bartleby that forbade the supposition that he would by any secular occupation violate the proprieties of the day.

Nevertheless, my mind was not pacified; and full of a restless curiosity, at last I returned to the door. Without hindrance I inserted my key, opened it, and entered. Bartleby was not to be seen. I looked round anxiously, peeped behind his screen; but it was very plain that he was gone. Upon more closely examining the place, I surmised that for an indefinite period Bartleby must have ate, dressed, and slept in my office, and that too without plate, mirror, or bed. The cushioned seat of a rickety old sofa in one corner bore the faint impress of a lean, reclining form. Rolled away under his desk, I found a blanket; under the empty grate, a blacking box and brush; on a chair, a tin basin, with soap and a ragged towel; in a newspaper a few crumbs of ginger-nuts and a morsel of cheese. Yes, thought I, it is evident enough that Bartleby has been making his home here, keeping bachelor's hall all by himself. Immediately then the thought came sweeping across me, What miserable friendlessness and loneliness are here revealed! His poverty is great; but his solitude, how horrible! Think of it. Of a Sunday, Wall-street is deserted as Petra; and every night of every day it is an emptiness. This building too, which of week-days hums with industry and life, at nightfall echoes with sheer vacancy, and all through Sunday is forlorn. And here Bartleby makes his home; sole spectator of a solitude which he has seen all populous—a sort of innocent and transformed Marius brooding among the ruins of Carthage!

For the first time in my life a feeling of overpowering stinging melancholy seized me. Before, I had never experienced aught but a not-unpleasing sadness. The bond of a common humanity now drew me irresistibly to gloom. A fraternal melancholy! For both I and Bartleby were sons of Adam. I remembered the bright silks and sparkling faces I had seen that day, in gala trim, swan-like sailing down the Mississippi of Broadway; and I contrasted them with the pallid copyist, and thought to myself, Ah, happiness courts the light, so we deem the world is gay; but misery hides aloof, so we deem that misery there is none. These sad fancyings—chimeras, doubtless, of a sick and silly brain—led on to other and more special thoughts, concerning the

eccentricities of Bartleby. Presentiments of strange discoveries hovered round me. The scrivener's pale form appeared to me laid out, among uncaring strangers, in its shivering winding sheet.

Suddenly I was attracted by Bartleby's closed desk, the key in open sight left in the lock.

I mean no mischief, seek the gratification of no heartless curiosity, thought I; besides, the desk is mine, and its contents too, so I will make bold to look within. Every thing was methodically arranged, the papers smoothly placed. The pigeon holes were deep, and removing the files of documents, I groped into their recesses. Presently I felt something there, and dragged it out. It was an old bandanna handkerchief, heavy and knotted. I opened it, and saw it was a savings' bank.

I now recalled all the quiet mysteries which I had noted in the man. I remembered that he never spoke but to answer; that though at intervals he had considerable time to himself, yet I had never seen him reading—no, not even a newspaper; that for long periods he would stand looking out, at his pale window behind the screen, upon the dead brick wall; I was quite sure he never visited any refectory or eating house; while his pale face clearly indicated that he never drank beer like Turkey, or tea and coffee even, like other men; that he never went any where in particular that I could learn; never went out for a walk, unless indeed that was the case at present; that he had declined telling who he was, or whence he came, or whether he had any relatives in the world; that though so thin and pale, he never complained of ill health. And more than all, I remembered a certain unconscious air of pallid—how shall I call it?—of pallid haughtiness, say, or rather an austere reserve about him, which had positively awed me into my tame compliance with his eccentricities, when I had feared to ask him to do the slightest incidental thing for me, even though I might know, from his long-continued motionlessness, that behind his screen he must be standing in one of those dead-wall reveries of his.

Revolving all these things, and coupling them with the recently discovered fact that he made my office his constant abiding place and home, and not forgetful of his morbid moodiness; revolving all these things, a prudential feeling began to steal over me. My first emotions had been those of pure melancholy and sincerest pity; but just in proportion as the forlornness of Bartleby grew and grew to my imagination, did that same melancholy merge into fear, that pity into repulsion. So true it is, and so terrible too, that up to a certain point the thought or sight of misery enlists our best affections; but, in certain special cases, beyond that point it does not. They err who would assert that invariably this is owing to the inherent selfishness of the human heart. It rather proceeds from a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill. To a sensitive being, pity is not seldom pain. And when at last it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effectual succor, common sense bids the soul rid of it. What I saw that morning persuaded me that the scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder. I might give alms to his body; but his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach.

I did not accomplish the purpose of going to Trinity Church that morning. Somehow, the things I had seen disqualified me for the time from church-going. I walked homeward, thinking what I would do with Bartleby. Finally, I resolved upon this;—I would put certain calm questions to him the next morning, touching his history, etc., and if he declined to answer them openly and unreservedly (and I supposed he would prefer not), then to give him a twenty dollar bill over and above whatever I might owe him, and tell him his services were no longer required; but that if in any other way I could assist him, I would be happy to do so, especially if he desired to return to his native place, wherever that might be, I would willingly help to defray the expenses. Moreover, if, after reaching home, he found himself at any time in want of aid, a letter from him would be sure of a reply.

The next morning came.

"Bartleby," said I, gently calling to him behind his screen.

No reply.

"Bartleby," said I, in a still gentler tone, "come here; I am not going to ask you to do any thing you would prefer not to do—I simply wish to speak to you."

Upon this he noiselessly slid into view.

"Will you tell me, Bartleby, where you were born?"

"I would prefer not to."

"Will you tell me *any thing* about yourself?"

"I would prefer not to."

"But what reasonable objection can you have to speak to me? I feel friendly towards you."

He did not look at me while I spoke, but kept his glance fixed upon my bust of Cicero, which as I then sat, was directly behind me, some six inches above my head.

"What is your answer, Bartleby?" said I, after waiting a considerable time for a reply, during which his countenance remained immovable, only there was the faintest conceivable tremor of the white attenuated mouth.

"At present I prefer to give no answer," he said, and retired into his hermitage.

It was rather weak in me I confess, but his manner on this occasion nettled me. Not only did there seem to lurk in it a certain calm disdain, but his perverseness seemed ungrateful, considering the undeniable good usage and indulgence he had received from me.

Again I sat ruminating what I should do. Mortified as I was at his behavior, and resolved as I had been to dismiss him when I entered my offices, nevertheless I strangely felt something superstitious knocking at my heart, and forbidding me to carry out my purpose, and denouncing me for a villain if I dared to breathe one bitter word against this forlornest of mankind. At last, familiarly drawing my chair behind his screen, I sat down and said: "Bartleby, never mind then about revealing your history; but let me entreat you, as a friend, to comply as far as may be with the usages of this office. Say now you will help to examine papers to-morrow or next day: in short, say now that in a day or two you will begin to be a little reasonable:—say so, Bartleby."

"At present I would prefer not to be a little reasonable," was his mildly cadaverous reply.

Just then the folding-doors opened, and Nippers approached. He seemed suffering from an unusually bad night's rest, induced by severer indigestion than common. He overheard those final words of Bartleby.

"*Prefer not*, eh?" gritted Nippers—"I'd *prefer* him, if I were you, sir," addressing me—"I'd *prefer* him; I'd give him preferences, the stubborn mule! What is it, sir, pray, that he *prefers* not to do now?"

Bartleby moved not a limb.

"Mr. Nippers," said I, "I'd prefer that you would withdraw for the present."

Somehow, of late I had got into the way of involuntarily using this word "prefer" upon all sorts of not exactly suitable occasions. And I trembled to think that my contact with the scrivener had already and seriously affected me in a mental way. And what further and deeper aberration might it not yet produce? This apprehension had not been without efficacy in determining me to summary means.

As Nippers, looking very sour and sulky, was departing, Turkey blandly and deferentially approached.

"With submission, sir," said he, "yesterday I was thinking about Bartleby here, and I think that if he would but prefer to take a quart of good ale every day, it would do much towards mending him, and enabling him to assist in examining his papers."

"So you have got the word too," said I, slightly excited.

"With submission, what word, sir," asked Turkey, respectfully crowding himself into the contracted space behind the screen, and by so doing, making me jostle the scrivener. "What word, sir?"

"I would prefer to be left alone here," said Bartleby, as if offended at being mobbed in his privacy.

"*That's* the word, Turkey," said I—"that's it."

"Oh, *prefer*? oh yes—queer word. I never use it myself. But, sir, as
I was saying, if he would but prefer—"

"Turkey," interrupted I, "you will please withdraw."

"Oh certainly, sir, if you prefer that I should."

As he opened the folding-door to retire, Nippers at his desk caught a glimpse of me, and asked whether I would prefer to have a certain paper copied on blue paper or white. He did not in the least roguishly accent the word prefer. It was plain that it involuntarily rolled from his tongue. I thought to myself, surely I must get rid of a demented man, who already has in some degree turned the tongues, if not the heads of myself and clerks. But I thought it prudent not to break the dismission at once.

The next day I noticed that Bartleby did nothing but stand at his window in his dead-wall revery. Upon asking him why he did not write, he said that he had decided upon doing no more writing.

"Why, how now? what next?" exclaimed I, "do no more writing?"

"No more."

"And what is the reason?"

"Do you not see the reason for yourself," he indifferently replied.

I looked steadfastly at him, and perceived that his eyes looked dull and glazed. Instantly it occurred to me, that his unexampled diligence in copying by his dim window for the first few weeks of his stay with me might have temporarily impaired his vision.

I was touched. I said something in condolence with him. I hinted that of course he did wisely in abstaining from writing for a while; and urged him to embrace that opportunity of taking wholesome exercise in the open air. This, however, he did not do. A few days after this, my other clerks being absent, and being in a great hurry to dispatch certain letters by the mail, I thought that, having nothing else earthly to do, Bartleby would surely be less inflexible than usual, and carry these letters to the post-office. But he blankly declined. So, much to my inconvenience, I went myself.

Still added days went by. Whether Bartleby's eyes improved or not, I could not say. To all appearance, I thought they did. But when I asked him if they did, he vouchsafed no answer. At all events, he would do no copying. At last, in reply to my urgings, he informed me that he had permanently given up copying.

"What!" exclaimed I; "suppose your eyes should get entirely well—better than ever before—would you not copy then?"

"I have given up copying," he answered, and slid aside.

He remained as ever, a fixture in my chamber. Nay—if that were possible—he became still more of a fixture than before. What was to be done? He would do nothing in the office: why should he stay there? In plain fact, he had now become a millstone to me, not only useless as a necklace, but afflictive to bear. Yet I was sorry for him. I speak less than truth when I say that, on his own account, he occasioned me uneasiness. If he would but have named a single relative or friend, I would instantly have written, and urged their taking the poor fellow away to some convenient retreat. But he seemed alone, absolutely alone in the universe. A bit of wreck in the mid Atlantic. At length, necessities connected with my business tyrannized over all other considerations. Decently as I could, I told Bartleby that in six days' time he must unconditionally leave the office. I warned him to take measures, in the interval, for procuring some other abode. I offered to assist him in this endeavor, if he himself would but take the first step towards a removal. "And when you finally quit me, Bartleby," added I, "I shall see that you go not away entirely unprovided. Six days from this hour, remember."

At the expiration of that period, I peeped behind the screen, and lo!
Bartleby was there.

I buttoned up my coat, balanced myself; advanced slowly towards him, touched his shoulder, and said, "The time has come; you must quit this place; I am sorry for you; here is money; but you must go."

"I would prefer not," he replied, with his back still towards me.

"You *must*."

He remained silent.

Now I had an unbounded confidence in this man's common honesty. He had frequently restored to me sixpences and shillings carelessly dropped upon the floor, for I am apt to be very reckless in such shirt-button affairs. The proceeding then which followed will not be deemed extraordinary.

"Bartleby," said I, "I owe you twelve dollars on account; here are thirty-two; the odd twenty are yours.—Will you take it?" and I handed the bills towards him.

But he made no motion.

"I will leave them here then," putting them under a weight on the table. Then taking my hat and cane and going to the door I tranquilly turned and added—"After you have removed your things from these offices, Bartleby, you will of course lock the door—since every one is now gone for the day but you—and if you please, slip your key underneath the mat, so that I may have it in the morning. I shall not see you again; so good-bye to you. If hereafter in your new place of abode I can be of any service to you, do not fail to advise me by letter. Good-bye, Bartleby, and fare you well."

But he answered not a word; like the last column of some ruined temple, he remained standing mute and solitary in the middle of the otherwise deserted room.

As I walked home in a pensive mood, my vanity got the better of my pity. I could not but highly plume myself on my masterly management in getting rid of Bartleby. Masterly I call it, and such it must appear to any dispassionate thinker. The beauty of my procedure seemed to consist in its perfect quietness. There was no vulgar bullying, no bravado of any sort, no choleric hectoring, and striding to and fro across the apartment, jerking out vehement commands for Bartleby to bundle himself off with his beggarly traps. Nothing of the kind. Without loudly bidding Bartleby depart—as an inferior genius might have done—I *assumed* the ground that depart he must; and upon that assumption built all I had to say. The more I thought over my procedure, the more I was charmed with it. Nevertheless, next morning, upon awakening, I had my doubts,—I had somehow slept off the fumes of vanity. One of the coolest and wisest hours a man has, is just after he awakes in the morning. My procedure seemed as sagacious as ever.—but only in theory. How it would prove in practice—there was the rub. It was truly a beautiful thought to have assumed Bartleby's departure; but, after all, that assumption was simply my own, and none of Bartleby's. The great point was, not whether I had assumed that he would quit me, but whether he would prefer so to do. He was more a man of preferences than assumptions.

After breakfast, I walked down town, arguing the probabilities *pro* and *con*. One moment I thought it would prove a miserable failure, and Bartleby would be found all alive at my office as usual; the next moment it seemed certain that I should see his chair empty. And so I kept veering about. At the corner of Broadway and Canal-street, I saw quite an excited group of people standing in earnest conversation.

"I'll take odds he doesn't," said a voice as I passed.

"Doesn't go?—done!" said I, "put up your money."

I was instinctively putting my hand in my pocket to produce my own, when I remembered that this was an election day. The words I had overheard bore no reference to Bartleby, but to the success or non-success of some candidate for the mayoralty. In my intent frame of mind, I had, as it were, imagined that all Broadway shared in my excitement, and were debating the same question with me. I passed on, very thankful that the uproar of the street screened my momentary absent-mindedness.

As I had intended, I was earlier than usual at my office door. I stood listening for a moment. All was still. He must be gone. I tried the knob. The door was locked. Yes, my procedure had worked to a charm; he indeed must be vanished. Yet a certain melancholy mixed with this: I was almost sorry for my brilliant success. I was fumbling under the door mat for the key, which Bartleby was to have left there for me, when accidentally my knee knocked against a panel, producing a summoning sound, and in response a voice came to me from within—"Not yet; I am occupied."

It was Bartleby.

I was thunderstruck. For an instant I stood like the man who, pipe in mouth, was killed one cloudless afternoon long ago in Virginia, by a summer lightning; at his own warm open window he was killed, and remained leaning out there upon the dreamy afternoon, till some one touched him, when he fell.

"Not gone!" I murmured at last. But again obeying that wondrous ascendancy which the inscrutable scrivener had over me, and from which ascendancy, for all my chafing, I could not completely escape, I slowly went down stairs and out into the street, and while walking round the block, considered what I should next do in this unheard-of perplexity. Turn the man out by an actual thrusting I could not; to drive him away by calling him hard names would not do; calling in the police was an unpleasant idea; and yet, permit him to enjoy his cadaverous triumph over me,—this too I could not think of. What was to be done? or, if nothing could be done, was there any thing further that I could *assume* in the matter? Yes, as before I had prospectively assumed that Bartleby would depart, so now I might retrospectively assume that departed he was. In the legitimate carrying out of this assumption, I might enter my office in a great hurry, and pretending not to see Bartleby at all, walk straight against him as if he were air. Such a proceeding would in a singular degree have the appearance of a home-thrust. It was hardly possible that Bartleby could withstand such an application of the doctrine of assumptions. But upon second thoughts the success of the plan seemed rather dubious. I resolved to argue the matter over with him again.

"Bartleby," said I, entering the office, with a quietly severe expression, "I am seriously displeased. I am pained, Bartleby. I had thought better of you. I had imagined you of such a gentlemanly organization, that in any delicate dilemma a slight hint would have suffice—in short, an assumption. But it appears I am deceived. Why," I added, unaffectedly starting, "you have not even touched that money yet," pointing to it, just where I had left it the evening previous.

He answered nothing.

"Will you, or will you not, quit me?" I now demanded in a sudden passion, advancing close to him.

"I would prefer *not* to quit you," he replied, gently emphasizing the *not*.

"What earthly right have you to stay here? Do you pay any rent? Do you pay my taxes? Or is this property yours?"

He answered nothing.

"Are you ready to go on and write now? Are your eyes recovered? Could you copy a small paper for me this morning? or help examine a few lines? or step round to the post-office? In a word, will you do any thing at all, to give a coloring to your refusal to depart the premises?"

He silently retired into his hermitage.

I was now in such a state of nervous resentment that I thought it but prudent to check myself at present from further demonstrations. Bartleby and I were alone. I remembered the tragedy of the unfortunate Adams and the still more unfortunate Colt in the solitary office of the latter; and how poor Colt, being dreadfully incensed by Adams, and imprudently permitting himself to get wildly excited, was at unawares hurried into his fatal act—an act which certainly no man could possibly deplore more than the actor himself. Often it had occurred to me in my ponderings upon the subject, that had that altercation taken place in the public street, or at a private residence, it would not have terminated as it did. It was the circumstance of being alone in a solitary office, up stairs, of a building entirely unhallowed by humanizing domestic associations—an uncarpeted office, doubtless, of a dusty, haggard sort of appearance;—this it must have been, which greatly helped to enhance the irritable desperation of the hapless Colt.

But when this old Adam of resentment rose in me and tempted me concerning Bartleby, I grappled him and threw him. How? Why, simply by recalling the divine injunction: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." Yes, this it was that saved me. Aside from higher considerations, charity often operates as a vastly wise and prudent principle—a great safeguard to its possessor. Men have committed murder for jealousy's sake, and anger's sake, and hatred's sake, and selfishness' sake, and spiritual pride's sake; but no man that ever

I heard of, ever committed a diabolical murder for sweet charity's sake. Mere self-interest, then, if no better motive can be enlisted, should, especially with high-tempered men, prompt all beings to charity and philanthropy. At any rate, upon the occasion in question, I strove to drown my exasperated feelings towards the scrivener by benevolently construing his conduct. Poor fellow, poor fellow! thought I, he don't mean any thing; and besides, he has seen hard times, and ought to be indulged.

I endeavored also immediately to occupy myself, and at the same time to comfort my despondency. I tried to fancy that in the course of the morning, at such time as might prove agreeable to him, Bartleby, of his own free accord, would emerge from his hermitage, and take up some decided line of march in the direction of the door. But no. Half-past twelve o'clock came; Turkey began to glow in the face, overturn his inkstand, and become generally obstreperous; Nippers abated down into quietude and courtesy; Ginger Nut munched his noon apple; and Bartleby remained standing at his window in one of his profoundest dead-wall reveries. Will it be credited? Ought I to acknowledge it? That afternoon I left the office without saying one further word to him.

Some days now passed, during which, at leisure intervals I looked a little into "Edwards on the Will," and "Priestly on Necessity." Under the circumstances, those books induced a salutary feeling. Gradually I slid into the persuasion that these troubles of mine touching the scrivener, had been all predestinated from eternity, and Bartleby was billeted upon me for some mysterious purpose of an all-wise Providence, which it was not for a mere mortal like me to fathom. Yes, Bartleby, stay there behind your screen, thought I; I shall persecute you no more; you are harmless and noiseless as any of these old chairs; in short, I never feel so private as when I know you are here. At last I see it, I feel it; I penetrate to the predestinated purpose of my life. I am content. Others may have loftier parts to enact; but my mission in this world, Bartleby, is to furnish you with office-room for such period as you may see fit to remain.

I believe that this wise and blessed frame of mind would have continued with me, had it not been for the unsolicited and uncharitable remarks obtruded upon me by my professional friends who visited the rooms. But thus it often is, that the constant friction of illiberal minds wears out at last the best resolves of the more generous. Though to be sure, when I reflected upon it, it was not strange that people entering my office should be struck by the peculiar aspect of the unaccountable Bartleby, and so be tempted to throw out some sinister observations concerning him. Sometimes an attorney having business with me, and calling at my office and finding no one but the scrivener there, would undertake to obtain some sort of precise information from him touching my whereabouts; but without heeding his idle talk, Bartleby would remain standing immovable in the middle of the room. So after contemplating him in that position for a time, the attorney would depart, no wiser than he came.

Also, when a Reference was going on, and the room full of lawyers and witnesses and business was driving fast; some deeply occupied legal gentleman present, seeing Bartleby wholly unemployed, would request him to run round to his (the legal gentleman's) office and fetch some papers for him. Thereupon, Bartleby would tranquilly decline, and yet remain idle as before. Then the lawyer would give a great stare, and turn to me. And what could I say? At last I was made aware that all through the circle of my professional acquaintance, a whisper of wonder was running round, having reference to the strange creature I kept at my office. This worried me very much. And as the idea came upon me of his possibly turning out a long-lived man, and keep occupying my chambers, and denying my authority; and perplexing my visitors; and scandalizing my professional reputation; and casting a general gloom over the premises; keeping soul and body together to the last upon his savings (for doubtless he spent but half a dime a day), and in the end perhaps outlive me, and claim possession of my office by right of his perpetual occupancy: as all these dark anticipations crowded upon me more and more, and my friends continually intruded their relentless remarks upon the apparition in my room; a great change was wrought in me. I resolved to gather all my faculties together, and for ever rid me of this intolerable incubus.

Ere revolving any complicated project, however, adapted to this end, I first simply suggested to Bartleby the propriety of his permanent departure. In a calm and serious tone, I commended the idea to his careful and mature consideration. But having taken three days to meditate upon it, he apprised me that his original determination remained the same; in short, that he still preferred to abide with me.

What shall I do? I now said to myself, buttoning up my coat to the last button. What shall I do? what ought I to do? what does conscience say I *should* do with this man, or rather ghost. Rid myself of him, I must; go, he shall. But how? You will not thrust him, the poor, pale, passive mortal,—you will not thrust such a helpless creature out of your door? you will not dishonor yourself by such cruelty? No, I will not, I cannot do that. Rather would I let him live and die here, and then mason up his remains in the wall. What then will you do? For all your coaxing, he will not budge. Bribes he leaves under your own paperweight on your table; in short, it is quite plain that he prefers to cling to you.

Then something severe, something unusual must be done. What! surely you will not have him collared by a constable, and commit his innocent pallor to the common jail? And upon what ground could you procure such a thing to be done?—a vagrant, is he? What! he a vagrant, a wanderer, who refuses to budge? It is because he will *not* be a vagrant, then, that you seek to count him *as* a vagrant. That is too absurd. No visible means of support: there I have him. Wrong again: for indubitably he *does* support himself, and that is the only unanswerable proof that any man can show of his possessing the means so to do. No more then. Since he will not quit me, I must quit him. I will change my offices; I will move elsewhere; and give him fair notice, that if I find him on my new premises I will then proceed against him as a common trespasser.

Acting accordingly, next day I thus addressed him: "I find these chambers too far from the City Hall; the air is unwholesome. In a word, I propose to remove my offices next week, and shall no longer require your services. I tell you this now, in order that you may seek another place."

He made no reply, and nothing more was said.

On the appointed day I engaged carts and men, proceeded to my chambers, and having but little furniture, every thing was removed in a few hours. Throughout, the scrivener remained standing behind the screen, which I directed to be removed the last thing. It was withdrawn; and being folded up like a huge folio, left him the motionless occupant of a naked room. I stood in the entry watching him a moment, while something from within me upbraided me.

I re-entered, with my hand in my pocket—and—and my heart in my mouth.

"Good-bye, Bartleby; I am going—good-bye, and God some way bless you; and take that," slipping something in his hand. But it dropped upon the floor, and then,—strange to say—I tore myself from him whom I had so longed to be rid of.

Established in my new quarters, for a day or two I kept the door locked, and started at every footfall in the passages. When I returned to my rooms after any little absence, I would pause at the threshold for an instant, and attentively listen, ere applying my key. But these fears were needless. Bartleby never came nigh me.

I thought all was going well, when a perturbed looking stranger visited me, inquiring whether I was the person who had recently occupied rooms at No.—Wall-street.

Full of forebodings, I replied that I was.

"Then sir," said the stranger, who proved a lawyer, "you are responsible for the man you left there. He refuses to do any copying; he refuses to do any thing; he says he prefers not to; and he refuses to quit the premises."

"I am very sorry, sir," said I, with assumed tranquility, but an inward tremor, "but, really, the man you allude to is nothing to me—he is no relation or apprentice of mine, that you should hold me responsible for him."

"In mercy's name, who is he?"

"I certainly cannot inform you. I know nothing about him. Formerly I employed him as a copyist; but he has done nothing for me now for some time past."

"I shall settle him then,—good morning, sir."

Several days passed, and I heard nothing more; and though I often felt a charitable prompting to call at the place and see poor Bartleby, yet a certain squeamishness of I know not what withheld me.

All is over with him, by this time, thought I at last, when through another week no further intelligence reached me. But coming to my room the day after, I found several persons waiting at my door in a high state of nervous excitement.

"That's the man—here he comes," cried the foremost one, whom I recognized as the lawyer who had previously called upon me alone.

"You must take him away, sir, at once," cried a portly person among them, advancing upon me, and whom I knew to be the landlord of No.—Wall-street. "These gentlemen, my tenants, cannot stand it any longer; Mr. B—" pointing to the lawyer, "has turned him out of his room, and he now persists in haunting the building generally, sitting upon the banisters of the stairs by day, and sleeping in the entry by night. Every body is concerned; clients are leaving the offices; some fears are entertained of a mob; something you must do, and that without delay."

Aghast at this torrent, I fell back before it, and would fain have locked myself in my new quarters. In vain I persisted that Bartleby was nothing to me—no more than to any one else. In vain:—I was the last person known to have any thing to do with him, and they held me to the terrible account. Fearful then of being exposed in the papers (as one person present obscurely threatened) I considered the matter, and at length said, that if the lawyer would give me a confidential interview with the scrivener, in his (the lawyer's) own room, I would that afternoon strive my best to rid them of the nuisance they complained of.

Going up stairs to my old haunt, there was Bartleby silently sitting upon the banister at the landing.

"What are you doing here, Bartleby?" said I.

"Sitting upon the banister," he mildly replied.

I motioned him into the lawyer's room, who then left us.

"Bartleby," said I, "are you aware that you are the cause of great tribulation to me, by persisting in occupying the entry after being dismissed from the office?"

No answer.

"Now one of two things must take place. Either you must do something, or something must be done to you. Now what sort of business would you like to engage in? Would you like to re-engage in copying for some one?"

"No; I would prefer not to make any change."

"Would you like a clerkship in a dry-goods store?"

"There is too much confinement about that. No, I would not like a clerkship; but I am not particular."

"Too much confinement," I cried, "why you keep yourself confined all the time!"

"I would prefer not to take a clerkship," he rejoined, as if to settle that little item at once.

"How would a bar-tender's business suit you? There is no trying of the eyesight in that."

"I would not like it at all; though, as I said before, I am not particular."

His unwonted wordiness inspirited me. I returned to the charge.

"Well then, would you like to travel through the country collecting bills for the merchants? That would improve your health."

"No, I would prefer to be doing something else."

"How then would going as a companion to Europe, to entertain some young gentleman with your conversation,—how would that suit you?"

"Not at all. It does not strike me that there is any thing definite about that. I like to be stationary. But I am not particular."

"Stationary you shall be then," I cried, now losing all patience, and for the first time in all my exasperating connection with him fairly flying into a passion. "If you do not go away from these premises before night, I shall feel bound—indeed I *am* bound—to—to—to quit the premises myself!" I rather absurdly concluded, knowing not with what possible threat to try to frighten his immobility into compliance. Despairing of all further efforts, I was precipitately leaving him, when a final thought occurred to me—one which had not been wholly unindulged before.

"Bartleby," said I, in the kindest tone I could assume under such exciting circumstances, "will you go home with me now—not to my office, but my dwelling—and remain there till we can conclude upon some convenient arrangement for you at our leisure? Come, let us start now, right away."

"No: at present I would prefer not to make any change at all."

I answered nothing; but effectually dodging every one by the suddenness and rapidity of my flight, rushed from the building, ran up Wall-street towards Broadway, and jumping into the first omnibus was soon removed from pursuit. As soon as tranquility returned I distinctly perceived that I had now done all that I possibly could, both in respect to the demands of the landlord and his tenants, and with regard to my own desire and sense of duty, to benefit Bartleby, and shield him from rude persecution. I now strove to be entirely care-free and quiescent; and my conscience justified me in the attempt; though indeed it was not so successful as I could have wished. So fearful was I of being again hunted out by the incensed landlord and his exasperated tenants, that, surrendering my business to Nippers, for a few days I drove about the upper part of the town and through the suburbs, in my rockaway; crossed over to Jersey City and Hoboken, and paid fugitive visits to Manhattanville and Astoria. In fact I almost lived in my rockaway for the time.

When again I entered my office, lo, a note from the landlord lay upon the desk. I opened it with trembling hands. It informed me that the writer had sent to the police, and had Bartleby removed to the Tombs as a vagrant. Moreover, since I knew more about him than any one else, he wished me to appear at that place, and make a suitable statement of the facts. These tidings had a conflicting effect upon me. At first I was indignant; but at last almost approved. The landlord's energetic, summary disposition had led him to adopt a procedure which I do not think I would have decided upon myself; and yet as a last resort, under such peculiar circumstances, it seemed the only plan.

As I afterwards learned, the poor scrivener, when told that he must be conducted to the Tombs, offered not the slightest obstacle, but in his pale unmoving way, silently acquiesced.

Some of the compassionate and curious bystanders joined the party; and headed by one of the constables arm in arm with Bartleby, the silent procession filed its way through all the noise, and heat, and joy of the roaring thoroughfares at noon.

The same day I received the note I went to the Tombs, or to speak more properly, the Halls of Justice. Seeking the right officer, I stated the purpose of my call, and was informed that the individual I described was indeed within. I then assured the functionary that Bartleby was a perfectly honest man, and greatly to be compassionated, however unaccountably eccentric. I narrated all I knew, and closed by suggesting the idea of letting him remain in as indulgent confinement as possible till something less harsh might be done—though indeed I hardly knew what. At all events, if nothing else could be decided upon,

the alms-house must receive him. I then begged to have an interview.

Being under no disgraceful charge, and quite serene and harmless in all his ways, they had permitted him freely to wander about the prison, and especially in the inclosed grass-platted yard thereof. And so I found him there, standing all alone in the quietest of the yards, his face towards a high wall, while all around, from the narrow slits of the jail windows, I thought I saw peering out upon him the eyes of murderers and thieves.

"Bartleby!"

"I know you," he said, without looking round,—"and I want nothing to say to you."

"It was not I that brought you here, Bartleby," said I, keenly pained at his implied suspicion. "And to you, this should not be so vile a place. Nothing reproachful attaches to you by being here. And see, it is not so sad a place as one might think. Look, there is the sky, and here is the grass."

"I know where I am," he replied, but would say nothing more, and so I left him.

As I entered the corridor again, a broad meat-like man, in an apron, accosted me, and jerking his thumb over his shoulder said—"Is that your friend?"

"Yes."

"Does he want to starve? If he does, let him live on the prison fare, that's all."

"Who are you?" asked I, not knowing what to make of such an unofficially speaking person in such a place.

"I am the grub-man. Such gentlemen as have friends here, hire me to provide them with something good to eat."

"Is this so?" said I, turning to the turnkey.

He said it was.

"Well then," said I, slipping some silver into the grub-man's hands (for so they called him). "I want you to give particular attention to my friend there; let him have the best dinner you can get. And you must be as polite to him as possible."

"Introduce me, will you?" said the grub-man, looking at me with an expression which seem to say he was all impatience for an opportunity to give a specimen of his breeding.

Thinking it would prove of benefit to the scrivener, I acquiesced; and asking the grub-man his name, went up with him to Bartleby.

"Bartleby, this is Mr. Cutlets; you will find him very useful to you."

"Your sarvant, sir, your sarvant," said the grub-man, making a low salutation behind his apron. "Hope you find it pleasant here, sir;—spacious grounds—cool apartments, sir—hope you'll stay with us some time—try to make it agreeable. May Mrs. Cutlets and I have the pleasure of your company to dinner, sir, in Mrs. Cutlets' private room?"

"I prefer not to dine to-day," said Bartleby, turning away. "It would disagree with me; I am unused to dinners." So saying he slowly moved to the other side of the inclosure, and took up a position fronting the dead-wall.

"How's this?" said the grub-man, addressing me with a stare of astonishment. "He's odd, aint he?"

"I think he is a little deranged," said I, sadly.

"Deranged? deranged is it? Well now, upon my word, I thought that friend of yourn was a gentleman forger; they are always pale and genteel-like, them forgers. I can't pity'em—can't help it, sir. Did you know Monroe Edwards?" he added touchingly, and paused. Then, laying his hand pityingly on my shoulder, sighed, "he died of consumption at Sing-Sing. So you weren't acquainted with Monroe?"

"No, I was never socially acquainted with any forgers. But I cannot stop longer. Look to my friend yonder. You will not lose by it. I will see you again."

Some few days after this, I again obtained admission to the Tombs, and went through the corridors in quest of Bartleby; but without finding him.

"I saw him coming from his cell not long ago," said a turnkey, "may be he's gone to loiter in the yards."

So I went in that direction.

"Are you looking for the silent man?" said another turnkey passing me. "Yonder he lies—sleeping in the yard there. 'Tis not twenty minutes since I saw him lie down."

The yard was entirely quiet. It was not accessible to the common prisoners. The surrounding walls, of amazing thickness, kept off all sounds behind them. The Egyptian character of the masonry weighed upon me with its gloom. But a soft imprisoned turf grew under foot. The heart of the eternal pyramids, it seemed, wherein, by some strange magic, through the clefts, grass-seed, dropped by birds, had sprung.

Strangely huddled at the base of the wall, his knees drawn up, and lying on his side, his head touching the cold stones, I saw the wasted Bartleby. But nothing stirred. I paused; then went close up to him; stooped over, and saw that his dim eyes were open; otherwise he seemed profoundly sleeping. Something prompted me to touch him. I felt his hand, when a tingling shiver ran up my arm and down my spine to my feet.

The round face of the grub-man peered upon me now. "His dinner is ready. Won't he dine to-day, either? Or does he live without dining?"

"Lives without dining," said I, and closed his eyes.

"Eh!—He's asleep, aint he?"

"With kings and counselors," murmured I.

* * * * * * * *

There would seem little need for proceeding further in this history. Imagination will readily supply the meager recital of poor Bartleby's interment. But ere parting with the reader, let me say, that if this little narrative has sufficiently interested him, to awaken curiosity as to who Bartleby was, and what manner of life he led prior to the present narrator's making his acquaintance, I can only reply, that in such curiosity I fully share, but am wholly unable to gratify it. Yet here I hardly know whether I should divulge one little item of rumor, which came to my ear a few months after the scrivener's decease. Upon what basis it rested, I could never ascertain; and hence, how true it is I cannot now tell. But inasmuch as this vague report has not been without certain strange suggestive interest to me, however sad, it may prove the same with some others; and so I will briefly mention it. The report was this: that Bartleby had been a subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office at Washington, from which he had been suddenly removed by a change in the administration. When I think over this rumor, I cannot adequately express the emotions which seize me. Dead letters! does it not sound like dead men? Conceive a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness, can any business seem more fitted to heighten it than that of continually handling these dead letters, and assorting them for the flames? For by the cart-load they are annually burned. Sometimes from out the folded paper the pale clerk takes a ring:—the finger it was meant for, perhaps, moulders in the grave; a bank-note sent in swiftest charity:—he whom it would relieve, nor eats nor hungers any more; pardon for those who died despairing; hope for those who died unhoping; good tidings for those who died stifled by unrelieved calamities. On errands of life, these letters speed to death.

Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!

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5.7: Moore, Alice Ruth "Violets" (1895)

I.

"And she tied a bunch of violets with a tress of her pretty brown hair."

She sat in the yellow glow of the lamplight softly humming these words. It was Easter evening, and the newly risen spring world was slowly sinking to a gentle, rosy, opalescent slumber, sweetly tired of the joy which had pervaded it all day. For in the dawn of the perfect morn, it had arisen, stretched out its arms in glorious happiness to greet the Saviour and said its hallelujahs, merrily trilling out carols of bird, and organ and flower-song. But the evening had come, and rest.

There was a letter lying on the table, it read:

"Dear, I send you this little bunch of flowers as my Easter token. Perhaps you may not be able to read their meaning, so I'll tell you. Violets, you know, are my favorite flowers. Dear, little, human-faced things! They seem always as if about to whisper a love-word; and then they signify that thought which passes always between you and me. The orange blossoms—you know their meaning; the little pinks are the flowers you love; the evergreen leaf is the symbol of the endurance of our affection; the tube-roses I put in, because once when you kissed and pressed me close in your arms, I had a bunch of tube-roses on my bosom, and the heavy fragrance of their crushed loveliness has always lived in my memory. The violets and pinks are from a bunch I wore to-day, and when kneeling at the altar, during communion, did I sin, dear, when I thought of you? The tube-roses and orange-blossoms I wore Friday night; you always wished for a lock of my hair, so I'll tie these flowers with them —but there, it is not stable enough; let me wrap them with a bit of ribbon, pale blue, from that little dress I wore last winter to the dance, when we had such a long, sweet talk in that forgotten nook. You always loved that dress, it fell in such soft ruffles away from the throat and bosom,—you called me your little forget-me-not, that night. I laid the flowers away for awhile in our favorite book,—Byron—just at the poem we loved best, and now I send them to you. Keep them always in remembrance of me, and if aught should occur to separate us, press these flowers to your lips, and I will be with you in spirit, permeating your heart with unutterable love and happiness."

II.

It is Easter again. As of old, the joyous bells clang out the glad news of the resurrection. The giddy, dancing sunbeams laugh riotously in field and street; birds carol their sweet twitterings everywhere, and the heavy perfume of flowers scents the golden atmosphere with inspiring fragrance. One long, golden sunbeam steals silently into the white-curtained window of a quiet room, and lay athwart a sleeping face. Cold, pale, still, its fair, young face pressed against the satin-lined casket. Slender, white fingers, idle now, they that had never known rest; locked softly over a bunch of violets; violets and tube-roses in her soft, brown hair, violets in the bosom of her long, white gown; violets and tube-roses and orange-blossoms banked everywhere, until the air was filled with the ascending souls of the human flowers. Some whispered that a broken heart had ceased to flutter in that still, young form, and that it was a mercy for the soul to ascend on the slender sunbeam. To-day she kneels at the throne of heaven, where one year ago she had communed at an earthly altar.

III.

Far away in a distant city, a man, carelessly looking among some papers, turned over a faded bunch of flowers tied with a blue ribbon and a lock of hair. He paused meditatively awhile, then turning to the regal-looking woman lounging before the fire, he asked:

"Wife, did you ever send me these?"

She raised her great, black eyes to his with a gesture of ineffable disdain, and replied languidly:

"You know very well I can't bear flowers. How could I ever send such sentimental trash to any one? Throw them into the fire."

And the Easter bells chimed a solemn requiem as the flames slowly licked up the faded violets. Was it merely fancy on the wife's part, or did the husband really sigh,—a long, quivering breath of remembrance?

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5.8: Poe, Edgar Allan "The Purloined Letter" (1844)

THE PURLOINED LETTER

> *Nil sapientiae odiosius acumine nimi*
>
> *Seneca.*

At Paris, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18-, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum, in company with my friend C. Auguste Dupin, in his little back library, or book-closet, au troisiême, No. 33, Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain. For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt. I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G—, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years. We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing so, upon G.'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend, about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

"If it is any point requiring reflection," observed Dupin, as he forebore to enkindle the wick, "we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark."

"That is another of your odd notions," said the Prefect, who had a fashion of calling every thing "odd" that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of "oddities."

"Very true," said Dupin, as he supplied his visiter with a pipe, and rolled towards him a comfortable chair.

"And what is the difficulty now?" I asked. "Nothing more in the assassination way, I hope?"

"Oh no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is very simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively odd."

"Simple and odd," said Dupin.

"Why, yes; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a good deal puzzled because the affair is so simple, and yet baffles us altogether."

"Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault," said my friend.

"What nonsense you do talk!" replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

"Perhaps the mystery is a little too plain," said Dupin.

"Oh, good heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?"

"A little too self-evident."

"Ha! ha! ha—ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!" roared our visiter, profoundly amused, "oh, Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!"

"And what, after all, is the matter on hand?" I asked.

"Why, I will tell you," replied the Prefect, as he gave a long, steady and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. "I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold, were it known that I confided it to any one."

"Proceed," said I.

"Or not," said Dupin.

"Well, then; I have received personal information, from a very high quarter, that a certain document of the last importance, has been purloined from the royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his possession."

"How is this known?" asked Dupin.

"It is clearly inferred," replied the Prefect, "from the nature of the document, and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from its passing out of the robber's possession; that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end to employ it."

"Be a little more explicit," I said.

"Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable." The Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

"Still I do not quite understand," said Dupin.

"No? Well; the disclosure of the document to a third person, who shall be nameless, would bring in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendancy over the illustrious personage whose honor and peace are so jeopardized."

"But this ascendancy," I interposed, "would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber. Who would dare—"

"The thief," said G., "is the Minister D—, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal boudoir. During its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavor to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus unexposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D—. His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognises the handwriting of the address, observes the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses, for some fifteen minutes, upon the public affairs. At length, in taking leave, he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but, of course, dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of the third personage who stood at her elbow. The minister decamped; leaving his own letter—one of no importance—upon the table."

"Here, then," said Dupin to me, "you have precisely what you demand to make the ascendancy complete—the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber."

"Yes," replied the Prefect; "and the power thus attained has, for some months past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has committed the matter to me."

"Than whom," said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, "no more sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired, or even imagined."

"You flatter me," replied the Prefect; "but it is possible that some such opinion may have been entertained."

"It is clear," said I, "as you observe, that the letter is still in possession of the minister; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs."

"True," said G.; "and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the minister's hotel; and here my chief embarrassment lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our design."

"But," said I, "you are quite au fait in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often before."

"O yes; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's apartment, and, being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have keys, as you know, with which I can open any chamber or cabinet in Paris. For three months a night has not passed, during the greater part of which I have not been engaged, personally, in ransacking the D— Hotel. My honor is interested, and, to mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it is possible that the paper can be concealed."

"But is it not possible," I suggested, "that although the letter may be in possession of the minister, as it unquestionably is, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?"

"This is barely possible," said Dupin. "The present peculiar condition of affairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D— is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its susceptibility of being produced at a moment's notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession."

"Its susceptibility of being produced?" said I.

"That is to say, of being destroyed," said Dupin.

"True," I observed; "the paper is clearly then upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the minister, we may consider that as out of the question."

"Entirely," said the Prefect. "He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched under my own inspection."

"You might have spared yourself this trouble," said Dupin. "D—, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have

anticipated these waylayings, as a matter of course."

"Not altogether a fool," said G., "but then he's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool."

"True," said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, "although I have been guilty of certain doggrel myself."

"Suppose you detail," said I, "the particulars of your search."

"Why the fact is, we took our time, and we searched every where. I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room; devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a secret drawer is impossible. Any man is a dolt who permits a 'secret' drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is so plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—of space—to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of a line could not escape us. After the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops."

"Why so?"

"Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furniture, is removed by the person wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bedposts are employed in the same way."

"But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?" I asked.

"By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton be placed around it. Besides, in our case, we were obliged to proceed without noise."

"But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces all articles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin spiral roll, not differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You did not take to pieces all the chairs?"

"Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and, indeed the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope. Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the glueing—any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to insure detection."

"I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and the plates, and you probed the beds and the bed-clothes, as well as the curtains and carpets."

"That of course; and when we had absolutely completed every particle of the furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed; then we scrutinized each individual square inch throughout the premises, including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope, as before."

"The two houses adjoining!" I exclaimed; "you must have had a great deal of trouble."

"We had; but the reward offered is prodigious!"

"You include the grounds about the houses?"

"All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed."

"You looked among D—'s papers, of course, and into the books of the library?"

"Certainly; we opened every package and parcel; we not only opened every book, but we turned over every leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of our police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book-cover, with the most accurate admeasurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed, longitudinally, with the needles."

"You explored the floors beneath the carpets?"

"Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet, and examined the boards with the microscope."

"And the paper on the walls?"

"Yes."

"You looked into the cellars?"

"We did."

"Then," I said, "you have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is not upon the premises, as you suppose."

"I fear you are right there," said the Prefect. "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?"

"To make a thorough re-search of the premises."

"That is absolutely needless," replied G—. "I am not more sure that I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the Hotel."

"I have no better advice to give you," said Dupin. "You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?"

"Oh yes!"—And here the Prefect, producing a memorandum-book proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and especially of the external appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure, more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before. In about a month afterwards he paid us another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said,—

"Well, but G—, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as overreaching the Minister?"

"Confound him, say I—yes; I made the re-examination, however, as Dupin suggested—but it was all labor lost, as I knew it would be."

"How much was the reward offered, did you say?" asked Dupin.

"Why, a very great deal—a very liberal reward—I don't like to say how much, precisely; but one thing I will say, that I wouldn't mind giving my individual check for fifty thousand francs to any one who could obtain me that letter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I have done."

"Why, yes," said Dupin, drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschaum, "I really—think, G—, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost in this matter. You might—do a little more, I think, eh?"

"How?—in what way?'

"Why—puff, puff—you might—puff, puff—employ counsel in the matter, eh?—puff, puff, puff. Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?"

"No; hang Abernethy!"

"To be sure! hang him and welcome. But, once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of spunging upon this Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case to the physician, as that of an imaginary individual.

"'We will suppose,' said the miser, 'that his symptoms are such and such; now, doctor, what would you have directed him to take?'

"'Take!' said Abernethy, 'why, take advice, to be sure.'"

"But," said the Prefect, a little discomposed, "I am perfectly willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would really give fifty thousand francs to any one who would aid me in the matter."

"In that case," replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a check-book, "you may as well fill me up a check for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it, I will hand you the letter."

I was astounded. The Prefect appeared absolutely thunder-stricken. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a check for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latter examined it carefully and deposited it in his pocket-book; then, unlocking an escritoire, took thence a letter and gave it to the Prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the check.

When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

"The Parisian police," he said, "are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G— detailed to us his mode of searching the premises at the Hotel D—, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labors extended."

"So far as his labors extended?" said I.

"Yes," said Dupin. "The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it."

I merely laughed—but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

"The measures, then," he continued, "were good in their kind, and well executed; their defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man. A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed, to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs by being too deep or too shallow, for the matter in hand; and many a schoolboy is a better reasoner than he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success at guessing in the game of 'even and odd' attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all

the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his opponents. For example, an arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hand, asks, ‘are they even or odd?’ Our schoolboy replies, ‘odd,’ and loses; but upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, ‘the simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second; I will therefore guess odd;’—he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first, he would have reasoned thus: ‘This fellow finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and, in the second, he will propose to himself, upon the first impulse, a simple variation from even to odd, as did the first simpleton; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even;’—he guesses even, and wins. Now this mode of reasoning in the schoolboy, whom his fellows termed ‘lucky,’—what, in its last analysis, is it?”

“It is merely,” I said, “an identification of the reasoner’s intellect with that of his opponent.”

“It is,” said Dupin; “and, upon inquiring of the boy by what means he effected the thorough identification in which his success consisted, I received answer as follows: ‘When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.’ This response of the schoolboy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to Rochefoucault, to La Bougive, to Machiavelli, and to Campanella.”

“And the identification,” I said, “of the reasoner’s intellect with that of his opponent, depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent’s intellect is admeasured.”

“For its practical value it depends upon this,” replied Dupin; “and the Prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and, secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their own ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which they would have hidden it. They are right in this much—that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of the mass; but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of principle in their investigations; at best, when urged by some unusual emergency—by some extraordinary reward—they extend or exaggerate their old modes of practice, without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case of D—, has been done to vary the principle of action? What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches—what is it all but an exaggeration of the application of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that all men proceed to conceal a letter,—not exactly in a gimlet hole bored in a chair-leg—but, at least, in some out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg? And do you not see also, that such recherchés nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordinary occasions, and would be adopted only by ordinary intellects; for, in all cases of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this recherché manner,—is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience, and determination of the seekers; and where the case is of importance—or, what amounts to the same thing in the policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude,—the qualities in question have never been known to fail. You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden any where within the limits of the Prefect’s examination—in other words, had the principle of its concealment been comprehended within the principles of the Prefect—its discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the Minister is a fool, because he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets; this the Prefect feels; and he is merely guilty of a non distributio medii in thence inferring that all poets are fools.”

“But is this really the poet?” I asked. “There are two brothers, I know; and both have attained reputation in letters. The Minister I believe has written learnedly on the Differential Calculus. He is a mathematician, and no poet.”

“You are mistaken; I know him well; he is both. As poet and mathematician, he would reason well; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect.”

“You surprise me,” I said, “by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at

naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as the reason par excellence."

"'Il y a à parièr,'" replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, "'que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue est une sottise, car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre.' The mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinuated the term 'analysis' into application to algebra. The French are the originators of this particular deception; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability—then 'analysis' conveys 'algebra' about as much as, in Latin, 'ambitus' implies 'ambition,' 'religio' 'religion,' or 'homines honesti,' a set of honorablemen."

"You have a quarrel on hand, I see," said I, "with some of the algebraists of Paris; but proceed."

"I dispute the availability, and thus the value, of that reason which is cultivated in any especial form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute, in particular, the reason educed by mathematical study. The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called pure algebra, are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are not axioms of general truth. What is true of relation—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually untrue that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry also the axiom fails. In the consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not, necessarily, a value when united, equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of relation. But the mathematician argues, from his finite truths, through habit, as if they were of an absolutely general applicability—as the world indeed imagines them to be. Bryant, in his very learned 'Mythology,' mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that 'although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing realities.' With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves, the 'Pagan fables' are believed, and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of memory, as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short, I never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that x^2+px was absolutely and unconditionally equal to q. Say to one of these gentlemen, by way of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur where x^2+px is not altogether equal to q, and, having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for, beyond doubt, he will endeavor to knock you down.

"I mean to say," continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last observations, "that if the Minister had been no more than a mathematician, the Prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this check. I know him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted to his capacity, with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I knew him as a courtier, too, and as a bold intriguant. Such a man, I considered, could not fail to be aware of the ordinary policial modes of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the Prefect as certain aids to his success, I regarded only as ruses, to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G—, in fact, did finally arrive—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt, also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just now, concerning the invariable principle of policial action in searches for articles concealed—I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the Minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise all the ordinary nooks of concealment. He could not, I reflected, be so weak as not to see that the most intricate and remote recess of his hotel would be as open as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets, and to the microscopes of the Prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to simplicity, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice. You will remember, perhaps, how desperately the Prefect laughed when I suggested, upon our first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so very self-evident."

"Yes," said I, "I remember his merriment well. I really thought he would have fallen into convulsions."

"The material world," continued Dupin, "abounds with very strict analogies to the immaterial; and thus some color of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the vis inertiæ, for example, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent momentum is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is, in the latter, that

intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. Again: have you ever noticed which of the street signs, over the shop-doors, are the most attractive of attention?"

"I have never given the matter a thought," I said.

"There is a game of puzzles," he resumed, "which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word—the name of town, river, state or empire—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names; but the adept selects such words as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the understanding of the Prefect. He never once thought it probable, or possible, that the Minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world, by way of best preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

"But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity of D—; upon the fact that the document must always have been at hand, if he intended to use it to good purpose; and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary's ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal this letter, the Minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all.

"Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles, and called one fine morning, quite by accident, at the Ministerial hotel. I found D— at home, yawning, lounging, and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the last extremity of ennui. He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive—but that is only when nobody sees him.

"To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation of my host.

"I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon which lay confusedly, some miscellaneous letters and other papers, with one or two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

"At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery fillagree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantel-piece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two, across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless, had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D— cipher very conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to D—, the minister, himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the uppermost divisions of the rack.

"No sooner had I glanced at this letter, than I concluded it to be that of which I was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which the Prefect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was large and black, with the D— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal arms of the S— family. Here, the address, to the Minister, diminutive and feminine; there the superscription, to a certain royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence. But, then, the radicalness of these differences, which was excessive; the dirt; the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the true methodical habits of D—, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document; these things, together with the hyper-obtrusive situation of this document, full in the view of every visiter, and thus exactly in accordance with the conclusions to which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion, in one who came with the intention to suspect.

"I protracted my visit as long as possible, and, while I maintained a most animated discussion with the Minister upon a topic which I knew well had never failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter. In this examination, I committed to memory its external appearance and arrangement in the rack; and also fell, at length, upon a discovery which set at rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. In scrutinizing the edges of the paper, I observed them to be more chafed than seemed necessary. They presented the broken appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reversed direction, in the same creases or edges which had formed the original fold. This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, re-directed, and re-sealed. I bade the Minister good morning,

and took my departure at once, leaving a gold snuff-box upon the table.

“The next morning I called for the snuff-box, when we resumed, quite eagerly, the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report, as if of a pistol, was heard immediately beneath the windows of the hotel, and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a terrified mob. D— rushed to a casement, threw it open, and looked out. In the meantime, I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a fac-simile, (so far as regards externals,) which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings—imitating the D— cipher, very readily, by means of a seal formed of bread.

“The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behavior of a man with a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard. When he had gone, D— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterwards I bade him farewell. The pretended lunatic was a man in my own pay.”

“But what purpose had you,” I asked, “in replacing the letter by a fac-simile? Would it not have been better, at the first visit, to have seized it openly, and departed?”

“D—,” replied Dupin, “is a desperate man, and a man of nerve. His hotel, too, is not without attendants devoted to his interests. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might never have left the Ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter, I act as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the Minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. Thus will he inevitably commit himself, at once, to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will not be more precipitate than awkward. It is all very well to talk about the facilis descensus Averni; but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that monstrum horrendum, an unprincipled man of genius. I confess, however, that I should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts, when, being defied by her whom the Prefect terms ‘a certain personage’ he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack.”

“How? did you put any thing particular in it?”

“Why—it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would have been insulting. D—, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humoredly, that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clue. He is well acquainted with my MS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words—

“‘— — Un dessein si funeste, S’il n’est digne d’Atrée, est digne de Thyeste. They are to be found in Crebillon’s ‘Atrée.’”

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5.9: Wilde, Oscar "The Nightingale and the Rose" (1888)

“She said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses,” cried the young Student; “but in all my garden there is no red rose.”

From her nest in the holm-oak tree the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves, and wondered.

“No red rose in all my garden!” he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. “Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched.”

“Here at last is a true lover,” said the Nightingale. “Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not: night after night have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow.”

“The Prince gives a ball to-morrow night,” murmured the young Student, “and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break.”

“Here indeed is the true lover,” said the Nightingale. “What I sing of, he suffers—what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely Love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the marketplace. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.”

“The musicians will sit in their gallery,” said the young Student, “and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her”; and he flung himself down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands, and wept.

“Why is he weeping?” asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

“Why, indeed?” said a Butterfly, who was fluttering about after a sunbeam.

“Why, indeed?” whispered a Daisy to his neighbour, in a soft, low voice.

“He is weeping for a red rose,” said the Nightingale.

“For a red rose?” they cried; “how very ridiculous!” and the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic, laughed outright.

But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student’s sorrow, and she sat silent in the oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of Love.

Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.

In the centre of the grass-plot was standing a beautiful Rose-tree, and when she saw it she flew over to it, and lit upon a spray.

“Give me a red rose,” she cried, “and I will sing you my sweetest song.”

But the Tree shook its head.

“My roses are white,” it answered; “as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. But go to my brother who grows round the old sun-dial, and perhaps he will give you what you want.”

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing round the old sun-dial.

“Give me a red rose,” she cried, “and I will sing you my sweetest song.”

But the Tree shook its head.

“My roses are yellow,” it answered; “as yellow as the hair of the mermaiden who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow before the mower comes with his scythe. But go to my brother who grows beneath the Student’s window, and perhaps he will give you what you want.”

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing beneath the Student’s window.

“Give me a red rose,” she cried, “and I will sing you my sweetest song.”

But the Tree shook its head.

“My roses are red,” it answered, “as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave and wave in the ocean-cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and the storm has broken my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year.”

“One red rose is all I want,” cried the Nightingale, “only one red rose! Is there no way by which I can get it?”

"There is a way," answered the Tree; "but it is so terrible that I dare not tell it to you."

"Tell it to me," said the Nightingale, "I am not afraid."

"If you want a red rose," said the Tree, "you must build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with your own heart's-blood. You must sing to me with your breast against a thorn. All night long you must sing to me, and the thorn must pierce your heart, and your life-blood must flow into my veins, and become mine."

"Death is a great price to pay for a red rose," cried the Nightingale, "and Life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the Moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?"

So she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She swept over the garden like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed through the grove.

The young Student was still lying on the grass, where she had left him, and the tears were not yet dry in his beautiful eyes.

"Be happy," cried the Nightingale, "be happy; you shall have your red rose. I will build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with my own heart's-blood. All that I ask of you in return is that you will be a true lover, for Love is wiser than Philosophy, though she is wise, and mightier than Power, though he is mighty. Flame-coloured are his wings, and coloured like flame is his body. His lips are sweet as honey, and his breath is like frankincense."

The Student looked up from the grass, and listened, but he could not understand what the Nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written down in books.

But the Oak-tree understood, and felt sad, for he was very fond of the little Nightingale who had built her nest in his branches.

"Sing me one last song," he whispered; "I shall feel very lonely when you are gone."

So the Nightingale sang to the Oak-tree, and her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar.

When she had finished her song the Student got up, and pulled a note-book and a lead-pencil out of his pocket.

"She has form," he said to himself, as he walked away through the grove—"that cannot be denied to her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style, without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still, it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good." And he went into his room, and lay down on his little pallet-bed, and began to think of his love; and, after a time, he fell asleep.

And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang, and the thorn went deeper and deeper into her breast, and her life-blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the top-most spray of the Rose-tree there blossomed a marvellous rose, petal following petal, as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river—pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water-pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose's heart remained white, for only a Nightingale's heart's-blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvellous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking her in her throat.

Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose

heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

“Look, look!” cried the Tree, “the rose is finished now”; but the Nightingale made no answer, for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

And at noon the Student opened his window and looked out.

“Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!” he cried; “here is a red rose! I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has a long Latin name”; and he leaned down and plucked it.

Then he put on his hat, and ran up to the Professor’s house with the rose in his hand.

The daughter of the Professor was sitting in the doorway winding blue silk on a reel, and her little dog was lying at her feet.

“You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose,” cried the Student. “Here is the reddest rose in all the world. You will wear it to-night next your heart, and as we dance together it will tell you how I love you.”

But the girl frowned.

“I am afraid it will not go with my dress,” she answered; “and, besides, the Chamberlain’s nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers.”

“Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful,” said the Student angrily; and he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter, and a cart-wheel went over it.

“Ungrateful!” said the girl. “I tell you what, you are very rude; and, after all, who are you? Only a Student. Why, I don’t believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the Chamberlain’s nephew has”; and she got up from her chair and went into the house.

“What a silly thing Love is,” said the Student as he walked away. “It is not half as useful as Logic, for it does not prove anything, and it is always telling one of things that are not going to happen, and making one believe things that are not true. In fact, it is quite unpractical, and, as in this age to be practical is everything, I shall go back to Philosophy and study Metaphysics.”

So he returned to his room and pulled out a great dusty book, and began to read.

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5.10: Woolf, Virginia "Kew Gardens" (1921)

FROM THE OVAL-SHAPED flower-bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks spreading into heart-shaped or tongue-shaped leaves half way up and unfurling at the tip red or blue or yellow petals marked with spots of colour raised upon the surface; and from the red, blue or yellow gloom of the throat emerged a straight bar, rough with gold dust and slightly clubbed at the end. The petals were voluminous enough to be stirred by the summer breeze, and when they moved, the red, blue and yellow lights passed one over the other, staining an inch of the brown earth beneath with a spot of the most intricate colour. The light fell either upon the smooth, grey back of a pebble, or, the shell of a snail with its brown, circular veins, or falling into a raindrop, it expanded with such intensity of red, blue and yellow the thin walls of water that one expected them to burst and disappear. Instead, the drop was left in a second silver grey once more, and the light now settled upon the flesh of a leaf, revealing the branching thread of fibre beneath the surface, and again it moved on and spread its illumination in the vast green spaces beneath the dome of the heart-shaped and tongue-shaped leaves. Then the breeze stirred rather more briskly overhead and the colour was flashed into the air above, into the eyes of the men and women who walk in Kew Gardens in July.

The figures of these men and women straggled past the flower-bed with a curiously irregular movement not unlike that of the white and blue butterflies who crossed the turf in zig-zag flights from bed to bed. The man was about six inches in front of the woman, strolling carelessly, while she bore on with greater purpose, only turning her head now and then to see that the children were not too far behind. The man kept this distance in front of the woman purposely, though perhaps unconsciously, for he wished to go on with his thoughts.

"Fifteen years ago I came here with Lily," he thought. "We sat somewhere over there by a lake and I begged her to marry me all through the hot afternoon. How the dragonfly kept circling round us: how clearly I see the dragonfly and her shoe with the square silver buckle at the toe. All the time I spoke I saw her shoe and when it moved impatiently I knew without looking up what she was going to say: the whole of her seemed to be in her shoe. And my love, my desire, were in the dragonfly; for some reason I thought that if it settled there, on that leaf, the broad one with the red flower in the middle of it, if the dragonfly settled on the leaf she would say 'Yes' at once. But the dragonfly went round and round: it never settled anywhere–of course not, happily not, or I shouldn't be walking here with Eleanor and the children–Tell me, Eleanor. D'you ever think of the past?"

"Why do you ask, Simon?"

"Because I've been thinking of the past. I've been thinking of Lily, the woman I might have married.... Well, why are you silent? Do you mind my thinking of the past?"

"Why should I mind, Simon? Doesn't one always think of the past, in a garden with men and women lying under the trees? Aren't they one's past, all that remains of it, those men and women, those ghosts lying under the trees,... one's happiness, one's reality?"

"For me, a square silver shoe buckle and a dragonfly–"

"For me, a kiss. Imagine six little girls sitting before their easels twenty years ago, down by the side of a lake, painting the water-lilies, the first red water-lilies I'd ever seen. And suddenly a kiss, there on the back of my neck. And my hand shook all the afternoon so that I couldn't paint. I took out my watch and marked the hour when I would allow myself to think of the kiss for five minutes only–it was so precious–the kiss of an old grey-haired woman with a wart on her nose, the mother of all my kisses all my life. Come, Caroline, come, Hubert."

They walked on the past the flower-bed, now walking four abreast, and soon diminished in size among the trees and looked half transparent as the sunlight and shade swam over their backs in large trembling irregular patches.

In the oval flower bed the snail, whose shell had been stained red, blue, and yellow for the space of two minutes or so, now appeared to be moving very slightly in its shell, and next began to labour over the crumbs of loose earth which broke away and rolled down as it passed over them. It appeared to have a definite goal in front of it, differing in this respect from the singular high stepping angular green insect who attempted to cross in front of it, and waited for a second with its antennæ trembling as if in deliberation, and then stepped off as rapidly and strangely in the opposite direction. Brown cliffs with deep green lakes in the hollows, flat, blade-like trees that waved from root to tip, round boulders of grey stone, vast crumpled surfaces of a thin crackling texture–all these objects lay across the snail's progress between one stalk and another to his goal. Before he had decided whether to circumvent the arched tent of a dead leaf or to breast it there came past the bed the feet of other human beings.

This time they were both men. The younger of the two wore an expression of perhaps unnatural calm; he raised his eyes and fixed them very steadily in front of him while his companion spoke, and directly his companion had done speaking he looked on the ground again and sometimes opened his lips only after a long pause and sometimes did not open them at all. The elder man had a curiously uneven and shaky method of walking,

jerking his hand forward and throwing up his head abruptly, rather in the manner of an impatient carriage horse tired of waiting outside a house; but in the man these gestures were irresolute and pointless. He talked almost incessantly; he smiled to himself and again began to talk, as if the smile had been an answer. He was talking about spirits–the spirits of the dead, who, according to him, were even now telling him all sorts of odd things about their experiences in Heaven.

"Heaven was known to the ancients as Thessaly, William, and now, with this war, the spirit matter is rolling between the hills like thunder." He paused, seemed to listen, smiled, jerked his head and continued:–

"You have a small electric battery and a piece of rubber to insulate the wire–isolate?–insulate?–well, we'll skip the details, no good going into details that wouldn't be understood–and in short the little machine stands in any convenient position by the head of the bed, we will say, on a neat mahogany stand. All arrangements being properly fixed by workmen under my direction, the widow applies her ear and summons the spirit by sign as agreed. Women! Widows! Women in black–"

Here he seemed to have caught sight of a woman's dress in the distance, which in the shade looked a purple black. He took off his hat, placed his hand upon his heart, and hurried towards her muttering and gesticulating feverishly. But William caught him by the sleeve and touched a flower with the tip of his walking-stick in order to divert the old man's attention. After looking at it for a moment in some confusion the old man bent his ear to it and seemed to answer a voice speaking from it, for he began talking about the forests of Uruguay which he had visited hundreds of years ago in company with the most beautiful young woman in Europe. He could be heard murmuring about forests of Uruguay blanketed with the wax petals of tropical roses, nightingales, sea beaches, mermaids, and women drowned at sea, as he suffered himself to be moved on by William, upon whose face the look of stoical patience grew slowly deeper and deeper.

Following his steps so closely as to be slightly puzzled by his gestures came two elderly women of the lower middle class, one stout and ponderous, the other rosy cheeked and nimble. Like most people of their station they were frankly fascinated by any signs of eccentricity betokening a disordered brain, especially in the well-to-do; but they were too far off to be certain whether the gestures were merely eccentric or genuinely mad. After they had scrutinised the old man's back in silence for a moment and given each other a queer, sly look, they went on energetically piecing together their very complicated dialogue:

"Nell, Bert, Lot, Cess, Phil, Pa, he says, I says, she says, I says, I says, I says–"

"My Bert, Sis, Bill, Grandad, the old man, sugar,

Sugar, flour, kippers, greens, Sugar, sugar, sugar." The ponderous woman looked through the pattern of falling words at the flowers standing cool, firm, and upright in the earth, with a curious expression. She saw them as a sleeper waking from a heavy sleep sees a brass candlestick reflecting the light in an unfamiliar way, and closes his eyes and opens them, and seeing the brass candlestick again, finally starts broad awake and stares at the candlestick with all his powers. So the heavy woman came to a standstill opposite the oval-shaped flower bed, and ceased even to pretend to listen to what the other woman was saying. She stood there letting the words fall over her, swaying the top part of her body slowly backwards and forwards, looking at the flowers. Then she suggested that they should find a seat and have their tea. The snail had now considered every possible method of reaching his goal without going round the dead leaf or climbing over it. Let alone the effort needed for climbing a leaf, he was doubtful whether the thin texture which vibrated with such an alarming crackle when touched even by the tip of his horns would bear his weight; and this determined him finally to creep beneath it, for there was a point where the leaf curved high enough from the ground to admit him. He had just inserted his head in the opening and was taking stock of the high brown roof and was getting used to the cool brown light when two other people came past outside on the turf. This time they were both young, a young man and a young woman. They were both in the prime of youth, or even in that season which precedes the prime of youth, the season before the smooth pink folds of the flower have burst their gummy case, when the wings of the butterfly, though fully grown, are motionless in the sun.

"Lucky it isn't Friday," he observed.

"Why? D'you believe in luck?"

"They make you pay sixpence on Friday."

"What's sixpence anyway? Isn't it worth sixpence?"

"What's 'it'–what do you mean by 'it'?"

"O, anything–I mean–you know what I mean."

Long pauses came between each of these remarks; they were uttered in toneless and monotonous voices. The couple stood still on the edge of the flower bed, and together pressed the end of her parasol deep down into the soft earth. The action and the fact that his hand rested on the top of hers expressed their feelings in a strange way, as these short insignificant words also expressed something, words with short wings for their heavy body of meaning, inadequate to carry them far and thus alighting awkwardly upon the very common objects that surrounded them, and were to their inexperienced touch so

massive; but who knows (so they thought as they pressed the parasol into the earth) what precipices aren't concealed in them, or what slopes of ice don't shine in the sun on the other side? Who knows? Who has ever seen this before? Even when she wondered what sort of tea they gave you at Kew, he felt that something loomed up behind her words, and stood vast and solid behind them; and the mist very slowly rose and uncovered–O, Heavens, what were those shapes?–little white tables, and waitresses who looked first at her and then at him; and there was a bill that he would pay with a real two shilling piece, and it was real, all real, he assured himself, fingering the coin in his pocket, real to everyone except to him and to her; even to him it began to seem real; and then–but it was too exciting to stand and think any longer, and he pulled the parasol out of the earth with a jerk and was impatient to find the place where one had tea with other people, like other people.

"Come along, Trissie; it's time we had our tea."

"Wherever does one have one's tea?" she asked with the oddest thrill of excitement in her voice, looking vaguely round and letting herself be drawn on down the grass path, trailing her parasol, turning her head this way and that way, forgetting her tea, wishing to go down there and then down there, remembering orchids and cranes among wild flowers, a Chinese pagoda and a crimson crested bird; but he bore her on.

Thus one couple after another with much the same irregular and aimless movement passed the flower-bed and were enveloped in layer after layer of green blue vapour, in which at first their bodies had substance and a dash of colour, but later both substance and colour dissolved in the green-blue atmosphere. How hot it was! So hot that even the thrush chose to hop, like a mechanical bird, in the shadow of the flowers, with long pauses between one movement and the next; instead of rambling vaguely the white butterflies danced one above another, making with their white shifting flakes the outline of a shattered marble column above the tallest flowers; the glass roofs of the palm house shone as if a whole market full of shiny green umbrellas had opened in the sun; and in the drone of the aeroplane the voice of the summer sky murmured its fierce soul. Yellow and black, pink and snow white, shapes of all these colours, men, women, and children were spotted for a second upon the horizon, and then, seeing the breadth of yellow that lay upon the grass, they wavered and sought shade beneath the trees, dissolving like drops of water in the yellow and green atmosphere, staining it faintly with red and blue. It seemed as if all gross and heavy bodies had sunk down in the heat motionless and lay huddled upon the ground, but their voices went wavering from them as if they were flames lolling from the thick waxen bodies of candles. Voices. Yes, voices. Wordless voices, breaking the silence suddenly with such depth of contentment, such passion of desire, or, in the voices of children, such freshness of surprise; breaking the silence? But there was no silence; all the time the motor omnibuses were turning their wheels and changing their gear; like a vast nest of Chinese boxes all of wrought steel turning ceaselessly one within another the city murmured; on the top of which the voices cried aloud and the petals of myriads of flowers flashed their colours into the air.

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5.11: Cather, Willa. "On the Gull's Road" (1908)

I

It often happens that one or another of my friends stops before a red chalk drawing in my study and asks me where I ever found so lovely a creature. I have never told the story of that picture to any one, and the beautiful woman on the wall, until yesterday, in all these twenty years has spoken to no one but me. Yesterday a young painter, a countryman of mine, came to consult me on a matter of business, and upon seeing my drawing of Alexandra Ebbling, straightway forgot his errand. He examined the date upon the sketch and asked me, very earnestly, if I could tell him whether the lady were still living. When I answered him, he stepped back from the picture and said slowly:

“So long ago? She must have been very young. She was happy?”

“As to that, who can say — about any one of us?” I replied. “Out of all that is supposed to make for happiness, she had very little.”

We returned to the object of his visit, but when he bade me goodbye at the door his troubled gaze again went back to the drawing, and it was only by turning sharply about that he took his eyes away from her.

I went back to my study fire, and as the rain kept away less impetuous visitors, I had a long time in which to think of Mrs. Ebbling. I even got out the little box she gave me, which I had not opened for years, and when Mrs. Hemway brought my tea I had barely time to close the lid and defeat her disapproving gaze.

My young countryman’s perplexity, as he looked at Mrs. Ebbling, had recalled to me the delight and pain she gave me when I was of his years. I sat looking at her face and trying to see it through his eyes — freshly, as I saw it first upon the deck of the Germania, twenty years ago. Was it her loveliness, I often ask myself, or her loneliness, or her simplicity, or was it merely my own youth? Was her mystery only that of the mysterious North out of which she came? I still feel that she was very different from all the beautiful and brilliant women I have known; as the night is different from the day, or as the sea is different from the land. But this is our story, as it comes back to me.

For two years I had been studying Italian and working in the capacity of clerk to the American legation at Rome, and I was going home to secure my first consular appointment. Upon boarding my steamer at Genoa, I saw my luggage into my cabin and then started for a rapid circuit of the deck. Everything promised well. The boat was thinly peopled, even for a July crossing; the decks were roomy; the day was fine; the sea was blue; I was sure of my appointment, and, best of all, I was coming back to Italy. All these things were in my mind when I stopped sharply before a chaise longue placed sidewise near the stern. Its occupant was a woman, apparently ill, who lay with her eyes closed, and in her open arm was a chubby little red-haired girl, asleep. I can still remember that first glance at Mrs. Ebbling, and how I stopped as a wheel does when the band slips. Her splendid, vigorous body lay still and relaxed under the loose folds of her clothing, her white throat and arms and red-gold hair were drenched with sunlight. Such hair as it was: wayward as some kind of gleaming seaweed that curls and undulates with the tide. A moment gave me her face; the high cheek-bones, the thin cheeks, the gentle chin, arching back to a girlish throat, and the singular loveliness of the mouth. Even then it flashed through me that the mouth gave the whole face its peculiar beauty and distinction. It was proud and sad and tender, and strangely calm. The curve of the lips could not have been cut more cleanly with the most delicate instrument, and whatever shade of feeling passed over them seemed to partake of their exquisiteness.

But I am anticipating. While I stood stupidly staring (as if, at twenty-five, I had never before beheld a beautiful woman) the whistles broke into a hoarse scream, and the deck under us began to vibrate. The woman opened her eyes, and the little girl struggled into a sitting position, rolled out of her mother’s arm, and ran to the deck rail. After putting my chair near the stern, I went forward to see the gang-plank up and did not return until we were dragging out to sea at the end of a long tow-line.

The woman in the chaise longue was still alone. She lay there all day, looking at the sea. The little girl, Carin, played noisily about the deck. Occasionally she returned and struggled up into the chair, plunged her head, round and red as a little pumpkin, against her mother’s shoulder in an impetuous embrace, and then struggled down again with a lively flourishing of arms and legs. Her mother took such opportunities to pull up the child’s socks or to smooth the fiery little braids; her beautiful hands, rather large and very white, played about the riotous little girl with a quieting tenderness. Carin chattered away in Italian and kept asking for her father, only to be told that he was busy.

When any of the ship’s officers passed, they stopped for a word with my neighbor, and I heard the first mate address her as Mrs. Ebbling. When they spoke to her, she smiled appreciatively and answered in low, faltering Italian, but I fancied that she was glad when they passed on and left her to her fixed contemplation of the sea. Her eyes seemed to drink the color of it all day long, and after every interruption they went back to it. There was a

kind of pleasure in watching her satisfaction, a kind of excitement in wondering what the water made her remember or forget. She seemed not to wish to talk to any one, but I knew I should like to hear whatever she might be thinking. One could catch some hint of her thoughts, I imagined, from the shadows that came and went across her lips, like the reflection of light clouds. She had a pile of books beside her, but she did not read, and neither could I. I gave up trying at last, and watched the sea, very conscious of her presence, almost of her thoughts. When the sun dropped low and shone in her face, I rose and asked if she would like me to move her chair. She smiled and thanked me, but said the sun was good for her. Her yellow-hazel eyes followed me for a moment and then went back to the sea.

After the first bugle sounded for dinner, a heavy man in uniform came up the deck and stood beside the chaise longue, looking down at its two occupants with a smile of satisfied possession. The breast of his trim coat was hidden by waves of soft blond beard, as long and heavy as a woman's hair, which blew about his face in glittering profusion. He wore a large turquoise ring upon the thick hand that he rubbed good-humoredly over the little girl's head. To her he spoke Italian, but he and his wife conversed in some Scandinavian tongue. He stood stroking his fine beard until the second bugle blew, then bent stiffly from his hips, like a soldier, and patted his wife's hand as it lay on the arm of her chair. He hurried down the deck, taking stock of the passengers as he went, and stopped before a thin girl with frizzed hair and a lace coat, asking her a facetious question in thick English. They began to talk about Chicago and went below. Later I saw him at the head of his table in the dining room, the befrizzed Chicago lady on his left. They must have got a famous start at luncheon, for by the end of the dinner Ebbling was peeling figs for her and presenting them on the end of a fork.

The Doctor confided to me that Ebbling was the chief engineer and the dandy of the boat; but this time he would have to behave himself, for he had brought his sick wife along for the voyage. She had a bad heart valve, he added, and was in a serious way.

After dinner Ebbling disappeared, presumably to his engines, and at ten o'clock, when the stewardess came to put Mrs. Ebbling to bed, I helped her to rise from her chair, and the second mate ran up and supported her down to her cabin. About midnight I found the engineer in the card room, playing with the Doctor, an Italian naval officer, and the commodore of a Long Island yacht club. His face was even pinker than it had been at dinner, and his fine beard was full of smoke. I thought a long while about Ebbling and his wife before I went to sleep.

The next morning we tied up at Naples to take on our cargo, and I went on shore for the day. I did not, however, entirely escape the ubiquitous engineer, whom I saw lunching with the Long Island commodore at a hotel in the Santa Lucia. When I returned to the boat in the early evening, the passengers had gone down to dinner, and I found Mrs. Ebbling quite alone upon the deserted deck. I approached her and asked whether she had had a dull day. She looked up smiling and shook her head, as if her Italian had quite failed her. I saw that she was flushed with excitement, and her yellow eyes were shining like two clear topazes.

"Dull? Oh, no! I love to watch Naples from the sea, in this white heat. She has just lain there on her hillside among the vines and laughed for me all day long. I have been able to pick out many of the places I like best."

I felt that she was really going to talk to me at last. She had turned to me frankly, as to an old acquaintance, and seemed not to be hiding from me anything of what she felt. I sat down in a glow of pleasure and excitement and asked her if she knew Naples well.

"Oh, yes! I lived there for a year after I was first married. My husband has a great many friends in Naples. But he was at sea most of the time, so I went about alone. Nothing helps one to know a city like that. I came first by sea, like this. Directly to Naples from Finmark, and I had never been South before." Mrs. Ebbling stopped and looked over my shoulder. Then, with a quick, eager glance at me, she said abruptly: "It was like a baptism of fire. Nothing has ever been quite the same since. Imagine how this bay looked to a Finmark girl. It seemed like the overture to Italy."

I laughed. "And then one goes up the country — song by song and wine by wine."

Mrs. Ebbling sighed. "Ah, yes. It must be fine to follow it. I have never been away from the seaports myself. We live now in Genoa."

The deck steward brought her tray, and I moved forward a little and stood by the rail. When I looked back, she smiled and nodded to let me know that she was not missing anything. I could feel her intentness as keenly as if she were standing beside me.

The sun had disappeared over the high ridge behind the city, and the stone pines stood black and flat against the fires of the afterglow. The lilac haze that hung over the long, lazy slopes of Vesuvius warmed with golden light, and films of blue vapor began to float down toward Baiae. The sky, the sea, and the city between them turned a shimmering violet, fading grayer as the lights began to glow like luminous pearls along the water-front, — the necklace of an irreclaimable queen. Behind me I heard a low exclamation; a slight, stifled sound, but it seemed the

perfect vocalization of that weariness with which we at last let go of beauty, after we have held it until the senses are darkened. When I turned to her again, she seemed to have fallen asleep.

That night, as we were moving out to sea and the tail lights of Naples were winking across the widening stretch of black water, I helped Mrs. Ebbling to the foot of the stairway. She drew herself up from her chair with effort and leaned on me wearily. I could have carried her all night without fatigue.

“May I come and talk to you to-morrow?” I asked. She did not reply at once. “Like an old friend?” I added. She gave me her languid hand, and her mouth, set with the exertion of walking, softened altogether. “Grazia,” she murmured.

I returned to the deck and joined a group of my countrywomen, who, primed with inexhaustible information, were discussing the baseness of Renaissance art. They were intelligent and alert, and as they leaned forward in their deck chairs under the circle of light, their faces recalled to me Rembrandt’s picture of a clinical lecture. I heard them through, against my will, and then went to the stern to smoke and to see the last of the island lights. The sky had clouded over, and a soft, melancholy wind was rushing over the sea. I could not help thinking how disappointed I would be if rain should keep Mrs. Ebbling in her cabin to-morrow. My mind played constantly with her image. At one moment she was very clear and directly in front of me; the next she was far away. Whatever else I thought about, some part of my consciousness was busy with Mrs. Ebbling; hunting for her, finding her, losing her, then groping again. How was it that I was so conscious of whatever she might be feeling? that when she sat still behind me and watched the evening sky, I had had a sense of speed and change, almost of danger; and when she was tired and sighed, I had wished for night and loneliness.

II

Though when we are young we seldom think much about it, there is now and again a golden day when we feel a sudden, arrogant pride in our youth; in the lightness of our feet and the strength of our arms, in the warm fluid that courses so surely within us; when we are conscious of something powerful and mercurial in our breasts, which comes up wave after wave and leaves us irresponsible and free. All the next morning I felt this flow of life, which continually impelled me toward Mrs. Ebbling. After the merest greeting, however, I kept away. I found it pleasant to thwart myself, to measure myself against a current that was sure to carry me with it in the end. I was content to let her watch the sea — the sea that seemed now to have come into me, warm and soft, still and strong. I played shuffleboard with the Commodore, who was anxious to keep down his figure, and ran about the deck with the stout legs of the little pumpkin-colored Carin about my neck. It was not until the child was having her afternoon nap below that I at last came up and stood beside her mother.

“You are better to-day,” I exclaimed, looking down at her white gown. She colored unreasonably, and I laughed with a familiarity which she must have accepted as the mere foolish noise of happiness, or it would have seemed impertinent.

We talked at first of a hundred trivial things, and we watched the sea. The coast of Sardinia had lain to our port for some hours and would lie there for hours to come, now advancing in rocky promontories, now retreating behind blue bays. It was the naked south coast of the island, and though our course held very near the shore, not a village or habitation was visible; there was not even a goat-herd’s hut hidden away among the low pinkish sand hills. Pinkish sand hills and yellow head-lands; with dull-colored scrubby bushes massed about their bases and following the dried water-courses. A narrow strip of beach glistened like white paint between the purple sea and the umber rocks, and the whole island lay gleaming in the yellow sunshine and translucent air. Not a wave broke on that fringe of white sand, not the shadow of a cloud played across the bare hills. In the air about us, there was no sound but that of a vessel moving rapidly through absolutely still water. She seemed like some great sea-animal, swimming silently, her head well up. The sea before us was so rich and heavy and opaque that it might have been lapis lazuli. It was the blue of legend, simply; the color that satisfies the soul like sleep.

And it was of the sea we talked, for it was the substance of Mrs. Ebbling’s story. She seemed always to have been swept along by ocean streams, warm or cold, and to have hovered about the edge of great waters. She was born and had grown up in a little fishing town on the Arctic ocean. Her father was a doctor, a widower, who lived with his daughter and who divided his time between his books and his fishing rod. Her uncle was skipper on a coasting vessel, and with him she had made many trips along the Norwegian coast. But she was always reading and thinking about the blue seas of the South.

“There was a curious old woman in our village, Dame Ericson, who had been in Italy in her youth. She had gone to Rome to study art, and had copied a great many pictures there. She was well connected, but had little money, and as she grew older and poorer she sold her pictures one by one, until there was scarcely a well-to-do family in our district that did not own one of Dame Ericson’s paintings. But she brought home many other strange things; a little orange-tree which she cherished until the day of her death, and bits of colored marble, and sea shells and pieces of coral, and a thin flask full of water from the Mediterranean. When I was a little girl she used to show me her things and tell me about the South; about the coral fishers, and the pink islands,

and the smoking mountains, and the old, underground Naples. I suppose the water in her flask was like any other, but it never seemed so to me. It looked so elastic and alive, that I used to think if one unsealed the bottle something penetrating and fruitful might leap out and work an enchantment over Finmark."

Lars Ebbling, I learned, was one of her father's friends. She could remember him from the time when she was a little girl and he a dashing young man who used to come home from the sea and make a stir in the village. After he got his promotion to an Atlantic liner and went South, she did not see him until the summer she was twenty, when he came home to marry her. That was five years ago. The little girl, Carin, was three. From her talk, one might have supposed that Ebbling was proprietor of the Mediterranean and its adjacent lands, and could have kept her away at his pleasure. Her own rights in him she seemed not to consider.

But we wasted very little time on Lars Ebbling. We talked, like two very young persons, of arms and men, of the sea beneath us and the shores it washed. We were carried a little beyond ourselves, for we were in the presence of the things of youth that never change; fleeing past them. To-morrow they would be gone, and no effort of will or memory could bring them back again. All about us was the sea of great adventure, and below us, caught somewhere in its gleaming meshes, were the bones of nations and navies . . . . . nations and navies that gave youth its hope and made life something more than a hunger of the bowels. The unpeopled Sardinian coast unfolded gently before us, like something left over out of a world that was gone; a place that might well have had no later news since the corn ships brought the tidings of Actium.

"I shall never go to Sardinia," said Mrs. Ebbling. "It could not possibly be as beautiful as this."

"Neither shall I," I replied.

As I was going down to dinner that evening, I was stopped by Lars Ebbling, freshly brushed and scented, wearing a white uniform, and polished and glistening as one of his own engines. He smiled at me with his own kind of geniality. "You have been very kind to talk to my wife," he explained. "It is very bad for her this trip that she speaks no English. I am indebted to you."

I told him curtly that he was mistaken, but my acrimony made no impression upon his blandness. I felt that I should certainly strike the fellow if he stood there much longer, running his blue ring up and down his beard. I should probably have hated any man who was Mrs. Ebbling's husband, but Ebbling made me sick.

III

The next day I began my drawing of Mrs. Ebbling. She seemed pleased and a little puzzled when I asked her to sit for me. It occurred to me that she had always been among dull people who took her looks as a matter of course, and that she was not at all sure that she was really beautiful. I can see now her quick, confused look of pleasure. I thought very little about the drawing then, except that the making of it gave me an opportunity to study her face; to look as long as I pleased into her yellow eyes, at the noble lines of her mouth, at her splendid, vigorous hair.

"We have a yellow vine at home," I told her, "that is very like your hair. It seems to be growing while one looks at it, and it twines and tangles about itself and throws out little tendrils in the wind."

"Has it any name?"

"We call it love vine."

How little a thing could disconcert her!

As for me, nothing disconcerted me. I awoke every morning with a sense of speed and joy. At night I loved to hear the swish of the water rushing by. As fast as the pistons could carry us, as fast as the water could bear us, we were going forward to something delightful; to something together. When Mrs. Ebbling told me that she and her husband would be five days in the docks in New York and then return to Genoa, I was not disturbed, for I did not believe her. I came and went, and she sat still all day, watching the water. I heard an American lady say that she watched it like one who is going to die, but even that did not frighten me: I somehow felt that she had promised me to live.

All those long blue days when I sat beside her talking about Finmark and the sea, she must have known that I loved her. I sat with my hands idle on my knees and let the tide come up in me. It carried me so swiftly that, across the narrow space of deck between us, it must have swayed her, too, a little. I had no wish to disturb or distress her. If a little, a very little of it reached her, I was satisfied. If it drew her softly, but drew her, I wanted no more. Sometimes I could see that even the light pressure of my thoughts made her paler. One still evening, after a long talk, she whispered to me, "You must go and walk now, and — don't think about me." She had been held too long and too closely in my thoughts, and she begged me to release her for a little while. I went out into the bow and put her far away, at the sky line, with the faintest star, and thought of her gently across the water. When I went back to her, she was asleep.

But even in those first days I had my hours of misery. Why, for instance, should she have been born in Finmark, and why

should Lars Ebbling have been her only door of escape? Why should she be silently taking leave of the world at the age when I was just beginning it, having had nothing, nothing of whatever is worth while?

She never talked about taking leave of things, and yet I sometimes felt that she was counting the sunsets. One yellow afternoon, when we were gliding between the shores of Spain and Africa, she spoke of her illness for the first time. I had got some magnolias at Gibraltar, and she wore a bunch of them in her girdle and the rest lay on her lap. She held the cool leaves against her cheek and fingered the white petals. “I can never,” she remarked, “get enough of the flowers of the South. They make me breathless, just as they did at first. Because of them I should like to live a long while — almost forever.”

I leaned forward and looked at her. “We could live almost forever if we had enough courage. It’s of our lives that we die. If we had the courage to change it all, to run away to some blue coast like that over there, we could live on and on, until we were tired.”

She smiled tolerantly and looked southward through half shut eyes. “I am afraid I should never have courage enough to go behind that mountain, at least. Look at it, it looks as if it hid horrible things.”

A sea mist, blown in from the Atlantic, began to mask the impassive African coast, and above the fog, the grey mountain peak took on the angry red of the sunset. It burned sullen and threatening until the dark land drew the night about her and settled back into the sea. We watched it sink, while under us, slowly but ever increasing, we felt the throb of the Atlantic come and go, the thrill of the vast, untamed waters of that lugubrious and passionate sea. I drew Mrs. Ebbling’s wraps about her and shut the magnolias under her cloak. When I left her, she slipped me one warm, white flower.

IV

From the Straits of Gibraltar we dropped into the abyss, and by morning we were rolling in the trough of a sea that drew us down and held us deep, shaking us gently back and forth until the timbers creaked, and then shooting us out on the crest of a swelling mountain. The water was bright and blue, but so cold that the breath of it penetrated one’s bones, as if the chill of the deep under-fathoms of the sea were being loosed upon us. There were not more than a dozen people upon the deck that morning, and Mrs. Ebbling was sheltered behind the stern, muffled in a sea jacket, with drops of moisture upon her long lashes and on her hair. When a shower of icy spray beat back over the deck rail, she took it gleefully.

“After all,” she insisted, “this is my own kind of water; the kind I was born in. This is first cousin to the Pole waters, and the sea we have left is only a kind of fairy tale. It’s like the burnt out volcanoes; its day is over. This is the real sea now, where the doings of the world go on.”

“It is not our reality, at any rate,” I answered.

“Oh, yes, it is! These are the waters that carry men to their work, and they will carry you to yours.”

I sat down and watched her hair grow more alive and iridescent in the moisture. “You are pleased to take an attitude,” I complained.

“No, I don’t love realities any more than another, but I admit them, all the same.”

“And who are you and I to define the realities?”

“Our minds define them clearly enough, yours and mine, everybody’s. Those are the lines we never cross, though we flee from the equator to the Pole. I have never really got out of Finmark, of course. I shall live and die in a fishing town on the Arctic ocean, and the blue seas and the pink islands are as much a dream as they ever were. All the same, I shall continue to dream them.”

The Gulf Stream gave us warm blue days again, but pale, like sad memories. The water had faded, and the thin, tepid sunshine made something tighten about one’s heart. The stars watched us coldly, and seemed always to be asking me what I was going to do. The advancing line on the chart, which at first had been mere foolishness, began to mean something, and the wind from the west brought disturbing fears and forebodings. I slept lightly, and all day I was restless and uncertain except when I was with Mrs. Ebbling. She quieted me as she did little Carin, and soothed me without saying anything, as she had done that evening at Naples when we watched the sunset. It seemed to me that every day her eyes grew more tender and her lips more calm. A kind of fortitude seemed to be gathering about her mouth, and I dreaded it. Yet when, in an involuntary glance, I put to her the question that tortured me, her eyes always met mine steadily, deep and gentle and full of reassurance. That I had my word at last, happened almost by accident.

On the second night out from shore there was the concert for the Sailors’ Orphanage, and Mrs. Ebbling dressed and went down to dinner for the first time, and sat on her husband’s right. I was not the only one who was glad to see her. Even the women were pleased. She wore a pale green gown, and she came up out of it regally white and gold. I was so proud that I blushed when any one spoke of her. After dinner she was standing by her deck-chair talking to her husband when people began to go below for the concert. She took up a long cloak and attempted to put it on.

The wind blew the light thing about, and Ebbling chatted and smiled his public smile while she struggled with it. Suddenly his roving eye caught sight of the Chicago girl, who was having a similar difficulty with her draperies, and he pranced half the length of the deck to assist her. I had been watching from the rail, and when she was left alone I threw my cigar away and wrapped Mrs. Ebbling up roughly.

“Don’t go down,” I begged. “Stay up here. I want to talk to you.”

She hesitated a moment and looked at me thoughtfully. Then, with a sigh, she sat down. Every one hurried down to the saloon, and we were absolutely alone at last, behind the shelter of the stern, with the thick darkness all about us and a warm east wind rushing over the sea. I was too sore and angry to think. I leaned toward her, holding the arm of her chair with both hands, and began anywhere.

“You remember those two blue coasts out of Gibraltar? It shall be either one you choose, if you will come with me. I have not much money, but we shall get on somehow. There has got to be an end of this. We are neither one of us cowards, and this is humiliating, intolerable.”

She sat looking down at her hands, and I pulled her chair impatiently toward me.

“I felt,” she said at last, “that you were going to say something like this. You are sorry for me, and I don’t wish to be pitied. You think Ebbling neglects me, but you are mistaken. He has had his disappointments, too. He wants children and a gay, hospitable house, and he is tied to a sick woman who can not get on with people. He has more to complain of than I have, and yet he bears with me. I am grateful to him, and there is no more to be said.”

“Oh, isn’t there?” I cried, “and I?”

She laid her hand entreatingly upon my arm. “Ah, you! you! Don’t ask me to talk about that. You — ” Her fingers slipped down my coat sleeve to my hand and pressed it. I caught her two hands and held them, telling her I would never let them go.

“And you meant to leave me day after tomorrow, to say goodbye to me as you will to the other people on this boat? You meant to cut me adrift like this, with my heart on fire and all my life unspent in me?”

She sighed despondently. “I am willing to suffer — whatever I must suffer — to have had you,” she answered simply. “I was ill — and so lonely — and it came so quickly and quietly. Ah, don’t begrudge it to me! Do not leave me in bitterness. If I have been wrong, forgive me.” She bowed her head and pressed my fingers entreatingly. A warm tear splashed on my hand. It occurred to me that she bore my anger as she bore little Carin’s importunities, as she bore Ebbling. What a circle of pettiness she had about her! I fell back in my chair and my hands dropped at my side. I felt like a creature with its back broken. I asked her what she wished me to do.

“Don’t ask me,” she whispered. “There is nothing that we can do. I thought you knew that. You forget that — that I am too ill to begin my life over. Even if there were nothing else in the way, that would be enough. And that is what has made it all possible, our loving each other, I mean. If I were well, we couldn’t have had even this much. Don’t reproach me. Hasn’t it been at all pleasant to you to find me waiting for you every morning, to feel me thinking of you when you went to sleep? Every night I have watched the sea for you, as if it were mine and I had made it, and I have listened to the water rushing by you, full of sleep and youth and hope. And everything you had done or said during the day came back to me, and when I went to sleep it was only to feel you more. You see there was never any one else; I have never thought of any one in the dark but you.” She spoke pleadingly, and her voice had sunk so low that I could scarcely hear her.

“And yet you will do nothing,” I groaned. “You will dare nothing. You will give me nothing.”

“Don’t say that. When I leave you day after tomorrow, I shall have given you all my life. I can’t tell you how, but it is true. There is something in each of us that does not belong to the family or to society, not even to ourselves. Sometimes it is given in marriage, and sometimes it is given in love, but oftener it is never given at all. We have nothing to do with giving or withholding it. It is a wild thing that sings in us once and flies away and never comes back, and mine has flown to you. When one loves like that, it is enough, somehow. The other things can go if they must. That is why I can live without you, and die without you.”

I caught her hands and looked into her eyes that shone warm in the darkness. She shivered and whispered in a tone so different from any I ever heard from her before or afterward: “Do you grudge it to me? You are so young and strong, and you have everything before you. I shall have only a little while to want you in — and I could want you forever and not weary.” I kissed her hair, her cheeks, her lips, until her head fell forward on my shoulder and she put my face away with her soft, trembling fingers. She took my hand and held it close to her, in both her own. We sat silent, and the moments came and went, bringing us closer and closer, and the wind and water rushed by us, obliterating our tomorrows and all our yesterdays.

The next day Mrs. Ebbling kept her cabin, and I sat stupidly by her chair until dark, with the rugged little girl to keep me

company, and an occasional nod from the engineer.

I saw Mrs. Ebbling again only for a few moments, when we were coming into the New York harbor. She wore a street dress and a hat, and these alone would have made her seem far away from me. She was very pale, and looked down when she spoke to me, as if she had been guilty of a wrong toward me. I have never been able to remember that interview without heartache and shame, but then I was too desperate to care about anything. I stood like a wooden post and let her approach me, let her speak to me, let her leave me. She came up to me as if it were a hard thing to do, and held out a little package, timidly, and her gloved hand shook as if she were afraid of me.

“I want to give you something,” she said. “You will not want it now, so I shall ask you to keep it until you hear from me. You gave me your address a long time ago, when you were making that drawing. Some day I shall write to you and ask you to open this. You must not come to tell me goodbye this morning, but I shall be watching you when you go ashore. Please don’t forget that.”

I took the little box mechanically and thanked her. I think my eyes must have filled, for she uttered an exclamation of pity, touched my sleeve quickly, and left me. It was one of those strange, low, musical exclamations which meant everything and nothing, like the one that had thrilled me that night at Naples, and it was the last sound I ever heard from her lips.

An hour later I went on shore, one of those who crowded over the gang-plank the moment it was lowered. But the next afternoon I wandered back to the docks and went on board the Germania. I asked for the engineer, and he came up in his shirt sleeves from the engine room. He was red and dishevelled, angry and voluble; his bright eye had a hard glint, and I did not once see his masterful smile. When he heard my inquiry he became profane. Mrs. Ebbling had sailed for Bremen on the Hobenstauffen that morning at eleven o’clock. She had decided to return by the northern route and pay a visit to her father in Finmark. She was in no condition to travel alone, he said. He evidently smarted under her extravagance. But who, he asked, with a blow of his fist on the rail, could stand between a woman and her whim? She had always been a wilful girl, and she had a doting father behind her. When she set her head with the wind, there was no holding her; she ought to have married the Arctic Ocean. I think Ebbling was still talking when I walked away.

I spent that winter in New York. My consular appointment hung fire (indeed, I did not pursue it with much enthusiasm), and I had a good many idle hours in which to think of Mrs. Ebbling. She had never mentioned the name of her father’s village, and somehow I could never quite bring myself to go to the docks when Ebbling’s boat was in and ask for news of her. More than once I made up my mind definitely to go to Finmark and take my chance at finding her; the shipping people would know where Ebbling came from. But I never went. I have often wondered why. When my resolve was made and my courage high, when I could almost feel myself approaching her, suddenly everything crumbled under me, and I fell back as I had done that night when I dropped her hands, after telling her, only a moment before, that I would never let them go.

In the twilight of a wet March day, when the gutters were running black outside and the Square was liquefying under crusts of dirty snow, the housekeeper brought me a damp letter which bore a blurred foreign postmark. It was from Niels Nannestad, who wrote that it was his sad duty to inform me that his daughter, Alexandra Ebbling, had died on the second day of February, in the twenty-sixth year of her age. Complying with her request, he inclosed a letter which she had written some days before her death.

I at last brought myself to break the seal of the second letter. It read thus:

“My Friend: —

You may open now the little package I gave you. May I ask you to keep it? I gave it to you because there is no one else who would care about it in just that way. Ever since I left you I have been thinking what it would be like to live a lifetime caring and being cared for like that. It was not the life I was meant to live, and yet, in a way, I have been living it ever since I first knew you.

“Of course you understand now why I could not go with you. I would have spoiled your life for you. Besides that, I was ill — and I was too proud to give you the shadow of myself. I had much to give you, if you had come earlier. As it was, I was ashamed. Vanity sometimes saves us when nothing else will, and mine saved you. Thank you for everything. I hold this to my heart, where I once held your hand. Alexandra.”

The dusk had thickened into night long before I got up from my chair and took the little box from its place in my desk drawer. I opened it and lifted out a thick coil, cut from where her hair grew thickest and brightest. It was tied firmly at one end, and when it fell over my arm it curled and clung about my sleeve like a living thing set free. How it gleamed, how it still gleams in the firelight! It was warm and softly scented under my lips, and stirred under my breath like seaweed in the tide. This, and a withered magnolia flower, and two pink sea shells; nothing more. And it was all twenty years ago!

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5.12: Davis, Rebecca Harding. "Life in the Iron-Mills" (1861)

> *“Is this the end?*
> *O Life, as futile, then, as frail!*
> *What hope of answer or redress?”*

A cloudy day: do you know what that is in a town of iron-works? The sky sank down before dawn, muddy, flat, immovable. The air is thick, clammy with the breath of crowded human beings. It stifles me. I open the window, and, looking out, can scarcely see through the rain the grocer's shop opposite, where a crowd of drunken Irishmen are puffing Lynchburg tobacco in their pipes. I can detect the scent through all the foul smells ranging loose in the air.

The idiosyncrasy of this town is smoke. It rolls sullenly in slow folds from the great chimneys of the iron-foundries, and settles down in black, slimy pools on the muddy streets. Smoke on the wharves, smoke on the dingy boats, on the yellow river,—clinging in a coating of greasy soot to the house-front, the two faded poplars, the faces of the passers-by. The long train of mules, dragging masses of pig-iron through the narrow street, have a foul vapor hanging to their reeking sides. Here, inside, is a little broken figure of an angel pointing upward from the mantel-shelf; but even its wings are covered with smoke, clotted and black. Smoke everywhere! A dirty canary chirps desolately in a cage beside me. Its dream of green fields and sunshine is a very old dream,—almost worn out, I think.

From the back-window I can see a narrow brick-yard sloping down to the river-side, strewed with rain-butts and tubs. The river, dull and tawny-colored, (la belle riviere!) drags itself sluggishly along, tired of the heavy weight of boats and coal-barges. What wonder? When I was a child, I used to fancy a look of weary, dumb appeal upon the face of the negro-like river slavishly bearing its burden day after day. Something of the same idle notion comes to me to-day, when from the street-window I look on the slow stream of human life creeping past, night and morning, to the great mills. Masses of men, with dull, besotted faces bent to the ground, sharpened here and there by pain or cunning; skin and muscle and flesh begrimed with smoke and ashes; stooping all night over boiling caldrons of metal, laired by day in dens of drunkenness and infamy; breathing from infancy to death an air saturated with fog and grease and soot, vileness for soul and body. What do you make of a case like that, amateur psychologist? You call it an altogether serious thing to be alive: to these men it is a drunken jest, a joke,—horrible to angels perhaps, to them commonplace enough. My fancy about the river was an idle one: it is no type of such a life. What if it be stagnant and slimy here? It knows that beyond there waits for it odorous sunlight, quaint old gardens, dusky with soft, green foliage of apple-trees, and flushing crimson with roses,—air, and fields, and mountains. The future of the Welsh puddler passing just now is not so pleasant. To be stowed away, after his grimy work is done, in a hole in the muddy graveyard, and after that, not air, nor green fields, nor curious roses.

Can you see how foggy the day is? As I stand here, idly tapping the windowpane, and looking out through the rain at the dirty back-yard and the coalboats below, fragments of an old story float up before me,—a story of this house into which I happened to come to-day. You may think it a tiresome story enough, as foggy as the day, sharpened by no sudden flashes of pain or pleasure.—I know: only the outline of a dull life, that long since, with thousands of dull lives like its own, was vainly lived and lost: thousands of them, massed, vile, slimy lives, like those of the torpid lizards in yonder stagnant water-butt.—Lost? There is a curious point for you to settle, my friend, who study psychology in a lazy, dilettante way. Stop a moment. I am going to be honest. This is what I want you to do. I want you to hide your disgust, take no heed to your clean clothes, and come right down with me,—here, into the thickest of the fog and mud and foul effluvia. I want you to hear this story. There is a secret down here, in this nightmare fog, that has lain dumb for centuries: I want to make it a real thing to you. You, Egoist, or Pantheist, or Arminian, busy in making straight paths for your feet on the hills, do not see it clearly,—this terrible question which men here have gone mad and died trying to answer. I dare not put this secret into words. I told you it was dumb. These men, going by with drunken faces and brains full of unawakened power, do not ask it of Society or of God. Their lives ask it; their deaths ask it. There is no reply. I will tell you plainly that I have a great hope; and I bring it to you to be tested. It is this: that this terrible dumb question is its own reply; that it is not the sentence of death we think it, but, from the very extremity of its darkness, the most solemn prophecy which the world has known of the Hope to come. I dare make my meaning no clearer, but will only tell my story. It will, perhaps, seem to you as foul and dark as this thick vapor about us, and as pregnant with death; but if your eyes are free as mine are to look deeper, no perfume-tinted dawn will be so fair with promise of the day that shall surely come.

My story is very simple,—Only what I remember of the life of one of these men,—a furnace-tender in one of Kirby & John's rolling-mills,—Hugh Wolfe. You know the mills? They took the great order for the lower Virginia railroads there last winter; run usually with about a thousand men. I cannot tell why I choose the half-forgotten story of this Wolfe more than that of myriads of these furnace-hands. Perhaps because there is a secret, underlying sympathy between that story and this day with its impure fog and thwarted sunshine,—or perhaps simply for the reason that this house is the one where the Wolfes lived. There were the father and son,—both hands, as I said, in one of Kirby & John's mills for making railroad-iron,—and Deborah, their cousin, a picker in some of the cotton-mills. The house was rented then to half a dozen families. The Wolfes had two of the cellar-rooms. The old man, like many of the puddlers and feeders of the mills, was Welsh,—had spent half of his life in the Cornish tin-mines. You may pick the Welsh emigrants, Cornish miners, out of the throng passing the windows, any day. They are a trifle more filthy; their muscles are not so brawny; they stoop more. When they are drunk, they neither yell, nor shout, nor stagger, but skulk along like beaten hounds. A pure, unmixed blood, I fancy: shows itself in the slight angular bodies and sharply-cut facial lines. It is nearly thirty years since the Wolfes lived here. Their lives were like those of their class: incessant labor, sleeping in kennel-like rooms, eating rank pork and molasses, drinking—God and the distillers only know what; with an occasional night in jail, to atone for some drunken excess. Is that all of their lives?—of the portion given to them and these their duplicates swarming the streets to-day?—nothing beneath?—all? So many a political reformer will tell you,—and many a private reformer, too, who has gone among them with a heart tender with Christ's charity, and come out outraged, hardened.

One rainy night, about eleven o'clock, a crowd of half-clothed women stopped outside of the cellar-door. They were going home from the cotton-mill.

“Good-night, Deb,” said one, a mulatto, steadying herself against the gas-post. She needed the post to steady her. So did more than one of them.

“Dah's a ball to Miss Potts' to-night. Ye'd best come.”

“Inteet, Deb, if hur'll come, hur'll hef fun,” said a shrill Welsh voice in the crowd.

Two or three dirty hands were thrust out to catch the gown of the woman, who was groping for the latch of the door.

“No.”

“No? Where's Kit Small, then?”

“Begorra! on the spools. Alleys behint, though we helped her, we dud. An wid ye! Let Deb alone! It's ondacent frettin' a quite body. Be the powers, an we'll have a night of it! there'll be lashin's o' drink,—the Vargent be blessed and praised for't!”

They went on, the mulatto inclining for a moment to show fight, and drag the woman Wolfe off with them; but, being pacified, she staggered away.

Deborah groped her way into the cellar, and, after considerable stumbling, kindled a match, and lighted a tallow dip, that sent a yellow glimmer over the room. It was low, damp,—the earthen floor covered with a green, slimy moss,—a fetid air smothering the breath. Old Wolfe lay asleep on a heap of straw, wrapped in a torn horse-blanket. He was a pale, meek little man, with a white face and red rabbit-eyes. The woman Deborah was like him; only her face was even more ghastly, her lips bluer, her eyes more watery. She wore a faded cotton gown and a slouching bonnet. When she walked, one could see that she was deformed, almost a hunchback. She trod softly, so as not to waken him, and went through into the room beyond. There she found by the half-extinguished fire an iron saucepan filled with cold boiled potatoes, which she put upon a broken chair with a pint-cup of ale. Placing the old candlestick beside this dainty repast, she untied her bonnet, which hung limp and wet over her face, and prepared to eat her supper. It was the first food that had touched her lips since morning. There was enough of it, however: there is not always. She was hungry,—one could see that easily enough,—and not drunk, as most of her companions would have been found at this hour. She did not drink, this woman,—her face told that, too,—nothing stronger than ale. Perhaps the weak, flaccid wretch had some stimulant in her pale life to keep her up,—some love or hope, it might be, or urgent need. When that stimulant was gone, she would take to whiskey. Man cannot live by work alone. While she was skinning the potatoes, and munching them, a noise behind her made her stop.

“Janey!” she called, lifting the candle and peering into the darkness. “Janey, are you there?”

A heap of ragged coats was heaved up, and the face of a young girl emerged, staring sleepily at the woman.

“Deborah,” she said, at last, “I'm here the night.”

“Yes, child. Hur's welcome,” she said, quietly eating on.

The girl's face was haggard and sickly; her eyes were heavy with sleep and hunger: real Milesian eyes they were, dark, delicate blue, glooming out from black shadows with a pitiful fright.

“I was alone,” she said, timidly.

“Where's the father?” asked Deborah, holding out a potato, which the girl greedily seized.

“He's beyant,—wid Haley,—in the stone house.” (Did you ever hear the word tail from an Irish mouth?) “I came here. Hugh told me never to stay me-lone.”

“Hugh?”

“Yes.”

A vexed frown crossed her face. The girl saw it, and added quickly,—

“I have not seen Hugh the day, Deb. The old man says his watch lasts till the mornin'.”

The woman sprang up, and hastily began to arrange some bread and flitch in a tin pail, and to pour her own measure of ale into a bottle. Tying on her bonnet, she blew out the candle.

“Lay ye down, Janey dear,” she said, gently, covering her with the old rags. “Hur can eat the potatoes, if hur's hungry.

“Where are ye goin', Deb? The rain's sharp.”

“To the mill, with Hugh's supper.”

“Let him bide till th' morn. Sit ye down.”

“No, no,”—sharply pushing her off. “The boy'll starve.”

She hurried from the cellar, while the child wearily coiled herself up for sleep. The rain was falling heavily, as the woman, pail in hand, emerged from the mouth of the alley, and turned down the narrow street, that stretched out, long and black, miles before her. Here and there a flicker of gas lighted an uncertain space of muddy footwalk and gutter; the long rows of houses, except an occasional lager-bier shop, were closed; now and then she met a band of millhands skulking to or from their work.

Not many even of the inhabitants of a manufacturing town know the vast machinery of system by which the bodies of workmen are governed, that goes on unceasingly from year to year. The hands of each mill are divided into watches that relieve each other as regularly as the sentinels of an army. By night and day the work goes on, the unsleeping engines groan and shriek, the fiery pools of metal boil and surge. Only for a day in the week, in half-courtesy to public censure, the fires are partially veiled; but as soon as the clock strikes midnight, the great furnaces break forth with renewed fury, the clamor begins with fresh, breathless vigor, the engines sob and shriek like “gods in pain.”

As Deborah hurried down through the heavy rain, the noise of these thousand engines sounded through the sleep and shadow of the city like far-off thunder. The mill to which she was going lay on the river, a mile below the city-limits. It was far, and she was weak, aching from standing twelve hours at the spools. Yet it was her almost nightly walk to take this man his supper, though at every square she sat down to rest, and she knew she should receive small word of thanks.

Perhaps, if she had possessed an artist's eye, the picturesque oddity of the scene might have made her step stagger less, and the path seem shorter; but to her the mills were only “summat deilish to look at by night.”

The road leading to the mills had been quarried from the solid rock, which rose abrupt and bare on one side of the cinder-covered road, while the river, sluggish and black, crept past on the other. The mills for rolling iron are simply immense tent-like roofs, covering acres of ground, open on every side. Beneath these roofs Deborah looked in on a city of fires, that burned hot and fiercely in the night. Fire in every horrible form: pits of flame waving in the wind; liquid metal-flames writhing in tortuous streams through the sand; wide caldrons filled with boiling fire, over which bent ghastly wretches stirring the strange brewing; and through all, crowds of half-clad men, looking like revengeful ghosts in the red light, hurried, throwing masses of glittering fire. It was like a street in Hell. Even Deborah muttered, as she crept through, “looks like t' Devil's place!” It did,—in more ways than one.

She found the man she was looking for, at last, heaping coal on a furnace. He had not time to eat his supper; so she went behind the furnace, and waited. Only a few men were with him, and they noticed her only by a “Hyur comes t'hunchback, Wolfe.”

Deborah was stupid with sleep; her back pained her sharply; and her teeth chattered with cold, with the rain that soaked her clothes and dripped from her at every step. She stood, however, patiently holding the pail, and waiting.

“Hout, woman! ye look like a drowned cat. Come near to the fire,”—said one of the men, approaching to scrape away the ashes.

She shook her head. Wolfe had forgotten her. He turned, hearing the man, and came closer.

“I did no' think; gi' me my supper, woman.”

She watched him eat with a painful eagerness. With a woman's quick instinct, she saw that he was not hungry,—was eating to please her. Her pale, watery eyes began to gather a strange light.

“Is't good, Hugh? T' ale was a bit sour, I feared.”

“No, good enough.” He hesitated a moment. “Ye're tired, poor lass! Bide here till I go. Lay down there on that heap of ash, and go to sleep.”

He threw her an old coat for a pillow, and turned to his work. The heap was the refuse of the burnt iron, and was not a hard bed; the half-smothered warmth, too, penetrated her limbs, dulling their pain and cold shiver.

Miserable enough she looked, lying there on the ashes like a limp, dirty rag,—yet not an unfitting figure to crown the scene of hopeless discomfort and veiled crime: more fitting, if one looked deeper into the heart of things, at her thwarted woman's form, her colorless life, her waking stupor that smothered pain and hunger,—even more fit to be a type of her class. Deeper yet if one could look, was there nothing worth reading in this wet, faded thing, halfcovered with ashes? no story of a soul filled with groping passionate love, heroic unselfishness, fierce jealousy? of years of weary trying to please the one human being whom she loved, to gain one look of real heart-kindness from him? If anything like this were hidden beneath the pale, bleared eyes, and dull, washed-out-looking face, no one had ever taken the trouble to read its faint signs: not the half-clothed furnace-tender, Wolfe, certainly. Yet he was kind to her: it was his nature to be kind, even to the very rats that swarmed in the cellar: kind to her in just the same way. She knew that. And it might be that very knowledge had given to her face its apathy and vacancy more than her low, torpid life. One sees that dead, vacant look steal sometimes over the rarest, finest of women's faces,—in the very midst, it may be, of their warmest summer's day; and then one can guess at the secret of intolerable solitude that lies hid beneath the delicate laces and brilliant smile. There was no warmth, no brilliancy, no summer for this woman; so the stupor and vacancy had time to gnaw into her face perpetually. She was young, too, though no one guessed it; so the gnawing was the fiercer.

She lay quiet in the dark corner, listening, through the monotonous din and uncertain glare of the works, to the dull plash of the rain in the far distance, shrinking back whenever the man Wolfe happened to look towards her. She knew, in spite of all his kindness, that there was that in her face and form which made him loathe the sight of her. She felt by instinct, although she could not comprehend it, the finer nature of the man, which made him among his fellow-workmen something unique, set apart. She knew, that, down under all the vileness and coarseness of his life, there was a groping passion for whatever was beautiful and pure, that his soul sickened with disgust at her deformity, even when his words were kindest. Through this dull consciousness, which never left her, came, like a sting, the recollection of the dark blue eyes and lithe figure of the little Irish girl she had left in the cellar. The recollection struck through even her stupid intellect with a vivid glow of beauty and of grace. Little Janey, timid, helpless, clinging to Hugh as her only friend: that was the sharp thought, the bitter thought, that drove into the glazed eyes a fierce light of pain. You laugh at it? Are pain and jealousy less savage realities down here in this place I am taking you to than in your own house or your own heart,—your heart, which they clutch at sometimes? The note is the same, I fancy, be the octave high or low.

If you could go into this mill where Deborah lay, and drag out from the hearts of these men the terrible tragedy of their lives, taking it as a symptom of the disease of their class, no ghost Horror would terrify you more. A reality of soul-starvation, of living death, that meets you every day under the besotted faces on the street,—I can paint nothing of this, only give you the outside outlines of a night, a crisis in the life of one man: whatever muddy depth of soul-history lies beneath you can read according to the eyes God has given you.

Wolfe, while Deborah watched him as a spaniel its master, bent over the furnace with his iron pole, unconscious of her scrutiny, only stopping to receive orders. Physically, Nature had promised the man but little. He had already lost the strength and instinct

vigor of a man, his muscles were thin, his nerves weak, his face (a meek, woman's face) haggard, yellow with consumption. In the mill he was known as one of the girl-men: “Molly Wolfe” was his sobriquet. He was never seen in the cockpit, did not own a terrier, drank but seldom; when he did, desperately. He fought sometimes, but was always thrashed, pommelled to a jelly. The man was game enough, when his blood was up: but he was no favorite in the mill; he had the taint of school-learning on him,—not to a dangerous extent, only a quarter or so in the free-school in fact, but enough to ruin him as a good hand in a fight.

For other reasons, too, he was not popular. Not one of themselves, they felt that, though outwardly as filthy and ash-covered; silent, with foreign thoughts and longings breaking out through his quietness in innumerable curious ways: this one, for instance. In the neighboring furnace-buildings lay great heaps of the refuse from the ore after the pig-metal is run. Korl we call it here: a light, porous substance, of a delicate, waxen, flesh-colored tinge. Out of the blocks of this korl, Wolfe, in his off-hours from the furnace, had a habit of chipping and moulding figures,—hideous, fantastic enough, but sometimes strangely beautiful: even the mill-men saw that, while they jeered at him. It was a curious fancy in the man, almost a passion. The few hours for rest he spent hewing and hacking with his blunt knife, never speaking, until his watch came again,—working at one figure for months, and, when it was finished, breaking it to pieces perhaps, in a fit of disappointment. A morbid, gloomy man, untaught, unled, left to feed his soul in grossness and crime, and hard, grinding labor.

I want you to come down and look at this Wolfe, standing there among the lowest of his kind, and see him just as he is, that you may judge him justly when you hear the story of this night. I want you to look back, as he does every day, at his birth in vice, his starved infancy; to remember the heavy years he has groped through as boy and man,—the slow, heavy years of constant, hot work. So long ago he began, that he thinks sometimes he has worked there for ages. There is no hope that it will ever end. Think that God put into this man's soul a fierce thirst for beauty,—to know it, to create it; to be—something, he knows not what,—other than he is. There are moments when a passing cloud, the sun glinting on the purple thistles, a kindly smile, a child's face, will rouse him to a passion of pain,—when his nature starts up with a mad cry of rage against God, man, whoever it is that has forced this vile, slimy life upon him. With all this groping, this mad desire, a great blind intellect stumbling through wrong, a loving poet's heart, the man was by habit only a coarse, vulgar laborer, familiar with sights and words you would blush to name. Be just: when I tell you about this night, see him as he is. Be just,—not like man's law, which seizes on one isolated fact, but like God's judging angel, whose clear, sad eye saw all the countless cankering days of this man's life, all the countless nights, when, sick with starving, his soul fainted in him, before it judged him for this night, the saddest of all.

I called this night the crisis of his life. If it was, it stole on him unawares. These great turning-days of life cast no shadow before, slip by unconsciously. Only a trifle, a little turn of the rudder, and the ship goes to heaven or hell.

Wolfe, while Deborah watched him, dug into the furnace of melting iron with his pole, dully thinking only how many rails the lump would yield. It was late,—nearly Sunday morning; another hour, and the heavy work would be done, only the furnaces to replenish and cover for the next day. The workmen were growing more noisy, shouting, as they had to do, to be heard over the deep clamor of the mills. Suddenly they grew less boisterous,—at the far end, entirely silent. Something unusual had happened. After a moment, the silence came nearer; the men stopped their jeers and drunken choruses. Deborah, stupidly lifting up her head, saw the cause of the quiet. A group of five or six men were slowly approaching, stopping to examine each furnace as they came. Visitors often came to see the mills after night: except by growing less noisy, the men took no notice of them. The furnace where Wolfe worked was near the bounds of the works; they halted there hot and tired: a walk over one of these great foundries is no trifling task. The woman, drawing out of sight, turned over to sleep. Wolfe, seeing them stop, suddenly roused from his indifferent stupor, and watched them keenly. He knew some of them: the overseer, Clarke,—a son of Kirby, one of the mill-owners,—and a Doctor May, one of the town-physicians. The other two were strangers. Wolfe came closer. He seized eagerly every chance that brought him into contact with this mysterious class that shone down on him perpetually with the glamour of another order of being. What made the difference between them? That was the mystery of his life. He had a vague notion that perhaps to-night he could find it out. One of the strangers sat down on a pile of bricks, and beckoned young Kirby to his side.

“This is hot, with a vengeance. A match, please?”—lighting his cigar. “But the walk is worth the trouble. If it were not that you must have heard it so often, Kirby, I would tell you that your works look like Dante's Inferno.”

Kirby laughed.

“Yes. Yonder is Farinata himself in the burning tomb,”—pointing to some figure in the shimmering shadows.

“Judging from some of the faces of your men,” said the other, “they bid fair to try the reality of Dante's vision, some day.”

Young Kirby looked curiously around, as if seeing the faces of his hands for the first time.

“They're bad enough, that's true. A desperate set, I fancy. Eh, Clarke?”

The overseer did not hear him. He was talking of net profits just then,—giving, in fact, a schedule of the annual business of the firm to a sharp peering little Yankee, who jotted down notes on a paper laid on the crown of his hat: a reporter for one of the city-papers, getting up a series of reviews of the leading manufactories. The other gentlemen had accompanied them merely for amusement. They were silent until the notes were finished, drying their feet at the furnaces, and sheltering their faces from the intolerable heat. At last the overseer concluded with—

“I believe that is a pretty fair estimate, Captain.”

“Here, some of you men!” said Kirby, “bring up those boards. We may as well sit down, gentlemen, until the rain is over. It cannot last much longer at this rate.”

“Pig-metal,”—mumbled the reporter,—“um! coal facilities,—um! hands employed, twelve hundred,—bitumen,—um!—all right, I believe, Mr. Clarke;—sinking-fund,—what did you say was your sinking-fund?”

“Twelve hundred hands?” said the stranger, the young man who had first spoken. “Do you control their votes, Kirby?”

“Control? No.” The young man smiled complacently. “But my father brought seven hundred votes to the polls for his candidate last November. No force-work, you understand,—only a speech or two, a hint to form themselves into a society, and a bit of red and blue bunting to make them a flag. The Invincible Roughs,—I believe that is their name. I forget the motto: 'Our country's hope,' I think.”

There was a laugh. The young man talking to Kirby sat with an amused light in his cool gray eye, surveying critically the half-clothed figures of the puddlers, and the slow swing of their brawny muscles. He was a stranger in the city,—spending a couple of months in the borders of a Slave State, to study the institutions of the South,—a brother-in-law of Kirby's,—Mitchell. He was an amateur gymnast,—hence his anatomical eye; a patron, in a blase' way, of the prize-ring; a man who sucked the essence out of a science or philosophy in an indifferent, gentlemanly way; who took Kant, Novalis, Humboldt, for what they were worth in his own scales; accepting all, despising nothing, in heaven, earth, or hell, but one-idead men; with a temper yielding and brilliant as summer water, until his Self was touched, when it was ice, though brilliant still. Such men are not rare in the States.

As he knocked the ashes from his cigar, Wolfe caught with a quick pleasure the contour of the white hand, the blood-glow of a red ring he wore. His voice, too, and that of Kirby's, touched him like music,—low, even, with chording cadences. About this man Mitchell hung the impalpable atmosphere belonging to the thoroughbred gentleman, Wolfe, scraping away the ashes beside him, was conscious of it, did obeisance to it with his artist sense, unconscious that he did so.

The rain did not cease. Clarke and the reporter left the mills; the others, comfortably seated near the furnace, lingered, smoking and talking in a desultory way. Greek would not have been more unintelligible to the furnace-tenders, whose presence they soon forgot entirely. Kirby drew out a newspaper from his pocket and read aloud some article, which they discussed eagerly. At every sentence, Wolfe listened more and more like a dumb, hopeless animal, with a duller, more stolid look creeping over his face, glancing now and then at Mitchell, marking acutely every smallest sign of refinement, then back to himself, seeing as in a mirror his filthy body, his more stained soul.

Never! He had no words for such a thought, but he knew now, in all the sharpness of the bitter certainty, that between them there was a great gulf never to be passed. Never!

The bell of the mills rang for midnight. Sunday morning had dawned. Whatever hidden message lay in the tolling bells floated past these men unknown. Yet it was there. Veiled in the solemn music ushering the risen Saviour was a key-note to solve the darkest secrets of a world gone wrong,—even this social riddle which the brain of the grimy puddler grappled with madly to-night.

The men began to withdraw the metal from the caldrons. The mills were deserted on Sundays, except by the hands who fed the fires, and those who had no lodgings and slept usually on the ash-heaps. The three strangers sat still during the next hour, watching the men cover the furnaces, laughing now and then at some jest of Kirby's.

“Do you know,” said Mitchell, “I like this view of the works better than when the glare was fiercest? These heavy shadows and the amphitheatre of smothered fires are ghostly, unreal. One could fancy these red smouldering lights to be the half-shut eyes of wild beasts, and the spectral figures their victims in the den.”

Kirby laughed. “You are fanciful. Come, let us get out of the den. The spectral figures, as you call them, are a little too real for me to fancy a close proximity in the darkness,—unarmed, too.”

The others rose, buttoning their overcoats, and lighting cigars.

“Raining, still,” said Doctor May, “and hard. Where did we leave the coach, Mitchell?”

“At the other side of the works.—Kirby, what's that?”

Mitchell started back, half-frightened, as, suddenly turning a corner, the white figure of a woman faced him in the darkness,—a woman, white, of giant proportions, crouching on the ground, her arms flung out in some wild gesture of warning.

“Stop! Make that fire burn there!” cried Kirby, stopping short.

The flame burst out, flashing the gaunt figure into bold relief.

Mitchell drew a long breath.

“I thought it was alive,” he said, going up curiously.

The others followed.

“Not marble, eh?” asked Kirby, touching it.

One of the lower overseers stopped.

“Korl, Sir.”

“Who did it?”

“Can't say. Some of the hands; chipped it out in off-hours.”

“Chipped to some purpose, I should say. What a flesh-tint the stuff has! Do you see, Mitchell?”

“I see.”

He had stepped aside where the light fell boldest on the figure, looking at it in silence. There was not one line of beauty or grace in it: a nude woman's form, muscular, grown coarse with labor, the powerful limbs instinct with some one poignant longing. One idea: there it was in the tense, rigid muscles, the clutching hands, the wild, eager face, like that of a starving wolf's. Kirby and Doctor May walked around it, critical, curious. Mitchell stood aloof, silent. The figure touched him strangely.

“Not badly done,” said Doctor May, “Where did the fellow learn that sweep of the muscles in the arm and hand? Look at them! They are groping, do you see?—clutching: the peculiar action of a man dying of thirst.”

“They have ample facilities for studying anatomy,” sneered Kirby, glancing at the half-naked figures.

“Look,” continued the Doctor, “at this bony wrist, and the strained sinews of the instep! A working-woman,—the very type of her class.”

“God forbid!” muttered Mitchell.

“Why?” demanded May, “What does the fellow intend by the figure? I cannot catch the meaning.”

“Ask him,” said the other, dryly, “There he stands,”—pointing to Wolfe, who stood with a group of men, leaning on his ash-rake.

The Doctor beckoned him with the affable smile which kind-hearted men put on, when talking to these people.

“Mr. Mitchell has picked you out as the man who did this,—I'm sure I don't know why. But what did you mean by it?”

“She be hungry.”

Wolfe's eyes answered Mitchell, not the Doctor.

“Oh-h! But what a mistake you have made, my fine fellow! You have given no sign of starvation to the body. It is strong,—terribly strong. It has the mad, half-despairing gesture of drowning.”

Wolfe stammered, glanced appealingly at Mitchell, who saw the soul of the thing, he knew. But the cool, probing eyes were turned on himself now,—mocking, cruel, relentless.

“Not hungry for meat,” the furnace-tender said at last.

“What then? Whiskey?” jeered Kirby, with a coarse laugh.

Wolfe was silent a moment, thinking.

“I dunno,” he said, with a bewildered look. “It mebbe. Summat to make her live, I think,—like you. Whiskey ull do it, in a way.”

The young man laughed again. Mitchell flashed a look of disgust somewhere,—not at Wolfe.

“May,” he broke out impatiently, “are you blind? Look at that woman's face! It asks questions of God, and says, 'I have a right to know,' Good God, how hungry it is!”

They looked a moment; then May turned to the mill-owner:—

“Have you many such hands as this? What are you going to do with them? Keep them at puddling iron?”

Kirby shrugged his shoulders. Mitchell's look had irritated him.

“Ce n'est pas mon affaire. I have no fancy for nursing infant geniuses. I suppose there are some stray gleams of mind and soul among these wretches. The Lord will take care of his own; or else they can work out their own salvation. I have heard you call our American system a ladder which any man can scale. Do you doubt it? Or perhaps you want to banish all social ladders, and put us all on a flat table-land,—eh, May?”

The Doctor looked vexed, puzzled. Some terrible problem lay hid in this woman's face, and troubled these men. Kirby waited for an answer, and, receiving none, went on, warming with his subject.

“I tell you, there's something wrong that no talk of 'Liberte' or 'Egalite' will do away. If I had the making of men, these men who do the lowest part of the world's work should be machines,—nothing more,—hands. It would be kindness. God help them! What are taste, reason, to creatures who must live such lives as that?” He pointed to Deborah, sleeping on the ash-heap. “So many nerves to sting them to pain. What if God had put your brain, with all its agony of touch, into your fingers, and bid you work and strike with that?”

“You think you could govern the world better?” laughed the Doctor.

“I do not think at all.”

“That is true philosophy. Drift with the stream, because you cannot dive deep enough to find bottom, eh?”

“Exactly,” rejoined Kirby. “I do not think. I wash my hands of all social problems,—slavery, caste, white or black. My duty to my operatives has a narrow limit,—the pay-hour on Saturday night. Outside of that, if they cut korl, or cut each other's throats, (the more popular amusement of the two,) I am not responsible.”

The Doctor sighed,—a good honest sigh, from the depths of his stomach.

“God help us! Who is responsible?”

“Not I, I tell you,” said Kirby, testily. “What has the man who pays them money to do with their souls' concerns, more than the grocer or butcher who takes it?”

“And yet,” said Mitchell's cynical voice, “look at her! How hungry she is!”

Kirby tapped his boot with his cane. No one spoke. Only the dumb face of the rough image looking into their faces with the awful question, “What shall we do to be saved?” Only Wolfe's face, with its heavy weight of brain, its weak, uncertain mouth, its desperate eyes, out of which looked the soul of his class,—only Wolfe's face turned towards Kirby's. Mitchell laughed,—a cool, musical laugh.

“Money has spoken!” he said, seating himself lightly on a stone with the air of an amused spectator at a play. “Are you answered?”—turning to Wolfe his clear, magnetic face.

Bright and deep and cold as Arctic air, the soul of the man lay tranquil beneath. He looked at the furnace-tender as he had looked at a rare mosaic in the morning; only the man was the more amusing study of the two.

“Are you answered? Why, May, look at him! 'De profundis clamavi.' Or, to quote in English, 'Hungry and thirsty, his soul faints in him.' And so Money sends back its answer into the depths through you, Kirby! Very clear the answer, too!—I think I remember reading the same words somewhere: washing your hands in Eau de Cologne, and saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this man. See ye to it!'”

Kirby flushed angrily.

“You quote Scripture freely.”

“Do I not quote correctly? I think I remember another line, which may amend my meaning? 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me.' Deist? Bless you, man, I was raised on the milk of the Word. Now, Doctor, the pocket of the world having uttered its voice, what has the heart to say? You are a philanthropist, in a small Way,—n'est ce pas? Here, boy, this gentleman can show you how to cut korl better,—or your destiny. Go on, May!”

“I think a mocking devil possesses you to-night,” rejoined the Doctor, seriously.

He went to Wolfe and put his hand kindly on his arm. Something of a vague idea possessed the Doctor's brain that much good was to be done here by a friendly word or two: a latent genius to be warmed into life by a waited-for sunbeam. Here it was: he had brought it. So he went on complacently:

“Do you know, boy, you have it in you to be a great sculptor, a great man? do you understand?” (talking down to the capacity of his hearer: it is a way people have with children, and men like Wolfe,)—“to live a better, stronger life than I, or Mr. Kirby here? A man may make himself anything he chooses. God has given you stronger powers than many men,—me, for instance.”

May stopped, heated, glowing with his own magnanimity. And it was magnanimous. The puddler had drunk in every word, looking through the Doctor's flurry, and generous heat, and self-approval, into his will, with those slow, absorbing eyes of his.

“Make yourself what you will. It is your right.

“I know,” quietly. “Will you help me?”

Mitchell laughed again. The Doctor turned now, in a passion,—

“You know, Mitchell, I have not the means. You know, if I had, it is in my heart to take this boy and educate him for”—

“The glory of God, and the glory of John May.”

May did not speak for a moment; then, controlled, he said,—

“Why should one be raised, when myriads are left?—I have not the money, boy,” to Wolfe, shortly.

“Money?” He said it over slowly, as one repeats the guessed answer to a riddle, doubtfully. “That is it? Money?”

“Yes, money,—that is it,” said Mitchell, rising, and drawing his furred coat about him. “You've found the cure for all the world's diseases.—Come, May, find your good-humor, and come home. This damp wind chills my very bones. Come and preach your Saint-Simonian doctrines' to-morrow to Kirby's hands. Let them have a clear idea of the rights of the soul, and I'll venture next week they'll strike for higher wages. That will be the end of it.”

“Will you send the coach-driver to this side of the mills?” asked Kirby, turning to Wolfe.

He spoke kindly: it was his habit to do so. Deborah, seeing the puddler go, crept after him. The three men waited outside. Doctor May walked up and down, chafed. Suddenly he stopped.

“Go back, Mitchell! You say the pocket and the heart of the world speak without meaning to these people. What has its head to say? Taste, culture, refinement? Go!”

Mitchell was leaning against a brick wall. He turned his head indolently, and looked into the mills. There hung about the place a thick, unclean odor. The slightest motion of his hand marked that he perceived it, and his insufferable disgust. That was all. May said nothing, only quickened his angry tramp.

“Besides,” added Mitchell, giving a corollary to his answer, “it would be of no use. I am not one of them.”

“You do not mean”—said May, facing him.

“Yes, I mean just that. Reform is born of need, not pity. No vital movement of the people's has worked down, for good or evil; fermented, instead, carried up the heaving, cloggy mass. Think back through history, and you will know it. What will this lowest deep—thieves, Magdalens, negroes—do with the light filtered through ponderous Church creeds, Baconian theories, Goethe schemes? Some day, out of their bitter need will be thrown up their own light-bringer,—their Jean Paul, their Cromwell, their Messiah.”

“Bah!” was the Doctor's inward criticism. However, in practice, he adopted the theory; for, when, night and morning, afterwards, he prayed that power might be given these degraded souls to rise, he glowed at heart, recognizing an accomplished duty.

Wolfe and the woman had stood in the shadow of the works as the coach drove off. The Doctor had held out his hand in a frank, generous way, telling him to “take care of himself, and to remember it was his right to rise.” Mitchell had simply touched his hat, as to an equal, with a quiet look of thorough recognition. Kirby had thrown Deborah some money, which she found, and clutched eagerly enough. They were gone now, all of them. The man sat down on the cinder-road, looking up into the murky sky.

“'T be late, Hugh. Wunnot hur come?”

He shook his head doggedly, and the woman crouched out of his sight against the wall. Do you remember rare moments when a sudden light flashed over yourself, your world, God? when you stood on a mountain-peak, seeing your life as it might have been, as it is? one quick instant, when custom lost its force and every-day usage? when your friend, wife, brother, stood in a new light? your soul was bared, and the grave,—a foretaste of the nakedness of the Judgment-Day? So it came before him, his life, that night. The slow tides of pain he had borne gathered themselves up and surged against his soul. His squalid daily life, the brutal coarseness eating into his brain, as the ashes into his skin: before, these things had been a dull aching into his consciousness; to-night, they were reality. He griped the filthy red shirt that clung, stiff with soot, about him, and tore it savagely from his arm. The flesh beneath was muddy with grease and ashes,—and the heart beneath that! And the soul? God knows.

Then flashed before his vivid poetic sense the man who had left him,—the pure face, the delicate, sinewy limbs, in harmony with all he knew of beauty or truth. In his cloudy fancy he had pictured a Something like this. He had found it in this Mitchell, even when he idly scoffed at his pain: a Man all-knowing, all-seeing, crowned by Nature, reigning,—the keen glance of his eye falling like a sceptre on other men. And yet his instinct taught him that he too—He! He looked at himself with sudden loathing, sick, wrung his hands With a cry, and then was silent. With all the phantoms of his heated, ignorant fancy, Wolfe had not been vague in his ambitions. They were practical, slowly built up before him out of his knowledge of what he could do. Through years he had day by day made this hope a real thing to himself,—a clear, projected figure of himself, as he might become.

Able to speak, to know what was best, to raise these men and women working at his side up with him: sometimes he forgot this defined hope in the frantic anguish to escape, only to escape,—out of the wet, the pain, the ashes, somewhere, anywhere,—only for one moment of free air on a hill-side, to lie down and let his sick soul throb itself out in the sunshine. But to-night he panted for life. The savage strength of his nature was roused; his cry was fierce to God for justice.

“Look at me!” he said to Deborah, with a low, bitter laugh, striking his puny chest savagely. “What am I worth, Deb? Is it my fault that I am no better? My fault? My fault?”

He stopped, stung with a sudden remorse, seeing her hunchback shape writhing with sobs. For Deborah was crying thankless tears, according to the fashion of women.

“God forgi' me, woman! Things go harder Wi' you nor me. It's a worse share.”

He got up and helped her to rise; and they went doggedly down the muddy street, side by side.

“It's all wrong,” he muttered, slowly,—“all wrong! I dunnot understan'. But it'll end some day.”

“Come home, Hugh!” she said, coaxingly; for he had stopped, looking around bewildered.

“Home,—and back to the mill!” He went on saying this over to himself, as if he would mutter down every pain in this dull despair.

She followed him through the fog, her blue lips chattering with cold. They reached the cellar at last. Old Wolfe had been drinking since she went out, and had crept nearer the door. The girl Janey slept heavily in the corner. He went up to her, touching softly the worn white arm with his fingers. Some bitterer thought stung him, as he stood there. He wiped the drops from his forehead, and went into the room beyond, livid, trembling. A hope, trifling, perhaps, but very dear, had died just then out of the poor puddler's life, as he looked at the sleeping, innocent girl,—some plan for the future, in which she had borne a part. He gave it up that

moment, then and forever. Only a trifle, perhaps, to us: his face grew a shade paler,—that was all. But, somehow, the man's soul, as God and the angels looked down on it, never was the same afterwards.

Deborah followed him into the inner room. She carried a candle, which she placed on the floor, closing the door after her. She had seen the look on his face, as he turned away: her own grew deadly. Yet, as she came up to him, her eyes glowed. He was seated on an old chest, quiet, holding his face in his hands.

“Hugh!” she said, softly.

He did not speak.

“Hugh, did hur hear what the man said,—him with the clear voice? Did hur hear? Money, money,—that it wud do all?”

He pushed her away,—gently, but he was worn out; her rasping tone fretted him.

“Hugh!”

The candle flared a pale yellow light over the cobwebbed brick walls, and the woman standing there. He looked at her. She was young, in deadly earnest; her faded eyes, and wet, ragged figure caught from their frantic eagerness a power akin to beauty.

“Hugh, it is true! Money ull do it! Oh, Hugh, boy, listen till me! He said it true! It is money!”

“I know. Go back! I do not want you here.”

“Hugh, it is t' last time. I'll never worrit hur again.”

There were tears in her voice now, but she choked them back:

“Hear till me only to-night! If one of t' witch people wud come, them we heard oft' home, and gif hur all hur wants, what then? Say, Hugh!”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean money.”

Her whisper shrilled through his brain.

“If one oft' witch dwarfs wud come from t' lane moors to-night, and gif hur money, to go out,—OUT, I say,—out, lad, where t' sun shines, and t' heath grows, and t' ladies walk in silken gownds, and God stays all t' time,—where t'man lives that talked to us to-night, Hugh knows,—Hugh could walk there like a king!”

He thought the woman mad, tried to check her, but she went on, fierce in her eager haste.

“If I were t' witch dwarf, if I had t' money, wud hur thank me? Wud hur take me out o' this place wid hur and Janey? I wud not come into the gran' house hur wud build, to vex hur wid t' hunch,—only at night, when t' shadows were dark, stand far off to see hur.”

Mad? Yes! Are many of us mad in this way?

“Poor Deb! poor Deb!” he said, soothingly.

“It is here,” she said, suddenly, jerking into his hand a small roll. “I took it! I did it! Me, me!—not hur! I shall be hanged, I shall be burnt in hell, if anybody knows I took it! Out of his pocket, as he leaned against t' bricks. Hur knows?”

She thrust it into his hand, and then, her errand done, began to gather chips together to make a fire, choking down hysteric sobs.

“Has it come to this?”

That was all he said. The Welsh Wolfe blood was honest. The roll was a small green pocket-book containing one or two gold pieces, and a check for an incredible amount, as it seemed to the poor puddler. He laid it down, hiding his face again in his hands.

“Hugh, don't be angry wud me! It's only poor Deb,—hur knows?”

He took the long skinny fingers kindly in his.

“Angry? God help me, no! Let me sleep. I am tired.”

He threw himself heavily down on the wooden bench, stunned with pain and weariness. She brought some old rags to cover him.

It was late on Sunday evening before he awoke. I tell God's truth, when I say he had then no thought of keeping this money. Deborah had hid it in his pocket. He found it there. She watched him eagerly, as he took it out.

“I must gif it to him,” he said, reading her face.

“Hur knows,” she said with a bitter sigh of disappointment. “But it is hur right to keep it.”

His right! The word struck him. Doctor May had used the same. He washed himself, and went out to find this man Mitchell. His right! Why did this chance word cling to him so obstinately? Do you hear the fierce devils whisper in his ear, as he went slowly down the darkening street?

The evening came on, slow and calm. He seated himself at the end of an alley leading into one of the larger streets. His brain was clear to-night, keen, intent, mastering. It would not start back, cowardly, from any hellish temptation, but meet it face to face. Therefore the great temptation of his life came to him veiled by no sophistry, but bold, defiant, owning its own vile name, trusting to one bold blow for victory.

He did not deceive himself. Theft! That was it. At first the word sickened him; then he grappled with it. Sitting there on a broken cart-wheel, the fading day, the noisy groups, the church-bells' tolling passed before him like a panorama, while the sharp struggle went on within. This money! He took it out, and looked at it. If he gave it back, what then? He was going to be cool about it.

People going by to church saw only a sickly mill-boy watching them quietly at the alley's mouth. They did not know that he was mad, or they would not have gone by so quietly: mad with hunger; stretching out his hands to the world, that had given so much to them, for leave to live the life God meant him to live. His soul within him was smothering to death; he wanted so much, thought so much, and knew—nothing. There was nothing of which he was certain, except the mill and things there. Of God and heaven he had heard so little, that they were to him what fairy-land is to a child: something real, but not here; very far off. His brain, greedy, dwarfed, full of thwarted energy and unused powers, questioned these men and women going by, coldly, bitterly, that night. Was it not his right to live as they,—a pure life, a good, true-hearted life, full of beauty and kind words? He only wanted to know how to use the strength within him. His heart warmed, as he thought of it. He suffered himself to think of it longer. If he took the money?

Then he saw himself as he might be, strong, helpful, kindly. The night crept on, as this one image slowly evolved itself from the crowd of other thoughts and stood triumphant. He looked at it. As he might be! What wonder, if it blinded him to delirium,—the madness that underlies all revolution, all progress, and all fall?

You laugh at the shallow temptation? You see the error underlying its argument so clearly,—that to him a true life was one of full development rather than self-restraint? that he was deaf to the higher tone in a cry of voluntary suffering for truth's sake than in the fullest flow of spontaneous harmony? I do not plead his cause. I only want to show you the mote in my brother's eye: then you can see clearly to take it out.

The money,—there it lay on his knee, a little blotted slip of paper, nothing in itself; used to raise him out of the pit, something straight from God's hand. A thief! Well, what was it to be a thief? He met the question at last, face to face, wiping the clammy drops of sweat from his forehead. God made this money—the fresh air, too—for his children's use. He never made the difference between poor and rich. The Something who looked down on him that moment through the cool gray sky had a kindly face, he knew,—loved his children alike. Oh, he knew that!

There were times when the soft floods of color in the crimson and purple flames, or the clear depth of amber in the water below the bridge, had somehow given him a glimpse of another world than this,—of an infinite depth of beauty and of quiet somewhere,—somewhere, a depth of quiet and rest and love. Looking up now, it became strangely real. The sun had sunk quite below the hills, but his last rays struck upward, touching the zenith. The fog had risen, and the town and river were steeped in its thick, gray damp; but overhead, the sun-touched smoke-clouds opened like a cleft ocean,—shifting, rolling seas of crimson mist, waves of billowy silver veined with blood-scarlet, inner depths unfathomable of glancing light. Wolfe's artist-eye grew drunk with color. The gates of that other world! Fading, flashing before him now! What, in that world of Beauty, Content, and Right, were the petty laws, the mine and thine, of mill-owners and mill hands?

A consciousness of power stirred within him. He stood up. A man,—he thought, stretching out his hands,—free to work, to live, to love! Free! His right! He folded the scrap of paper in his hand. As his nervous fingers took it in, limp and blotted, so his soul took in the mean temptation, lapped it in fancied rights, in dreams of improved existences, drifting and endless as the cloud-seas of

color. Clutching it, as if the tightness of his hold would strengthen his sense of possession, he went aimlessly down the street. It was his watch at the mill. He need not go, need never go again, thank God!—shaking off the thought with unspeakable loathing.

Shall I go over the history of the hours of that night? how the man wandered from one to another of his old haunts, with a half-consciousness of bidding them farewell,—lanes and alleys and back-yards where the mill-hands lodged,—noting, with a new eagerness, the filth and drunkenness, the pig-pens, the ash-heaps covered with potato-skins, the bloated, pimpled women at the doors, with a new disgust, a new sense of sudden triumph, and, under all, a new, vague dread, unknown before, smothered down, kept under, but still there? It left him but once during the night, when, for the second time in his life, he entered a church. It was a sombre Gothic pile, where the stained light lost itself in far-retreating arches; built to meet the requirements and sympathies of a far other class than Wolfe's. Yet it touched, moved him uncontrollably. The distances, the shadows, the still, marble figures, the mass of silent kneeling worshippers, the mysterious music, thrilled, lifted his soul with a wonderful pain. Wolfe forgot himself, forgot the new life he was going to live, the mean terror gnawing underneath. The voice of the speaker strengthened the charm; it was clear, feeling, full, strong. An old man, who had lived much, suffered much; whose brain was keenly alive, dominant; whose heart was summer-warm with charity. He taught it to-night. He held up Humanity in its grand total; showed the great world-cancer to his people. Who could show it better? He was a Christian reformer; he had studied the age thoroughly; his outlook at man had been free, world-wide, over all time. His faith stood sublime upon the Rock of Ages; his fiery zeal guided vast schemes by which the Gospel was to be preached to all nations. How did he preach it to-night? In burning, light-laden words he painted Jesus, the incarnate Life, Love, the universal Man: words that became reality in the lives of these people,—that lived again in beautiful words and actions, trifling, but heroic. Sin, as he defined it, was a real foe to them; their trials, temptations, were his. His words passed far over the furnace-tender's grasp, toned to suit another class of culture; they sounded in his ears a very pleasant song in an unknown tongue. He meant to cure this world-cancer with a steady eye that had never glared with hunger, and a hand that neither poverty nor strychnine-whiskey had taught to shake. In this morbid, distorted heart of the Welsh puddler he had failed.

Eighteen centuries ago, the Master of this man tried reform in the streets of a city as crowded and vile as this, and did not fail. His disciple, showing Him to-night to cultured hearers, showing the clearness of the God-power acting through Him, shrank back from one coarse fact; that in birth and habit the man Christ was thrown up from the lowest of the people: his flesh, their flesh; their blood, his blood; tempted like them, to brutalize day by day; to lie, to steal: the actual slime and want of their hourly life, and the wine-press he trod alone.

Yet, is there no meaning in this perpetually covered truth? If the son of the carpenter had stood in the church that night, as he stood with the fishermen and harlots by the sea of Galilee, before His Father and their Father, despised and rejected of men, without a place to lay His head, wounded for their iniquities, bruised for their transgressions, would not that hungry mill-boy at least, in the back seat, have “known the man”? That Jesus did not stand there.

Wolfe rose at last, and turned from the church down the street. He looked up; the night had come on foggy, damp; the golden mists had vanished, and the sky lay dull and ash-colored. He wandered again aimlessly down the street, idly wondering what had become of the cloud-sea of crimson and scarlet. The trial-day of this man's life was over, and he had lost the victory. What followed was mere drifting circumstance,—a quicker walking over the path,—that was all. Do you want to hear the end of it? You wish me to make a tragic story out of it? Why, in the police-reports of the morning paper you can find a dozen such tragedies: hints of shipwrecks unlike any that ever befell on the high seas; hints that here a power was lost to heaven,—that there a soul went down where no tide can ebb or flow. Commonplace enough the hints are,—jocose sometimes, done up in rhyme.

Doctor May a month after the night I have told you of, was reading to his wife at breakfast from this fourth column of the morning-paper: an unusual thing,—these police-reports not being, in general, choice reading for ladies; but it was only one item he read.

“Oh, my dear! You remember that man I told you of, that we saw at Kirby's mill?—that was arrested for robbing Mitchell? Here he is; just listen:—'Circuit Court. Judge Day. Hugh Wolfe, operative in Kirby & John's Loudon Mills. Charge, grand larceny. Sentence, nineteen years hard labor in penitentiary. Scoundrel! Serves him right! After all our kindness that night! Picking Mitchell's pocket at the very time!”

His wife said something about the ingratitude of that kind of people, and then they began to talk of something else.

Nineteen years! How easy that was to read! What a simple word for Judge Day to utter! Nineteen years! Half a lifetime!

Hugh Wolfe sat on the window-ledge of his cell, looking out. His ankles Were ironed. Not usual in such cases; but he had made two desperate efforts to escape. “Well,” as Haley, the jailer, said, “small blame to him! Nineteen years' imprisonment was not a pleasant thing to look forward to.” Haley was very good-natured about it, though Wolfe had fought him savagely.

“When he was first caught,” the jailer said afterwards, in telling the story, “before the trial, the fellow was cut down at once,—laid there on that pallet like a dead man, with his hands over his eyes. Never saw a man so cut down in my life. Time of the trial, too, came the queerest dodge of any customer I ever had. Would choose no lawyer. Judge gave him one, of course. Gibson it Was. He tried to prove the fellow crazy; but it wouldn't go. Thing was plain as daylight: money found on him. 'T was a hard sentence,—all the law allows; but it was for 'xample's sake. These mill-hands are gettin' onbearable. When the sentence was read, he just looked up, and said the money was his by rights, and that all the world had gone wrong. That night, after the trial, a gentleman came to see him here, name of Mitchell,—him as he stole from. Talked to him for an hour. Thought he came for curiosity, like. After he was gone, thought Wolfe was remarkable quiet, and went into his cell. Found him very low; bed all bloody. Doctor said he had been bleeding at the lungs. He was as weak as a cat; yet if ye'll b'lieve me, he tried to get a-past me and get out. I just carried him like a baby, and threw him on the pallet. Three days after, he tried it again: that time reached the wall. Lord help you! he fought like a tiger,—giv' some terrible blows. Fightin' for life, you see; for he can't live long, shut up in the stone crib down yonder. Got a death-cough now. 'T took two of us to bring him down that day; so I just put the irons on his feet. There he sits, in there. Goin' to-morrow, with a batch more of 'em. That woman, hunchback, tried with him,—you remember?—she's only got three years. 'Complice. But she's a woman, you know. He's been quiet ever since I put on irons: giv' up, I suppose. Looks white, sick-lookin'. It acts different on 'em, bein' sentenced. Most of 'em gets reckless, devilish-like. Some prays awful, and sings them vile songs of the mills, all in a breath. That woman, now, she's desper't'. Been beggin' to see Hugh, as she calls him, for three days. I'm a-goin' to let her in. She don't go with him. Here she is in this next cell. I'm a-goin' now to let her in.”

He let her in. Wolfe did not see her. She crept into a corner of the cell, and stood watching him. He was scratching the iron bars of the window with a piece of tin which he had picked up, with an idle, uncertain, vacant stare, just as a child or idiot would do.

“Tryin' to get out, old boy?” laughed Haley. “Them irons will need a crow-bar beside your tin, before you can open 'em.”

Wolfe laughed, too, in a senseless way.

“I think I'll get out,” he said.

“I believe his brain's touched,” said Haley, when he came out.

The puddler scraped away with the tin for half an hour. Still Deborah did not speak. At last she ventured nearer, and touched his arm.

“Blood?” she said, looking at some spots on his coat with a shudder.

He looked up at her, “Why, Deb!” he said, smiling,—such a bright, boyish smile, that it Went to poor Deborah's heart directly, and she sobbed and cried out loud.

“Oh, Hugh, lad! Hugh! dunnot look at me, when it wur my fault! To think I brought hur to it! And I loved hur so! Oh lad, I dud!”

The confession, even In this wretch, came with the woman's blush through the sharp cry.

He did not seem to hear her,—scraping away diligently at the bars with the bit of tin.

Was he going mad? She peered closely into his face. Something she saw there made her draw suddenly back,—something which Haley had not seen, that lay beneath the pinched, vacant look it had caught since the trial, or the curious gray shadow that rested on it. That gray shadow,—yes, she knew what that meant. She had often seen it creeping over women's faces for months, who died at last of slow hunger or consumption. That meant death, distant, lingering: but this—Whatever it was the woman saw, or thought she saw, used as she was to crime and misery, seemed to make her sick with a new horror. Forgetting her fear of him, she caught his shoulders, and looked keenly, steadily, into his eyes.

“Hugh!” she cried, in a desperate whisper,—“oh, boy, not that! for God's sake, not that!”

The vacant laugh went off his face, and he answered her in a muttered word or two that drove her away. Yet the words were kindly enough. Sitting there on his pallet, she cried silently a hopeless sort of tears, but did not speak again. The man looked up furtively at her now and then. Whatever his own trouble was, her distress vexed him with a momentary sting.

It was market-day. The narrow window of the jail looked down directly on the carts and wagons drawn up in a long line, where they had unloaded. He could see, too, and hear distinctly the clink of money as it changed hands, the busy crowd of whites and blacks shoving, pushing one another, and the chaffering and swearing at the stalls. Somehow, the sound, more than anything else had done, wakened him up,—made the whole real to him. He was done with the world and the business of it. He let the tin fall, and looked out, pressing his face close to the rusty bars. How they crowded and pushed! And he,—he should never walk that pavement again! There came Neff Sanders, one of the feeders at the mill, with a basket on his arm. Sure enough, Nyeff was married the other week. He whistled, hoping he would look up; but he did not. He wondered if Neff remembered he was there,—if any of the boys thought of him up there, and thought that he never was to go down that old cinder-road again. Never again! He had not quite understood it before; but now he did. Not for days or years, but never!—that was it.

How clear the light fell on that stall in front of the market! and how like a picture it was, the dark-green heaps of corn, and the crimson beets, and golden melons! There was another with game: how the light flickered on that pheasant's breast, with the purplish blood dripping over the brown feathers! He could see the red shining of the drops, it was so near. In one minute he could be down there. It was just a step. So easy, as it seemed, so natural to go! Yet it could never be—not in all the thousands of years to come—that he should put his foot on that street again! He thought of himself with a sorrowful pity, as of some one else. There was a dog down in the market, walking after his master with such a stately, grave look!—only a dog, yet he could go backwards and forwards just as he pleased: he had good luck! Why, the very vilest cur, yelping there in the gutter, had not lived his life, had been free to act out whatever thought God had put into his brain; while he—No, he would not think of that! He tried to put the thought away, and to listen to a dispute between a countryman and a woman about some meat; but it would come back. He, what had he done to bear this?

Then came the sudden picture of what might have been, and now. He knew what it was to be in the penitentiary, how it went with men there. He knew how in these long years he should slowly die, but not until soul and body had become corrupt and rotten,—how, when he came out, if he lived to come, even the lowest of the mill-hands would jeer him,—how his hands would be weak, and his brain senseless and stupid. He believed he was almost that now. He put his hand to his head, with a puzzled, weary look. It ached, his head, with thinking. He tried to quiet himself. It was only right, perhaps; he had done wrong. But was there right or wrong for such as he? What was right? And who had ever taught him? He thrust the whole matter away. A dark, cold quiet crept through his brain. It was all wrong; but let it be! It was nothing to him more than the others. Let it be!

The door grated, as Haley opened it.

“Come, my woman! Must lock up for t' night. Come, stir yerself!”

She went up and took Hugh's hand.

“Good-night, Deb,” he said, carelessly.

She had not hoped he would say more; but the tired pain on her mouth just then was bitterer than death. She took his passive hand and kissed it.

“Hur'll never see Deb again!” she ventured, her lips growing colder and more bloodless.

What did she say that for? Did he not know it? Yet he would not be impatient with poor old Deb. She had trouble of her own, as well as he.

“No, never again,” he said, trying to be cheerful.

She stood just a moment, looking at him. Do you laugh at her, standing there, with her hunchback, her rags, her bleared, withered face, and the great despised love tugging at her heart?

“Come, you!” called Haley, impatiently.

She did not move.

“Hugh!” she whispered.

It was to be her last word. What was it?

“Hugh, boy, not THAT!”

He did not answer. She wrung her hands, trying to be silent, looking in his face in an agony of entreaty. He smiled again, kindly.

“It is best, Deb. I cannot bear to be hurted any more.

“Hur knows,” she said, humbly.

“Tell my father good-bye; and—and kiss little Janey.”

She nodded, saying nothing, looked in his face again, and went out of the door. As she went, she staggered.

“Drinkin' to-day?” broke out Haley, pushing her before him. “Where the Devil did you get it? Here, in with ye!” and he shoved her into her cell, next to Wolfe's, and shut the door.

Along the wall of her cell there was a crack low down by the floor, through which she could see the light from Wolfe's. She had discovered it days before. She hurried in now, and, kneeling down by it, listened, hoping to hear some sound. Nothing but the rasping of the tin on the bars. He was at his old amusement again. Something in the noise jarred on her ear, for she shivered as she heard it. Hugh rasped away at the bars. A dull old bit of tin, not fit to cut korl with.

He looked out of the window again. People were leaving the market now. A tall mulatto girl, following her mistress, her basket on her head, crossed the street just below, and looked up. She was laughing; but, when she caught sight of the haggard face peering out through the bars, suddenly grew grave, and hurried by. A free, firm step, a clear-cut olive face, with a scarlet turban tied on one side, dark, shining eyes, and on the head the basket poised, filled with fruit and flowers, under which the scarlet turban and bright eyes looked out half-shadowed. The picture caught his eye. It was good to see a face like that. He would try to-morrow, and cut one like it. To-morrow! He threw down the tin, trembling, and covered his face with his hands. When he looked up again, the daylight was gone.

Deborah, crouching near by on the other side of the wall, heard no noise. He sat on the side of the low pallet, thinking. Whatever was the mystery which the woman had seen on his face, it came out now slowly, in the dark there, and became fixed,—a something never seen on his face before. The evening was darkening fast. The market had been over for an hour; the rumbling of the carts over the pavement grew more infrequent: he listened to each, as it passed, because he thought it was to be for the last time. For the same reason, it was, I suppose, that he strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of each passer-by, wondering who they were, what kind of homes they were going to, if they had children,—listening eagerly to every chance word in the street, as if—(God be merciful to the man! what strange fancy was this?)—as if he never should hear human voices again.

It was quite dark at last. The street was a lonely one. The last passenger, he thought, was gone. No,—there was a quick step: Joe Hill, lighting the lamps. Joe was a good old chap; never passed a fellow without some joke or other. He remembered once seeing the place where he lived with his wife. “Granny Hill” the boys called her. Bedridden she Was; but so kind as Joe was to her! kept the room so clean!—and the old woman, when he was there, was laughing at some of “t' lad's foolishness.” The step was far down the street; but he could see him place the ladder, run up, and light the gas. A longing seized him to be spoken to once more.

“Joe!” he called, out of the grating. “Good-bye, Joe!”

The old man stopped a moment, listening uncertainly; then hurried on. The prisoner thrust his hand out of the window, and called again, louder; but Joe was too far down the street. It was a little thing; but it hurt him,—this disappointment.

“Good-bye, Joe!” he called, sorrowfully enough.

“Be quiet!” said one of the jailers, passing the door, striking on it with his club.

Oh, that was the last, was it?

There was an inexpressible bitterness on his face, as he lay down on the bed, taking the bit of tin, which he had rasped to a tolerable degree of sharpness, in his hand,—to play with, it may be. He bared his arms, looking intently at their corded veins and sinews. Deborah, listening in the next cell, heard a slight clicking sound, often repeated. She shut her lips tightly, that she might not scream; the cold drops of sweat broke over her, in her dumb agony.

“Hur knows best,” she muttered at last, fiercely clutching the boards where she lay.

If she could have seen Wolfe, there was nothing about him to frighten her. He lay quite still, his arms outstretched, looking at the pearly stream of moonlight coming into the window. I think in that one hour that came then he lived back over all the years that had gone before. I think that all the low, vile life, all his wrongs, all his starved hopes, came then, and stung him with a farewell poison

that made him sick unto death. He made neither moan nor cry, only turned his worn face now and then to the pure light, that seemed so far off, as one that said, “How long, O Lord? how long?”

The hour was over at last. The moon, passing over her nightly path, slowly came nearer, and threw the light across his bed on his feet. He watched it steadily, as it crept up, inch by inch, slowly. It seemed to him to carry with it a great silence. He had been so hot and tired there always in the mills! The years had been so fierce and cruel! There was coming now quiet and coolness and sleep. His tense limbs relaxed, and settled in a calm languor. The blood ran fainter and slow from his heart. He did not think now with a savage anger of what might be and was not; he was conscious only of deep stillness creeping over him. At first he saw a sea of faces: the mill-men,—women he had known, drunken and bloated,—Janey's timid and pitiful-poor old Debs: then they floated together like a mist, and faded away, leaving only the clear, pearly moonlight.

Whether, as the pure light crept up the stretched-out figure, it brought with It calm and peace, who shall say? His dumb soul was alone with God in judgment. A Voice may have spoken for it from far-off Calvary, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!” Who dare say? Fainter and fainter the heart rose and fell, slower and slower the moon floated from behind a cloud, until, when at last its full tide of white splendor swept over the cell, it seemed to wrap and fold into a deeper stillness the dead figure that never should move again. Silence deeper than the Night! Nothing that moved, save the black, nauseous stream of blood dripping slowly from the pallet to the floor!

There was outcry and crowd enough in the cell the next day. The coroner and his jury, the local editors, Kirby himself, and boys with their hands thrust knowingly into their pockets and heads on one side, jammed into the corners. Coming and going all day. Only one woman. She came late, and outstayed them all. A Quaker, or Friend, as they call themselves. I think this woman Was known by that name in heaven. A homely body, coarsely dressed in gray and white. Deborah (for Haley had let her in) took notice of her. She watched them all—sitting on the end of the pallet, holding his head in her arms with the ferocity of a watch-dog, if any of them touched the body. There was no meekness, no sorrow, in her face; the stuff out of which murderers are made, instead. All the time Haley and the woman were laying straight the limbs and cleaning the cell, Deborah sat still, keenly watching the Quaker's face. Of all the crowd there that day, this woman alone had not spoken to her,—only once or twice had put some cordial to her lips. After they all were gone, the woman, in the same still, gentle way, brought a vase of wood-leaves and berries, and placed it by the pallet, then opened the narrow window. The fresh air blew in, and swept the woody fragrance over the dead face, Deborah looked up with a quick wonder.

“Did hur know my boy wud like it? Did hur know Hugh?”

“I know Hugh now.”

The white fingers passed in a slow, pitiful way over the dead, worn face. There was a heavy shadow in the quiet eyes.

“Did hur know where they'll bury Hugh?” said Deborah in a shrill tone, catching her arm.

This had been the question hanging on her lips all day.

“In t' town-yard? Under t' mud and ash? T' lad'll smother, woman! He wur born in t' lane moor, where t' air is frick and strong. Take hur out, for God's sake, take hur out where t' air blows!”

The Quaker hesitated, but only for a moment. She put her strong arm around Deborah and led her to the window.

“Thee sees the hills, friend, over the river? Thee sees how the light lies warm there, and the winds of God blow all the day? I live there,—where the blue smoke is, by the trees. Look at me,” She turned Deborah's face to her own, clear and earnest, “Thee will believe me? I will take Hugh and bury him there to-morrow.”

Deborah did not doubt her. As the evening wore on, she leaned against the iron bars, looking at the hills that rose far off, through the thick sodden clouds, like a bright, unattainable calm. As she looked, a shadow of their solemn repose fell on her face; its fierce discontent faded into a pitiful, humble quiet. Slow, solemn tears gathered in her eyes: the poor weak eyes turned so hopelessly to the place where Hugh was to rest, the grave heights looking higher and brighter and more solemn than ever before. The Quaker watched her keenly. She came to her at last, and touched her arm.

“When thee comes back,” she said, in a low, sorrowful tone, like one who speaks from a strong heart deeply moved with remorse or pity, “thee shall begin thy life again,—there on the hills. I came too late; but not for thee,—by God's help, it may be.”

Not too late. Three years after, the Quaker began her work. I end my story here. At evening-time it was light. There is no need to tire you with the long years of sunshine, and fresh air, and slow, patient Christ-love, needed to make healthy and hopeful this impure body and soul. There is a homely pine house, on one of these hills, whose windows overlook broad, wooded slopes and clover-crimsoned meadows,—niched into the very place where the light is warmest, the air freest. It is the Friends' meeting-house. Once a week they sit there, in their grave, earnest way, waiting for the Spirit of Love to speak, opening their simple hearts to receive His words. There is a woman, old, deformed, who takes a humble place among them: waiting like them: in her gray dress, her worn face, pure and meek, turned now and then to the sky. A woman much loved by these silent, restful people; more silent than they, more humble, more loving. Waiting: with her eyes turned to hills higher and purer than these on which she lives, dim and far off now, but to be reached some day. There may be in her heart some latent hope to meet there the love denied her here,—that she shall find him whom she lost, and that then she will not be all-unworthy. Who blames her? Something is lost in the passage of every soul from one eternity to the other,—something pure and beautiful, which might have been and was not: a hope, a talent, a love, over which the soul mourns, like Esau deprived of his birthright. What blame to the meek Quaker, if she took her lost hope to make the hills of heaven more fair?

Nothing remains to tell that the poor Welsh puddler once lived, but this figure of the mill-woman cut in korl. I have it here in a corner of my library. I keep it hid behind a curtain,—it is such a rough, ungainly thing. Yet there are about it touches, grand sweeps of outline, that show a master's hand. Sometimes,—to-night, for instance,—the curtain is accidentally drawn back, and I see a bare arm stretched out imploringly in the darkness, and an eager, wolfish face watching mine: a wan, woful face, through which the spirit of the dead korl-cutter looks out, with its thwarted life, its mighty hunger, its unfinished work. Its pale, vague lips seem to tremble with a terrible question. “Is this the End?” they say,—“nothing beyond? no more?” Why, you tell me you have seen that look in the eyes of dumb brutes,—horses dying under the lash. I know.

The deep of the night is passing while I write. The gas-light wakens from the shadows here and there the objects which lie scattered through the room: only faintly, though; for they belong to the open sunlight. As I glance at them, they each recall some task or pleasure of the coming day. A half-moulded child's head; Aphrodite; a bough of forest-leaves; music; work; homely fragments, in which lie the secrets of all eternal truth and beauty. Prophetic all! Only this dumb, woful face seems to belong to and end with the night. I turn to look at it. Has the power of its desperate need commanded the darkness away? While the room is yet steeped in heavy shadow, a cool, gray light suddenly touches its head like a blessing hand, and its groping arm points through the broken cloud to the far East, where, in the flickering, nebulous crimson, God has set the promise of the Dawn.

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5.13: Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt"

Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt"

"George, I wish you'd look at the nursery.

"What's wrong with it?"

"I don't know."

"Well, then."

"I just want you to look at it, is all, or call a psychologist in to look at it."

"What would a psychologist want with a nursery?"

"You know very well what he'd want." His wife was standing in the middle of the kitchen watching the stove busy humming to itself, making supper for four.

"It's just that it is different now than it was."

"All right, let's have a look."

They walked down the hall of their HappyLife Home, which had cost them thirty thousand dollars with everything included. This house which clothed and fed and rocked them to sleep and played and sang and was good to them. Their approach was sensed by a hidden switch and the nursery light turned on when they came within ten feet of it. Similarly, behind them, in the halls, lights went on and off automatically as they left them behind.

"Well," said George Hadley. They stood on the grass-like floor of the nursery. It was forty feet across by forty feet long and thirty feet high; it had cost half again as much as the rest of the house.

"But nothing's too good for our children," George had said.

The room was silent and empty. The walls were white and two dimensional. Now, as George and Lydia Hadley stood in the center of the room, the walls made a quiet noise and seemed to fall away into the distance. Soon an African veldt appeared, in three dimensions, on all sides, in color. It looked real to the smallest stone and bit of yellow summer grass. The ceiling above them became a deep sky with a hot yellow sun.

George Hadley started to sweat from the heat. "Let's get out of this sun," he said. "This is a little too real. But I don't see anything wrong."

"Wait a moment, you'll see," said his wife.

Now hidden machines were beginning to blow a wind containing prepared smells toward the two people in the middle of the baked veldt. The hot straw smell of lion grass, the cool green smell of the hidden water hole, the strong dried blood smell of the animals, the smell of dust like red pepper in the hot air. And now the sounds: the thump of distant antelope feet on soft grassy ground, the papery rustle of vultures. A shadow passed through the sky. George Hadley looked up, and as he watched the shadow moved across his sweating face. "Horrible creatures," he heard his wife say.

"The vultures."

"You see, there are the lions, far over, that way. Now they're on their way to the water hole.

They've just been eating," said Lydia. "I don't know what."

"Some animal." George Hadley put his hand above his eyes to block off the burning light and looked carefully. "A zebra or a baby giraffe, maybe."

"Are you sure?" His wife sounded strangely nervous.

"No, it's a little late to be sure," he said, with a laugh. "Nothing over there I can see but cleaned bone, and the vultures dropping for what's left."

"Did you hear that scream?" she asked.

"No."

"About a minute ago?"

"Sorry, no."

The lions were coming. And again George Hadley was filled with respect for the brilliant mind that had come up with the idea for this room. A wonder of efficiency selling for an unbelievably low price. Every home should have one. Oh, occasionally they frightened you with their realism, they made you jump, gave you a scare. But most of the time they were fun for everyone. Not only your own son and daughter, but for yourself when you felt like a quick trip to a foreign land, a quick change of scenery. Well, here it was!

And here were the lions now, fifteen feet away. They looked so real, so powerful and shockingly real, that you could feel the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. Your mouth was filled with the dusty smell of their heated fur. The yellow of the lions and the summer grass was in your eyes like a picture in an expensive French wall hanging. And there was the sound of the lions quick, heavy breaths in the silent mid-day sun, and the smell of meat from their dripping mouths.

The lions stood looking at George and Lydia Hadley with terrible green-yellow eyes. "Watch out!" screamed Lydia.

The lions came running at them. Lydia turned suddenly and ran. Without thinking, George ran after her. Outside in the hall, after they had closed the door quickly and noisily behind them, he was laughing and she was crying. And they both stood shocked at the other's reaction.

"George!"

"Lydia! Oh, my dear poor sweet Lydia!"

"They almost got us!"

"Walls, Lydia, remember; glass walls, that's all they are. Oh, they look real, I must admit – Africa in your living room. But it's all created from three dimensional color film behind glass screens. And the machines that deliver the smells and sounds to go with the scenery. Here's my handkerchief."

"I'm afraid." She came to him and put her body against him and cried as he held her. "Did you see? Did you feel? It's too real."

"Now, Lydia…"

"You've got to tell Wendy and Peter not to read any more on Africa."

"Of course – of course." He patted her.

“Promise?”

“Sure.”

“And lock the nursery for a few days until I can get over this.”

“You know how difficult Peter is about that. When I punished him a month ago by locking it for even a few hours – the way he lost his temper! And Wendy too. They live for the nursery.”

“It’s got to be locked, that’s all there is to it.”

“All right.” Although he wasn’t happy about it, he locked the huge door. “You’ve been working too hard. You need a rest.”

“I don’t know – I don’t know,” she said, blowing her nose, sitting down in a chair that immediately began to rock and comfort her. “Maybe I don’t have enough to do. Maybe I have time to think too much. Why don’t we shut the whole house off for a few days and take a vacation?”

“You mean you want to fry my eggs for me?”

“Yes.” She nodded.

“And mend my socks?”

“Yes.” She nodded again excitedly, with tears in her eyes.

“And clean the house?”

“Yes, yes – oh, yes!”

“But I thought that’s why we bought this house, so we wouldn’t have to do anything?”

“That’s just it. I feel like I don’t belong here. The house is wife and mother now, and nurse for the children. Can I compete with an African veldt? Can I give a bath and clean the children as efficiently or quickly as the automatic body wash can? I cannot. And it isn’t just me. It’s you. You’ve been awfully nervous lately.”

“I suppose I have been smoking too much.”

“You look as if you didn’t know what to do with yourself in this house, either. You smoke a little more every morning and drink a little more every afternoon, and you are taking more pills to help you sleep at night. You’re beginning to feel unnecessary too.”

“Am I?” He thought for a moment as he and tried to feel into himself to see what was really there.

“Oh, George!” She looked past him, at the nursery door. “Those lions can’t get out of there, can they?”

He looked at the door and saw it shake as if something had jumped against it from the other side.

“Of course not,” he said.

At dinner they ate alone, for Wendy and Peter were at a special plastic fair across town. They had called home earlier to say they’d be late. So George Hadley, deep in thought, sat watching the dining-room table produce warm dishes of food from the machines inside.

“We forgot the tomato sauce,” he said.

“Sorry,” said a small voice within the table, and tomato sauce appeared.

As for the nursery, thought George Hadley, it won’t hurt for the children to be locked out of it a

while. Too much of anything isn't good for anyone. And it was clearly indicated that the children had been spending a little too much time on Africa. That sun. He could still feel it on his neck, like a hot paw. And the lions. And the smell of blood. Remarkable how the nursery read the thoughts in the children's minds and created life to fill their every desire. The children thought lions, and there were lions. The children thought zebras, and there were zebras. Sun – sun. Giraffes – giraffes. Death and death.

That last. He ate the meat that the table had cut for him without tasting it. Death thoughts. They were awfully young, Wendy and Peter, for death thoughts. Or, no, you were never too young, really. Long before you knew what death was you were wishing it on someone else. When you were two years old you were shooting people with toy guns.

But this – the long, hot African veldt. The awful death in the jaws of a lion. And repeated again and again.

"Where are you going?"

George didn't answer Lydia… he was too busy thinking of something else. He let the lights shine softly on ahead of him, turn off behind him as he walked quietly to the nursery door. He listened against it. Far away, a lion roared. He unlocked the door and opened it. Just before he stepped inside, he heard a faraway scream. And then another roar from the lions, which died down quickly. He stepped into Africa.

How many times in the last year had he opened this door and found Wonderland with Alice and the Mock Turtle, or Aladdin and his Magical Lamp, or Jack Pumpkinhead of Oz, or Dr. Doolittle, or the cow jumping over a very real-looking moon. All the most enjoyable creations of an imaginary world. How often had he seen Pegasus the winged horse flying in the sky ceiling, or seen explosions of red fireworks, or heard beautiful singing.

But now, is yellow hot Africa, this bake oven with murder in the heat. Perhaps Lydia was right. Perhaps they needed a little vacation from the fantasy which was growing a bit too real for ten-yearold children. It was all right to exercise one's mind with unusual fantasies, but when the lively child mind settled on one pattern..?

It seemed that, at a distance, for the past month, he had heard lions roaring, and noticed their strong smell which carried as far away as his study door. But, being busy, he had paid it no attention.

George Hadley stood on the African veldt alone. The lions looked up from their feeding, watching him. The only thing wrong with the image was the open door. Through it he could see his wife, far down the dark hall, like a framed picture. She was still eating her dinner, but her mind was clearly on other things.

"Go away," he said to the lions.

They did not go. He knew exactly how the room should work. You sent out your thoughts. Whatever you thought would appear. "Let's have Aladdin and his lamp," he said angrily. The veldt remained; the lions remained.

“Come on, room! I demand Aladdin!” he said.

Nothing happened. The lions made soft low noises in the hot sun.

“Aladdin!”

He went back to dinner. “The fool room’s out of order,” he said. “It won’t change.”

“Or…”

“Or what?”

“Or it can’t change,” said Lydia, “because the children have thought about Africa and lions and killing so many days that the room’s stuck in a pattern it can’t get out of.”

“Could be.”

“Or Peter’s set it to remain that way.”

“Set it?”

“He may have got into the machinery and fixed something.”

“Peter doesn’t know machinery.”

“He’s a wise one for ten. That I.Q. of his…”

“But…”

“Hello, Mom. Hello, Dad.”

The Hadleys turned. Wendy and Peter were coming happily in the front door, with bright blue eyes and a smell of fresh air on their clothes from their trip in the helicopter.

“You’re just in time for supper,” said both parents.

“We’re full of strawberry ice-cream and hot dogs,” said the children, holding hands. “But we’ll sit and watch.”

“Yes, come tell us about the nursery,” said George Hadley.

The brother and sister looked at him and then at each other. “Nursery?”

“All about Africa and everything,” said the father with a false smile.

“I don’t understand,” said Peter.

“Your mother and I were just traveling through Africa.

“There’s no Africa in the nursery,” said Peter simply.

“Oh, come now, Peter. We know better.”

“I don’t remember any Africa,” said Peter to Wendy. “Do you?”

“No.”

“Run see and come tell.”

She did as he told her.

“Wendy, come back here!” said George Hadley, but she was gone. The house lights followed her like fireflies. Too late, he realized he had forgotten to lock the nursery door after his last visit.

“Wendy’ll look and come tell us,” said Peter.

“She doesn’t have to tell me. I’ve seen it.”

“I’m sure you’re mistaken, Father.”

“I’m not, Peter. Come along now.”

But Wendy was back. “It’s not Africa,” she said breathlessly.

“We’ll see about this,” said George Hadley, and they all walked down the hall together and opened the door.

There was a green, lovely forest, a lovely river, a purple mountain, high voices singing. And there was Rima the bird girl, lovely and mysterious. She was hiding in the trees with colorful butterflies, like flowers coming to life, flying about her long hair. The African veldt was gone. The lions were gone. Only Rima was here now, singing a song so beautiful that it brought tears to your eyes.

George Hadley looked in at the changed scene. “Go to bed,” he said to the children.

They opened their mouths.

“You heard me,” he said.

They went off to the air tube, where a wind blew them like brown leaves up to their sleeping rooms.

George Hadley walked through the forest scene and picked up something that lay in the corner near where the lions had been. He walked slowly back to his wife.

“What is that?” she asked.

“An old wallet of mine,” he said. He showed it to her. The smell of hot grass was on it… and the smell of a lion. It was wet from being in the lion’s mouth, there were tooth marks on it, and there was dried blood on both sides. He closed the door and locked it, tight.

They went to up to bed but couldn’t sleep. “Do you think Wendy changed it?” she said at last, in the dark room.

“Of course.”

“Made it from a veldt into a forest and put Rima there instead of lions?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. But it’s staying locked until I find out.”

“How did your wallet get there?”

“I don’t know anything,” he said, “except that I’m beginning to be sorry we bought that room for the children. If children are suffering from any kind of emotional problem, a room like that…”

“It’s supposed to help them work off their emotional problems in a healthy way.”

“I’m starting to wonder.” His eyes were wide open, looking up at the ceiling.

“We’ve given the children everything they ever wanted. Is this our reward – secrecy, not doing what we tell them?”

“Who was it said, ‘Children are carpets, they should be stepped on occasionally’? We’ve never lifted a hand. They’re unbearable – let’s admit it. They come and go when they like; they treat us as if we were the children in the family. They’re spoiled and we’re spoiled.”

“They’ve been acting funny ever since you wouldn’t let them go to New York a few months ago.”

“They’re not old enough to do that alone, I explained.”

“I know, but I’ve noticed they’ve been decidedly cool toward us since.”

“I think I’ll have David McClean come tomorrow morning to have a look at Africa.”

“But it’s not Africa now, it’s South America and Rima.”

“I have a feeling it’ll be Africa again before then.”

A moment later they heard the screams. Two screams. Two people screaming from downstairs. And then a roar of lions.

“Wendy and Peter aren’t in their rooms,” said his wife.

He lay in his bed with his beating heart. “No,” he said. “They’ve broken into the nursery.”

“Those screams – they sound familiar.”

“Do they?”

“Yes, awfully.”

And although their beds tried very hard, the two adults couldn’t be rocked to sleep for another hour.

A smell of cats was in the night air.

* * *

“Father?” asked Peter the next morning.

“Yes.”

Peter looked at his shoes. He never looked at his father any more, nor at his mother. “You aren’t going to lock up the nursery for good, are you?”

“That all depends.”

“On what?” said Peter sharply.

“On you and your sister. If you break up this Africa with a little variety – oh, Sweden perhaps, or Denmark or China…”

“I thought we were free to play as we wished.”

“You are, within reasonable limits.”

“What’s wrong with Africa, Father?”

“Oh, so now you admit you have been thinking up Africa, do you?”

“I wouldn’t want the nursery locked up,” said Peter coldly. “Ever.”

“Matter of fact, we’re thinking of turning the whole house off for about a month. Live sort of a happy family existence.”

“That sounds terrible! Would I have to tie my own shoes instead of letting the machine do it? And brush my own teeth and comb my hair and give myself a bath?”

“It would be fun for a change, don’t you think?”

No, it would be horrible. I didn’t like it when you took out the picture painter last month.”

“That’s because I wanted you to learn to paint all by yourself, son.”

“I don’t want to do anything but look and listen and smell; what else is there to do?”

“All right, go play in Africa.”

“Will you shut off the house sometime soon?”

“We’re considering it.”

“I don’t think you’d better consider it any more, Father.”

“I won’t have any threats from my son!”

“Very well.” And Peter walked off to the nursery.

* * *

“Am I on time?” said David McClean.

“Breakfast?” asked George Hadley.

“Thanks, had some. What’s the trouble?”

“David, you’re a psychologist.”

“I should hope so.”

“Well, then, have a look at our nursery. You saw it a year ago when you dropped by; did you notice anything unusual about it then?”

“Can’t say I did; the usual violences, a tendency toward a slight paranoia here or there. But this is usual in children because they feel their parents are always doing things to make them suffer in one way or another. But, oh, really nothing.”

They walked down the hall. “I locked it up,” explained the father, “and the children broke back into it during the night. I let them stay so they could form the patterns for you to see.”

There was a terrible screaming from the nursery.

“There it is,” said George Hadley. “See what you make of it.”

They walked in on the children without knocking. The screams had stopped. The lions were feeding.

“Run outside a moment, children,” said George Hadley. “No, don’t change the mental picture. Leave the walls as they are. Get!”

With the children gone, the two men stood studying the lions sitting together in the distance, eating with great enjoyment whatever it was they had caught.

“I wish I knew what it was,” said George Hadley. “Sometimes I can almost see. Do you think if I brought high-powered binoculars here and…”

David McClean laughed dryly. “Hardly.” He turned to study all four walls. “How long has this been going on?”

“A little over a month.”

“It certainly doesn’t feel good.”

“I want facts, not feelings.”

“My dear George, a psychologist never saw a fact in his life. He only hears about feelings; things that aren’t always clearly expressed. This doesn’t feel good, I tell you. Trust me. I have a nose for something bad. This is very bad. My advice to you is to have the whole damn room torn down and your children brought to me every day during the next year for treatment.”

“Is it that bad?”

“I’m afraid so. One of the original uses of these rooms was so that we could study the patterns left on the walls by the child’s mind. We could study them whenever we wanted to, and help the child. In this case, however, the room has become a means of creating destructive thoughts, instead of helping to make them go away.”

“Didn’t you sense this before?”

“I sensed only that you had spoiled your children more than most. And now you’re letting them down in some way. What way?”

“I wouldn’t let them go to New York.”

“What else?”

“I’ve taken a few machines from the house and threatened them, a month ago, with closing up the nursery unless they did their homework. I did close it for a few days to show I meant business.”

“Ah, ha!”

“Does that mean anything?”

“Everything. Where before they had a Santa Claus now they have a Scrooge. Children prefer Santa. You’ve let this room and this house replace you and your wife in your children’s feelings. This room is their mother and father, far more important in their lives than their real parents. And now you come along and want to shut it off. No wonder there’s hatred here. You can feel it coming out of the sky. Feel that sun. George, you’ll have to change your life. Like too many others, you’ve built it around creature comforts. Why, you’d go hungry tomorrow if something went wrong in your kitchen. You wouldn’t know how to cook an egg. All the same, turn everything off. Start new. It’ll take time. But we’ll make good children out of bad in a year, wait and see.”

“But won’t the shock be too much for the children, shutting the room up without notice, for good?”

“I don’t want them going any deeper into this, that’s all.”

The lions were finished with their bloody meat. They were standing on the edge of the clearing watching the two men.

“Now I’m feeling worried,” said McClean. “Let’s get out of here. I never have cared for these damned rooms. Make me nervous.”

“The lions look real, don’t they?” said George Hadley. I don’t suppose there’s any way…”

“What?”

“…that they could become real?”

“Not that I know.”

“Some problem with the machinery, someone changing something inside?”

“No.”

They went to the door.

“I don’t imagine the room will like being turned off,” said the father.

“Nothing ever likes to die – even a room.”

“I wonder if it hates me for wanting to switch it off?”

“Paranoia is thick around here today,” said David McClean. “You can see it everywhere. Hello.” He bent and picked up a bloody scarf. “This yours?”

“No.” George Hadley’s face set like stone. “It belongs to Lydia.”

They went to the control box together and threw the switch that killed the nursery.

The two children were so upset that they couldn’t control themselves. They screamed and danced around and threw things. They shouted and cried and called them rude names and jumped on the furniture.

“You can’t do that to the nursery, you can’t!”

“Now, children.”

The children threw themselves onto a sofa, crying.

“George,” said Lydia Hadley, “turn it on again, just for a few moments. You need to give them some more time.”

“No.”

“You can’t be so cruel…”

“Lydia, it’s off, and it stays off. And the whole damn house dies as of here and now. The more I see of the mess we’ve put ourselves in, the more it sickens me. We’ve been thinking of our machine assisted selves for too long. My God, how we need a breath of honest air!”

And he marched about the house turning off the voice clocks, the stoves, the heaters, the shoe cleaners, the body washer, the massager, and every other machine he could put his hand to.

The house was full of dead bodies, it seemed. It felt like a mechanical cemetery. So silent. None of the humming hidden energy of machines waiting to function at the tap of a button.

“Don’t let them do it!” cried Peter to the ceiling, as if he was talking to the house, the nursery.

“Don’t let Father kill everything.” He turned to his father. “Oh, I hate you!”

“Saying things like that won’t get you anywhere.”

“I wish you were dead!”

“We were, for a long while. Now we’re going to really start living. Instead of being handled and massaged, we’re going to live.”

Wendy was still crying and Peter joined her again. “Just a moment, just one moment, just another moment of nursery,” they cried.

“Oh, George,” said the wife, “it can’t hurt.”

“All right – all right, if they’ll just shut up. One minute, mind you, and then off forever.”

“Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!” sang the children, smiling with wet faces.

“And then we’re going on a vacation. David McClean is coming back in half an hour to help us move out and get to the airport. I’m going to dress. You turn the nursery on for a minute, Lydia, just a minute, mind you.”

And the three of them went off talking excitedly while he let himself be transported upstairs through the air tube and set about dressing himself. A minute later Lydia appeared.

“I’ll be glad when we get away,” she said thankfully.

“Did you leave them in the nursery?”

“I wanted to dress too. Oh, that horrible Africa. What can they see in it?”

“Well, in five minutes we’ll be on our way to Iowa. Lord, how did we ever get in this house? What made us buy a nightmare?”

“Pride, money, foolishness.”

“I think we’d better get downstairs before those kids spend too much time with those damned beasts again.”

Just then they heard the children calling, “Daddy, Mommy, come quick – quick!”

They went downstairs in the air tube and ran down the hall. The children were nowhere in sight. “Wendy? Peter!”

They ran into the nursery. The veldt was empty save for the lions waiting, looking at them. “Peter, Wendy?”

The door closed loudly.

“Wendy, Peter!”

George Hadley and his wife turned quickly and ran back to the door.

“Open the door!” cried George Hadley, trying the handle. “Why, they’ve locked it from the outside! Peter!” He beat at the door. “Open up!”

He heard Peter’s voice outside, against the door.

“Don’t let them switch off the nursery and the house,” he was saying.

Mr. and Mrs. George Hadley beat at the door. “Now, don’t be silly, children. It’s time to go. Mr. McClean’ll be here in a minute and…”

And then they heard the sounds.

The lions were on three sides of them in the yellow veldt grass. They walked quietly through the dry grass, making long, deep rolling sounds in their throats. The lions!

Mr. Hadley looked at his wife and they turned and looked back at the beasts edging slowly forward, knees bent, tails in the air.

Mr. and Mrs. Hadley screamed.

And suddenly they realized why those other screams had sounded familiar.

* * *

“Well, here I am,” said David McClean from the nursery door. “Oh, hello.” He looked carefully at the two children seated in the center of the room eating a little picnic lunch. On the far them he could see the water hole and the yellow veldt. Above was the hot sun. He began to sweat. “Where are your father and mother?”

The children looked up and smiled. “Oh, they’ll be here directly.”

“Good, we must get going.”

At a distance Mr. McClean saw the lions fighting over something and then quietening down to feed

in silence under the shady trees. He put his hand to his eyes to block out the sun and looked at them.

Now the lions were done feeding. They moved to the water hole to drink. A shadow moved over

Mr. McClean’s hot face. Many shadows moved. The vultures were dropping down from the burning

sky.

“A cup of tea?” asked Wendy in the silence.

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5.14: A Hunger Artist by Franz Kafka

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In the last decades interest in hunger artists has declined considerably. Whereas in earlier days there was good money to be earned putting on major productions of this sort under one's own management, nowadays that is totally impossible. Those were different times. Back then the hunger artist captured the attention of the entire city. From day to day while the fasting lasted, participation increased. Everyone wanted to see the hunger artist at least daily. During the final days there were people with subscription tickets who sat all day in front of the small barred cage. And there were even viewing hours at night, their impact heightened by torchlight. On fine days the cage was dragged out into the open air, and then the hunger artist was put on display particularly for the children. While for grown-ups the hunger artist was often merely a joke, something they participated in because it was fashionable, the children looked on amazed, their mouths open, holding each other's hands for safety, as he sat there on scattered straw—spurning a chair—in a black tights, looking pale, with his ribs sticking out prominently, sometimes nodding politely, answering questions with a forced smile, even sticking his arm out through the bars to let people feel how emaciated he was, but then completely sinking back into himself, so that he paid no attention to anything, not even to what was so important to him, the striking of the clock, which was the single furnishing in the cage, merely looking out in front of him with his eyes almost shut and now and then sipping from a tiny glass of water to moisten his lips.

Apart from the changing groups of spectators there were also constant observers chosen by the public—strangely enough they were usually butchers—who, always three at a time, were given the task of observing the hunger artist day and night, so that he didn't get something to eat in some secret manner. It was, however, merely a formality, introduced to reassure the masses, for those who understood knew well enough that during the period of fasting the hunger artist would never, under any circumstances, have eaten the slightest thing, not even if compelled by force. The honour of his art forbade it. Naturally, none of the watchers understood that. Sometimes there were nightly groups of watchers who carried out their vigil very laxly, deliberately sitting together in a distant corner and putting all their attention into playing cards there, clearly intending to allow the hunger artist a small refreshment, which, according to their way of thinking, he could get from some secret supplies. Nothing was more excruciating to the hunger artist than such watchers. They depressed him. They made his fasting terribly difficult. Sometimes he overcame his weakness and sang during the time they were observing, for as long as he could keep it up, to show people how unjust their suspicions about him were. But that was little help. For then they just wondered among themselves about his skill at being able to eat even while singing. He much preferred the observers who sat down right against the bars and, not satisfied with the dim backlighting of the room, illuminated him with electric flashlights. The glaring light didn't bother him in the slightest. Generally he couldn't sleep at all, and he could always doze under any lighting and at any hour, even in an overcrowded, noisy auditorium. With such observers, he was very happily prepared to spend the entire night without sleeping. He was very pleased to joke with them, to recount stories from his nomadic life and then, in turn, to listen their stories—doing everything just to keep them awake, so that he could keep showing them once again that he had nothing to eat in his cage and that he was fasting as none of them could.

He was happiest, however, when morning came and a lavish breakfast was brought for them at his own expense, on which they hurled themselves with the appetite of healthy men after a hard night's work without sleep. True, there were still people who wanted to see in this breakfast an unfair means of influencing the observers, but that was going too far, and if they were asked whether they wanted to undertake the observers' night shift for its own sake, without the breakfast, they excused themselves. But nonetheless they stood by their suspicions.

However, it was, in general, part of fasting that these doubts were inextricably associated with it. For, in fact, no one was in a position to spend time watching the hunger artist every day and night, so no one could know, on the basis of his own observation, whether this was a case of truly uninterrupted, flawless fasting. The hunger artist himself was the only one who could know that and, at the same time, the only spectator capable of being completely satisfied with his own fasting. But the reason he was never satisfied was something different. Perhaps it was not fasting at all which made him so very emaciated that many people, to their own regret, had to stay away from his performance, because they couldn't bear to look at him. For he was also so skeletal out of dissatisfaction with himself, because he alone knew something that even initiates didn't know—how easy it was to fast. It was the easiest thing in the world. About this he did not remain silent, but people did not believe him. At best they thought he was being

modest. Most of them, however, believed he was a publicity seeker or a total swindler, for whom, at all events, fasting was easy, because he understood how to make it easy, and then had the nerve to half admit it. He had to accept all that. Over the years he had become accustomed to it. But this dissatisfaction kept gnawing at his insides all the time and never yet—and this one had to say to his credit—had he left the cage of his own free will after any period of fasting.

The impresario had set the maximum length of time for the fast at forty days—he would never allow the fasting go on beyond that point, not even in the cosmopolitan cities. And, in fact, he had a good reason. Experience had shown that for about forty days one could increasingly whip up a city's interest by gradually increasing advertising, but that then the people turned away—one could demonstrate a significant decline in popularity. In this respect, there were, of course, small differences among different towns and among different countries, but as a rule it was true that forty days was the maximum length of time.

So then on the fortieth day the door of the cage—which was covered with flowers—was opened, an enthusiastic audience filled the amphitheatre, a military band played, two doctors entered the cage, in order to take the necessary measurements of the hunger artist, the results were announced to the auditorium through a megaphone, and finally two young ladies arrived, happy about the fact that they were the ones who had just been selected by lot, seeking to lead the hunger artist down a couple of steps out of the cage, where on a small table a carefully chosen hospital meal was laid out. And at this moment the hunger artist always fought back. Of course, he still freely laid his bony arms in the helpful outstretched hands of the ladies bending over him, but he did not want to stand up. Why stop right now after forty days? He could have kept going for even longer, for an unlimited length of time. Why stop right now, when he was in his best form, indeed, not yet even in his best fasting form? Why did people want to rob him of the fame of fasting longer, not just so that he could become the greatest hunger artist of all time, which he probably was already, but also so that he could surpass himself in some unimaginable way, for he felt there were no limits to his capacity for fasting. Why did this crowd, which pretended to admire him so much, have so little patience with him? If he kept going and kept fasting longer, why would they not tolerate it? Then, too, he was tired and felt good sitting in the straw. Now he was supposed to stand up straight and tall and go to eat, something which, when he just imagined it, made him feel nauseous right away. With great difficulty he repressed mentioning this only out of consideration for the women. And he looked up into the eyes of these women, apparently so friendly but in reality so cruel, and shook his excessively heavy head on his feeble neck.

But then happened what always happened. The impresario came and in silence—the music made talking impossible—raised his arms over the hunger artist, as if inviting heaven to look upon its work here on the straw, this unfortunate martyr, something the hunger artist certainly was, only in a completely different sense, then grabbed the hunger artist around his thin waist, in the process wanting with his exaggerated caution to make people believe that here he had to deal with something fragile, and handed him over —not without secretly shaking him a little, so that the hunger artist's legs and upper body swung back and forth uncontrollably—to the women, who had in the meantime turned as pale as death. At this point, the hunger artist endured everything. His head lay on his chest—it was as if it had inexplicably rolled around and just stopped there—his body was arched back, his legs, in an impulse of self-preservation, pressed themselves together at the knees, but scraped the ground, as if they were not really on the floor but were looking for the real ground, and the entire weight of his body, admittedly very small, lay against one of the women, who appealed for help with flustered breath, for she had not imagined her post of honour would be like this, and then stretched her neck as far as possible, to keep her face from the least contact with the hunger artist, but then, when she couldn't manage this and her more fortunate companion didn't come to her assistance but trembled and remained content to hold in front of her the hunger artist's hand, that small bundle of knuckles, she broke into tears, to the delighted laughter of the auditorium, and had to be relieved by an attendant who had been standing ready for some time. Then came the meal. The impresario put a little food into mouth of the hunger artist, now half unconscious, as if fainting, and kept up a cheerful patter designed to divert attention away from the hunger artist's condition. Then a toast was proposed to the public, which was supposedly whispered to the impresario by the hunger artist, the orchestra confirmed everything with a great fanfare, people dispersed, and no one had the right to be dissatisfied with the event, no one except the hunger artist—he was always the only one.

He lived this way, taking small regular breaks, for many years, apparently in the spotlight, honoured by the world, but for all that his mood was usually gloomy, and it kept growing gloomier all the time, because no one understood how to take him seriously. But how was he to find consolation? What was there left for him to wish for? And if a good-natured man who felt sorry for him ever wanted to explain to him that his sadness probably came from his fasting, then it could happen that the hunger artist responded with an outburst of rage and began to shake the bars like an animal, frightening everyone. But the impresario had a way of punishing moments like this, something he was happy to use. He would make an apology for the hunger artist to the assembled public,

conceding that the irritability had been provoked only by his fasting, something quite intelligible to well-fed people and capable of excusing the behaviour of the hunger artist without further explanation. From there he would move on to speak about the equally hard to understand claim of the hunger artist that he could go on fasting for much longer than he was doing. He would praise the lofty striving, the good will, and the great self-denial no doubt contained in this claim, but then would try to contradict it simply by producing photographs, which were also on sale, for in the pictures one could see the hunger artist on the fortieth day of his fast, in bed, almost dead from exhaustion. Although the hunger artist was very familiar with this perversion of the truth, it always strained his nerves again and was too much for him. What was a result of the premature ending of the fast people were now proposing as its cause! It was impossible to fight against this lack of understanding, against this world of misunderstanding. In good faith he always listened eagerly to the impresario at the bars of his cage, but each time, once the photographs came out, he would let go of the bars and, with a sigh, sink back into the straw, and a reassured public could come up again and view him.

When those who had witnessed such scenes thought back on them a few years later, often they were unable to understand themselves. For in the meantime that change mentioned above had set it. It happened almost immediately. There may have been more profound reasons for it, but who bothered to discover what they were? At any rate, one day the pampered hunger artist saw himself abandoned by the crowd of pleasure seekers, who preferred to stream to other attractions. The impresario chased around half of Europe one more time with him, to see whether he could still re-discover the old interest here and there. It was all futile. It was as if a secret agreement against the fasting performances had developed everywhere. Naturally, it couldn't really have happened all at once, and people later remembered some things which in the days of intoxicating success they hadn't paid sufficient attention to, some inadequately suppressed indications, but now it was too late to do anything to counter them. Of course, it was certain that the popularity of fasting would return once more someday, but for those now alive that was no consolation. What was the hunger artist to do now? A man whom thousands of people had cheered on could not display himself in show booths at small fun fairs. The hunger artist was not only too old to take up a different profession, but was fanatically devoted to fasting more than anything else. So he said farewell to the impresario, an incomparable companion on his life's road, and let himself be hired by a large circus. In order to spare his own feelings, he didn't even look at the terms of his contract at all.

A large circus with its huge number of men, animals, and gimmicks, which are constantly being let go and replenished, can use anyone at any time, even a hunger artist, provided, of course, his demands are modest. Moreover, in this particular case it was not only the hunger artist himself who was engaged, but also his old and famous name. In fact, given the characteristic nature of his art, which was not diminished by his advancing age, one could never claim that a worn out artist, who no longer stood at the pinnacle of his ability, wanted to escape to a quiet position in the circus. On the contrary, the hunger artist declared that he could fast just as well as in earlier times—something that was entirely credible. Indeed, he even affirmed that if people would let him do what he wanted—and he was promised this without further ado—he would really now legitimately amaze the world for the first time, an assertion which, however, given the mood of the time, which the hunger artist in his enthusiasm easily overlooked, only brought smiles from the experts.

However, basically the hunger artist had not forgotten his sense of the way things really were, and he took it as self-evident that people would not set him and his cage up as the star attraction somewhere in the middle of the arena, but would move him outside in some other readily accessible spot near the animal stalls. Huge brightly painted signs surrounded the cage and announced what there was to look at there. During the intervals in the main performance, when the general public pushed out towards the menagerie in order to see the animals, they could hardly avoid moving past the hunger artist and stopping there a moment. They would perhaps have remained with him longer, if those pushing up behind them in the narrow passage way, who did not understand this pause on the way to the animal stalls they wanted to see, had not made a longer peaceful observation impossible. This was also the reason why the hunger artist began to tremble at these visiting hours, which he naturally used to long for as the main purpose of his life. In the early days he could hardly wait for the pauses in the performances. He had looked forward with delight to the crowd pouring around him, until he became convinced only too quickly—and even the most stubborn, almost deliberate self-deception could not hold out against the experience—that, judging by their intentions, most of these people were, again and again without exception, only visiting the menagerie. And this view from a distance still remained his most beautiful moment. For when they had come right up to him, he immediately got an earful from the shouting of the two steadily increasing groups, the ones who wanted to take their time looking at the hunger artist, not with any understanding but on a whim or from mere defiance—for him these ones were soon the more painful—and a second group of people whose only demand was to go straight to the animal stalls.

Once the large crowds had passed, the late comers would arrive, and although there was nothing preventing these people any more from sticking around for as long as they wanted, they rushed past with long strides, almost without a sideways glance, to get to the animals in time. And it was an all-too-rare stroke of luck when the father of a family came by with his children, pointed his finger at the hunger artist, gave a detailed explanation about what was going on here, and talked of earlier years, when he had been present at similar but incomparably more magnificent performances, and then the children, because they had been inadequately prepared at school and in life, always stood around still uncomprehendingly. What was fasting to them? But nonetheless the brightness of the look in their searching eyes revealed something of new and more gracious times coming. Perhaps, the hunger artist said to himself sometimes, everything would be a little better if his location were not quite so near the animal stalls. That way it would be easy for people to make their choice, to say nothing of the fact that he was very upset and constantly depressed by the stink from the stalls, the animals' commotion at night, the pieces of raw meat dragged past him for the carnivorous beasts, and the roars at feeding time. But he did not dare to approach the administration about it. In any case, he had the animals to thank for the crowds of visitors among whom, here and there, there could be one destined for him. And who knew where they would hide him if he wished to remind them of his existence and, along with that, of the fact that, strictly speaking, he was only an obstacle on the way to the menagerie.

A small obstacle, at any rate, a constantly diminishing obstacle. People got used to the strange notion that in these times they would want to pay attention to a hunger artist, and with this habitual awareness the judgment on him was pronounced. He might fast as well as he could—and he did—but nothing could save him any more. People went straight past him. Try to explain the art of fasting to anyone! If someone doesn't feel it, then he cannot be made to understand it. The beautiful signs became dirty and illegible. People tore them down, and no one thought of replacing them. The small table with the number of days the fasting had lasted, which early on had been carefully renewed every day, remained unchanged for a long time, for after the first weeks the staff grew tired of even this small task. And so the hunger artist kept fasting on and on, as he once had dreamed about in earlier times, and he had no difficulty succeeding in achieving what he had predicted back then, but no one was counting the days—no one, not even the hunger artist himself, knew how great his achievement was by this point, and his heart grew heavy. And when once in a while a person strolling past stood there making fun of the old number and talking of a swindle, that was in a sense the stupidest lie which indifference and innate maliciousness could invent, for the hunger artist was not being deceptive—he was working honestly—but the world was cheating him of his reward.

Many days went by once more, and this, too, came to an end. Finally the cage caught the attention of a supervisor, and he asked the attendant why they had left this perfectly useful cage standing here unused with rotting straw inside. Nobody knew, until one man, with the help of the table with the number on it, remembered the hunger artist. They pushed the straw around with a pole and found the hunger artist in there. "Are you still fasting?" the supervisor asked. "When are you finally going to stop?" "Forgive me everything," whispered the hunger artist. Only the supervisor, who was pressing his ear up against the cage, understood him. "Certainly," said the supervisor, tapping his forehead with his finger in order to indicate to the spectators the state the hunger artist was in, "we forgive you." "I always wanted you to admire my fasting," said the hunger artist. "But we do admire it," said the supervisor obligingly. "But you shouldn't admire it," said the hunger artist. "Well then, we don't admire it," said the supervisor, "but why shouldn't we admire it?" "Because I had to fast. I can't do anything else," said the hunger artist. "Just look at you," said the supervisor, "why can't you do anything else?" "Because," said the hunger artist, lifting his head a little and, with his lips pursed as if for a kiss, speaking right into the supervisor's ear so that he wouldn't miss anything, "because I couldn't find a food which I enjoyed. If had found that, believe me, I would not have made a spectacle of myself and would have eaten to my heart's content, like you and everyone else." Those were his last words, but in his failing eyes there was the firm, if no longer proud, conviction that he was continuing to fast.

"All right, tidy this up now," said the supervisor. And they buried the hunger artist along with the straw. But in his cage they put a young panther. Even for a person with the dullest mind it was clearly refreshing to see this wild animal throwing itself around in this cage, which had been dreary for such a long time. It lacked nothing. Without thinking about it for any length of time, the guards brought the animal food. It enjoyed the taste and never seemed to miss its freedom. This noble body, equipped with everything necessary, almost to the point of bursting, also appeared to carry freedom around with it. That seem to be located somewhere or other in its teeth, and its joy in living came with such strong passion from its throat that it was not easy for spectators to keep watching. But they controlled themselves, kept pressing around the cage, and had no desire to move on.

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5.15: Flannery O'Connor's A Good Man is Hard to Find and Good Country People



Image 6.3 | Flannery O'Connor, 1947
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Mary Flannery O'Connor was born in Savannah, Georgia and lived there until 1938. An Orthodox Catholic family, the O'Connor family lived in Lafayette Square, a largely Catholic neighborhood of Savannah, mainly through the generosity of her second cousin, Kate Semmes (whom O'Connor would call "Cousin Katie"). In 1936, O'Connor's father, Edwin, was diagnosed with lupus and was hospitalized in Atlanta; his diagnosis would later force the family to leave Savannah. While Edwin sought treatment, both Regina and Flannery would often stay with family in Milledgeville.

In 1941, Edwin's death would imprint itself on O'Connor, who was close with her father. Both Flannery and her mother, Regina, subsequently moved to live at Andalusia, the maternal family farm in Milledgeville. After high school, O'Connor enrolled in Georgia College for Women (now Georgia College) in Milledgeville, where she completed a degree in English and Sociology. In college, O'Connor was active with both the literary magazine, *The Corinthian*, and the yearbook, *The Spectrum*. After college, O'Connor enrolled in journalism school at the University of Iowa but, once there, enrolled in the Iowa Writer's Workshop, where she was able to work with many of the most influential writers of her time.

At the Writer's Workshop, O'Connor established herself as one of their most promising writers, winning a book contract, as well as a prestigious Yaddo fellowship at the Yaddo Writers Colony in New York. However, after being diagnosed with lupus in 1951, Flannery O'Connor returned to Andalusia, where she remained. At the age of twenty-five, she published her first novel, *Wise Blood* (1952) and followed it up with her first collection of short stories, *A Good Man is Hard to Find and Other Stories* (1955). Her second published novel, *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960), was nominated for a **National Book Award**. Up until her death from lupus, at the young age of thirty-nine, she was working on her second collection of stories, *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965). In 1971, O'Connor's friend and literary executor, Sally Fitzgerald, helped publish *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* which won the National Book Award and was later awarded the Reader's Choice Best of the National Book Award (2010).

O'Connor's fiction is famous for its **Southern gothic** settings and her use of dark humor. Other themes in her fiction include the following: her relationship with her mother, life at Andalusia, and her Orthodox Catholicism. "A Good Man is Hard to Find" is O'Connor's most anthologized story and one of her most violent. The story follows a family of six that, while on vacation to Florida, encounter the Misfit, a pensive, yet troubled serial killer, and one of O'Connor's most famous characters. The Misfit states that his troubles center on Christ's claims of resurrecting the dead. In "Good Country People," Joy-Hulga, a philosophy Ph.D. with a wooden leg, tries to seduce Manly Pointer, a naïve traveling bible salesman.

"A Good Man is Hard to Find"

Please click the link to access this selection.

“Good Country People”

Please click the link to access this selection.

Exercise 5.15.1

Reading and Review Questions

1. What do these two stories, “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and “Good Country People,” have in common?
2. What does the Misfit mean with his final line, “She would have been a good woman. . . if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life”?

Contributors

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5.16: William Faulker's "A Rose for Emily" and "Barn Burning"

William Faulkner is the most important writer of the Southern Renaissance. Flannery O'Connor once compared the overpowering force of his influence to a thundering train, remarking that "nobody wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track the **Dixie Limited** is roaring down." Faulkner was born in Mississippi and raised on tales of his legendary great-great grandfather the "Old Colonel," who led a group of raiders in the civil war, built his own railroad, served in the state legislature, and was murdered by a political rival and prominent great-grandfather, the "Young Colonel," who was an assistant United States attorney and banker. Dropping out of high school, Faulkner left Mississippi to pursue his interests in drawing and poetry. During World War I, Faulkner pretended to be English and enlisted in the Royal Air Force, although he never saw combat. He picked up his poetic career after the war, ultimately publishing his first book in 1924, a collection of poetry called *The Marble Faun.* Turning his attention to fiction writing, Faulkner then wrote two timely novels. His first novel, *Soldier's Pay* (1926), explores the states of mind of those who did and did not fight in World War I. His second novel, *Mosquitos* (1927), exposes the triviality of the New Orleans art community of which Faulkner was briefly a part. However, it is with his third novel, *Sartoris* (1929), that Faulkner made what he called his "great discovery": the fictional possibilities contained within his home state of Mississippi. Returning to Oxford, MS, with his new wife, Faulkner moved into an antebellum mansion and began turning the tales he heard growing up about his hometown and surrounding area into one of the greatest inventions in American literary history: Yoknapatawpha County.

Faulkner eventually wrote thirteen novels set in Yoknapatawpha County. Beginning with his fourth novel, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Faulkner began to incorporate modernist literary techniques such as stream-of-consciousness narration and non-linear plotting into his already lofty style. *The Sound and the Fury* describes the fall of the Compson family through four distinct psychological points of view, one of which is that of a young man who commits suicide, and another belonging to an illiterate who is severely mentally handicapped. *As I Lay Dying* (1930) describes the death and burial of a matriarch from the perspective of fifteen different characters in fifty-seven sections of often stream-of-consciousness prose. In *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), four narrators relate the same story yet also change it to arrive at four very different meanings. Modernist techniques such as these enabled Faulkner to show how the particulars of everyday life in the rural American South dramatize what he saw as the universal truths of humanity as a whole. While stylistically modernist, Faulkner's collective epic of Yoknapatawpha County ultimately explores not so much the future of narrative as the human condition itself as lensed through generation-spanning histories of great and low families. Two of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha stories are included here: "Barn Burning," an early story of the Snopes family about whom Faulkner would eventually write a trilogy of novels; and "A Rose for Emily," one of his many tales about the decline of formerly-great Southern families. These short stories are good representatives of both the range of Faulkner's style and his ambition as a storyteller. In deeply regional tales that are at once grotesque, tragic, brilliant, profound, loving, and hilarious, Faulkner leads us to the source, as he once put it, from which drama flows: "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself."

"A Rose for Emily"

Please click the link to access this selection.

"Barn Burning"

Please click the link to access this selection.

Exercise 5.16.1

Reading and Review Questions

1. At the end of "Barn Burning," what is young Sarty running from? Why does he not look back?
2. Why does Abner Snopes burn barns?
3. Why is the discovery of the single grey hair at the end of "A Rose for Emily" significant?
4. Faulkner received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. In his award speech, he lamented that many of America's young authors had forgotten "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing." Discuss how "Barn Burning" and "A Rose for Emily" show the human heart in conflict with itself.
5. How does Faulkner represent the relationship between parents and children in "Barn Burning"?

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5.17: Zora Neale Hurston's The Sweat



Image 5.16 | Zora Neale Hurston, circa 1935
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Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1891 in Alabama, moving with her family when she was a young child to Eatonville, Florida, one of the nation's first all-black towns. Hurston enjoyed a happy childhood in Eatonville. In 1904, however, Hurston's idyllic young life came to an end when her mother died. Hurston's father soon remarried, and family life for Hurston became complicated. She moved frequently, living with relatives and working to support herself. Eventually, she attended Howard University where she nurtured her writing talent. She later attended Barnard College where she studied anthropology, earning her bachelor's degree in 1928. In the 1920s, Hurston became one of the most important figures of the Harlem Renaissance, producing a number of literary pieces and working with Langston Hughes to launch a literary magazine that promoted the talents of young African-American writers. In the 1930s, Hurston enjoyed one of her most productive decades. She conducted anthropological fieldwork across the South, studying African-American folklore, and she traveled in Haiti and Jamaica, where she conducted research on spiritual practices including hoodoo and voodoo. Her book *Mules and Men*, published in 1935, remains an important work on African-American folklore. In 1937, she published her most well-known novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, an early African-American feminist work that inspired later writers such as Alice Walker. During the next twenty years, Hurston continued to work as a journalist and a freelance writer. She married twice, but each marriage ended. By the time of her death, she was living in Florida in relative obscurity and poverty, dying of a stroke in 1960.

Unlike her contemporaries, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, Hurston in her fiction did not take on overtly political or racial themes. Like many artists in the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, Hurston's art was essentially apolitical. Hurston's work celebrated racial pride and African-American culture without any filtering, and characters' power came from their own self-discoveries and their own inner resources. In her most critically acclaimed novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the main character Janie Crawford comes of age, moving from a young girl taught by her grandmother that she must be cared for by a man to a young woman trapped in an abusive marriage to a self-actualized woman who loves herself and lives life on her own terms, including freely expressing her sexuality. In "Sweat," Hurston explores a similar theme of self-liberation. Delia Jones, trapped in an abusive marriage to Sykes, a brutal man who beats her and uses her for material gain, finds within herself the power to stand up to him and order him from the home and business she has built through her own sweat. When he plans retribution by exposing Delia to a rattlesnake in her home, she beats him at his own game. Sykes, at the end of the story, sweats for a change.

"Sweat"

Please click the link to access this selection.

Exercise 5.17.1

Reading and Review Questions

1. Analyze the title of the story "Sweat." How does the title [illegible] the theme of the story?

1. Analyze the title of the story "Sweat." How does the title comment upon the theme of the story?
2. Why does Delia continue to stay with a husband who abuses her?
3. How do the community members react to Sykes's treatment of Delia?
4. How does Delia's discovery of Sykes's bullwhip foreshadow what is to come later in the story?
5. When Delia finally stands up to Sykes and tells him to leave her house, how does he react? Why doesn't he carry through with his threats to hurt her?
6. Why does Delia not attempt to save Sykes? Do you think she will later have regrets?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: About Poetry

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students will be able to:

- define poetry.
- discuss the elements of poetry.
- analyze poetry.

6.1: What is Poetry?
6.2: Music and Poetry
6.3: Reading Poetry
6.4: Case Study- A Close Reading of a Poem
6.5: Why Analyze Poetry?
6.6: The Line in Poetry
6.7: Word Choice, Word Order and Tone
6.8: Voice
6.9: Imagery
6.10: Figurative Language
6.11: Sound in Poetry- Meter
6.12: Sound in Poetry- Alliteration, Consonance, Assonance
6.13: Sound in Poetry- Rhyme
6.14: Form in Poetry

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6.1: What is Poetry?



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What is Poetry?

Poetry is a condensed form of writing. As an art, it can effectively invoke a range of emotions in the reader. It can be presented in a number of forms — ranging from traditional rhymed poems such as sonnets to contemporary free verse. Poetry has always been intrinsically tied to music and many poems work with rhythm. It often brings awareness of current issues such as the state of the environment, but can also be read just for the sheer pleasure.

A poet makes the invisible visible. The invisible includes our deepest feelings and angsts, and also our joys, sorrows, and unanswered questions of being human. How is a poet able to do this? A poet uses **fresh** and **original language**, and is more interested in how the arrangement of words affects the reader rather than solely grammatical construction. The poet thinks about how words **sound**, the musicality within each word and also how the words come together.

Like fiction writers, poets mostly **show rather than tell**. They describe the scene vividly using as few words as possible and prefer to describe rather than analyze, leaving the latter to the people who read and write about poetry as you are doing in this class.

The Purpose of Poetry

If you've taken a composition or freshman writing course, you might recognize some familiar terms used above — summarizes, sources, persuades, ethos. These are all words you will rarely, if ever, use in reference to writing poetry. And why is that? Well, what's the purpose of poetry? Perhaps this is not an easy question to answer. In fact, the answer might depend on time and culture. Epics such as *Gilgamesh* aided in memorization and preserved stories meant to be passed down orally. The British Romantics valued the pleasure derived from hearing and reading poetry. In some cultures poetry is important in ritual and religious practice. In contemporary times, many describe poetry as being a tool for self-expression.

In the excellent glossary in his book *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*, poet Edward Hirsch provides the following definition for a poem:

Poem: A made thing, a verbal construct, an event in language. The word *poesis* means "making;" and the oldest term for the poet means "maker." The *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* points out that the medieval and Renaissance poets used the word *makers*, as in "courtly makers," as a precise equivalent for *poets*. (Hence William Dunbar's "Lament for the Makers.") The word *poem* came into English in the sixteenth century and has been with us ever since to denote a form of fabrication, a verbal composition, a made thing.

William Carlos Williams defined the poem as "a small (or large) machine made of words." (He added that there is nothing redundant about a machine.) Wallace Stevens characterized poetry as "a revelation of words by means of the words." In his helpful essay "What is Poetry?" linguist Roman Jakobson declared:

"Poeticity is present when the word is felt as a word and not a mere representation of the object being named or an outburst of emotion, when words and their composition, their meaning, their external and internal form, acquire a weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality."

Ben Johnson referred to the art of poetry as "the craft of making." The old Irish word *cerd*, meaning "people of the craft," was a designation for artisans, including poets. It is cognate with the Greek *kerdos*, meaning "craft, craftiness." Two basic metaphors for the art of poetry in the classical world were carpentry and weaving. "Whatsoever else it may be," W. H. Auden said, "a poem is a verbal artifact which must be as skillfully and solidly constructed as a table or a motorcycle."

The true poem has been crafted into a living entity. It has magical potency, ineffable spirit. There is always something mysterious and inexplicable in a poem. It is an act—an action—beyond paraphrase because what is said is always inseparable from the way it is being said. A poem creates an experience in the reader that cannot be reduced to anything else. Perhaps it exists in order to create that aesthetic experience. Octavio Paz maintained that the poet and the reader are two moments of a single reality.

Of the many ideas provided here in this definition, perhaps the one to emphasize most is that the poem is "an event in language." It is also one of the harder to understand concepts. "A poem creates an experience in the reader that cannot be reduced to anything else," writes Hirsch. Especially not through paraphrase. This means that in order to "experience" a poem, a reader needs to read it as it is. The poem is itself a type of virtual reality.

Jeremy Arnold, a professor of philosophy at the University of Woolamaloo in Canada, likens the poem to the "pensieve" device in the Harry Potter series: "A poem allows someone to preserve a mental experience so that an outsider can access it as if it were their own." When coming to poetry, there may be nothing more important to understand because nothing can shape your perspective more on how to write and for what purpose. Poetry requires a reader, an audience; therefore, the poet must learn how to best engage an audience. And this engagement doesn't happen by sharing ideas, feelings, or experiences, by telling the reader about *your* experiences — it happens by *creating* them on the page with words that evoke the senses. With *images*. These, then, are how the literary genres speak. Images are their muscles. Their heart. Images are poetry's body and soul.

Activity

Choose a poem from the Poetry Foundation's featured poems and look again at Edward Hirsh's definition of poem. How does this poem typify his explanation? Are there any ways in which it does not? Write a short response (300 words or less) explaining how you see your selected poem in relation to Hirsch's definition.

Video: Billy Collins, A Poet, Speaks Out

Watch Billy Collins' audio/visual poem:





Video 6.1.1 : Introduction to Poetry by Billy Collins

After watching the video above, read the poem here, and click on the link below to listen to a lecture by Billy Collins on his craft and how it relates to the reader.

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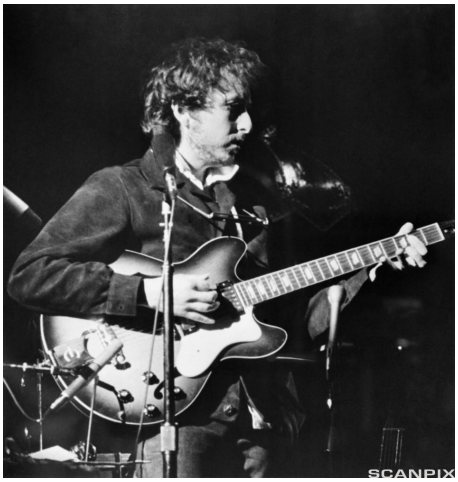
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6.2: Music and Poetry

Music and Poetry: Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen - Rock Poets

Musicians have been bringing poetry to a mass audience who might not listen to or read poetry. The ultimate synthesis between rock music and lyrics can be a tricky one. The two forms of expression must complement each other in some kind of balance. Most rock productions tend to lean more on the music than the textual expression, while some singer/songwriters put more emphasis on the poetic choice of words in their songs. Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen belong in the last category; their literary contributions to rock and pop over half a century ranks them among the greatest modernist and contemporary poets. Cohen said about Dylan that "he put the word back into the jukebox," signifying the intrusion of art into popular culture. Dylan's rich imagery and often surreal texts and Cohen's silent and sharp poetic observations certainly were, and still are, read and listened to by an increasing audience all over the world. The songs are personal, often political but always original.

Background



Bob Dylan. (CC BY-SA-NC; Supplier Corbis Supplier NTB scanpix via ScanPix)

The American political scene of the sixties was one of turmoil and unrest with the assassinations of great leaders, race riots, civil rights rallies, the Vietnam War, the Cuba Crisis, student riots, anti-communism, and the Cold War – to list some of the key factors that characterised American society at the time. Like many of the modernist artists, Cohen and Dylan were more into their art than what was going on around them. After songs like "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" and "Masters of War" Bob Dylan was embraced as a protest singer by the anti-war activists, who wanted to make him the voice of their generation. Admittedly, "Hard Rain" was spontaneously written during the Cuba Crisis, and he certainly is aware of political malpractice and injustice. But Dylan never wanted to be labelled and put into any specific category, and when he later left his acoustic concept and turned to a loud electric performance of his songs, there was uproar among his fans – accusing him of betraying their cause. But Dylan let them down and went his own unpredictable ways like he has always done.

Leonard Cohen never intended to become a singer at all. His ambition was to make a living out of his talent for writing. He published some novels in the early sixties that did not catch on very well, so he learned fingerpicking guitar and decided to put his poems into songs. This (probably much to his own surprise) went down with the bohemian beatniks of Greenwich Village, who cared more for a profound and mystic piece of poetry than a glittering stage act and loud music.

Imagery and integrity

Bob Dylan did not set out to be a poet; his ambition was to become a folk singer in the tradition of Woody Guthrie. Leonard Cohen had studied poetry and was more conscious about his poetic project. Hence their poetic approaches are quite different and must be dealt with distinctively. What unifies the two is their integrity and devotion to their work. It is hard to pick representative examples of their massive production that spans over half a century, but the following quotes could be a small sample that may tease the appetite for a more in-depth study of their songs and poetry.

Unlike most modernist poets Cohen's and Dylan's poetry has a distinct rhythm and rhyme, which of course is because the poetry was meant for singing.

Bob Dylan's Poems

One of Bob Dylan's most famous songs is "**Mr. Tambourine Man**," from which these poetic lines are taken:

Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky
With one hand waving free
Silhouetted by the sea, circled by the circus sands
With all memory and fate driven deep beneath the waves
Let me forget about today until tomorrow.

"Desolation Row" is another long poem stacked with enigmatic imagery and references to Shakespeare, Einstein and the Bible; this is the first stanza:

Desolation Road (Bob Dylan)
They're selling postcards of the hanging
They're painting the passports brown
The beauty parlor is filled with sailors
The circus is in town
Here comes the blind commissioner
They've got him in a trance
One hand is tied to the tight-rope dancer
The other is in his pants
And the riot squad, they're restless
They need somewhere to go
As Lady and I look out tonight
From Desolation Row

Bono (of U2) said about the following lines: "I don't have a clue about what it means, but it is beautiful":

I Want You (Bob Dylan)
The guilty undertaker sighs
The lonesome organ grinder cries
The silver saxophones say I should refuse you
The cracked bells and washed out horns
Blow into my face with scorn
But it's not that way
I wasn't born to lose you

The lines are quite surreal; Dylan paints images and creates suggestive associations that stir the curiosity of his audience.



Leonard Cohen CC CC-BY-NC-SA-4.0 Photographer: Erik Thorberg

Leonard Cohen's poetry is more subtle and low-voiced as he in this poem speaks of how love appears where you least expect it to. Note the poetic and evocative juxtapositions (birthmark/stain, snowman/rain etc.)

Love Calls You By Your Name (Leonard Cohen)
You thought that it could never happen
To all the people that you became,
Your body lost in legend, the beast so very tame.
But here, right here,
Between the birthmark and the stain
Between the ocean and your open vein,
Between the snowman and the rain
Once again, once again
Love calls you by your name.

The woman in your scrapbook
Whom you still praise and blame
You say they chained you to your fingernails
And you climb the halls of fame.
Oh, but here, right here
Between the peanuts and the cage
Between the darkness and the stage
Between the hour and the age
Once again, once again
Love calls you by your name

These are the two first stanzas of a beautiful song included on one of his early albums, *Songs of Love and Hate* (1971). The next example is an excerpt from a more recent poem, included on *The Future* (1992).

Anthem (Leonard Cohen)

The birds they sang
At the break of day
Start again
I heard them say
Don't dwell on what
Has passed away
Or what is yet to be

Ah, the wars they will
Be fought again
The holy dove
She will be caught again
Bought and sold
And bought again
The dove is never free

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

In his humble way Leonard Cohen has said about this poem that "it is probably the one I am most pleased with." And indeed, the last two lines sum up much of Cohen's poetry beautifully; his melancholy way of pointing out that despite, or even because of our defects we can see our blessings and the bright sides of life. Like the title of one of his novels also indicates, we are *Beautiful Losers*.

Bob Dylan was born in 1941 and Leonard Cohen in 1934. They are still active producing music and poetry, and they are both still touring.

Exercise 6.2.1

1. What do you make of the imagery of Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man"? What do you associate with it? What is the singer asking for?
2. The imagery of "Desolation Row" is both wild and fantastic. On the internet you will find a full version; read it and play the song. See if you can place all his references and allusions.
3. Like Bono said, it is hard to figure out any meaning in the lines of "I Want You," but find it on the internet, play it, and follow the lyrics. Does it make any sense or is it just words and changing imagery?
4. Look at the juxtapositions of Cohen's "Love Calls You by Your Name." What can you say about the distance between the two items in each one?
5. Read the second stanza of Cohen's "Anthem." What is this about, and how do you interpret "the dove"?
6. Explain the two last lines of Cohen's "Anthem." What do we call such a literary technique?

Contributors and Attributions

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6.3: Reading Poetry

Reading Poetry



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Muriel Rukeyser says in *The Life of Poetry* that in order to successfully read a poem, we must give a poem "a total response." This means giving it all of our attention, taking it in slowly, reading it several times. It means listening to the poem openly, without judgment, and without projecting our own assumed meanings onto it, but rather as Ruykeyser writes, coming "to the emotional meanings at every moment." As she explains, "That is one reason for the high concentration of music, in poetry."

To come to emotional meanings at every moment means to adjust and react to the way a poem takes shape with every word, every line, every sentence, every stanza. Each poem creates its own universe as it moves from line to line. It is a universe that Ruykeyser describes as the "universe of emotional truth." So how exactly does one listen with his or her emotions?

Reading is one of the most intimate forms of connection we can have with someone. We take their words—their breath—into ourselves. We shape the words with our own bodies and, too, give them life with our own breath. Reading poetry, we breathe in what a poet breathes out. We share breath. The words and their meanings become part of our body as they move through our mind, triggering sensations in our bodies that lead to thoughts. And through this process, we have experiences that are new and that change us as much as any other experience can.

Poetry is a condensed art form that produces an experience in a reader through words. And though words may appear visually as symbols on the page, the experience that poems produce in us is much more physical and direct. The elements of poetry permit a poet to control many aspects of language—tone, pace, rhythm, sound—as well as language's effects: images, ideas, sensations. These elements give power to the poet to shape a reader's physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual experience of the poem. Because form and function are so closely intertwined, it is impossible to paraphrase a poem. When I was an undergraduate at SUNY Brockport, my first poetry teacher Anthony Piccione used to say, "A poem is what a poem does." This is why we must read poems with full concentration and focus more than once. It is why we must read them out loud. It is why we must be attentive to every aspect of the poem on both ends: as a writer, and as a reader.

Readers come to the page with different backgrounds and a range of different experiences with poetry, but it is how we read a poem that determines our experience of it. By "read" I do not mean understand or analyze, but rather, the actual process of coming to the poem, ingesting its lines, and responding emotionally.

Be a Good Listener



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I'm willing to bet that all of us have heard someone described as a "a good listener" in our lifetimes. Well, what is it that makes someone a good listener? List the qualities we associate with good listening skills and share your experiences of people who demonstrate these skills. In contrast, what makes someone a "bad listener"? How can we relate these concepts to reading a poem?

Being a good listener requires many of the same traits as being a good reader. When we listen to someone speak, we listen to their emotions and ideas through meaning and tone, body gestures, and emphasized words. We do not judge. We do not interrupt. We may touch the speaker's arm to express care. We certainly use facial expressions and gestures to let the speaker know we are listening and understanding, that we are advancing emotionally alongside them with each turn of the story. Before offering advice, condolences, or other reactions, we as listeners try to see their perspective and its complexities from their side. We take our identities out of the equation and place their concerns in the middle of our attention.

Every poem has a speaker that seeks connection with a listener. A poet seeks to create an emotional experience in the reader through the poem's process, just as if a friend—or stranger—were telling an intense story. Unlike a person speaking, who can use the entire body to gesture, poetry has only a voice to rely on to speak. Yet the poem seeks to speak to a reader as if it had a body. The poem uses rhythm, pauses, stresses, inflections, and different speeds to engage the listener's body. As readers, it is our role to listen to the speaker of the poem and to *em*body the words the speaker speaks with our own self as if we are the ones who've spoken. We as readers identify with the speaker, with the voice of the poem. We listen with what John Keats called a "negative capability," meaning we are capable of erasing our own identity and ego in order to imagine what it is like to take on another. Although Keats used the term to apply to the writing side of poetry, it is useful to consider the concept in terms of the reading side of the equation, as well.

> A big mistake novice readers of poetry make is assuming that they can get the meaning of a poem by reading it just once. Since a poem is condensed language, the meaning reveals itself slowly, unfolding a bit at a time after multiple readings.

Like individuals, each poem's speaker speaks from a place of perspective, a place which can be physical and/or psychological. As we as readers move word to word, line to line, we must allow the universe of the poem to take root in our imaginations as if it is the only universe that exists. When we are open to the words' music and meaning, the poem has the potential to envelop our entire being and body.

> **Note**
>
> Poet Emily Dickinson expresses how she can tell if something is poetry in one of her letters: "If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me I know *that* is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry. These are the only way I know. Is there any other way."

A poem is structured differently from prose as poems are mostly structured around a **line** rather than a paragraph (poets can also write **prose poems** that use paragraphs). What this means is that, as a reader, you pause briefly after reading a line and moving onto

the next line. Sometimes, poets might break up a sentence midway between lines. This is called **caesura** and poets use this to emphasize the meanings of words either directly before the line break or on the following line. Seeing how a poem is visually laid out is as important as hearing it read as contemporary poets might work more with the white space of the page to emphasize meaning.

Poets break up lines in a poem into **stanzas**, the equivalent of paragraphs in prose. Often, a stanza has a meaning that is distinct from other stanzas. Understanding why a poet has chosen to group lines together in stanzas is important in ascertaining the meaning of the poem at large.

Note

A big mistake novice readers of poetry make is assuming that they can get the meaning of a poem by reading it just once. Since a poem is condensed language, the meaning reveals itself slowly, unfolding a bit at a time after multiple readings.

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6.4: Case Study- A Close Reading of a Poem



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How to Conduct a Close Reading of a Poem

The Title Matters

Reading a poem, we start at the beginning — the title, which we allow to set up an expectation for the poem in us. A title can set a mood or tone, or ground us in a setting, persona, or time. It is the doorway into the poem. It prepares us for what follows.

Exercise 6.4.1

Read the titles of the poems that follow. What do the titles bring up for you? Discuss your findings.

- Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening
- Happiness
- Wishes for Sons
- Riot Act, April 29, 1992
- Reckless Sonnet
- Pissing Off the Back of the Boat into the Nivernais Canal
- How Much Is This Poem Going to Cost Me?
- The Turtle
- A Blessing
- Girl Friend Poem #3
- Sex at Noon Taxes
- The Tree of Personal Effort
- The First Time Through

Upon a first reading, it's important to get an idea of what it is you are entering. *Read* the poem out loud. *Listen* for the general, larger qualities of the poem like tone, mood, and style. *Look up* any words you cannot define. *Circle* any phrases that you don't understand and *mark* any that stand out to you. Some questions we may ask ourselves include:

1. What is my first emotional reaction to the poem?
2. Is this poem telling a story? Sharing thoughts? Playing with language experimentally? Is it exploring one's feelings or perceptions? Is it describing something?
3. Is the tone serious? Funny? Meditative? Inquisitive? Confessional? Here is a list of tonal descriptors that may help you pin down what you're hearing:
    - Abrasive, accepting, admiring, adoring, angry, anxious, apologetic, apprehensive, argumentative, awe-struck
    - Biting, bitter, blissful, boastful
    - Candid, childish, child-like, clipped, cold, complimentary, condescending, critical

- Despairing, detached, didactic, direct, discouraged, doubtful, dramatic
- Fearful, forceful, frightened
- Happy, heavy-hearted, horrified, humorous
- Indifferent, ironic, irreverent
- Loving
- Melancholic, mysterious
- Naïve, nostalgic
- Objective, optimistic, peaceful, pessimistic, playful, proud
- Questioning
- Reflective, reminiscent
- Sad, sarcastic, satirical, satisfied, seductive, self-critical, self-mocking, sexy, shocked, silly, sly, solemn, somber, stunned, subdued, sweet, sympathetic
- Thoughtful, threatening
- Uncertain, urgent
- Whimsical

These initial questions will emotionally prepare you to be a good listener. When we come to a text, though we release ourselves of any preconceived judgments, we do come prepared emotionally. Picking up a book of fiction is different than opening a book of nonfiction essays. Within us there is an ever-so-slight yet important preparation. Think about it. Although both nonfiction and fiction share similar writing tropes, how would you feel if someone told you that the nonfiction book you are reading—the one that brought you to tears—is not nonfiction, but actually fiction? Most people become upset. It feels like you've been lied to. To put it another way, think about how differently you prepare to engage with a performance depending on its genre. How do you set yourself up differently for a stand-up comic as opposed to an opera? Not only are the effects of the performance different, but the way we emotionally prepare ourselves to receive them is also different.

Let's begin to apply our approaches to the following poem by Stephen Dunn:

Poem: The Insistence of Beauty by Stephen Dunn

The day before those silver planes
came out of the perfect blue, I was struck
by the beauty of pollution rising
from smokestacks near Newark,
gray and white ribbons of it
on their way to evanescence.

And at impact, no doubt, certain beholders
and believers from another part of the world
must have seen what appeared gorgeous—
the flames of something theirs being born.

I watched for hours—mesmerized—
that willful collision replayed,
the better man in me not yielding,
then yielding to revenge's sweet surge.

The next day there was a photograph
of dust and smoke ghosting a street,
and another of a man you couldn't be sure
was fear-frozen or dead or made of stone,

and for a while I was pleased
to admire the intensity—or was it the coldness?—

of each photographer's good eye.
For years I'd taken pride in resisting

the obvious—sunsets, snowy peaks,
a starlet's face—yet had come to realize
even those, seen just right, can have
their edgy place. And the sentimental,

beauty's sloppy cousin, that enemy,
can't it have a place too?
Doesn't a tear deserve a close-up?
When word came of a fireman

who hid in the rubble
so his dispirited search dog
could have someone to find, I repeated it
to everyone I knew. I did this for myself,
not for community or beauty's sake,
yet soon it had a rhythm and a frame.

"The Insistence of Beauty," from THE INSISTENCE OF BEAUTY: POEMS by Stephen Dunn. Copyright © 2004 by Stephen Dunn. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Begin with the title: "The Insistence of Beauty." What does this title do to you? What kind of expectations and tone does it set up?

Perhaps you expect a poem about beauty, or because it is the "insistence of" you may feel determination, or like beauty is up against some other force. Or maybe you expect a poem about art.

Then ask and begin to answer these questions:

1. What is my first emotional reaction to the poem?
    - There is no one answer to this, obviously. But maybe you feel loss. Or hope. Or desperation. Or sadness. Or admiration. Maybe you're confused or feel a combination of these.
2. Is this poem telling a story? Sharing thoughts? Playing with language experimentally?
    - This poem seems to be telling a story. The poem contains a sequence of events: "The day before"; "I watched for hours"; "the next day." The speaker is sharing emotional reactions to something, as well as his actions to an event.
3. Is the tone serious? Funny? Meditative?
    - It seems serious, inquisitive, and confessional. It's not humorous and isn't experimental.



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Images and Tone

After an initial introduction to the poem, read slowly and allow the meanings to emerge as you move from line to line, paying attention next to images and **tone**. Before moving ahead, ask what your emotional response is at the end of each line, as lines can create different meanings and give the poem complexity. For instance, in the following stanza, we respond one way to the first two lines' image, and another way after its turn to the third line:

The day before those silver planes
came out of the perfect blue, I was struck
by the beauty of pollution rising
from smokestacks near Newark

In the second line, the phrase "I was struck" forms an image with what precedes before it can form an image with what follows. This second line leaves us with the image of the speaker being struck by something. It might be different for you, but because I am holding the image of a plane in my mind, a plane being a large and physical object, I immediately imagine the speaker being "struck" physically by an object. Therefore, we momentarily hold the image of being struck physically: "The day before those silver planes / came out of the perfect blue, I was struck."

But when we move to the third line, the image changes. The speaker is no longer struck by an object , but by an emotion or idea: the "beauty of pollution rising." Although we may think of pollution as ugly, here we are being told that it is beautiful. The word reverses our assumptions; maybe we see in our mind's eye the cliché image of smog rising from smokestacks and ask, "How is that beautiful?" Or maybe we think about how smog makes the colors of sunsets more intense. Either way, the speaker is telling us that he sees pollution as beautiful even with all of its complications (it's harmful, smelly, ugly, et cetera). Rather than leave us with only the speaker's judgement of pollution, the next lines create for us an image of that "beauty" so we can see it, too: "gray and white ribbons of it / on their way to evanescence." These last two lines help us make sense of the idea that pollution is beautiful. The ribbons evaporating maybe *are* somehow beautiful. If we disconnect our knowledge from the image so we do not think about how the ribbons are smoke, if we simply see the visual the smoke makes: "ribbons… on their way to evanescence," we experience what the speaker experiences: beauty. Or, perhaps, what the speaker sees as beautiful is the pollution disappearing. From this perspective, the speaker would see not the gray and white ribbons as beautiful, but the gray and white ribbons *disappearing* as beautiful.

Tonally, the words "perfect" and "struck" stand out for different reasons in the first two lines — one for meaning, one for sound. When something is "perfect" we feel admiration, maybe the need to protect it. Since nothing really is perfect, it also sounds a little romantic, subjective, or too good to be true, which may also produce tension as we know perfection isn't real, or doesn't last. The word "struck" is a harsh, violent, physical word. And ending the line on it emphasizes it even more. To be struck by something suggests shock, surprise, immediacy, and change.

In addition to these two words, the first phrase sets a tone, too, of expectation. We know something significant is being made of the planes because they are marking a day: "The day before those silver planes." The event is important enough to refer to it in such a way. This is how we speak of big events. The day we were married. The day we went swimming. The day those silver planes came out of the blue.

The tone in the first stanza immediately produces a connection between the speaker and reader. We feel the speaker is disclosing something to us, or divulging something important. As we continue through the poem the speaker's tone becomes inquisitive as he asks questions:

—or was it the coldness?—

that enemy,
can't it have a place too?

Doesn't a tear deserve a close-up?

Is he asking questions of the reader? To himself? A bit of both? We journey with him on his seeking.

Exercise 6.4.1

> Read through Dunn's poem and identify the rest of the images. Discuss how each image makes you feel. To what words or images is your attention drawn? What associations do you make from them?

Find Connections and Ask Questions

After moving through the poem and noting images, their effects, and the tone or places where tone changes, the next question that is helpful to ask is: What does *x* remind me of? Or, what associations am I making? Usually the connections I would suggest making would be within the poem itself and the patterns it creates—between lines, images, repetitive words or themes, **diction** (word choice)—but in Dunn's poem, before we can make connections within the poem, we are actually reminded of something outside of the poem. In the first stanza, the two planes near Newark and two ribbons evaporating may remind you of the iconic image of the September 11th attacks on The World Trade Center in New York City. This an **allusion** (an indirect reference) to that event, as suggested by the second stanza: "believers from another part of the world / must have seen what appeared to be gorgeous." Making this connection provides us with a context for the poem's occasion. Maybe we begin to ask, "How can the attacks on the World Trade Center and its subsequent collapse be seen as gorgeous?"

You may be wondering what happens if you didn't make that connection. Will you misread Dunn's poem? In a poem, allusions like this usually aren't usually necessary if the poem makes use of all the other elements of poetry successfully. And in Dunn's poem we are actually given enough, I would say, to have a sufficient experience if the allusion isn't made. In the poem the planes cause an "impact," believers elsewhere watch the "flames of something of theirs being born," the speaker watches "mesmerized," the media posts photographs of the fearful and "dead or made of stone" watching the events; then the poem focuses on the speaker's emotional reactions and thoughts regarding the event, and what thoughts it evokes within him in regard to beauty. The poem closes with the story of the fireman and his dog and the speaker's insights. Looking at it this way, maybe 9/11 is secondary in experiencing the poem. It's hard to be certain since I cannot *not* make the connection to the event personally, but perhaps it is possible that the allusion is not central to the poem's experience, since it is all of the other poetic techniques of the poem that create the sensual reaction in the reader.

Let's for a moment pretend that the poem isn't alluding to these events. This will leave us to focus on the private and unique universe of the poem and make connections within it. If we begin to make connections within the poem itself, one of the first connections we might make is how the ribbons in the first stanza appear beautiful to the speaker even though they are pollution, and how the flames in the second stanza appear "gorgeous" to the believers even though they are destructive. What does that suggest? The connection bridges the distance between the speaker and the believers, as they both have the capacity to see beauty in something harmful, in something that others see as ugly. This further suggests that beauty is subjective, though the ability to see it is universal.

You can see how making connections like this and asking questions about those connections can lead to insight into the poem's experience, as well as insight into the experience of being human. Here, Dunn's speaker has found similarities between himself and people who might be considered enemies. Beauty, we see, may be received and interpreted by our senses and not rely on context.

What other connections and patterns can we see? And what questions can these patterns raise in us? In the third stanza the speaker watches the collision "replayed"—be it on a television screen or in his mind—and admits to a desire for revenge. Later, in the last stanza, the speaker repeats the story of the fireman: "I repeated it / to everyone I knew." What does this suggest? He says "I did this for myself, / not for community or beauty's sake, / yet soon it had a rhythm and a frame." How are we to understand the impact of his repeating his story? If it is told "for myself," then what exactly is the speaker getting from this and how is it connected to the replaying of the collision? What might be meant by rhythm and frame?

In the fourth and fifth stanza the speaker makes a connection between himself admiring "the intensity" of the people in the photographs and between the photographers taking the photographs:

The next day there was a photograph
of dust and smoke ghosting a street,
and another of a man you couldn't be sure
was fear-frozen or dead or made of stone,

and for a while I was pleased
to admire the intensity—or was it the coldness?—

of each photographer's good eye.

The speaker asks, "Was it the coldness?" This seems to suggest a distance, or emotional coldness, in the voyeuristic qualities he is experiencing and the way photographers act as objective eyes for the audience. The photographers cannot act on their emotions or empathies; instead, to succeed, photographers in intense situations must shut down their responses and capture the moment visually, detached from their emotions. The speaker says that he admires this, "the intensity—or was it the coldness?— / of each photographer's good eye." Perhaps he sees courage in the act of taking these photographs, or maybe he sees something admirable in the way a person can detach himself from an event in order to focus only on the image, the visual, the camera's eye with a "good eye" that can see art and capture it.

In the fifth and sixth stanzas, the speaker muses on how he's reacted to beautiful things in the past just as coldly as these photographers: "For years I'd taken pride in resisting / the obvious—sunsets, snowy peaks, / a starlet's face." The pattern of "coldness" is established by several word choices here: "fear-frozen," "coldness," "snowy." The words are used as physical description and emotional description. They are literal, and they are figurative. Our speaker then tells us how he discovered that images of "sunsets, snowy peaks, / a starlet's face," too, have their "edgy" place. This is a little mysterious. Does "edgy" refer to the destructive, ugly yet mesmerizing collision and photographs he's been viewing? Is this suggesting that serene beauty and edginess are somehow closely related?

The speaker then introduces the idea of "the sentimental," which he refers to as "beauty's sloppy cousin, the enemy," and asks if it can have a place to also be appreciated. The word choice of "enemy" is interesting, as it echoes the relationship between the speaker and the believers from the beginning of the poem. What does this suggest about the relationship between enemies, and between the roles they play? The speaker ends the stanza with another question: "Doesn't a tear deserve a close-up?" The image represents sentimentality, beauty's "sloppy cousin," but it actually could be another allusion, this time to a commercial by the Keep America Beautiful campaign, made in the 1970s at the start of the environmental movement. It is another reference that will not diminish the poem's effect on a reader if he or she doesn't know it, but it can add another layer of complexity if it is understood. In a commercial, a Native American witnesses the pollution of a river as he paddles a canoe up the river, and as he turns to the camera, we zoom in on a tear slipping from his eye. The allusion echoes the pollution that the speaker found beautiful in the first stanza.

In the last part of the poem, the speaker confesses that he retells the story about the fireman hiding in the rubble "so his dispirited search dog / could have someone to find." And that he retells it not "for community or beauty's sake," but for himself. Why would he do that? Why does it matter that he does? The story is moving. Who isn't moved by the relationship between a man and his dog? Our focus shifts from all of the people who perished in the rubble whom the fireman and his dog cannot help, to the "dispirited" feelings of the dog that the fireman tries to help. It is almost as if all the devastating emotion we feel thinking about those people and their families, empathizing with them, transfers to the emotion we feel thinking about the dog, empathizing with the fireman who feels such empathy and emotion for the dog that he hides in the rubble so the dog can find someone. In this moment, the feelings the dog has become as important and as worthy as our own—a dog's emotions equate with a human's. If we can feel such strong empathy toward the dog, as the fireman clearly does, can we not also feel it toward our enemies? And are these feelings in any way similar to "revenge's sweet surge," referred to earlier in the poem? Are they maybe one side and the other, sloppy cousins of each other like beauty and sentimentality? Or is the dog and fireman story too sentimental to fall in love with? And if it is, doesn't it "deserve a close-up" too?

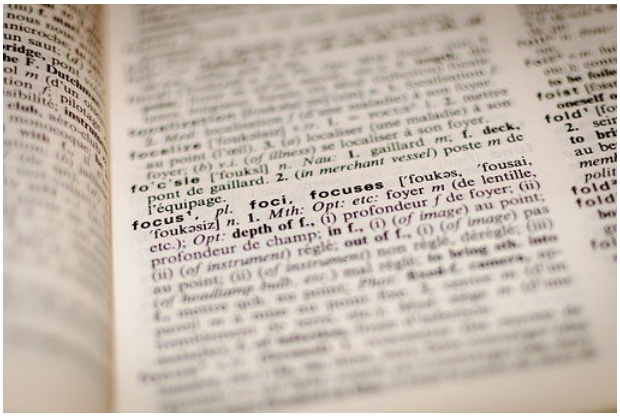


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Look Closely at Diction

When reading a poem, you should always look up words you do not know, but sometimes it can help to look up words that you do know when they have more than one meaning, too. The last line of the poem may seem a bit mysterious: “I did this for myself, / not for community or beauty’s sake, / yet soon it had a rhythm and a frame.” A rhythm and a frame? What on earth does that have to do with anything? Is the speaker suggesting that beauty relies somehow on rhythm and a frame? We can begin by looking in the poem for other things that have rhythm and a frame. The poem itself, does, for starters. Poetry has rhythm. Speech has rhythm. And the images of the building collapsing repetitively have a rhythm too, as well as a frame if they are being shown on television, captured through a camera lens. But “frame” is a word with many meanings. If we look at the word “frame,” we find that it is a noun defined as:

1. a border or case for enclosing a picture, mirror, etc.
2. a rigid structure formed of relatively slender pieces, joined so as to surround sizable empty spaces or nonstructural panels, and generally used as a major support in building or engineering works, machinery, furniture, etc.
3. a body, especially a human body, with reference to its size or build; physique: *He has a large frame.*
4. a structure for admitting or enclosing something: *a window frame.*
5. usually, frames. (*used with a plural verb*) the framework for a pair of eyeglasses.
6. form, constitution, or structure in general; system; order.
7. a particular state, as of the mind: *an unhappy frame of mind.*

In looking at the above definitions, there are several that have resonance in relation to this poem.

1. a border or case for enclosing a picture, mirror, etc.
    - We frame art and other works of beauty, and the title of the poem is “The Insistence of Beauty.” What is the purpose of a frame in this sense of the word?
2. a rigid structure formed of relatively slender pieces, joined so as to surround sizable empty spaces or nonstructural panels, and generally used as a major support in building or engineering works, machinery, furniture, etc.
    - The World Trade Center, like all buildings, had a frame, which was destroyed in the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Were the Twin Towers a piece of art that had beauty and a frame? What did they represent symbolically?
3. a body, especially a human body, with reference to its size or build; physique
    - All people—no matter what their culture or nationality—and other living beings have frames.
4. form, constitution, or structure in general; system; order
    1. Poems have form; society has systems; the United States has a Constitution; the 9/11 terrorist attacks were very orderly and systematic. How is beauty linked to order?
5. a particular state, as of the mind
    - A poem’s speaker has a state of mind, as does the reader; the events of 9/11 place us in a certain “frame of mind.” What frame of mind is the reader in? What frame of mind does the poem put the reader in?

The word “frame” adds layers of meaning that can contribute to our interpretations, reactions, and understandings of this poem, as the word relates to many of the poem’s themes: beauty, violence, love, destruction, storytelling, and the visual nature of art, to name a few. Considering these definitions, we might follow our thoughts to conclude something like this:

“Frame” can refer to the building’s architecture, the human body, systems, and orders. We frame photographs—a single moment captured from time—and hang them on our walls. A frame lends support, gives something its shape. And rhythm? Our first rhythm: our mother’s heartbeat—rhythm is elemental and basic. It is the basis of music and poetry. The human body finds rhythms pleasing. Rhythms repeat themselves. The man telling the story of the fireman and his dog creates a rhythm through its repetition; it becomes artful, monumental. It becomes an experience shared rather than isolated. It stands as a symbol, an allegory for the wreckage of person, animal, and city. Perhaps the retelling becomes its own type of architecture that listeners can enter, or the bones within someone, like the fireman, who in retelling this story finds strength and support.

Activity

What is your experience of this poem? How do you interpret its meaning? After discussing your reactions to the poem, discuss the specific approaches you used to come to your interpretation. What do you think is the most powerful part of the poem? What, if anything, confused you in its reading? Did that change once you conducted a closer reading of the poem? Did your interpretation align with mine in some places? Or are there sections in which it differed? Remember, there is no one way to interpret a poem. That’s what makes discussing them so pleasing and rewarding.

Exercise 6.4.1

Read the poem by Wordsworth below aloud the first time to hear the sound of the words and the brief pauses with each line break. Each and every word, every punctuation mark is deliberately chosen by the poet, so read thoughtfully and carefully. You can also use "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden or "Catch" by Robert Francis.

I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud *by William Wordsworth*

I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;

Beside the lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine

And twinkle on the milky way,

They stretched in never-ending line

Along the margin of a bay:

Ten thousand saw I at a glance,

Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they

Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:

A poet could not but be gay,

In such a jocund company:

I gazed—and gazed—but little thought

What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie

In vacant or in pensive mood,

They flash upon that inward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude;

And then my heart with pleasure fills,

And dances with the daffodils.

2) Go through the same process the author used to read Stephen Dunn's poem to do a close reading of Wordsworth's poem. What is your first emotional reaction to the poem? Next, follow the steps below to do a close reading.

1. What does this title do to you? What kind of expectations and tone does it set up?
2. What do you notice about the structure of the poem?
3. How are the lines organized differently than prose? Where do they break?
4. What do you notice about the last word of each line?
5. Is this poem telling a story? Sharing thoughts? Playing with language experimentally?
6. Is the tone serious? Funny? Meditative?
7. Read through and identify the images in the poem and also the tone and places where the tone changes. Discuss how each image makes you feel. To what words or images is your attention drawn? What associations do you make from them?
8. Find connections and ask questions. What does *x* remind me of? Or, what associations am I making? What other connections and patterns can we see?
9. Look closely at diction or word choice, especially as the connotative and denotative meanings of words.
10. What do you think is the most powerful part of the poem?
11. What, if anything, confused you in its reading? Did that change once you conducted a closer reading of the poem?
12. What is your experience of this poem? How do you interpret its meaning? What are the specific approaches you used to come to your interpretation?
13. Now, read the poem in your own mind again once or twice. Pause at each word that “jumps” out at you because it is either an unusual image or it elicits a mood, or it could just be that you don’t know the meaning of the word and will need to refer to a dictionary.
14. Note recurring ideas or images—color code these with highlighters for visual recognition as you look at the poem on the page.
15. Determine formal patterns. Is there a regular rhythm? How would you describe it? Can it be characterized by the number of syllables in each line? If not, do you note a certain number of beats (moments where your voice emphasizes the sound) in the line? Are there rhyming sounds? Where do they occur?
16. What is the overarching effect of all these elements taken together? What do you think is the message conveyed by the poem?

As you learn more about the elements of poetry, you will be looking at word choices a poet makes and also changes in tone. Are there any figures of speech the poet uses? What is the form of the poem? Each of these contributes to the overall meaning of a poem.

Contributors and Attributions

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6.5: Why Analyze Poetry?

Analyzing Poetry

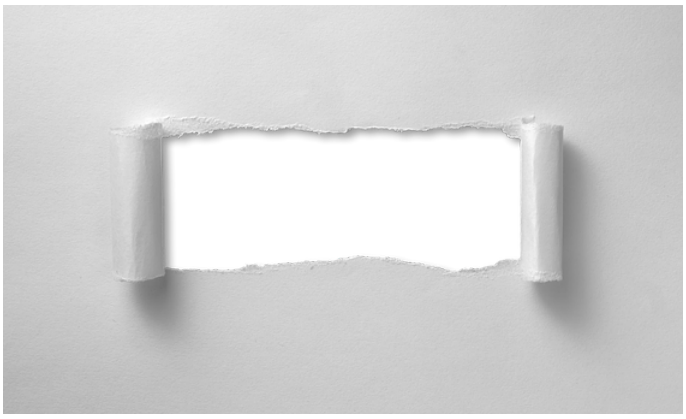


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What is the point of analyzing poetry? One simple answer is that the more we know about anything the more interesting it becomes: listening to music or looking at paintings with someone who can tell us a little about what we hear or see–or what we're reading–is one way of increasing our understanding and pleasure. That may mean learning something about the people who produced the writing, music, painting that we are interested in, and why they produced it. But it may also mean understanding why one particular form was chosen rather than another: why, for example, did the poet choose to write a **sonnet** rather than an **ode**, a **ballad**, or a **villanelle**? To appreciate the appropriateness of one form, we need to be aware of a range of options available to that particular writer at that particular time. In the same way, we also need to pay attention to word choice. Why was this particular word chosen from a whole range of words that might have said much the same? Looking at manuscript drafts can be really enlightening, showing how much effort was expended in order to find the most appropriate or most evocative expression.

Exercise 6.5.1

Click on the link below to read and compare the two versions of William Blake's "Tyger." The one on the left is a draft, the other is the final published version.

William Blake's "Tyger"

What are the differences between the two versions?

Answer

The most obvious difference between the two is that stanza 4 of the draft does not survive in the published version, and an entirely new stanza, "When the stars threw down their spears," appears in the finished poem. Significantly this introduces the idea of "the Lamb," a dramatic contrast to the tiger, as well as the idea of a "he" who made the lamb. One similarity between draft and final version is that each is made up entirely of unanswered questions. But if you look at the manuscript stanza 5, you can see revisions from "What" to "Where," and the struggle with the third line, where Blake eventually decided that the idea of an arm was redundant, subsumed in the notions of grasping and clasping. The two rhyme words are decided–grasp/clasp–but in which order should they come? "Clasp" is a less aggressive word than "grasp"; "clasp" is not quite as gentle as an embrace, but it is closer to embracing than "grasp" is – so it must be for deliberate effect that we end up with "What dread grasp/Dare its deadly terrors clasp?"

It is rare to have manuscript drafts to examine in this way, but I hope that this convinces you of the kind of attention writers pay to word choice.

Exercise 6.5.1

Let us take one more example. Think about this first stanza of Thomas Hardy's "Neutral Tones" (1867); what do you notice about the word choice in the last line?

We stood by a pond that winter day,

And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,

And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;

– They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

(Gibson, 1976, p. 12)

Answer

Notice that, in the last line, "oak" or "elm" would work just as well as far as the **rhythm** or music of the line is concerned, but "ash" has extra connotations of greyness, of something burnt out, dead, finished ("ashes to ashes," too, perhaps?), all of which contribute to the mood that Hardy conveys in a way that "oak" or "elm" wouldn't.

To return to my original question then, "What is the point of analyzing poetry?", one answer is that only an analytical approach can help us arrive at an informed appreciation and understanding of the poem. Whether we like a poem or not, we should be able to recognize the craftsmanship that has gone into making it, the ways in which stylistic techniques and devices have worked to create meaning. General readers may be entirely happy to find a poem pleasing, or unsatisfactory, without stopping to ask why. But *studying* poetry is a different matter and requires some background understanding of what those stylistic techniques might be, as well as an awareness of constraints and conventions within which poets have written throughout different periods of history.

You may write poetry yourself. If so, you probably know only too well how difficult it is to produce something you feel really expresses what you want to convey. Writing an essay presents enough problems – a poem is a different matter, but certainly no easier. Thinking of poetry as a discipline and a craft which, to some extent, can be learned, is another useful way of approaching analysis. After all, how successful are emotional outpourings on paper? Words one might scribble down in the heat of an intense moment may have some validity in conveying that intensity, but in general might they not be more satisfactory if they were later revised? My own feeling is that a remark Wordsworth made 200 years ago has become responsible for a number of misconceptions about what poetry should do. In the Preface to a volume of poems called *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) he wrote that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Owens and Johnson, 1998, p.85,11.105–6). The second time he uses the same phrase he says something that I think is often forgotten today: "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion *recollected in tranquillity*" (my italics) (ibid., p. 95, ll.557–8). Notice the significant time lapse implied there – the idea that, however powerful or spontaneous the emotion, it needs to be carefully considered before you start writing. He goes on:

> *The emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually reproduced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins.*

You don't have to agree with Wordsworth about what poetry is or how best to achieve it. (Would you always want a poem to express powerful emotion, for example? I referred to Hardy's "Neutral Tones" above, where the whole point is that neither of the two characters described feels anything much at all.) But the idea of contemplation is a useful and important one: it implies distance, perhaps detachment, but above all re-creation, not the thing itself. And if we try to re-create something, we must choose our methods and our words carefully in order to convey what we experienced as closely as possible. A word of warning though: writers do not always aim to express personal experiences; often a persona is created (see discussion of "Voice").

The poet Ezra Pound offered this advice to other poets in an essay written in 1913: "Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something" (Gray, 1990, p. 56). And in the 1950s William Carlos Williams advised, "cut and cut again whatever you write." In his opinion, the "test of the artist is to be able to revise without showing a seam" (loc. cit.). That sewing image he uses appeals to me particularly because it stresses the notion of skilled craftsmanship. Pound and Williams were American, writing

long after Wordsworth, but, as you can see, like countless other poets they too reflected very seriously on their own poetic practice. I hope this helps convince you that as students we owe it to the poems we read to give them close analytical attention.



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Elements of Poetry

In what follows, section headings like "Rhyme," "Rhythm," "Line lengths and line endings," "Alliteration," and so on are intended to act as signposts to help you use this course (if terms are unfamiliar, look them up in the glossary at the end of this free course). But these headings indicate only the *main* technique being discussed. While it is something we need to attempt, it is very difficult to try to isolate devices in this way – to separate out, for example, the effects of rhythm from rhyme. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't look for particular techniques at work in a poem, but we need to be aware that they will be interdependent and the end product effective or not because of the way such elements work together.

If you are working on a poem, it can be a good idea to print it, maybe even enlarge it, and then write anything you find particularly striking in the margins. Use highlighters or coloured pens to underline repetitions and link rhyme words. Patterns may well emerge that will help you understand the way the poem develops. Make the poems your own in this way, and then, if you are the kind of person who doesn't mind writing in books, you can insert notes in a more restrained way in the margins of your book.

If you prefer to work on your computer, you can do a similar thing by using an annnotation tool on your word processor.

Whatever you do, always ask yourself what the effect of a particular technique that you identify is. Noticing an unusual choice of words, a particular **rhyme scheme** or use of **alliteration** (see section on alliteration) is an important first step, but you need to take another one. Unless you go on to say why what you have noticed is effective, what it contributes to the rest of the poem, how it endorses or changes things, then you are doing less than half the job. Get into the habit of asking yourself questions, even if you can't always answer them satisfactorily.

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6.6: The Line in Poetry

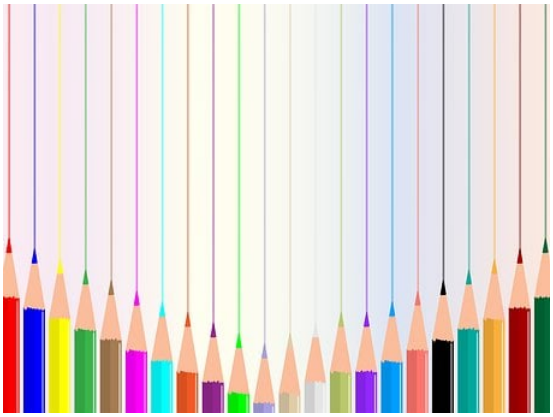


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In poetry, there are three units of architecture, or structure: words, lines, and stanzas. As with all forms of writing, words comprise the most basic level of form. But what makes poetry unique as a genre is **verse**—lines—which work as both a unit of sensibility and music. Lines assemble into stanzas, or "rooms" in Italian. Sometimes poems can have sections, too, where stanzas are confined yet relate to one another, and sometimes poems can break from line and stanza into what we call prose poems, which we will discuss later.

The Line: Rows

Originally, poetry was used as a way to remember stories, which were delivered orally by a speaker or "the poet" to an audience. The units created *verse*, which in Latin translates to "line," "row," or "furrow," musical measures that were easier to remember. Poetry existed before writing; and even after writing was invented most people could not read. Poetry has been a way throughout human existence for people to pass on history, news, entertainment, and wisdom from one generation to the next. With the spread of literacy, the function of lines began to take on more complexity, increasing auditory and visual impacts. By the twentieth century, typeface allowed poets to place visual form at the center of their art.

It is apt that "verse" translates to "row" or "furrow," words we also use when speaking of gardens and farms (and also to the lines on our foreheads when we brood!). Think of each line of poetry you write as a row in your garden that is the poem. Every garden is different and the plants in it do not simply lie atop the surface; roots go deep and flourish from the nutrients in the soil. In a poem, those nutrients are the knowledge and emotions of the poet which, like in a garden, we do not see. Instead we see emotions and ideas transformed linguistically into imagery and music. In this analogy, words are the plants and flowers that the poet/gardener has chosen, and they are rooted into the earth, into history, into what came before. Words cannot detach themselves from their meanings and nuances. Each is a seed fallen from a mother plant. Poetry, the garden in which generations of words may flourish, gives opportunities for words to evolve. It is why the poet is known as the "keeper of language," giving words to the unspeakable, naming the unnameable.

In our gardens, the line is a unit of measurement different from that of sentences. A line can ignore syntax and grammar to create interesting effects. For instance, a line can end on a verb and suspend the object onto the next line. This move can increase speed, or the pace, of the poem, as the reader is propelled forward to complete the thought. The line break can also create an image or idea that can transform when the reader reaches the next line. For example, in Bruce Snider's poem "Epitaph," the word "alive" creates one meaning that changes with the turn to the next line:

… I could sense
him down there, satin-lined,
curled like the six-toe cat
we'd found bloated in the creek, alive
with lice and maggots.

As reader we think at first that the cat is alive, only to find that it is alive but with “lice and maggots.” The effect comes from the use of an **enjambed** line, a line that does not end with punctuation. This enjambment is referred to as *hard* enjambment because it has so much of an effect and impact on the poem’s reading. Enjambed lines can suggest complex meaning, create images or emphasis, and control the music, or **prosody** of the poem. In contrast, when a line ends with a form of punctuation, or with a complete phrase, we refer to those lines as **end-stopped**.

Deciding where to break a line can be determined by a number of things: rhythm, rhyme, emphasis, pace, or the way a poem looks on a page. Classic forms predetermine the form a poem takes, and include rules concerning meter, rhyme, and repetition. Some forms like the Shakespearean sonnet include the element of a turn, or a **volta**, in which there is a marked change in the speaker in thought, emotion, or rhetoric. Forms are fun to experiment with and assert pressure on the writer in interesting ways that result in surprises that wouldn’t occur otherwise.

Today, most poetry is written in free verse, or *verslibre* in Latin, not requiring the poet to follow any prescribed rules of form. Robert Frost famously referred to writing free verse as “playing tennis without a net.” And as you saw in the previous chapter, Billy Collins has noted the way free verse poems have come to rely on tone of voice to hold it together.



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End-Stopped Lines and Enjambment

In the following poem, James Wright keeps his lines syntactically intact and uses almost entirely end-stopped lines. Read the poem via the Poetry Foundation.

The pauses at the ends of Wright’s lines are natural in speech and adhere to the formation of phrases, the units of sentences. Incorporating enjambment, Wright could’ve altered the music, meaning, and emphasis of this poem if he had started:

In the Shreve High football stadium, I think

Of Polacks nursing long beers in Titonsville.

You can see in this example how the speaker’s thinking is emphasized more than in the original because now the verb, “think,” falls at the end of the line. This formation also sets up a delay for the reader to find out what the speaker is thinking about. If this were the first line of the poem, we’d initially have more of a focus on the speaker and his thinking, his brooding. Instead, the first four lines of the original end with a place—stadium, Titonsville, Benwood, and Wheeling Steel. In addition, the punctuation enforces more of a pause at the end of the line than the break already does. We sense the separation of the places, yet their connectedness through the stanza that joins them, as well as the last line of the stanza which unites the Polacks, Negroes, and watchman through an action: “dreaming of heroes.” The collective action suggests that the speaker, part of this larger community, is also dreaming of heroes.

The only line not end-stopped with punctuation in the poem happens in the last stanza: “Their sons grow suicidally beautiful,” and this difference, as any change does, makes the line stand out. Even though there’s no punctuation, this line is not forcefully enjambed, as Wright continues to adhere to syntactical units:

Possessive pronoun (Their)—noun (sons)—verb (grow)—adverb (suicidally)—adjective (beautiful)

And because he does, there is little if any jarring with the break to “At the beginning of October.”

Overall, the end-stopped lines and syntactical intactness of the lines moves the poem slowly, one step it seems at a time until it reaches its sum: “Therefore,” at which point the poem loosens its pace and speeds up just for a bit, as if the sons begin to “gallop” or run, as the line itself runs over into the next.

At the end of another one of Wright’s poems, “A Blessing,” enjambment is used to surprise the reader with an image that changes as the **penultimate,** or second to last, line gives way to the final line:

Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom.

The hard enjambment between “break” and “blossom” creates an initial image of breaking in which the tone is harsh, violent, a loss, a break in need of repair. But the last line changes the tone with the image of a body breaking into blossom rather than simply breaking.

In contrast to Wright’s poem, the following poem by Aimee Nezhukumatathil employs mostly enjambed lines that ignore syntactically complete units in this poem about the explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark:

Lewis and Clark Disagree

Because Meriwether ate the last berry
without consulting William. Because

the prairie dog only let *William* feed
it dried corn. Because the Nez Perce

gave one a necklace of purple quartz
and not the other. Because Osage oranges

gave Meriwether hives. Because a grizzly
chased William into an oak tree, left him

high for hours. Because “Someone” tucked
buffalo chips into Merriwether’s knapsack

when he wasn’t looking. Because after walking,
rowing, swimming, climbing, trotting, pulling,

cutting, all they really wanted was a name
for a fruit one found sour, the other, so sweet.

“Lewis and Clark Disagree” from Miracle Fruit, *published by Tupelo Press, copyright © 2003 Aimee Nezhukumatahil. Used with permission.*

The form is almost the exact opposite of Wrights’: ten enjambed lines followed by two end-stopped, then an enjambed line, then an end-stopped line. In this poem the lines break sometimes on the first word of the next sentence. If we were to lay out the lines in terms of sentences, we would be left with an almost bullet-pointed list of reasons for why “Lewis and Clark Disagree” and they would look like this:

Because Meriwether ate the last berry without consulting William.

Because the prairie dog only let *William* feed it dried corn.

Because the Nez Perce gave one a necklace of purple quartz and not the other.

Because Osage oranges gave Meriwether hives.

Because a grizzly chased William into an oak tree, left him high for hours.

Because “Someone” tucked buffalo chips into Meriwether’s knapsack when he wasn’t looking.

Because after walking, rowing, swimming, climbing, trotting, pulling, cutting, all they really wanted was a name for a fruit one found sour, the other, so sweet.

Because, because, because, because, because. Instead, verse allows Nezhukumatathil to tone down the repetition of "Because" while also allowing her to manipulate rhythm and layer meaning. Take, for instance, the following lines:

… Because a grizzly
chased William into an oak tree, left him

high for hours. Because "Someone" tucked
buffalo chips into Merriwether's knapsack

when he wasn't looking. Because after walking,

The break after "left him" allows the image and idea of abandonment to linger before its meaning evolves into the complete thought "left him high for hours." The next two lines use the break to emphasize the alliteration of "tuck" and "-sack," which even continues beyond that couplet to the next with "walk." "Walk" and "Tuck" also being verbs, we are propelled forward to the next line by action. As for meaning, we come to "tuck" and think: tucked what?

With lines, generally the first and last words will take on extra emphasis, and in "Lewis and Clark Disagree" they have multiple effects. Some lines begin and end where they do to emphasize meaning: "left him" and "when he wasn't looking" suggest tension that feeds back to the relationship between Lewis and Clark; abandonment and sneakiness aren't marks of kindness. We read "left him" and think how terrible! We turn to "when he wasn't looking" and think, oooooh sneaky.

Like Wright's poem, this poem changes its pattern, moving from enjambed lines to end-stopped lines. The last sentence of the poem is strung out over four lines and arranged in a way so that the acoustics develop the feel of a burden or a long list:

… Because after walking,
rowing, swimming, climbing, trotting, pulling,

cutting, all they really wanted was a name
for a fruit one found sour, the other, so sweet.

Listen to how the rising pitch in the first line gives way to a list of actions that propels us into the penultimate line:

. . . walking, [↑]

[→] rowing, swimming, climbing, trotting, pulling, [a big pause]

cutting

There is a long pause between "pulling" and "cutting" produced from the break of momentum in the list of actions. Nezhukumatathil could've placed all the verbs on one line to create an entirely different feel:

walking, rowing, swimming, climbing, trotting, pulling, cutting

But instead, in order to keep the inflection and pitch varied, she rearranges words on a line differently, regardless of their syntactical relationships.

Exercise 6.6.1

Read the following prose extract taken from Walter Pater's discussion of the *Mona Lisa*, written in 1893, and then complete the activity:

> *She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and*

> *lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands*

When W.B. Yeats was asked to edit *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892–1935* (1936), he chose to begin with this passage from Pater, but he set it out quite differently on the page. Before you read his version, write out the extract as a poem yourself. The exercise is designed to make you think about line lengths, where to start a new line and where to end it when there is no rhyme to give you a clue. There is no *regular* rhythm either, though I'm sure you will discover rhythms in the words, as well as repeated patterns. How can you best bring out these poetic features?

Answer

Of course, there is no right answer to this exercise, but you should compare your version to Yeats's, printed below, to see if you made similar decisions.

She is older than the rocks among which she sits;
Like the Vampire,
She has been dead many times,
And learned the secrets of the grave;
And has been a diver in deep seas,
And keeps their fallen day about her;
And trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants;
And, as Leda,
Was the mother of Helen of Troy,
And, as St Anne,
Was the mother of Mary;
And all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes,
And lives
Only in the delicacy
With which it has moulded the changing lineaments,
And tinged the eyelids and the hands.

I wonder whether you used upper case letters for the first word of each line, as Yeats did? You may have changed the punctuation, or perhaps have left it out altogether. Like Yeats, you may have used "And" at the beginnings of lines to draw attention to the repetitions: nine of the lines begin in this way, emphasising the way the clauses pile up, defining and redefining the mysterious Mona Lisa. Two lines begin with "She": while there was no choice about the first, beginning the third in the same way focuses attention on her right at the start of the poem. Yeats has used Pater's punctuation to guide his line endings in all but two places: lines 13 and 14 run on – a stylistic device known as enjambment. The effect is an interesting interaction between eyes and ears. While we may be tempted to read on without pausing to find the sense, the line endings and white space of the page impose pauses on our reading, less than the commas and semicolons that mark off the other lines, but significant nevertheless.

Yeats's arrangement of the words makes the structure and movement of Pater's long sentence clearer than it appears when written as prose. The poem begins with age–she is "older than the rocks"– and refers to "Vampire", death, and "grave" in the first lines. The decision to single out the two words "And lives" in a line by themselves towards the end of the poem sets them in direct opposition to the opening; we have moved from great age and living death to life. The arrangement of lines 8-11 highlights her links with both pagan and Christian religions: the Mona Lisa was the mother of Helen of Troy and the Virgin Mary. The wisdom and knowledge she has acquired is worn lightly, nothing more than "the sound of lyres and flutes", apparent only in the "delicacy" of colour on "eyelids and hands."

The aim of the preceding exercise was to encourage you to think about form and structure even when a poem does not appear to follow a conventional pattern. Because you have now "written" a poem and had the opportunity to compare it with someone else's version of the same words, you should begin to realize the importance of decisions about where exactly to place a word for maximum effect, and how patterns can emerge which will control our reading when, for example, successive lines begin with repetitions. It should have made you think about the importance of the beginnings of

lines, as well as line endings. What has been achieved by using a short line here, a longer one there? How do these decisions relate to what is being said? These are questions that can usefully be asked of any poem.

Earlier, discussing the extract from Pope's *An Essay on Criticism*, I asked you to concentrate on the sound qualities of the poetry. Here, I want you to consider the visual impact of the poem on the page. It is a good thing to be aware of what a complex task reading is, and to be alive to the visual as well as the aural qualities of the verse.

Length of a Line



Image from Pixabay

If you simply browse the poems included in any anthology, you will see all types of shapes on the page. The length of the line is one of the most important decisions a poet makes about a poem, and the decision usually comes to define a poet's style. Robert Creeley's poems use short lines. C. K. Williams, long. Most poets write somewhere in between. The decision of how long to make lines can be driven by a number of factors, but mostly it is chosen by prosody, the musical component of the language that projects the speaker's voice and breath. As we've seen in the last chapter, where we choose to break lines also has a tremendous effect on the poem's tone and meaning.

One of the elements that determine line length is the character of the language in which you write. English contains many iambic patterns that often sound most right on a line between four and five feet long. Lines one foot long are barely poems at all; it is difficult to create tension or musical phrases with only two beats per line. Lines with four feet are frequently used to tell stories as is the case often with Robert Frost's poems. Longer lines lend themselves well to conversational tones, like that of Denise Duhamel's, or in lyric poems like Larry Levis'.

Some poets like Allen Ginsberg and Charles Olson, who wrote about it in his essay "Projective Verse," considered a line to be a unit of breath. Olson writes:

And the line comes (I swear it) from the breath, from the breathing of the man who writes, at the moment that he writes, and thus is, it is here that, daily work, the WORK, gets in, for only he, the man who writes, can declare, at every moment, the line its metric and its ending—where its breathing, shall come to, termination.

There can be no denial of the essential relationship between the poetic line and breath. Or between any carefully constructed writing and the pace at which it's read. Just look at Olson's passage and his use of commas, which causes us to stagger through the sentence.

Poetry is an oral art which comes fully to life when read aloud. Lines are instructions for how often and how long to pause. Like sheet music, the lines guide our pace, emphasis, and silence. If you were to read short-lined poems, however, taking a new breath at each line's start, you'd sound like a panting dog. So, there is some room for interpretation on Olson's assertion. Nonetheless, breath and line are intertwined, as you will see from the following examples.

As we read through these, note the different line lengths and their effects:

Here from this mountain shore, headland beyond stormy headland plunging

like dolphins through the blue sea-smoke

Into pale sea—look west at the hill of water: it is half the planet: this dome, this half globe, this bulging

Eyeball of water, arched over to Asia,

Australia and white Antarctica: those are the eyelids that never close; this is the staring unsleeping

Eye of the earth; and what it watches is not our wars.

(Robinson Jeffers, from “The Eye”)

In this excerpt from Robinson Jeffers’ poem “The Eye” we see the different effects long and short lines have on the breath. The first lengthy line full of images beyond the human—the headlands, the mountain, the shore, the dolphin, the smoke—in a long line like this we are given a sense of being overwhelmed as the images keep building and drawing out the breath until we are breathless. Compare this line to what follows two lines below: “Eyeball of water, arched over to Asia.” If you read both out loud you can feel how the length changes the way you use your lungs: long breath, short breath. The effect of the shorter line is like a quick glance—the eye open from the Pacific coast to Asia.

Exercise 6.6.1

Click on the following link to take a look at the first four lines of Allen Ginsberg’s poem “Howl.”

Knowing that Ginsberg considered a line to be a unit of breath, it is easy for us to read the lines the way they were intended. In Ginsberg’s long lines we sense overwhelming frustration, exasperation, and urgency. There is the sense that the speaker has so much to say that he cannot contain himself, that he cannot take a breath deep enough to capture all of his thoughts. What happens when you read the last line here out loud? Try it if you haven’t. What happens is that you need to speak quickly, and this creates a voice of desperation—perfectly appropriate given the subject matter of Ginsberg’s great generational poem “Howl.” The title itself, taken from a line in Walt Whitman’s great poem “Song of Myself,” reflects the tone that Ginsberg’s lines create.

In the strange house
In the strange town
Going barefoot past the parents’ empty room
I hear the horses the fire the wheel bone wings
Your voice

(Jean Valentine, from “The Messenger”)

Rather than breaking the line after words or phrases to create a pause, many poets incorporate white space into the line itself. Here, the spaces in line four visually mimic the footsteps referred to in line three, as well as create the pacing — as though the steps being taken are slow. Notice that the phrase “Your voice,” which is part of the list in line four, is moved to line five. That means there must be some difference between the effect created between the phrases with white space and those created by line breaks. It seems that the pauses between the list in line four are slightly shorter, more staccato, than the pause created between “bone wings” and “Your voice.” The more poetry you read, and the more poetry you write, the more you will begin to identify the subtleties of these techniques.



Image from Pixabay

“Lines”, from *The Star-Spangled Banner* by Denise Duhamel

On our first date, instead of holding my hand, my future-husband looked
at my palm. *Here’s your fame line your heart line the lucky M*
he said *you were in danger but you are coming out of it now.*
He said it like he meant it, the way the old women in the Philippines
had taught him. *Now make a fist these two little lines under your pinky*
these are the two kids you’ll have.
My sister keeps waiting
for her third baby. She has three lines. Three kids, that’s what the palm reader
at Rocky Point told her. *You’ll get married next year*
and you’ll have three beautiful daughters. My sister laughed and said
I‘ll get a second opinion because she was just a junior in high school
and sure she was going to college.
On our first date my future-husband
traced
the lines on my palm with his finger and I closed my hand around his
because it tickled. *If the pad near your thumb is fleshy*, he said,
it means you’re very passionate. His own palms were chubby and pink,
his brown fingers tapered and elegant. He wore a silver and turquoise ring.
He said, *You’ll get married only once*
but later there’ll be an affair.
Now that we’re married, he can’t find that wrinkle of infidelity.
Our palms change, he tells me, especially our right palms
that mutate through our behavior. He examines the bunch of tiny *xs*
that look like windshield frost, the wishbones, the spider webs,
the triangle dragon teeth.
My sister will most likely have that third baby.

My husband sees those three lines though my sister groans,

Two are enough. Her oldest is already fourteen, and my sister

is finally able to start taking classes at the community college.

My husband says to make everyone feel better: *I was only kidding*

I don't really know that much about predictions.

That night we all go

to Rocky Point which isn't as fun as it used to be, which is going bankrupt,

my sister says, like everything else in Rhode Island. The rollercoaster

is broken down, the cars off the tracks, lying on their sides

like cows. And hanging from the booths' roofs, giant Tweety Birds and Pink Panthers,

the cuddly neon elusive ones that hardly anyone ever wins.

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One of the most conversational of contemporary poets, Duhamel speaks to us like we are a long-time friend. Her voice is energetic though the lines are long. And in this poem she varies line lengths drastically but keeps to an overall pattern so it still looks uniform on the page. Once again, like other poems we've looked at, the form reflects and enhances the subject: the lines on our hands that palm readers use to predict our future. As we read the poem, we read the lines as though we are scanning a palm. Ironically, poems are made of lines too! In addition to the visual echo, the spaces also create pauses that mimic the way a fortune teller speaks: slowly, interpreting, considering — "He said, *You'll get married once* / [space] *But later there'll be an affair*." The space also creates suspense and drama. In this excerpt, there is one line on which only one word sits: "trace." It is the only line in the poem that contains one word. What is the effect? Why this word?

Exercise 6.6.1

Follow the link to Gwendolyn Brooks' poem "We Real Cool." This short poem accomplishes a lot with its short lines and enjambment. Reflecting the theme of rebellion, each line ignores standards of syntax and ends on a word that actually starts the next sentence. The enjambment places a stress on the word "We" and therefore emphasizes the will of the speaker to identify the group. What else do you think this poem accomplishes with its lines?

If the poem is laid out so that each sentence falls on its own line, what happens to the poem's energy? Music? Tone? Or what if you place one-and-a-half sentences on each line? Try rearranging the lines differently again and see what the effect is.

Alternatively, try another excerpt from above. Break "Howl" up into short lines, Duhamel's poem into medium lines. Experiment with how line affects music and emphasis in meaning. Try it in one of your own poems.

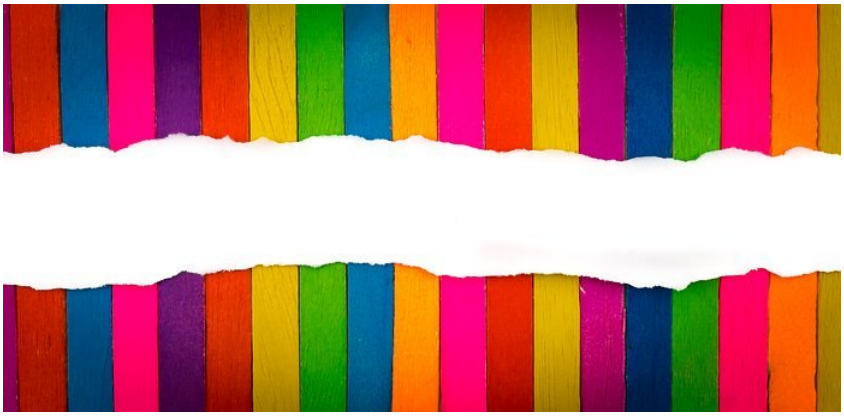


Image from Pixabay

What Stanzas Do

There is no way around the fact that stanzas, which dictate the way space is used on the page, create unity and separation. Even if the motive is to break a poem into stanzas to make the poem easier to read on the page—a huge chunk of text can be intimidating and heavy—or even if the motive is to control the music of the language by adding longer pauses—breaking a poem into stanzas invites the ideas of division and unification into the poem.

Just like the rooms of houses, walls say "This is the den (let's relax!)," or "This is the dining room (no clutter allowed!)." Rooms help us create space and define the tone of that space. When I was young, my sister and I shared a doorway with no door. Our bedrooms flowed into and out of each other, but the walls still defined our own individual space. We were connected as siblings, could see into each other's rooms, but still had control over what we wanted in our private space. Like my childhood bedroom, stanzas in poems can suggest connection, or confine ideas, images, and sounds to their own space while still sharing the same roof. Punctuation and other devices in the last and first lines of a stanza suggest whether the doorway is open like mine and my sister's bedrooms, or whether it contains a titanium door.

There are endless ways to organize stanzas and infinite decisions that can be made in the process of doing so. Usually stanzas are built on more than one idea, for more than one reason (like all aspects of a poem). Lines are part of stanzas, and words are part of lines. These three elements—words, lines, and stanzas—work together to cause all sorts of effects from creating music to drawing parallels between ideas and images. There is no way to provide a comprehensive review of what stanzas do, but the following examples will offer a small sampling of what stanzas *can* do.

Organize space and time

1) To label the past, present, and future:

In Lee's poem below, the first stanza is delivered in the present tense and the second brings us to the future with "lives far ahead."

A Story

by Li Young Li

In a room full of books in a world
of stories, he can recall
not one, and soon, he thinks, the boy
will give up on his father.

Already the man lives far ahead, he sees
the day this boy will go. Don't go!
Hear the alligator story! The angel story once more!
You love the spider story. You laugh at the spider.
Let me tell it!

2) To illustrate differences in location:

Read Chad Sweeny's poem below to see how stanza breaks affect location:

The Mile

by Chad Sweeny

My grandmother crowns the hill,
her headlights lathing the dark,
a farm route

through rye then cotton
then the red and gold of wheat,
the scrub oak crowding

a little nameless river
where fog holds to low places.
Who would have seen the tractor

aimed down the highway by a boy
his first summer behind the wheel
with no lights but the holy

somnolence of a cowboy radio?
The next car over the rise
is my father

blind into the fog.
There is so much to talk about
at this moment,

so many lines of cause and effect
trembling taut into that gully.
How does my father choose,

with his mother's ribs broken,
his new wife moaning from the ditch,
to carry the limp body

of someone else's child
a mile over night fields
toward the insinuation of a roof?

Everyone is bleeding and starlight
drizzles over the summer wheat.
The poem holds them there

long enough to trace the flight
of an owl
from a cedar's black minaret

its wings underlit by brake-lights.
Which of you, dear reader,
is in the next Oldsmobile

to clatter over the bluff
shouting help into your CB radio?
Which of you opens the front door

weeping
to wrap your unconscious boy
in quilts? Do you kill

the man
who carries him?
In most endings I am never

born. In most,
you buy my family's farm cheap
at auction. Who among you

is rushing the ambulance
past the county line at mile 67
when the tire blows? The story

moves through telephone wires
at the pitiless speed of rumor:
when my father reaches the house

with the boy expiring in his arms,
a white rectangle of light
and grief

seers his eyes forever.
In the cave of my mother's
body

I listen to the first fire.

Copyright © Chad Sweeney. "The Mile" is licensed CC-BY-NA-SA.

Here, Sweeney's stanzas bring us on a journey. We move with the grandmother over the hill, then through the grain fields, then beside a river. The lack of punctuation between the stanzas unifies the locations and makes the transitions feel like one journey. Had punctuation such as periods been used at the end of each stanza, there would be a stronger sense of isolation:

My grandmother crowns the hill,
her headlights lathing the dark.

A farm route
through rye then cotton
then the red and gold of wheat.

Then, the scrub oak crowding
a little nameless river
where fog holds to low places.

3) Indicate shifts in a poem's mode or voice

Stanzas can mark transitions between narrative and lyrical modes, descriptions and questions, and shifts in tone or perspective. Look for the shifts in voice or address in the stanzas below:

Dinner Out

by Christopher Howell

We went to either the Canton Grill
or the Chinese Village, both of them
on 82nd among the car lots
and discount stores and small nests
of people waiting hopelessly
for the bus. I preferred the Canton
for its black and bright red sign
with the dragon leaping out of it
sneezing little pillows of smoke.
And inside, the beautiful green
half-shell booths, glittery brass encrusted
lamps swinging above them.

What would I have?
Sweet and sour?
Chow mein with little wagon wheel shaped
slices of okra and those crinkly noodles

my father called deep fried worms?
Fried rice?

Among such succulence, what did it matter?
We could eat till we were glad and full, the whole
family sighing with the pleasure of it.
And then the tea!
All of this for about six bucks, total,
my father, for that once-in-awhile, feeling
flush in the glow of our happy faces
and asking me, “How you doing, son?”

Fine, Dad. Great, really, in the light
of that place, almost tasting
the salt and bean paste and molasses, nearly
hearing the sound of the car door
opening before we climbed in together
and drove and drove,
though we hadn’t far to go.

From Gaze *by Christopher Howell (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions). Copyright © 2012 by Christopher Howell. Reprinted with permission from Milkweed Editions. milkweed.org*

In each stanza we hear a shift in voice. The first opens in a narrative mode as we are given a place and time, a description of the street on which the restaurant the speaker and his dad go to eat. In the second stanza, the voice shifts into an interrogative mode, asking questions about what will be ordered. Though the third stanza also begins with a question, this is a different type of question than what is posed in the second stanza. Here, the voice becomes lyrical and introspective: “Among such succulence, what did it matter?” In the last stanza the voice shifts to answer the question posed by the dad in the end of the third stanza and in this way, the first line of the last stanza directly addresses the dad. In Howell’s poem each stanza is used to mark a slight shift in voice.

4) A shift in thought or a resolution:

You are the bread and the knife,
the crystal goblet and the wine.
You are the dew on the morning grass
and the burning wheel of the sun.
You are the white apron of the baker,
and the marsh birds suddenly in flight.

However, you are not the wind in the orchard,
the plums on the counter,
or the house of cards.
And you are certainly not the pine-scented air.
There is just no way that you are the pine-scented air.

It is possible that you are the fish under the bridge,
maybe even the pigeon on the general’s head,
but you are not even close
to being the field of cornflowers at dusk.

(Billy Collins, from “Litany”)

As in Howell's poem, in Collins' poem there is a shift in the voice's pitch. But in "Litany," the stanzas emphasize moves in the thought process that build upon the ideas established in the preceding stanza. You can follow these turns of thought by the transition words that begin them: "You are"…"However, you are not…" "It is possible that you are…"

5) Create emphasis on individual images:

Passover: The Injections

Clouds pass over, endless,
black fruit dripping
sap from the branches
of lightning.

We lie down in the field,
thousands of us,
never mind the rain.

Soldiers come toward us,
groups of three or four.
The wind opens their long coats.
Underneath, their uniforms are black.

They bend over to the babies.
The babies cry,
for a little while.

"We are living in Biblical times,"
a woman says.

"Passover: The Injections", from The Candle: Poems of Our Twentieth Century Holocausts *by William Heyen. Copyright © 2016 by William Heyen. Used by permission of Etruscan Press.*

Rarely is there one reason for the way stanzas are arranged. In the above excerpt, the stanzas isolate images, but they also organize space and actions. Each stanza is end-stopped, further emphasizing the divide between the fields, the prisoners, the soldiers.

On Enjambment

Even the tumbleweed

is a stowaway sneaked in

with the grass seed, given

an easier-to-say name. It became

American. We are lonely

when it stumbles by, but it's just

a weed. We made it

a thing sadder than itself,

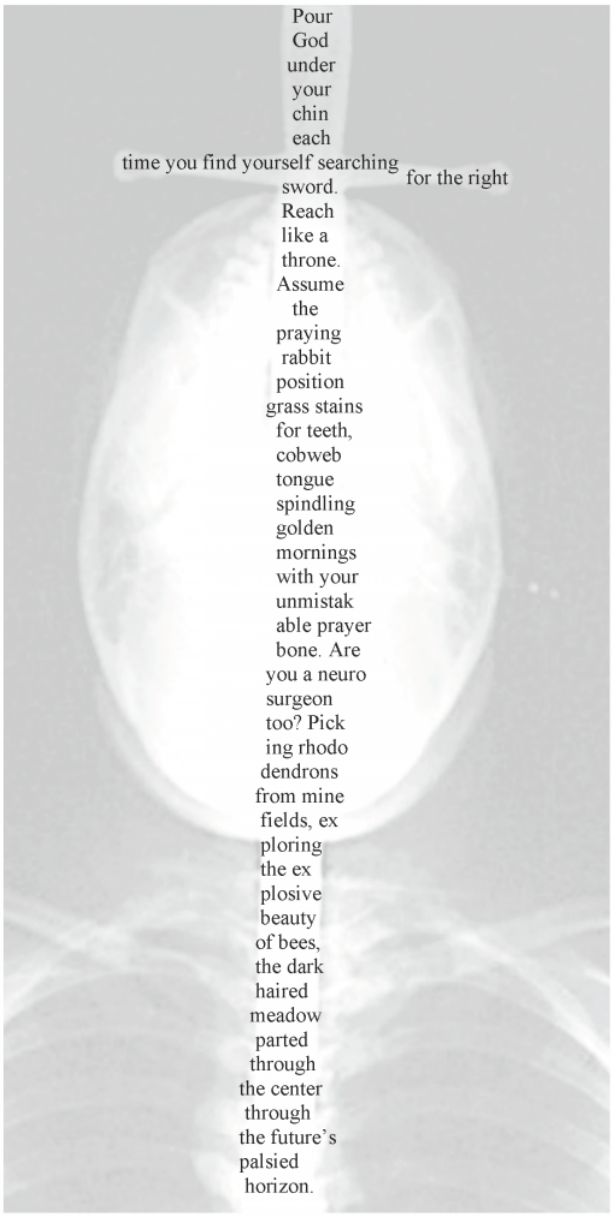
like a nursing home lunch.

(Bethany Schultz Hurst, from "Settler")

The stanzas used by Hurst accentuate the way the enjambment affects images and sounds. Each stanza break makes the line break even harder. When we end the first stanza, we are left with the idea of sharing or giving something away. There is connection: "Even the tumbleweed / is a stowaway sneaked in / with the grass seed, given." It sounds thoughtful. It sounds like we are receiving—"given." But moving to the second stanza, the meaning changes: "given // an easier-to-say name." This happens again in the transition from the second to third stanzas with the meaning of "just" changing from the idea of justice or fairness—"but it's

just”—to something different: “but it’s just // a weed.” The beginning of both the second and third stanzas undercut the sentiment we are left with at the end of the preceding stanza and the way the stanzas are formed emphasize this change.

6) Create an image with the words on the page



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6.7: Word Choice, Word Order and Tone

In the previous section, we discussed the importance of word choice in poetry. Furthering this idea, and also the idea of "show versus tell," we will explore how a poet's use of concrete words makes all the difference. Also, since the best way to appreciate poetry or any art is to practice it, we will try writing a few lines of poetry.



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Abstract Versus Concrete Words

The success of the above poems results in the poets' uses of concrete images, the images that refer to things you can actually touch in real life. In poetry, we work with two types of words: **abstract** and **concrete**. Ideally, the poem should recreate the experience of a poem through concrete details so the reader isn't merely *told* about the experience through the speaker, but *shown* the experience which the poet recreates in a way that engages the reader's five senses. If the poets had used mostly abstract words, their poems may not be, well, poems. They might tell us more than show us. They might report or summarize. For example, if Gary Snyder relied more on abstractions than concretes, "The Bath" might tell us outright how he feels about washing a baby or how the baby feels about being washed rather than creating images of the baby being washed. The concrete images create a scene and allow us to come to our own conclusions through the images. Here is an example of what Snyder's poem might look like if it relied too heavily on abstractions:

The baby was scared
but we were happy
in the sauna washing him
and keeping him safe
because we love him
and his body so much.

The sentiment in these lines is intimate and warm, but as readers we struggle to see the event in our mind's eye. But note, even with the abstractions, the poem cannot escape using some concretes—baby, sauna, body. Rather than putting us in the room with the bath and allowing readers to feel the actions and be there themselves, the poem shifts its spotlight on the feelings of the speaker.

Activity

- To prove the usefulness of concrete, sensory detail, and the failings of being overly abstract in one's language, especially in one's descriptive language, the poet Mike Dockins works with his creative writing students to describe the scene of a motorcycle accident. As a class, make a list on the board of various concrete (and sensory) images that a witness would observe. Telling the story with only concrete words, and literally no abstractions, does the emotional level come across? If they do, how do they accomplish chaos, panic, fear, shock, terror, death?

To better understand, let's look closer at abstract words. Here are some examples:

- Love

- Fear
- Happiness

These are what we call *abstract* words. They refer to ideas we think with our minds rather than specific, individual things we can feel with our five senses and that call an exact image into our mind's eye. Think of concrete words as something you can actually *touch*. You cannot touch "love" and "safe" but you can touch your son in "warm water / Soap all over the smooth of his thighs and stomach." Once you finely tune the images into specific, concrete details, the sentiment will come through naturally.

Sometimes this concept confuses my students. "But I can *feel* love," they say. "I can *feel* anger." And, yes, of course we can recall what those emotions feel like when they are referenced in a poem. And, in fact, we feel actual sensations brought on by these emotions when they happen. Our blood races when we're in love, our stomach jumps when our lover or someone we desire walks into sight. We feel our chests swell when we think about our mothers and our fathers, but when we read abstract words like "love" and "anger" we experience them in a vague, cloudy way, reliant more on our own individual memories that involved our five senses to make, rather than the poem itself using our five senses through imagery to create a new experience and memory.

Trying to avoid concretes is difficult. In fact, in order to even explain to you the sensations we feel when we experience love, as I just did, I had to use much more specific language that refers directly to physical things — chest, blood, stomach. Lover, mother, father. We read the word "love" and imagine love but it takes our brains on an extended voyage of neural connections; we do not have a specific image come immediately into our mind's eye. And immediacy is the poet's job and responsibility to the reader of poems — words should vanish. The walls between the experience created by the words and the reader's senses taking in that to which the words refer should fall. When we read good writing, we get lost in the experience and in the images the words are creating in our minds. We are transported.

Activity

In contrast to abstractions, take in these words:

- Apple
- Blue
- Boat

Go around the room and have each class member share the image that comes to mind with the above words. How many different images are there for apple? Blue? Boat? Now, what if we were to make these words even more specific:

- Apple … Golden Delicious Apple
- Blue … Turquoise blue
- Boat … Sailboat

Next, begin with the following vague categories and narrow down the word making it more and more specific:

- Food
- Vehicle
- Animal

Now the brain is working more quickly. We see these things more immediately in our mind's eye.

In the poem "The Bath," Gary Snyder is very attentive to specific details. He names his son, Kai, places us in a sauna, describes the lantern as being kerosene and set on a box. There is not a window, but a *ground-level* window which the light from the lantern illuminates. The light also illuminates not the stove, but the *edge* of the *iron* stove. Kai's body stands not in water but *warm* water, and it's not his body that is soapy—but his *thighs* and *stomach*.

Snyder creates a concrete, physical world for his readers and places us in a very specific time and setting. The details feel like they are slowed down—in both the writing and reading process—so the event may be created on one side and taken in on another. Snyder slows down and looks closely so we may, too.

Once details become this specific, something magical begins to happen. The poem naturally begins to amass different levels of meaning; it grows in complexity. For example, what's the significance of the lantern being kerosene? What does that tell us about the setting? The speaker? What do we take away from the detail about the ground-level window? What ideas come to mind when

we read “ground-level”? Once we attain a literal reading, a first reading, which creates the scene, we may look again only this time more closely at the words, the diction. We may notice that “ground-level” evokes a sense of simplicity in us, an idea about being closer to the earth, being grounded. If so, how then does this feeling and idea relate to the poem as a whole?

This symbolic way of reading of poetry happens naturally when images are concrete, and details specific, and significant. Snyder could have used any words in the poem, but he used these. Why? What do these words do inside their poetic space? What we do as writers affects the way readers read our poems. But when we write—here’s the catch—we don’t necessarily have to think of how a reader will interpret and read the poem. We just need to concentrate on making the words we choose be specific and significant so language—naturally symbolic—can do its thang. After all, Alexander Fleming didn’t discover penicillin by setting out to cure disease — he saw some mold growing, tapped into his curiosity, and used his imagination.

Read the poem “What Came to Me” by Jane Kenyon and note how the poem thinks small but produces big feelings. The poem’s use of line, sound, tone, and image creates a moment in which the speaker is overwhelmed with grief. And what causes this for both the speaker and the reader? Finding a drop of gravy on the porcelain lip of a gravy boat. One “hard, brown / drop.” Why does this image have such power? It is a short poem—nine lines—and those lines are short, ranging from four syllables to one line that is seven syllables long. But although brief, it is compact and bursts with emotion. We are not told how the speaker feels. She does not say she felt sadness, pain, remorse, or loss. The first line describes action, simply, “I took.” And the penultimate, the second-to-last, line also describes an action: “I grieved.” Kenyon doesn’t write “I felt grief” (a filter) or “I thought of all the good times” (a cliché). Instead, we are there with her, lifting the gravy boat from the box, only to discover in line five, a “hard, brown” and in line six, “drop of gravy still.” The word “still” here doubly stops time and implies no movement while it also ends the line and hangs there, still on the sixth line’s edge just as the gravy drop is on the edge of the gravy boat’s lip.

As Hirsch writes, “A poem creates an experience in the reader that cannot be reduced to anything else.” The effect of Kenyon’s poem cannot be reduced only to the image of the gravy drop. As said, the diction, sound, form and tone do a lot of work. But it cannot be denied that the image is central to the poem’s effect. And when it is combined with all the other poem’s elements, it produces an experience that cannot be replicated any other way.

Activity

- Write a poem about an experience with an object that invokes emotions for you. Rather than tell the reader about this experience, show the reader by using concrete, specific words. You may wish to start by free writing about the memory and then forming it into a poem, especially if no specific object comes immediately to mind. Through writing about an emotional experience while paying close attention to specific details, a concrete object should emerge.

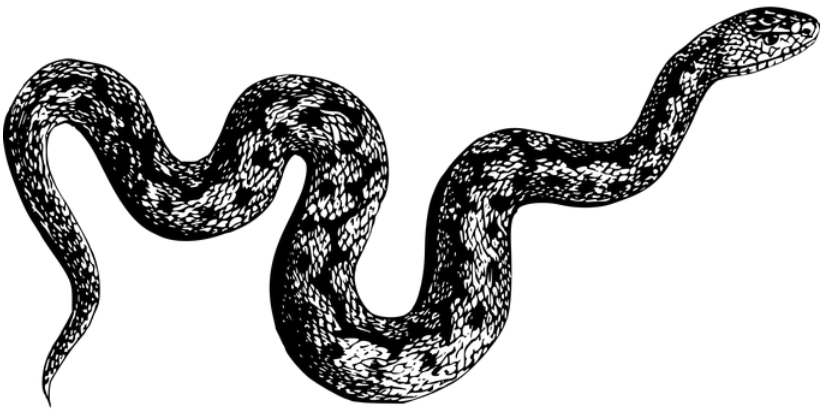


Image from Pixabay

Word Order

A poet not only chooses words carefully, but also the order in which to present them to emphasize the desired meaning. According to Dictionary.com, syntax is the “arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language.”

Poetic Inversion

Poetic inversion, or changing the usual word order of speech, is often linked to the need to maintain a rhythm or to find a rhyme. We noticed Pope's poetic inversion in *An Essay on Criticism* and saw how the rhyme was intimately linked to the rhythm of the verse. The song "Dancing in the Street," first recorded by Martha and the Vandellas in the 1960s, does violence to word order in the interests of rhyme—"There'll be dancing in the street/ A chance new folk to meet"—but, because the words are sung to a driving rhythm, we are unlikely to notice how awkward they are. There's a convention that we recognize, however unconsciously, that prevents us from mentally re-writing the line as "a chance to meet new people." ("People" rather than "folk" would be more usual usage for me, but, as with the Pope example, this would mean that the rhythm too would be lost.)

Activity

- Read Emily Dickinson's poem about a snake. Discuss how her choice of word order affects the poem.

Tone

Watch out for changes in **tone** for they can happen within a line or a few lines of poem and are critical in understanding a poem. Poems can be serious, sarcastic, grieving, happy et cetera. One of the definitions of tone, according to Dictionary.com, is "the general character or attitude of a place, piece of writing, situation, etc." Words that have positive or negative associations give a specific tone to writing.

Poets use both **denotation**, or the actual/dictionary meaning of words, as well as **connotation**, or the implied meaning of words. For example, the dictionary definition of "home" is a place where one lives, but the connotation can mean security, warmth, belonging. The connotation of words lends to the tone of the poem as words with a positive connotation lends itself to a happier tone. Connotations change over time as they are based upon readers' experiences within a given period of time. An **allusion**, according to Dictionary.com, is an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference. Allusions, like connotative words, refer to something beyond just the dictionary meaning of the word.

Additional poems to study diction and tone

To a Captious Critic

by Paul Lawrence Dunbar (1872-1906)

Dear critic, who my lightness so deplores,

Would I might study to be prince of bores,

Right wisely would I rule that dull estate—

But, sir, I may not, till you abdicate.

To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time

by Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,

Old Time is still a-flying;

And this same flower that smiles today

Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,

The higher he's a-getting,

The sooner will his race be run,

And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,

When youth and blood are warmer;

But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.
Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry;
For having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry.

To his Coy Mistress

by Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)

Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,

And into ashes all my lust;

The grave’s a fine and private place,

But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue

Sits on thy skin like morning dew,

And while thy willing soul transpires

At every pore with instant fires,

Now let us sport us while we may,

And now, like amorous birds of prey,

Rather at once our time devour

Than languish in his slow-chapped power.

Let us roll all our strength and all

Our sweetness up into one ball,

And tear our pleasures with rough strife

Through the iron gates of life:

Thus, though we cannot make our sun

Stand still, yet we will make him run.

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6.8: Voice

Voice



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The speaker is the bridge between the poem's experience and the reader. Similar to language, when it works best, it becomes invisible, cemented to, part and particle of the poem's experience. Tone of voice is responsible for creating trust between the reader and the speaker, in seducing the reader to lose him or herself in the experience; it is responsible for letting a reader be enraptured by the poem.

In the introduction to the *2006 Best American Poetry* anthology, the judge for that year, poet Billy Collins, explains the key role that a poem's tone of voice played in determining which poems to place in the pile that left him "cold" and which poems to place in the pile that caught him "in their spell," those that he would eventually consider for inclusion in the collection. Collins begins by elucidating how the voice of a poem took on a bigger role once Modern poetry began to experiment with free verse:

> *Once Walt Whitman demonstrated that poetry in English could get along without standard meter and end-rhyme, poetry began to lose that familiar gait and musical jauntiness that listeners and readers had come to identify with it. But poetry also lost something more: a trust system that had bound poet and reader together through the reliable recurrence of similar sounds and a steady dependable beat. Whatever emotional or intellectual demands a poem placed on the reader, at least the reader could put trust in the poet's implicit promise to keep up a tempo and maintain a sound pattern. It is the same promise that is made to the listeners of popular songs. What has come to replace that system of trust, if anything? However vague a substitute, the answer is probably tone of voice. As a reader, I come to trust or distrust the authority of the poem after reading just a few lines. Do I hear a voice that's making reasonable claims for itself—usually a first-person voice speaking fallibly but honestly—or does the poem begin with a grandiose pronouncement, a riddle, or an intimate confession foisted on me by a stranger? Tone may be the most elusive aspect of written language, but our ears instantly recognize words that sound authentic and words that ring false. The character of the speaker's voice played an indescribable but essential role in the making of those two piles I mentioned, one much taller than the other.*

It is interesting that Collins refers negatively to the "voice of a stranger," as aren't all speakers of poems strangers to a reader? We do not know the poet, so how can we possibly know the speaker? Yet here, Collins suggests that there is something in us that does know something of the speaker, some credibility that "sounds authentic" rather than "ringing false," and this has more to do with tone of voice than subject matter. After all, who believes someone who doesn't sound trustworthy? It is like watching a play with bad acting — you can't lose yourself in the story or character, you cannot transport, you cannot release yourself to get "caught in its spell." We have trouble trusting our senses and giving our time to the speaker without suspicion, which acts as a barrier between the reader and the experience. It is similar to what poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge called a "suspension of disbelief," in a sense: We need to be willing to be wrapped up in a poem's experience and if we're untrusting then we're not willing. Tone of voice develops from the many moves a poem makes and can be considered, in another way, the *stance* the speaker takes, the relationship between the subject matter and the speaker.

Exercise 6.8.1

Is the speaker in a poem one and the same as the writer? Stop and consider this for a few moments. Can you think of any poems you have read where a writer has created a character, or persona, whose voice we hear when we read?

Wordsworth's *The Prelude* was written as an autobiographical poem, but there are many instances where it is obvious that poet and persona are different. Charlotte Mew's poem "The Farmer's Bride" (1916) begins like this:

Three summers since I chose a maid,
Too young maybe — but more's to do
At harvest-time than bide and woo.
When us was wed she turned afraid
Of love and me and all things human;

(Warner, 1981, pp. 1–2)

Answer

Mew invents a male character here, and clearly separates herself as a writer from the voice in her poem. Some of the most well-known created characters—or personae—in poetry are Browning's dramatic monologues.

Exercise 6.8.1

Analysis of Voice in Browning's Poetry

Consider the opening lines from three Robert Browning poems below. Robert Browning was one of the most important poets of the Victorian period (1812-1889). Who do you think is speaking?

Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister (1842)

Gr-r- r — there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims —
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

The Last Duchess (1842)

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Porphyria's Lover (1842)

The rain set early in to-night,

The sullen wind was soon awake,

It tore the elm-tops down for spite,

And did its worst to vex the lake:

I listened with heart fit to break.

Answer

Well, the first speaker isn't named, but we can infer that, like Brother Lawrence whom he hates, he's a monk. The second must be a Duke since he refers to his "last Duchess" and, if we read to the end of the third poem, we discover that the speaker is a man consumed with such jealousy that he strangles his beloved Porphyria with her own hair. Each of the poems is written in the first person ("*my* heart's abhorrence"; "That's *my* last Duchess"; "*I* listened with heart fit to break"). None of the characters Browning created in these poems bears any resemblance to him: the whole point of a dramatic monologue is the creation of a character who is most definitely not the poet. Charlotte Mew's poem can be described in the same way.

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6.9: Imagery



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To put it simply and directly, creative writing is the language of images. Whereas other forms of writing like news articles, academic essays, and instruction manuals relay information from the writer to the speaker in order to *inform* or *instruct*, in fiction and poetry images are how we translate the world into a text so that a reader may *experience*. If you are a creative writer, then you are an image creator. And to be a master image creator, you need to be really good—really, really good—at finding ways to stimulate a reader's senses through significant, concrete detail. When poets write, they see through the speaker's eye, what we call *the mind's eye*. By writing through the mind''s eye, you literally describe what the speaker *sees* in order to recreate the world of the speaker in words on a page so then the reader can translate those words back into images and experience the poem.

Language is Physical

If we examine the words associated with the act of writing, we find that language is directly rooted in the physical world of the body. Let's consider the answers to the questions below.

Q. Where does poetry come from?

A. It comes from the imagination—

Imagination. Imagine. Image. This is the language of creative writing. What the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines as "a mental picture" which we as writers see through the mind's eye. When we read writing, our mind processes the words into mental images with our five senses — sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. When we are writing poetry we want to give our readers the world in its raw form; its physical, concrete existence. The more specific we can be, the better.

For example, note how the following descriptions affect your physical, emotional, and mental experience differently:

1. The child was sad because it was her first day of school.
2. Standing in the doorway between her classroom and the sunny sidewalk, four-year-old Meredith twisted her mother's flowered skirt in her hands, hid her face in its folds, and stained its red silk with the thick mucus of her nose.

The second example is much more detailed and imagistic than the first. It, therefore, engages our senses and sensibilities much more directly.

Exercise 6.9.1

In example two above, vivid details invite your senses to take in the scene. But once a piece of creative writing contains specific images and details, those details begin to have an additional effect on the reader's intellect as the images resonate into symbols and create connections and suggestions. What effects do the images in the above example have on your intellect? What types of connections, contrasts, resonance, and suggestions do the images make? For example, notice the contrast between the shady classroom and the sunny sidewalk. What types of interpretations does this image invite? What others do you perceive?

Q. How does poetry affect the reader?

A. With sensations—

Sensation. Sensual. Sense. This is how we make sense of the writing. How we *make sense* of the words on the page. We do not understand through abstract thought. We understand mentally through what our eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin understand physically. Merriam-Webster defines "sense" as:

One of the five natural powers (touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing) through which you receive information about the world around you.

"Show Don't Tell"

How many of you have heard this phrase before? Maybe you heard it in your high school creative writing or English classroom? Or maybe this is the first time you are hearing it. The phrase reminds me of the television show *Lassie* in which eleven-year-old Timmy's collie named Lassie would run to tell Timmy's family whenever Timmy was in trouble and needed rescuing. Timmy was curious and always getting into trouble. Timmy's family couldn't do anything to help him until Lassie did more than bark; Lassie had to show them exactly what was wrong by leading them directly to Timmy so they could *see precisely* what the matter was.

In this analogy, the language of your poem can either bark generally or lead specifically. And you do this with either general, abstract words that make a reader think, or you do this with specific, concrete words that allow a reader to see. The adage "Show don't tell" is shorthand for the most important tenet of creative writing. It asks you to create with an attention to the concrete, physical world rather than telling with abstract words which produce thoughts about the speaker's experience or ideas instead of feelings in the reader's body through the five senses.

Types of Sensory Images

In the following poems, images can not only be seen, but heard, tasted, smelled, and felt. Here are some examples of the different types of imagery we use in poetry. Many use more than one kind:

Auditory Imagery

She sinks her eight ball, drinks me under
the table. I whimper for a date, a smooch,
a slap. She hits the jukebox, that old song.
(Mike Dockins, from "American Love Story")

…Oh
prayer for the hat to be a puller
for her even as it circles the city
or enters someone else's flat, hat
have an arm to keep her from his fist,
moon and train, moon and train, moon
and train: pull her, pull her, pull her.
(Michael Burkard, from "Hat Angel")

Gustatory Imagery

I love saying the name. Each sweet syllable seems like there ought to be a crush of sugar on your tongue, a tiny reward just for saying the word. These milk-balls, fried golden and soaked in sugar syrup, are glassed up in a luxuriously oversized jar that my grandmother collects under her spice table to store homemade mango and spicy lime pickles.
(Aimee Nezhukumatathil, from "Gulabjamoon Jar")

Olfactory Imagery

I loved him most
when he came home from work,
his fingers still curled from fitting pipe,

his denim shirt ringed with sweat
and smelling of salt, the drying weeds
of the ocean.
(Dorianne Laux, from “The Shipfitter’s Wife”)

On things asleep: No balm :
A kingdom of stinks and sighs,
Fetor of cockroaches, dead fish, petroleum,
Worse than castoreum of mink or weasel,
Saliva dripping from warm microphones,
Agony of crucifixion on barstools.
(Theodore Roethke, from “The Longing”)

Tactile Imagery

I am a man of many heads. Each one capable of loving you, each one unwrapping your paper delicately by hand, slipping my fingernail beneath your coating till I can feel the smooth skin of your nakedness.
(Robert Evory, from “Garlic”)

I love the sound of the bone against the plate
and the fortress-like look of it
lying before me in a moat of risotto,
the meat soft as the leg of an angel
who has lived a purely airborne existence.
(Billy Collins, from “Osso Bucco”)

Visual Imagery

The fish rises with a red body in the green pond.
Under the arch of heaven
The fisherman travels smoothly in his blue skiff.
(Georg Trakl, from “The Sun,” translated by Robert Bly and James Wright)

They decide to exchange heads.
Barbie squeezes the small opening under her chin
over Ken’s bulging neck socket. His wide jaw line jostles
atop his girlfriend’s body, loosely,
like one of those nodding novelty dogs
destined to gaze from the back window of cars.
(Denise Duhamel, from “Kinky”)

Notice not only how imagistic these examples are, but how specific the details are, as well. In the poem "Hat Angel," Michael Burkard recreates the sound that the train makes in the last two lines through his use of diction and line breaks. And in "Kinky," Denise Duhamel attends to the small details of a Barbie doll—"the small opening under her chin" while Robert Evory in "Garlic" brings our eye to the meeting of the delicate paper of a garlic clove and a fingernail. These poems describe a pair of pants, a Barbie doll, and a garlic clove the way we would see them if we were holding them in our hands. And with Billy Collins in his poem "Osso Bucco," we get the sense that we are looking closer and closer and closer at the meat on his (on our!) plate. In these examples, the reader must be—cannot avoid being—sensually immersed in these images, which trigger the five senses—sight, taste, smell, touch, and hearing—through memory and imagination to create an actual experience for the reader. We do not read about George Trakl’s experience on the water in the poem "Sun"; we are there ourselves.

Exercise 6.9.1

Click on the following link to read Gary Snyder’s poem "The Bath." Lines 1-9 are a good example of how the senses may be activated in multiple ways from one image. For example, the line "steaming air and crackle of waterdrops" can be classified as auditory, visual, and tactile. We see the steam and drops, hear the crackle, feel the heat.

Can you identify any other images that engage more than one sense? After Snyder, return to the preceding examples and see if you can identify places where more than one sense is being used. How are your senses activated in the poems? What pictures do you see when you take the images in? Go through each poem and underline examples of objects you can touch — pants, waistband, snap, zipper, et cetera.

Answer

The second and third definitions reflect the impact of poetic images on a reader. These poetic images produce *vision* in the reader by manifesting "to the senses" "something immaterial." In other words, a reader's senses react to the vision, or images of an "object," created by the poem as though that object were actually real. With poetry, those images give way to "a thought, concept," or idea. In the above example describing Meredith's first day of school, for instance, we are led to the thought or concept of how she is sad via the images.

Language is the personal or private choice of words the speaker uses to express himself. Poetry makes pictures with words.

- Are there any words that are repeated or that stand out?
- Are the sentences long or short?

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6.10: Figurative Language

Figurative Language

Figurative language uses words or expressions not meant to be taken literally. Whether you realize it or not, we encounter them every day. When we exaggerate we use **hyperbole**: *I'm so hungry I can eat a horse*; when Rhianna sings about *stars like diamonds in the sky* she uses **simile**; when we say *opportunity knocked on my door* we are using **personification**. In addition to making our conversations interesting and capturing our intense feelings, figurative language is very important to the making of poetry. It is a tool that allows us to make connections, comparisons, and contrasts in ways that produce insight, raise questions, and add specificity. Earlier we worked to make words more specific. We changed *apple*, *blue*, and *boat* into *golden delicious*, *turquoise*, and *sailboat*. The changes made the images more immediate and sharper and offered the reader opportunities to understand the poem. Figures of speech are the next step to adding layers to your poems, to adding even more complexity and meaning.

Types of Figurative Language

Metaphor

Figurative language, often the comparison made between two seemingly unlike things, is almost all image-based and, therefore, a good friend of poetry. In fact, some, like Owen Barfield in his essay on metaphor in Poets.org, would go so far as to say that poetry *is* **metaphor**:

Quote:

> The most conspicuous point of contact between meaning and poetry is *metaphor*. For one of the first things that a students of etymology—even quite an amateur student—discovers for himself is that every language, with its thousands of abstract terms, and its nuances of meaning and association, is *apparently* nothing, from beginning to end, but an unconscionable tissue of dead, or petrified, metaphors. If we trace the meaning of a great many words—or those of the elements of which they are composed—about as far back as etymology can take us, we are at once made to realize that an overwhelming proportion, if not all, of them referred in earlier days to one of these two things—a solid, sensible object, or some animal (probably human) activity. Examples abound on every page of the dictionary. Thus, an apparently objective scientific term like *elasticity,* on the one hand, and the metaphysical *abstract* on the other, are both traceable to verbs meaning "draw" or "drag." *Centrifugal* and *centripetal* are composed of a noun meaning "a goad" and verbs signifying "to flee" and "to seek" respectively; epithet, theme, thesis, anathema, hypothesis, etc., go back to a Greek verb, "to put," and even *right* and *wrong*, it seems, once had the meaning "stretched" and so "straight" and "wringing" or "sour." Some philologists, looking still further back into the past, have resolved these two classes into one, but this is immaterial to the point at issue.
>
> (Owen Barfield, "Metaphor")



Image from Pixabay

"Nothing in the intellect that was not previously in the senses"

"Nothing in the intellect that was not previously in the senses," wrote philosopher John Locke. In short, the way we know *anything* is through the senses — even abstract idea originates through experience gained through our bodies. And in the case of language's origin, as explained above, it appears that all words, at their invention, referred to something concrete: an object or a specific action that evoked the senses. As we continue to use words, they evolve, for they live their own life. And when we use a word, we invite its history and permutations into its meaning. Of course, this is all way too much to think about at once in the writing process. But it is why writers revise and cross-examine their diction, thinking out what meanings the word may suggest. Language is *naturally* symbolic in origin, in its fabric. And an art that uses words cannot help but also have more meanings than just the literal. The following types of figurative language are used most often in poetry:

- **Metaphor**: A direct comparison between two unlike things, as in *Hope is the thing with feathers* (Emily Dickinson, "Hope").
- **Simile**: A comparison that uses *like* or *as*, as in *something inside me / rising explosive as my parakeet bursting / from its cage* (Bruce Snider, "Chemistry")
- **Personification**: Human characteristics being applied to non-human things, as in *irises, all / funnel & hood, papery tongues whispering little / rumors in their mouths* (Laura Kasischke, "Hostess").
- **Metonymy**: When one thing is represented by another thing associated with it, as in *The pen is mightier than the sword* (where pen stands in for writing, and sword stands in for warfare or violence).
- **Synecdoche**: When a part of something symbolizes the whole, or the whole of something symbolizes the part, as in *All hands on deck* (where *hands* stands in for *men*), or *The whole world loves you* (where *whole world* represents only a small number of its human population).

When we read such literary devices, our mind lights up a new pathway between the two things and we discover new ways of thinking about the relationship between these two things. We wonder, how is his love a red, red rose? But before we wonder, our senses have already made a connection. As we look closer at the poem, we begin to explore the idea more.

The following is a poem by Laura Kasischke. Can you identify the numerous metaphors and similes?

Confections

Caramel is sugar burnt

to syrup in a pan. Chaos
is a pinch of joy, a bit of screaming. An infant sleeping's
a milky sea. A star

is fire and flower. Divinity
is beaten out of egg whites

into cool white peaks. Friendship

begins and ends in suspicion, unless
it ends in death. Ignite

a glass of brandy in a pan, and you'll

have cherries jubilee: sex
without love's sodden nightgown

before your house burns down. Music's

a bomb of feathers
in the air
inthe moment before it explodes
and settles itself whispering
onto the sleeves of a child's choir robe. And

a candied apple's
like a heartache—exactly

like a heartache—something
sweet and red tortured to death

with something sweeter, and more red.

Laura Kasischke, "Confections" from Fire & Flower. *Copyright © 1998 by Laura Kasischke. Reprinted with the permission of The Permissions Company, Inc., on behalf of Alice James Books, www.alicejamesbooks.org.*

The poem begins with a sentence that mimics a metaphor — stating something is something else: *carmel is sugar burnt / to syrup in a pan*. It sounds like a metaphor, but it actually isn't. Carmel actually is sugar burnt to syrup. Rather than a metaphor, the first two lines function as a definition, which sets the stage (note my own figurative language) for understanding how metaphors work in our minds, for whether definition or metaphor, we use the same structure: x is y; our minds equate the one thing with the other. In the poem this happens with carmel to sugar burnt to syrup.

In "Confections," the opening definition that looked like a metaphor is followed by a true metaphor (or is it?). *Chaos is a pinch of joy, a bit of screaming.* We take this as metaphor, but because we do, it brings us back to the first sentence. If sentence two is figurative, why isn't sentence one? And if sentence one is literal, why isn't sentence two? Both are structured exactly the same. Kasischke's poem exposes the slipperiness of language and syntax: how we use them and interpret them. The poem asks us to examine closely the line between imagination and reality and the role language plays in sorting them out, or not.

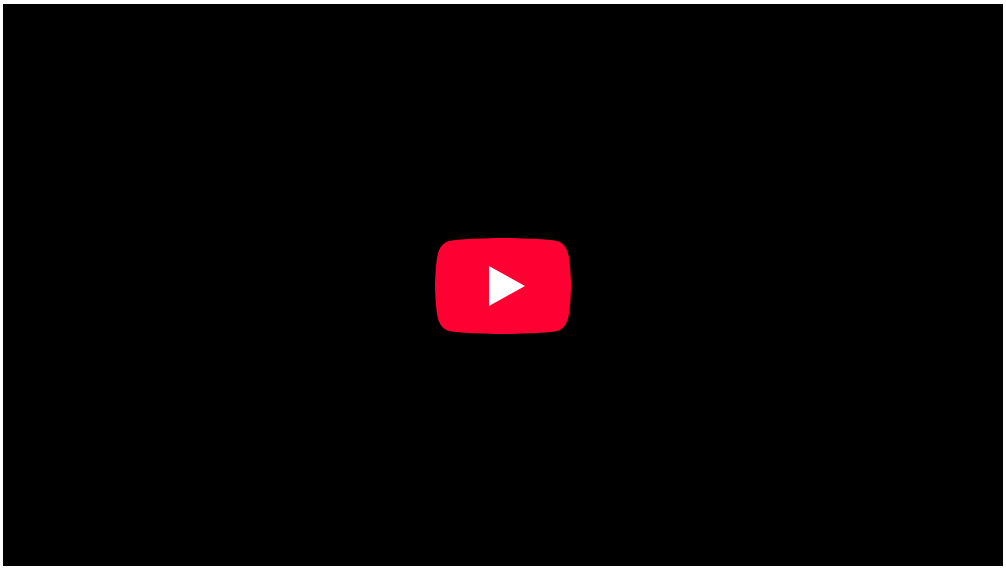
The next two metaphors are more imagistic that the previous: *An infant sleeping's / a milky sea. A star / is fire and flower*. While we couldn't "see" the abstraction *joy* and could only hear *screaming*, we certainly see a milky sea, and we certainly see a star flaring as fire, and flower. The parallel of fire and flower is interesting because they are so different. A flower would not survive if it were ablaze in flames. Yet, Kasischke's comparison between the star and fire and flower makes sense to us. It plays not on the science of heat, but on the images associated with fire and flowers: they both spread outward. So, we equate the shape and motion of a star with both fire and flower. Of course, like the comparison of caramel to sugar burnt to syrup, a star actually is a fire. Again, the poem engages our ability to hold two things in the mind at once—just as a metaphor does—only with the poem as a whole, these two things are the literal and symbolic nature of language.

Activity

Read the poem "Confections" and continue to discuss the effect of the figurative language. Explore the comparisons deeper: how is an infant a milky sea? How is chaos a pinch of joy, a bit of screaming? Explore how figurative language allows us to use concrete language to relate abstract ideas.

Video

Watch the video: *The Art of the Metaphor* by Jane Hirshfield, animation by Ben Pearce.





Video 6.10.1 : The Art of the Metaphor

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6.11: Sound in Poetry- Meter



Image from Pixabay

Meter: Length and Rhythm

Even before you were born, in your watery womb home, your body recognized patterns of sound. It began with the beat of your mother's heart, the swishing of her blood. Rhythm is primal. It is comforting, and it can be startling. When rhythms break, they wake us. When rhythms extend, we become entranced. Rhythm is integral to poetry and a mark of what poetry actually is. In learning to interpret poetry's structures and sound patterns, in free verse, our ears attune finely to tone, cadence, pitch, rhythm, and silence. In formal verse, we employ a particular language to help us talk about rhythm.

Rhythm

All speech has rhythm because we naturally stress some words or syllables more than others. The rhythm can sometimes be very regular and pronounced, as in a children's nursery rhyme—"JACK and JILL went UP the HILL"—but even in the most ordinary sentence the important words are given more stress. In poetry, rhythm is extremely important: patterns are deliberately created and repeated for varying effects.

The rhythmical pattern of a poem is called its **meter** and we can analyze, or scan, lines of poetry to identify stressed and unstressed syllables. In marking the text to show this, the mark "/" is used to indicate a stressed syllable, and "x" to indicate an unstressed syllable. Each complete unit of stressed and unstressed syllables is called a **foot**, which usually has one stressed and one or two unstressed syllables.

The most common foot in English is known as the **iamb**, which is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one (x /). Many words in English are iambic: a simple example is the word "**forgot**." When we say this, the stresses naturally fall in the sequence:

x /
'forgot'.

Iambic rhythm is in fact the basic sound pattern in ordinary English speech. If you say the following line aloud you will hear what I mean:

"I went across the road and bought a pair of shoes"

x / x / x / x / x / x /
I went across the road and bought a pair of shoes.

The next most common foot is the **trochee**, a stressed syllable (or beat) followed by an unstressed one (/ x), as in the word "**mountain**"

/ x
'mountain'.

Both the iamb and the trochee have two syllables, the iamb being a "rising" rhythm and the trochee a "falling" rhythm. Another two-syllable foot known as the **spondee** has two equally stressed beats (/ /), as in the phrase "**blue spurt**"

/ /
'blue spurt'.

Other important feet have three syllables. The most common are the **anapest** (x x /) and the **dactyl** (/ x x), which are triple rhythms, rising and falling respectively, as in the words "unimpressed" and "probably"

x x / / x x
'unimpressed' and 'probably'.

Here are some fairly regular examples of the four main kinds of meter used in poetry. (I have separated the feet by using a vertical slash.) You should say the lines aloud, listening for the stress patterns and noting how the **beats** fall on particular syllables or words.

Iambic meter

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day"

x / x / x / x / x /
The cur- | few tolls | the knell | of part- | ing day

Trochaic meter

"Tiger tiger burning bright"

/ x / x / x /
Tiger | tiger | burning | bright

Anapestic meter

"She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps"

x x / x x / x x / x x /
She is far | from the land | where her young | hero sleeps

Dactylic meter

"Woman much missed how you call to me, call to me"

/ x x / x x / x x / x x
Woman much | missed how you | call to me, | call to me

The other technical point that you need to know about is the way the lengths of lines of verse are described. This is done according to the number of feet they contain, and the names given to different lengths of lines are as follows:

monometer	a line of one foot
dimeter	a line of two feet
trimeter	a line of three feet
tetrameter	a line of four feet
pentameter	a line of five feet
hexameter	a line of six feet
heptameter	a line of seven feet
octameter	a line of eight feet

By far the most widely used of these are the **tetrameter** and the **pentameter**. If you look back at the four lines of poetry given as examples above, you can count the feet. You will see that the first one has five feet, so it is an iambic pentameter line; the second one has four feet, so it is a trochaic tetrameter line; the fourth and fifth also have four feet, so are anapestic and dactylic tetrameter lines respectively. Lines do not always have exactly the "right" number of beats. Sometimes a pentameter line will have an extra beat, as in the famous line from *Hamlet*, "To be or not to be: that is the question," where the "tion" of question is an eleventh, unstressed beat. (It is worth asking yourself why Shakespeare wrote the line like this. Why did he not write what would have been a perfectly regular ten-syllable line, such as "The question is, to be or not to be"?)

Having outlined some of the basic meters of English poetry, it is important to say at once that very few poems would ever conform to a perfectly regular metrical pattern. The effect of that would be very boring indeed: imagine being restricted to using only iambic words, or trying to keep up a regular trochaic rhythm. Poets therefore often include trochaic or anapestic or dactylic words or phrases within what are basically iambic lines, in order to make them more interesting and suggestive, and to retain normal pronunciation. Here is a brief example from Shakespeare to show you what this mean. These lines were spoken by Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Act 1, scene 2. This first version has been marked to show you the basic iambic meter.

"My father loved Sir Rowland as his soul,

And all the world was of my father's mind"

x / x / x / x / x /
My fa- | ther loved | Sir Row- | land as | his soul,
x / x / x / x / x /
And all | the world | was of | my fa | ther's mind.

If you say the lines out loud in this regular way you can hear that the effect is very unnatural. Here is one way the lines might be scanned to show how the stresses would fall in speech (though there are other ways of scanning them):

/ / x / x x x x x /
My father loved Sir Rowland as his soul,
x / x / x x x / x /
And all the world was of my father's mind.

It must be emphasized that there is no need to feel that you must try to remember all the technical terms in poetry. The purpose has been to help you to become aware of the importance of rhythmic effects in poetry, and it can be just as effective to try to describe these in your own words.

The thing to hang on to when writing about the rhythm of a poem is that, as Ezra Pound put it, "Rhythm MUST have meaning. It can't be merely a careless dash off with no grip and no real hold to the words and sense, a tumty tum tumpty tum tum ta" (quoted in Gray, 1990, p. 56). There are occasions, of course, when a tum-ty-ty-tum rhythm may be appropriate and have meaning. When Tennyson wrote "The Charge of the Light Brigade," he recreated the sound, pace, and movement of horses thundering along with the emphatic dactyls of "Half a league, half a league, half a league onward / Into the valley of death rode the six hundred." For a very different example, look at a short two-line poem by Pound himself. This time there is no fixed meter: like much twentieth century poetry, this poem is in free verse. Its title is "In a Station of the Metro" (the Metro being the Paris underground railway). It was written in 1916:

"The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough."

x x xx x x / / x x /
The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
/ x x x / / /
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Here you can see that the rhythm plays a subtle part in conveying the meaning. The poem is comparing the faces of people in a crowded underground to petals that have fallen on to a wet bough. The rhythm not only highlights the key words in each line, but produces much of the emotional feeling of the poem by slowing down the middle words of the first line and the final three words of the second.

For our final example of rhythm, here is a passage from Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* (1711).

Activity

Take a look at this excerpt from Pope's *An Essay of Criticism*. Read it aloud if you can. Listen to the rhythm, and identify why the rhythm is appropriate to the meaning.

Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,

And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;

But when loud billows lash the sounding shore,

The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar.

> When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
>
> The line too labours, and the words move slow:
>
> Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
>
> Flies o'er the unbending corn, and skims along the main. (Book II, ll.366–73)

Discussion

Pope here uses a basic structure of iambic pentameters with variations, so that the lines sound as if they have a different pace, faster or slower, depending on what is being described. It is not just rhythm that contributes to the effect here: rhyme and alliteration (successive words beginning with the same sound) recreate smooth, rough, slow and swift movement. Rhythm is entirely dependent on word choice, but is also influenced by other interdependent stylistic devices. Pope's lines enact what they describe simply because of the care that has gone into choosing the right words. It doesn't matter if you don't recognize the classical allusions: from the descriptions it is clear that Ajax is a strong man and Camilla is quick and light. If you count the beats of each line, you'll notice that, in spite of the variety of sound and effect, all have five stresses, except the last, which has six. Strangely enough it is the last and longest line that creates an impression of speed. How is this achieved? Try to hear the lines by reading them again out loud.

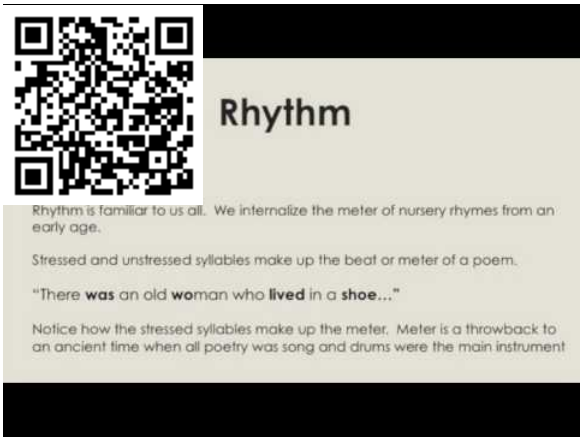
There is really only one way, and that is through the words chosen to represent movement: the repeated 's' sounds associated with Camilla trip swiftly off the tip of the tongue, whereas Ajax's lines demand real physical effort from mouth, lips, and tongue. You will get a much stronger sense of this if you form the words in this way, even if you are unable to say them out loud. In an exam, for instance, silent articulation of a poem will help you grasp many poetic techniques and effects that may otherwise be missed.

This extract from Pope's *An Essay on Criticism*, like the whole poem, is written in rhyming couplets (lines rhyming in pairs). They confer a formal, regular quality to the verse. The punctuation helps to control the way in which we read: notice that there is a pause at the end of each line, either a comma, a semi-colon, or a full stop. This use of the end-stopped line is characteristic of eighteenth-century heroic couplets (iambic pentameter lines rhyming in pairs), where the aim was to reproduce classical qualities of balance, harmony, and proportion.

Get into the habit of looking at rhyme words. Are any of Pope's rhymes particularly interesting here? One thing I noticed was what is known as poetic inversion. The rhyme shore/roar is clearly important to the sound sense of the verse, but the more natural word order (were this ordinary speech) would be "The hoarse rough verse should roar like the torrent." Had he written this, Pope would have lost the sound qualities of the rhyme shore/roar. He would have had to find a word such as "abhorrent" to rhyme with "torrent," and the couplet would have had a very different meaning. He would also have lost the rhythm of the line, in spite of the fact that the words are exactly the same.

Before we leave *An Essay on Criticism*, did you notice that Pope's subject in this poem is really poetry itself? Like Wordsworth, Pound, and William Carlos Williams, all of whom were quoted earlier, Pope too was concerned with poetry as a craft.

Click below for a Power Point presentation video that gives college students a poetry lesson.



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6.12: Sound in Poetry- Alliteration, Consonance, Assonance



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Alliteration

This is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words. Read the poem "There Come Soft Rains" by Sarah Teasdale below to see if you can spot the alliteration:

There Will Come Soft Rains

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;

And frogs in the pool singing at night,
And wild plum trees in tremulous white;

Robins will wear their feathery fire,
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;

And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,
If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself when she woke at dawn
Would scarcely know that we were gone.

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Assonance

This is the repetition of vowel sounds within a word. An example of assonance can be found in the following poem by Edgar Allen Poe*: "**On**ce up**on** a midnight dr**ea**ry, while I pondered w**ea**k and w**ea**ry..."* Can you find any more?

The Raven

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

"Tis some visitor,' I muttered, 'tapping at my chamber door -
Only this, and nothing more.'

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; - vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow - sorrow for the lost Lenore -
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels named Lenore -
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me - filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door -
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door; -
This it is, and nothing more,'

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
'Sir,' said I, 'or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you' - here I opened wide the door; -
Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before
But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, 'Lenore!'
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, 'Lenore!'
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
'Surely,' said I, 'surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore -
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore; -
'Tis the wind and nothing more!'

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore.
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door -
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door -
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
'Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,' I said, 'art sure no craven.
Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the nightly shore -
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!'

Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'

Much I marveled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning - little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door -
Bird or beast above the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as 'Nevermore.'

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only,
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered - not a feather then he fluttered -
Till I scarcely more than muttered 'Other friends have flown before -
On the morrow he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before.'
Then the bird said, 'Nevermore.'

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
'Doubtless,' said I, 'what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore -
Till the dirges of his hope that melancholy burden bore
Of "Never-nevermore."'

But the raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore -
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking 'Nevermore.'

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, me thought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
'Wretch,' I cried, 'thy God hath lent thee - by these angels he has sent thee
Respite - respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost Lenore!'
Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'

'Prophet!' said I, 'thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil! -
Whether tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted -
On this home by horror haunted - tell me truly, I implore -
Is there - is there balm in Gilead? - tell me - tell me, I implore!'
Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'

'Prophet!' said I, 'thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us - by that God we both adore -
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels named Lenore -
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels named Lenore?'
Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'

'Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!' I shrieked upstarting -
'Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! - quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!'
Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'

And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted - nevermore!

Consonance

This is the repetition of consonant sounds at the end of words. An example of consonance is found in the following poem by Adrian Henry:

*“Love is feeling cold in the back of **vans***
*Love is a fanclub with only two **fans***
*Love is walking holding paintstained h**ands**…"*

Exercise 6.12.1

Read a stanza from Arthur Hugh Clough's poem, "Natura naturans." There is not enough space to quote the whole poem, but to give you some idea of the context of this stanza so that you can more fully appreciate what Clough is doing, it is worth explaining that "Natura naturans" describes the sexual tension between a young man and woman who sit next to each other in a railway carriage. They have not been introduced, and they neither speak nor exchange so much as a glance. The subject matter and its treatment is unusual and also extraordinarily frank for the time of writing (about 1849), but you need to know what is being described in order to appreciate the physicality of the lines I quote.

Natura Naturans by Arthur Hugh Clough (1890)

Flashed flickering forth fantastic flies,

Big bees their burly bodies swung,

Rooks roused with civic dim the elms,

And lark its wild reveillez rung;

In Libyan dell the light gazelle,

The leopard lithe in Indian glade,

And dolphin, brightening tropic seas,

In us were living, leapt and played: (Clough, 1890, p.262)

1. What is the single most striking technique used, and what are the effects?

2. How would you describe the imagery, and what does it contribute to the overall effect?

Answer

1) Visually the use of alliteration is striking, particularly in the first line and almost equally so in the second. If you took the advice above about paying attention to the physical business of articulating the words too, you should be in a good position to discriminate between the rapidity of the flies and the heavier movement of the bees, and to notice how tactile the language is. The effect is actually to create sensuality in the stanza.

2) Notice that though we begin with flies, bees and rooks, all of which are fairly common flying creatures, we move to the more romantic lark with its "wild" song, and then to the positively exotic gazelle, leopard, and dolphin. From the rather homely English air (flies, bees, birds), we move to foreign locations "Libyan dell" and "Indian glade," and from there to "tropic seas." (Cod in the North Sea would have very different connotations from dolphins in the tropics.) Air, earth, and sea are all invoked to help express the variety of changing highly charged erotic feelings that the speaker remembers. The images are playful and preposterous, joyfully expressing the familiar poetic subject of sexual attraction and arousal in a way that makes it strange and new. Notice that in each case the image is more effective because the alliteration emphasizes it.

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6.13: Sound in Poetry- Rhyme

Rhyme

In addition to line length and rhythm, we also categorize lines by rhyme, especially in formal verse where an extended pattern is maintained. You, of course, have been rhyming from an early age. Children's books written by writers like Shel Silverstein and Dr. Seuss have delighted both children and adults with their rhyming stories. Rhyme makes language memorable and pleasurable.

In both formal verse and free verse, rhyming is elemental. In formal poetry it occurs more frequently as **end rhyme**, when two or more words that end lines rhyme. In free verse, the rhyme is more likely to be **internal** not necessarily occurring at the end of lines.

Let's take a look at an excerpt from William Wordsworth's poem "The Daffodils":

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Here we can see the first and third lines rhyme; the second, fourth and sixth; the fifth and sixth. There is definite **rhyme scheme**. When we refer to the rhymes in this stanza, we diagram the rhymes with matching letters like this: ABABCC.

I wandered lonely as a cloud (A)
That floats on high o'er vales and hills, (B)
When all at once I saw a crowd, (A)
A host, of golden daffodils; (B)
Beside the lake, beneath the trees, (C)
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. (C)

The letter changes whenever the rhyme changes, and whenever a new rhyme is introduced you add a new letter.

In the poem "They Feed They Lion," rather than end-rhyme, Philip Levine utilizes internal rhyme. Read the first stanza via this link.

In this example, Levine uses rhymes that are both **internal and slant** or off rather than exact: sacks, black, shafts; butter, tar. Even the numerous occurrences of "out" paired with "creosote" creates a kind of slant rhyme. Here is another example:

Not my hands but green across you now.
Green tons hold you down, and ten bass curve
teasing your hair. Summer slime
will pile deep on your breast. Four months of ice
will keep you firm.

(Richard Hugo, from "The Lady in Kicking Horse Reservoir")

In this example, the second line contains a slant internal rhyme: "ten" and "ton," which also rhyme with "hands" in line one. These sounds are tightly woven and where there isn't rhyme, per se, there is **assonance**, similar vowel sounds, or vowel rhyme: green, tease, deep; and slime, pile, ice.

Exercise 6.13.1

Turn to the entire Levine poem "They Feed They Lion" and perform a close reading with your ears. Note places of assonance and rhyme. How do these patterns affect your reading of the poem? How do these sounds work to create the poem's tone of voice?

If a poem rhymes, then considering how the rhyme works is always important. Rhyme schemes can be simple or highly intricate and complex; it will always be worth considering why a particular rhyme pattern was chosen and trying to assess its effects.

A summary of rhyme terms follows:

End rhyme: rhyme occurring on stressed syllables at the ends of verse lines. The most common form of rhyme. Couplet: a pair of end-rhyming verse lines, usually of the same length. E.g.:

Had we but World enough, and Time,

This coyness Lady were no crime.

We would sit down, and think which way

To walk, and pass our long Loves Day.

—Marvell, "To his Coy Mistress"

Internal rhyme: rhyme occurring within a single verse line.

Crossed rhyme: the rhyming of one word in the middle of a verse line with a word in the middle of the following line.

Half rhyme: also known as **slant rhyme**; an incomplete form of rhyme in which final consonants match but vowel sounds do not. E.g.:

I have heard that hysterical women say

They are sick of the palette and fiddle-bow.

Of poets that are always gay,

For everybody knows or else should know

That if nothing drastic is done

Aeroplane and Zeppelin will come out.

Pitch like King Billy bomb-balls in

Until the town lie beaten flat.

—Yeats, "Lapis Lazuli"

The first quatrain is an example of full end rhyme; the second quatrain an example of half rhyme.

Para-rhyme: a form of half rhyme; when all the consonants of the relevant words match, not just the final consonants. E.g.:

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall, —
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.

—Wilfred Owen, “Strange Meeting”

Eye rhyme: a visual-only rhyme; i.e. when spellings match but in pronunciation there is no rhyme, e.g. want/pant, five/give.

Double rhyme: a rhyme on two syllables, the first stressed, the second unstressed. E.g.

I want a hero: —an uncommon want,

When every year and month sends forth a new one,

Till, after cloying the gazettes with can't,

The age discovers he is not the true one

—Byron, *Don Juan*, I.i

The second and fourth lines are double rhymes; the first and third lines are examples of half rhyme/eye rhyme.

Exercise 6.13.1

What is the poem about, and how does the rhyme contribute to the meaning and overall effect?

Love from the North by Christina Rossetti (1862)

I had a love in soft south land,
Beloved through April far in May;
He waited on my lightest breath,
And never dared to say me nay.

He saddened if my cheer was sad,
But gay he grew if I was gay;
We never differed on a hair,
My yes his yes, my nay his nay.

The wedding hour was come, the aisles
Were flushed with sun and flowers that day;
I pacing balanced in my thoughts,—
"It's quite too late to think of nay."—

My bridegroom answered in his turn,
Myself had almost answered "yea":
When through the flashing nave I heard.
A struggle and resounding "nay."

Bridemaids and bridegroom shrank in fear,
But I stood high who stood at bay:
"And if I answer yea, fair Sir,
What man art thou to bar with nay?"

He was a strong man from the north,
Light-locked, with eyes of dangerous gray:
"Put yea by for another time
In which I will not say thee nay.

He took me in his strong white arms,
He bore me on his horse away
O'er crag, morass, and hair-breadth pass,
But never asked me yea or nay.

He made me fast with book and bell,
With links of love he makes me stay;
Till now I've neither heart nor power
Nor will nor wish to say him nay.

Answer

"Love From the North" tells a simple story. A woman about to marry one man is whisked away by another, just as she is about to exchange vows. The form of the poem is very simple: the second and fourth lines of each of the eight 4-line

stanzas rhyme. More significantly, because the last word of each stanza is "nay," there is only one rhyme sound throughout. There are more internal rhymes relying on the same repeated sound, however, aren't there? Look at the last lines of stanzas 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8 where "say" "nay"; "nay" "nay"; "say" "nay"; "yea" "nay"; and "say" "nay" appear. In the second stanza, "gay" occurs twice in line 2; stanza five and six both have "yea" in line 3. What is the effect of this?

Do you think the effect might be to help over-simplify the story? Clearly the woman has doubts about the man from the south's devotion: he "never dared" to say no to her. He seems to have no will of his own: he "saddens" when she does, is "gay" when she is, wants only what she does. On her wedding day she thinks: "It's quite too late to think of nay." But is she any happier with the strong man from the north? Who is he? Has he carried her off against her will? And what exactly do you make of the last stanza? Do the "links of love" imply a chain? This strong-minded woman who imposed her will on the man from the south has "neither heart nor power/Nor will nor wish" to say no to the man from the north. Is that good, or bad? And what do you make of the "book and bell" with which she's made to stay? Certainly they imply something different from the conventional Christian marriage she was about to embark on in the middle of the poem — witchcraft, perhaps, or magic? And are the words "Till now" particularly significant at the beginning of line 3 in the last stanza? Might they suggest a new resolve to break free?

How important is it to resolve such questions? It is very useful to ask them, but not at all easy to find answers. In fact, that is one of the reasons I like the poem so much. The language is very simple and so is the form—eight quatrains (or four-line stanzas)–and yet the more I think about the poem, the more interesting and ambiguous it seems. In my opinion, that is its strength. After all, do we always know exactly what we want or how we feel about relationships? Even if we do, is it always possible to put such feelings into words? Aren't feelings often ambivalent rather than straightforward?

It is also worth bearing in mind the fact that the poem is written in ballad form. A ballad tells a story, but it does only recount events — part of the convention is that ballads don't go into psychological complexities. It is likely that Rossetti chose this ancient oral verse form because she was interested in raising ambiguities. But perhaps the point of the word "nay" chiming throughout "Love From the North" is to indicate the female speaker saying no to both men — the compliant lover and his opposite, the demon lover, alike? After all, "nay" is the sound which gives the poem striking unity and coherence.

Exercise 6.13.1

Keats's "Eve of St Agnes" (1820) also tells a tale of lovers, but it isn't a ballad, even though the rhyme scheme of the first four lines is the same as Rossetti's quatrains. The stanzas are longer, and the form more complex and sophisticated. The rhyme pattern is the same throughout all 42 stanzas, the first two of which are reproduced for the following activity: Read the first two stanzas of Keats's poem above. How would you describe the rhyme scheme, and does it seem appropriate for the subject matter?

Eve of St. Agnes by Keats

St. Agnes' Eve — Ah bitter chill it was!

The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;

The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,

And silent was the flock in woolly fold:

Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told

His rosary, and while his frosted breath,

Like pious incense from a censer old,

Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,

Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;

Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,

And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,

Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:

The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,

Emprison'd in black purgatorial rails:

Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,

He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails

To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Answer

In comparison to the Rossetti poem the rhyme sounds form complex patterns, don't they? While "was"/"grass" in the first stanza and "man"/"wan" in the second do not quite produce a full rhyme (depending on your accent), the first and third lines do rhyme in subsequent stanzas. Using a letter of the alphabet to describe each new rhyme sound, we could describe the pattern like this: a b a b b c b c c (imagine sustaining that intricate patterning for 42 stanzas). This kind of formula is useful up to a point for showing how often the same sounds recur, and it does show how complicated the interweaving of echoing sounds is. But it says nothing about how the sounds relate to what is being said — and, as I have been arguing all along, it is the relationship between meaning and word choice that is of particular interest. To give a full answer to my own question, I'd really need to consider the function of rhyme throughout the poem. It would not be necessary to describe what happens in each stanza, but picking out particular pertinent examples would help me argue a case. With only the first two stanzas to work with, I could say that, if nothing else, the intricate rhyme pattern seems appropriate not only for the detailed descriptions but also for the medieval, slightly gothic setting of the chapel where the holy man prays.

Exercise 6.13.1

Read the extract from the poem below. Again, this comes from a longer poem, so it would be useful to look it up and read the rest if you have the opportunity.

Consider the following questions:

1. Describe the rhyme in the stanza from Tennyson's "Mariana."
2. What is the first stanza about?

Mariana by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1830)

With blackest moss the flower-plots

Were thickly crusted, one and all:

The rusted nails fell from the knots

That held the pear to the gable-wall.

The broken sheds looked sad and strange:

Unlifted was the clinking latch;

Weeded and worn the ancient thatch

Upon the lonely moated grange.

She only said, "My life is dreary,

He cometh not," she said;

She said, "I am aweary, aweary,

I would that I were dead!" (Trilling and Bloom, 1973, p.396)

Answer

1) As with the Keats poem, the rhyme scheme here is quite complicated. Using the same diagrammatic formula of a letter for each new rhyme sound, we could describe this as ‘a b a b c d d c e f e f. You might notice too that indentations at the beginning of each line emphasise lines that rhyme with each other: usually the indentations are alternate, except for lines 6 and 7, which form a couplet in the middle of the stanza. It is worth telling you too that each of the stanzas ends with a variation of the line "I would that I were dead" (this is known as a refrain) so—as in Christina Rossetti’s "Love From the North"—a dominant sound or series of sounds throughout helps to control the mood of the poem.

2) We may not know who Mariana is, or why she is in the lonely, crumbling grange, but she is obviously waiting for a man who is slow in arriving. The "dreary"/"aweary" and "dead"/"said" rhymes, which, if you read the rest of the poem, you will see are repeated in each stanza, convey her dejection and express the boredom of endless waiting. As with the stanzas from Keats's "Eve of St Agnes," there is plenty of carefully observed detail—black moss on the flower-plots, rusty nails, a clinking latch on a gate or door—all of which description contributes to the desolation of the scene and Mariana's mood. Were the moated grange a lively, sociable household, the poem would be very different. Either Mariana would be cheerful, or her suicidal misery would be in sharp contrast to her surroundings. It is always worth considering what settings contribute to the overall mood of a poem.

Free Verse

Free verse refers to poetry that does not follow standard or regularized meter (the organization of stressed and unstressed syllables) or rhyme scheme. As opposed to more traditional poetry, which tends to use recurring line lengths, metrical patterns, and rhyme to unify individual lines of verse and tie them to other lines within the same poem, free verse can, at times, seem to be random, having no pattern or organization at all. Yet in the hands of many poets, free verse enables a different kind of organization, as they balance free verse's openness, its ability to provide elements of the poem with a different amount of emphasis, with the use of repeated imagery or syntactic patterns (parallel organization of grammatical elements) to maintain coherence and create a sense of connection among lines.

Free verse does, at times, draw on metrical patterns and occasional rhyme to tie lines together. What distinguishes free verse from other traditional forms of verse is that it only uses these elements occasionally—for a few lines here and there in a longer poem—and does not use them to structure the poem as a whole. A poem in free verse, then, does not lack structure—or, in many cases, some instances of metrical organization or rhyme—it simply does not maintain or use a regular pattern of meter or rhyme to structure the poem as a whole. Instead, free verse relies more on thematic, syntactic, or semantic repetition and development to create coherence.



Photo taken by Gilberto Taccari

Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* is often credited as introducing free verse into English-language poetry. While not quite true (other experiments and uses preceded his), Whitman's poetry helped to establish free verse's potential for exploring a broad range of topics and its ability to embrace an extensive number of ways of organizing verse lines. Later-nineteenth century poets, such as Matthew Arnold in England, further explored the use of free verse, but it was the French symbolists (Jules Laforgue, Gustave Kahn, and Arthur Rimbaud) who practiced what they called vers libre most fully during this period. In the twentieth century, free verse came to dominate much poetic production in English, beginning with the modernists (such as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams) who saw the open form as allowing for the more nimble representation of a modern fragmented and accelerated world.

For more examples, please see the The Poetry Foundation.

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6.14: Form in Poetry



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Form is the "shape" of a poem, its layout on the page. Specific poetic forms have been developed by many cultures over time. In more developed, closed or "received" poetic forms, which are forms that have been handed down over the generations, the rhyming scheme, meter and other elements of a poem are based on sets of rules, ranging from the relatively loose rules that govern the construction of an *elegy* to the highly formalized structure of the ghazal or villenelle. These forms are also known as "fixed" forms as they follow a set pattern or rules. More contemporary poets might choose to create their own forms where the poet dictates the rhythm, and uses techniques such as the spatial arrangement of the lines on the page. Open form poems will be discussed in the next section.

Poetic Forms Based on Stanza

Many forms use variations of a **stanza** that dictate its poetic form. Poetry is grouped in lines called stanzas. Stanzas are the poetic equivalent to paragraphs in prose. Traditional poems often use stanzas that have **rhyme schemes**. Words that end each line dictate the rhyme scheme in a stanza. We denote the end rhyme schemes with a lower case letter starting with a. Examples of rhyme schemes are ABAB or ABCD. See the example below:

A.E. HOUSMAN (1859-1936)

Loveliest of Trees, the cherry now

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now (A)
Is hung with bloom along the bough, (A)
And stands about the woodland ride (B)
Wearing white for Eastertide. (B)

Now, of my threescore years and ten, (C)
Twenty will not come again, (C)
And take from seventy springs a score, (D)
It only leaves me fifty more. (D)

And since to look at things in bloom (E)
Fifty springs are little room, (E)
About the woodlands I will go (F)
To see the cherry hung with snow. (F)

Types of Stanzas

Once the lines of our poem begin to find their length of breath, the next structural concern is how to break the lines into stanzas. In classic forms stanza lengths are predetermined. A **ballad** is written in quatrains, or stanzas containing four lines; a **roundel** has three stanzas; and a **villanelle** five **tercets**, or stanzas containing three lines. But in free verse, the poem's stanzas are determined by

the poet.There are no rules when it comes to deciding what kind of stanzas to use in a poem and usually any reason that seems to intuit itself to the poet is justification. The decisions are based on personal taste with consideration to how it looks on the page, how it affects rhythm and pacing, and what it emphasizes in the poem. Like many moves in poetry, stanzas should be organic to the poem and not feel forced or hokey. And like many of the techniques of writing poetry, knowing what to do comes with practice and fine-tuning our attention to language and the effects of poetic elements.

Like rhythm and line length, there is a nomenclature that permits us to talk about stanza length. These terms are used to speak about metrical verse, as well as free verse:

Couplet: a stanza of two lines

Tercet, or Triplet: a stanza of three lines

Quatrain: a stanza of four lines

Cinquain, or quintain, or quintet: a stanza of five lines

Sextain, or sestet: a stanza of six lines

Septet: a stanza of seven lines

Octave: a stanza of eight lines

Expanded examples:

A **couplet** are two line stanzas with end words that rhyme. Poets in the 17th-18th century like Alexander Pope often wrote "heroic couplets." See an example from Pope's "Essay of Criticism below" using a couplet rhyme scheme:

- But you who seek to give and merit fame, (A)
- And justly bear a critic's noble name, (A)
- Be sure your self and your own reach to know, (B)
- How far your genius, taste, and learning go; (B)
- Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet, (C)
- And mark that point where sense and dulness meet. (C)

A **tercet** or three line stanza uses three interlocking end rhyme-schemes: ABA, BCB CDC, DED. Dante's *Divine Comedy* uses this pattern, as does Robert Frost's *I Have Been Well Acquainted With the Night*.

The most common stanaic form is the **quatrain** which has four lines. Common rhyme schemes include AABB, ABBA, AABA and ABCB, which is used by the ballad stanza, a form that consists of alternating eight and six syllable lines. See the excerpt from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner":

It is an ancient Mariner,

And he stoppeth one of three.

'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,

Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,

And I am next of kin;

The guests are met, the feast is set:

May'st hear the merry din.'



Image from Pixabay

Non-Stanzaic Poetic Forms

Poems can also have fixed forms that do not have stanzas. A few examples of these forms are sonnets, villanelles, sestinas, and epigrams.

Sonnet

Although there are several versions of the sonnet, each has fourteen lines and contains a **volta**, or a turn in thought, which can sometimes be indicated with the words “but” or “yet.” In contemporary poetry it has become common for poets to compose sonnets with differing rhyme or meter, or with none at all.

Shakespearian:

Comprised of an octet and a sextet, this sonnet is composed in iambic pentameter and rhymes A B A B–C D C D–E F E F–G G. The volta appears either between lines eight and nine or between lines twelve and thirteen.

Petrarchan:

This sonnet contains two stanzas: one octet that rhymes as A B B A–A B B A, and a remaining sextet with varying rhyme schemes. The volta occurs between the stanzas.

Spenserian:

This sonnet modifies the Petrarchan to contain a rhyme scheme of A B A B–B C B C–C D C D–E E.

This kind of poetry is not for the amateur. A sonnet is a poem that has to comply with a certain system of rhyme and rhythm. The Shakespearian sonnet has fourteen lines with the rhyme scheme abab, cdcd, efef, gg, in a 4+4+4+2 structure. The sonnet will open for the writer's creativity within these strict rules, like a sport for poets who wants to excel and show off their word craft. The sonnet may present the poet’s view on certain aspects of life, the world, himself — but most often the sonnet is about love. Many of Shakespeare's sonnets look like passionate love letters to a lady he is in love with, while others are a sort of dialogue with a friend. Scholars have ever since wanted to find out the autobiographical background of Shakespeare's sonnets, but so far no one has succeeded in any identification of the characters. His first collection of sonnets was published in 1609 (probably without Shakespeare's approval) and tells the tale of a romantic narrator who conveys his love to a lady or renders his reflections of different aspects of life. Some of them may seem like poetic finger exercises and a bit monotone in their rigorous style. But still, Shakespeare's sonnets clearly demonstrate his poetic skills and his immaculate way with words.

Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

If By Dull Rhymes Our English Must Be Chain'd

BY JOHN KEATS

If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd,

And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet

Fetter'd, in spite of pained loveliness;

Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,

Sandals more interwoven and complete

To fit the naked foot of poesy;

Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress

Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd

By ear industrious, and attention meet:

Misers of sound and syllable, no less

Than Midas of his coinage, let us be

Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown;

So, if we may not let the Muse be free,

She will be bound with garlands of her own.

Described below are some common fixed forms of poetry widely used across a number of languages.



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Abecedarian

In this form, the poem works its way through the alphabet, each line beginning with the letter following the first letter of the previous line. There are no restrictions on meter or rhyme. The following example demonstrates the abecedarian form:

Lake Affected

April 11th and out my Michigan window: no surprise, really:
Blizzard. The small sidewalk trees sag under fluff and sky.
Cindy says she can’t take it, this weather. She misses
Dallas, the blue bells, has had enough of the lake's snow globe
Extending its stay beyond this season's home opener, yellow
Flowers and late night light for late nights
Grilling. Her hand opens back toward Texas like a beauty queen's,
Her eyes bat their long lashes: Take me back old friend, holy hell,
I am sorry. But everyone has different needs
Jig-sawing their bellies. Pieces of life floating down like, well, you
Know. Kevin, I'm leaving messages like lightning on your machine.
Lying in bed this morning I couldn't sleep. Snow
Makes electric champagne of my nerves, pops me open, twists me until sweet
Nostalgia curls me up with a book, squeezes poetry from my skull, seduces me to
Ogle over young faces in old pictures, realphabetize my library, boil
Potatoes until my kitchen windows steam. I burned yesterday's leftover
Quart of coffee reheating on the stove. But I didn't care, all
Restless as I was and hungry for everything no longer
Snuggling in my shoes or my bed, which is to say, bodies from the past.
Time, oh time and time again time
Undoes more than the elastic seams on lingerie, but like that—
Very much like that, the things that make us sexy
Wear away. And when it snows like this I want to melt until
X-rays show me one white dot, unique, branching out, stuck,
Yearning for others like me that will have a ball balling with me something
Zesty as an orange, ready to be thrown at the world.

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Aubade

Partner to the serenade, which focuses on evening, the aubade is a poem about the morning or dawn. There are no restrictions on line, meter, or rhyme. Here is one by Traci Brimball:

Aubade with a Broken Neck

The first night you don't come home
summer rains shake the clematis.
I bury the dead moth I found in our bed,
scratch up a rutabaga and eat it rough
with dirt. The dog finds me and presents
between his gentle teeth a twitching
nightjar. In her panic, she sings
in his mouth. He gives me her pain
like a gift, and I take it. I hear
the cries of her young, greedy with need,
expecting her return, but I don’t let her go
until I get into the house. I read
the auspices—the way she flutters against
the wallpaper’s moldy roses means
all can be lost. How she skims the ceiling

means a storm approaches. You should see
her in the beginnings of her fear, rushing
at the starless window, her body a dart,
her body the arrow of longing, aimed,
as all desperate things are, to crash
not into the object of desire,
but into the darkness behind it.

“Aubade With a Broken Neck”, from Rookery *by Traci Brimhall; Copyright © 2010 Traci Brimhall, reproduced by permission of Southern Illinois University Press.*

Ballad

Before written language, folk ballads were used around the world to transmit stories—often tragic—from one generation to another. The word "ballad" has its roots in the Latin word *ballare*, meaning “to dance,” evidence of the rhythmic qualities of the form and its frequent recital to musical accompaniment. Although written in many variations, the ballad is today most commonly written in quatrains and A B C B rhyme. The first and third lines contain eight syllables, while the second and fourth lines contain six. According to Robin Skelton, the most common rhyme scheme is iambic tetrameter alternating with iambic trimeter. The following is a ballad by Muriel Rukeyser:

Read Ballad of Orange and Grape on PoetryFoundation.org

Listen to Muriel Rukeyser read the poem here.

Blank Verse

A form that lends itself well to a meditative voice, blank verse is written in iambic pentameter lines that do not rhyme. The Poetry Foundation contains numerous examples, including links to those written in 10-syllable lines traditional of epic poems such as John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

Ch’i-Yen-Shih

In this Chinese pattern, each line contains seven monosyllabic words with a caesura after each fourth word. The rhyme scheme is comprised of the pattern A B C B.

Captured

In the low grass, a girl holds
a bright pink shell washed to land
by high white waves. Her toes grow
like a tree's roots in the sand.

Cinquain

Adelaide Crapsey established this unrhymed iambic form, which consists of a five-line stanza with the syllable count 2 4 6 8 2. Here is an example of one titled "Amaze" and another called "November Night."

Daina

This Latvian form consists of a quatrain of trochaic octometer lines with feminine endings. Although there are no end rhymes, alliteration and internal rhymes are common. The example below breaks form in the last line and adds a stressed foot for effect.

Catholic School

Every Friday early morning
we would march to church all wearing
navy beanies nuns pulled down our
heads like muffins. We preferred them

sideways, some French painter’s fancy
style. But always Sisters reaching

over pressing God's will into
bodies, taming young girls from the wild.

Dodoitsu

This Japanese form is composed of four lines with the syllable count 7 7 7 5. There is no rhyme or set meter.

Service

An altar boy holds the stained-
glass door open as women
in satin-lined skirts enter
the church like saints.

Elegy

An elegy is a lament for the dead and contains the character of sadness and loss. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland explain that an elegy "mourns for a dead person, lists his or her virtues, and seeks consolation beyond the momentary event." It is considered a public poem that when done best, according Strand and Boland, sets the customs of death in a particular culture against the decorum and private feelings of the speaker.

The following is by the poet William Heyen:

Elegy for Wilt the Stilt

October 12, 1999. Remember the date.
As of this autumn day at century's end,
God's fortunes in heaven have changed.
He's drafted and signed Himself a center.
Wilt the Stilt is dead.

Wilt the Stilt is dead before George Mikan,
first of the big men,
dead before Bill Russell,
before Kareem Abdul Jabbar,
before Moses Malone, before Shaquille O'Neal

who might have taken Him
to His own promised land.
God could wait no longer
for his franchise player,
so Wilt the Stilt is dead.

In Philly, his high school rims shiver with applause.
In Kansas, his college rims rattle with applause.
Globetrotter and NBA nets rip themselves in homage,
and in the silence of a hundred gyms
in the dead of night backboards

shatter in adulation and remembrance as, now
Wilt the Stilt ducks his head
under the transom of heaven,
as God reaches up to shake hands
with his new acquisition,

to welcome Wilt home among the constellations
of His cosmic league.
Wilt bows, vows to work hard,

to settle down with one woman,
to earn his minutes here with sweat,

to balance power and finesse,
even, on occasion, to pass the ball
out of the low post. God smiles,
cheerleaders leap, spread legs, and tumble,
for today the Stilt has joined them in death.

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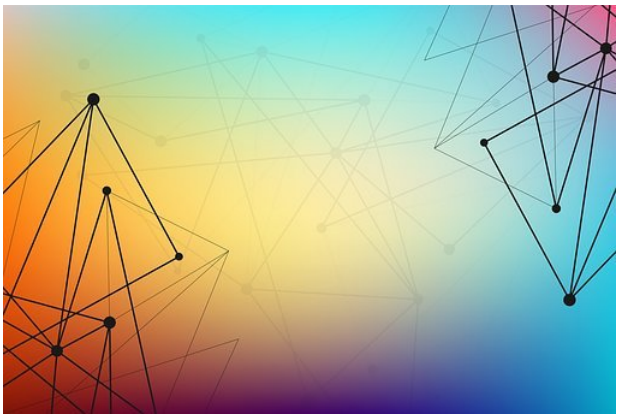


Image from Pixabay

Exquisite Corpse

This form, invented by the Surrealists, is fun to write in a group. Each person writes two lines, then folds the paper so the next person writing can see only the second line; the next person writes two more lines and folds the paper so that only the second line is visible; and so on.

Exercise 6.14.1

Work with a partner and play another Surrealist game called "If This, Then That." Each person writes without knowing what the other person is writing. The first person writes a phrase on one side of a piece of paper that begins "If…" and then passes the paper to his or her partner. Without looking at the "If" statement, the partner then writes a statement beginning "Then…" Here are some examples that make it hard to believe that these were random — but they were! You'll be surprised how the collective unconscious sometimes aligns:

If school is canceled tomorrow… then girls will dance under umbrellas in the rain.

If turkeys made honey… then no would ever have to go to bed without supper.

If you heard a sound and didn't know what it was… then the neighbors would be knockin' at your door.

Ghazal

Typically dealing with subjects of love and separation, the ghazal is a form with Arabic roots consisting of rhyming couplets of the same syllabic length and a refrain. As explained on the Academy of American Poets' Website:

The ghazal is composed of a minimum of five couplets—and typically no more than fifteen—that are structurally, thematically, and emotionally autonomous. Each line of the poem must be of the same length, though meter is not imposed in English. The first couplet introduces a scheme, made up of a rhyme followed by a refrain. Subsequent couplets pick up the same scheme in the second line only, repeating the refrain and rhyming the second line with both lines of the first stanza. The final couplet usually includes the poet's signature, referring to the author in the first or third person, and frequently including the poet's own name or a derivation of its meaning.

Here is an example of one by Patricia Smith:

Read Hip-Hop Ghazal at PoetryFoundation.org

Haiku

This well-known Japanese form is three lines long and comprised of unrhymed, unmetered lines with a 5 7 5 syllable count. Traditionally, the haiku's subject matter relates to nature or seasons.

Mother's Day

One Sunday in May
Mothers answer mothers' calls
We are all children

Italian Quatrain

The four lines are written in iambic pentameter and rhyme A B B A.

Mountain Road

We drove the silver van full speed
The branches snapped in windows
We dipped and bumped in rocky holes
From earth we felt like we'd been freed

Katauta

In this three-line poem with the syllable count 5 7 7, the first line poses a question that the next two lines attempt to answer in an intuitive, immediate way. Try answering with the first image that pops into your mind.

What's in my future?
The budding heads of tulips
Fragrant, red-lipped, and sealed.

Pantoum

Originating in Malaysia, the pantoum was adapted by French poets. It consists of an unlimited number of quatrains in which the second and fourth lines of each are repeated in the first and third lines of the next. The first and third lines of the first stanza become the final stanza's second and fourth lines. There can be some variation. For instance, the first line of the poem may be the last.

The following is an example by Melissa Rhoades:

Dutch East India Company

Back home, my new wife makes fine lace. I keep
a scrap of her work in my brine-soaked breeches.
Black waters pitch and the hull creaks
as I head for spice stores at Malacca's beach.

The scrap of her work in my brine-soaked breeches
is soiled from these sickened months
of heading for spice stores at Malacca's beach.
The taste of molded hard tack licks my tongue

and soiled from these sickened months,
we had to leave nine scurvied men with the Boers.
The taste of molded hard tack licks all our tongues
and the Captain won't say when next we moor.

Although we left nine scurvied men with the Boers,
we're all bleeding gums, thin skin, and fleas.

The Captain still won't say when we moor
and some dirty dogs talk of mutiny.

But for all our bleeding gums, thin skin, and fleas
sweet land comes, a line on the horizon.
Now, no dogs talk of mutiny,
not with palm trees visible from our galleon.

Sweet land! Malaya fills the horizon.
Scrabble at the riggings, keen to anchor.
Palm trees look heavenly from the galleon.
Once ashore, we drink till we slur,

scrabbling around port, keen from anchor.
Sweat runs down our backs. In the shade
we sprawl out, still drinking in a slur.
At dusk, I thrust into a dark-skinned maiden,

sweat running down our backs in the shade.
Black Malacca reeks of nutmeg and mace.
Again, I thrust into the dark-skinned maid
and moan. Back home, my new wife makes fine lace.

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Pregunta

This Spanish form was practiced by poets of the court in pairs during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One poet asks a question or series of questions in one form and the second poet, matching the form, answers. The topics usually related to love, philosophy, or morality.

Q: If two loves want one heart
And the heart thrums both loves' strings
How long before one parts
From two and chooses a single fling?

A: Since no hearts be alike
If no love presumes a thing
You may wish to keep arms wide
And see what each day brings.

Exercise 6.14.1

Alternatively, it might be fun to experiment with different topics and be loose and spontaneous with the answers and with the form. The Surrealists were great at inventing these types of games. Pair up and in the style of the Surrealists, have one person write a question and the other write an imagistic answer without knowing what the question is.

Q. How do I know if I love her?
A. The shutters will fly off the house.

Q. How do I know when to tell her?
A. A row of blackbirds a choir on a wire.

Q. How will I know when to ask her?
A. Her open hand and the light lifting from it.

Prose Poem

The prose poem, which can be any length, isn't broken into verse, but contains many of the elements of poetry: figures of speech, musical language, internal rhyme, repetition, condensed syntax, and imagery. There is some debate over the form, as there are some poets who do not consider the form a poem, per se, but something more akin to flash fiction, or at least a genre of prose rather than verse. Either way, it is a cross-genre form—half prose, half verse—and fun to experiment with.

An influential revivalist of the form was Robert Bly, who said in a 1997 interview that the form is part of an evolution in human democracy: from gods to heroes to everyday humans; from sacred culture to aristocracy to democracy; likewise, from sacred chants in which "all words are signs" to metered poetry to free verse to prose. Additionally in the interview, Bly spoke about his feeling of freedom and "safety" in writing prose poems: "The most wonderful thing about the prose poem is that nobody has set up any standards yet."

The following poem is by Russell Edson, known as "the godfather of the prose poem." As a father of the form, Edson provided one of the form's common characteristics: strangeness. His subjects tend to be odd, surreal, and humorous. The figure of the ape is one that appears frequently in his poems.

Ape and Coffee

Some coffee had gotten on a man's ape. The man said, animal did you get on my coffee?
No no, whistled the ape, the coffee got on me.
You're sure you didn't spill on my coffee? said the man.
Do I look like a liquid? peeped the ape.
Well you sure don't look human, said the man.
But that doesn't make me a fluid, twittered the ape.
Well I don' know what the hell you are,
so just stop it, cried the man.
I was just sitting here reading the newspaper when you splashed coffee all over me, piped the ape.
I don't care if you are a liquid, you just better stop splashing on things, cried the man.
Do I look fluid to you? Take a good look, hooted the ape.
If you don't stop I'll put you in a cup, screamed the man.
I'm not a fluid, screeched the ape.
Stop it, stop it, screamed the man, you are frightening me.

Russell Edson, "Ape and Coffee" from The Tunnel: Selected Poems of Russell Edson. *Copyright © 1973 by Russell Edson. Reprinted with the permission of Oberlin College Press.*

Here is another example by Devon Moore:

Motion Sick

I was five but the woman thought I was seven 'cause that's how old you had to be to be an unaccompanied minor, so that's what my daddy told me to say, so then I was an unaccompanied liar catapulting through the clouds and later I told my daddy, "I saw a lightning bolt," and he said, "Yeah, right," and I said, "Why?" and he said, "Cause I thought you said you saw an angel," and I said, "No, a lightning bolt," and we were quiet.

I was up in the clouds looking for angels and the nice stewardess offered me hot chocolate instead of pop, and maybe it was the turbulence or my open hands, but the next thing I know the scalding hot was all in my lap, and I was crying loud, but that's not the worst of it 'cause then I was standing in the front row butt naked from the waist down, just a simple small hairless vagina for all to see.

I was in the terminal on a layover, but I still thought every man I saw with black hair and a moustache might be my father, and I tried to go to them but the stewardess grabbed me back and said, "No, this is not your stop," so she sat me down on a chair and told me not to move and left me for what felt like hours and I had to pee so bad but I couldn't move 'cause I was still hoping that my daddy might surprise me and show up before his time.

I was chewing the bubblegum my mommy got me for popping ears when I started throwing up Dramamine and I might as well have been the plague or the grossest thing she'd ever seen 'cause the woman sitting next to me leapt out of her seat and pointed and said, "She's sick," which was true, but I cried anyways and then my new coat that had a detachable outer layer smelled like throw-up, so the stewardess put it in a plastic bag, which was the first thing they handed my father when he got to the airport.

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Roundel

The roundel is an English form consisting of eleven lines in three stanzas with no set meter. The first part of line one repeats at the end of the first stanza and again as the last line of poem. The half line also forms the rhyme pattern and is indicated here as R for "refrain": A B A R–B A B–A B A R.

Spring

The daffodils roaring from the ground, at the April
market, tables are lined with buds and green
and people stand in lines looking around
at the daffodils roaring from the ground.

In winter's sleep few colors seen:
no birds or bugs outdoors make sound.
Now, voices, friends, and new bags of seed

are garden bed and birdhouse bound.
Off with gloves and scarves and wool that's been
wrapped around us for so long for now we've found
the daffodils roaring from the ground.

Sestina

The sestina consists of five sestets culminating in a final tercet called an **envoi**, also called a **tornada**. The six words that end each of the lines in the first stanza repeat throughout the poem in the following pattern:

1. A B C D E F
2. F A E B D C
3. C F D A B E
4. E C B F A D
5. D E A C F B
6. B D F E C A
7. (envoi) E C A or A C E

In addition, the envoi also repeats the words that end lines B D F in the first stanza. These three words can go anywhere in interior of the final tercet's lines.

Here is an example by Chad Sweeney:

Michigan Sestina

I've tried to understand this winter
that grows out from no root and no
seed, yet sways like a meadow toward the mind,
sways on its white stem and is
a figure of uncertainty over hills of sleep,
where aging factories gesture to a train

and mills are shuttered over river ice. The train
crosses a bridge from Michigan into winter,
its silos and tobacco fields framed by sleep,
inscrutable and nine hells down. No
horses center the pastures where the sky is
its own pasture, a drift of snow over the mind.

Three crows motionless on a fence, in the mind
are moving, crossing the windows of the train
like Japanese characters whose sense is
effortless, a calligraphy of winter
whose shifting figures evoke a *No*
theater, three masks in a theater of sleep.

But the land draws its own lessons from sleep,
a heap of frozen images in the mind,
Polish teachers in the birch grove and no
one to bury them, shoved from the train,
the faces of the dead occupy the whole winter,
one borderless nation of snow. Memory is

unable to bury them. What *was* and what *is*
and what *never was*—mounded together in sleep:
history erects a statue to winter,
a wolf leaves its tracks across the mind,
the train and the memory of the train
arrive on the same line, though no

station is there to greet them and no
one is getting on or off. Is
it irony draws this train
west toward Chicago with its cargo of sleep?
My forehead against the window doesn't mind
closing its one eye against winter,

the train moves deeper into memory, no
train and no winter, though one crow is
changed in sleep to the Japanese character for *mind*.

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Split Couplet

Composed of two lines, the split couplet contains a first line in iambic tetrameter and a second in iambic dimeter; the two lines should rhyme. Another variation is to write the first line in iambic pentameter.

Morning Run

A rabbit hops across my trail
A bouncy tail

A fawn leans into chamomile
Its sunny meal

The miles vanish beneath my feet
It brings me peace

Tanka, or Waka

This Japanese form, which focuses primarily on nature or strong emotions, consists of five unrhymed, non-metrical lines with the syllable count 5 7 5 7 7.

In Waka, lines one and two, as well as three and four, form complete sentences, as does the last line.

July

Grasshoppers alight
Onto the sunflower's face.
Honeybees buzzing
From lavender to basil.
The whole garden is alive.

Than-Bauk, or Climbing Rhyme

This Burmese form consists of three four-syllable lines, with rhyme falling on the fourth syllable of the first line, the third syllable of the second line, and the second syllable of the third line.

Relish your sleep
Wake, repeat, wake
Count sheep and dream

Never lose hope
There is no time
To mope around.

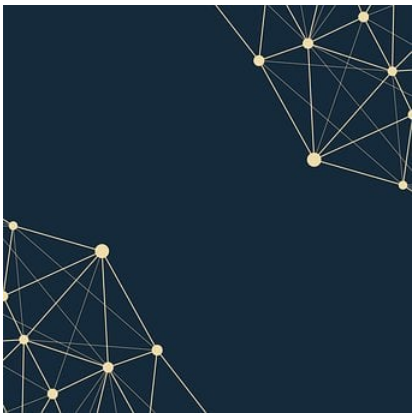


Image from Pixabay

Villanelle

This French form consists of five tercets and a final quatrain. The first stanza's first and third lines repeat in an alternating pattern as the last line in the subsequent stanzas. In the final quatrain, the two lines that have been repeating throughout the poem form the final two lines of the poem.

The following villanelle was written by Victor James Daley. It is title is simply "Villanelle":

Villanelle

We said farewell, my youth and I,
When all fair dreams were gone or going,
And Love's red lips were cold and dry.

When white blooms fell from tree-tops high,
Our Austral winter's way of snowing,
We said farewell, my youth and I.

We did not sigh, what use to sigh
When Death passed as a mower mowing,
And Love's red lips were cold and dry?

But hearing Life's stream thunder by,
That sang of old through flowers flowing,
We said farewell, my youth and I.

There was no hope in the blue sky,
No music in the low winds blowing,
And Love's red lips were cold and dry.

My hair is black as yet, then why
So sad! I know not, only knowing
We said farewell, my youth and I.

All are not buried when they die;
Dead souls there are through live eyes showing
When Love's red lips are cold and dry.

So, seeing where the dead men lie,
Out of their hearts the grave-flowers growing,
We said farewell, my youth and I,
When Love's red lips were cold and dry.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Poetry Readings

For an extensive list of American poetry readings, ordered chronologically, please refer to Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865-present by Berke, Bleil, & Cofer, sourced from University of North Georgia Press, CC-BY-SA.

Included Readings

The following examples of literature appear in this textbook

7.1: Romantic Poets
7.2: Emily Dickinson
7.3: Percy Bysshe Shelley
7.4: Poet - William Wordsworth
7.5: Wordsworth, William "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1807)
7.6: Robert Frost
7.7: Walt Whitman
7.8: Featured Period - The Harlem Renaissance
7.9: Cavendish, Margaret "The Hunting of the Hare" (1653)
7.10: Crane, Stephen "In the Desert" (1895)
7.11: Burns, Robert "To a Mouse" (1785)
7.12: Behn, Aphra. Two Poems. (1688)
7.13: Dong-joo, Yoon. Selected Poems from Sky, Wind, and Stars. Trans. Kyung-nyun Kay Richards and Steffen F. Richards (2003)
7.14: Hill, Sean "Distance Between Desires" from Dangerous Goods (2013)
7.15: Hughes, Langston "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" (1921)
7.16: Keats, John. Selected Poems. (1819)
7.17: Marlowe, Christopher "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" (1599)
7.18: Moore, Alice Ruth "Amid the Roses" (1895)
7.19: Nguyen, Hieu Minh. "The Study" and "White Boy Time Machine- Override" (2018)
7.20: Raleigh, Walter "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" (1600)
7.21: Robinson, Edwin Arlington "Richard Cory" (1897)
7.22: Wheatley, Phillis. Selections from Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral (1773)
7.23: Williams, William Carlos. Selected poems (1913-1923).
7.24: Tennyson, Alfred Lord "The Lady of Shalott" (1832)
7.25: Allen Gingsbert- Beat Poet
7.26: Athena Kashyap
7.27: Sylvia Plath
7.28: The Book of Songs- China (before 551 B.C.E.)
7.29: 7.29 Pound, Ezra. Selected poems. (1885-1972)

Supplemental Readings

These linked readings are not included in this textbook due to copyright permissions and/or space constraints.

- Poetry Foundation includes extensive online libraries of poetry

- The Academy of American Poets is an extensive library of poetry and poetry resources

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7.1: Romantic Poets

The Romantic Period - An Introduction

There is an ordered correlation between the various trends of our cultural history; the various periods succeed one another in a pattern of action and reaction. The German word "zeitgeist" (spirit of the time) refers to the dominating cultural attitude over a particular span of time.

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Image by Pixabay

After the scientific and factual approach that characterized culture during the Enlightenment the pendulum swings again. The period from the late 18th century until around 1850 has, somewhat misleadingly, been labelled the Romantic Period; misleading because what we today associate with the word "romantic" will be representative for only a small part of the culture of that era. The Romantic period was much more than what we may think is "romantic."

Philosophy and Culture

The scientists and philosophers have always been the trendsetters. The ideas and theories fronted by thinkers and intellectuals often caused debate and controversy, and would eventually catch on with artists after a maturing process over time. Accordingly, the cultural expressions from painters and writers who were inspired by these new theories would usually appear half a century or so later. For example, the culture of the Enlightenment was inspired by scientific innovations and theories from the 17th century, and likewise the trendsetting ideas for the artists of the Romantic era were launched mainly during the first half of the 18th century. The most significant philosopher was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in 1741 came to Paris and joined the Encyclopaedists but soon after broke with their rigid and mathematical approach to the understanding of man and his universe. In his works he postulates that man is initially good, but has been corrupted by his surroundings and has to find his way back to his natural and original qualities to restore his balance and well-being.

Literary Themes and Genres

For German and English writers and poets the agenda was to praise the beauty of nature and to incite love and longing for what was natural. Love is a key word — love of nature, of one’s country, of the simple life, and of course love between man and woman, often unfulfilled, but absorbingly passionate. Suffering was also seen as a romantic ideal. Goethe's "Die Leiden des jungen Werthers" (1774) is the prime example. The book was actually banned in Denmark–Norway since poor Werther committed suicide at the end, and the authorities were concerned about the possible contagious effect. Other literary projects during the Romantic zeitgeist would revive medieval ideals such as chivalry and bravery with heroes who relentlessly fought for their country or for the love of a woman. The German playwright Friedrich von Schiller and Scottish Sir Walter Scott represent this approach. Other sources of inspiration were myths and legends and old folklore traditions. The longing for the natural and simple life brought on literature that idealized the simple people, the outcast or the misfit and turned its back on aristocratic and academic values. The poets would clearly prefer the innocent countryside child to the urban and sophisticated man or woman. The style and language they used may today seem both sentimental and pompous, but sentimentality was seen as an essential and necessary part of romantic expression.

Many, in fact most, of the romantic writers expressed themselves through poetry. Since poetry traditionally is seen as an adequate way to express feelings, poetry became the genuine voice of romanticism. John Keats, William Wordsworth, Percy B. Shelley, Lord Byron are all prominent English poets of this period. The poetry could be expressing love and praise of nature, or it could be an inflammatory political

appeal; many of the romantic poets were political activists. But it was not only poetry; drama and prose were also ways of expressing romantic ideals. American James Fennimore Cooper's stories of the Native Americans are good examples of romantic prose, as are Sir Walter Scott's and Jane Austen's novels. Another genre was the mystery tale with ingredients like monsters, occult forces, and magic. Edgar Allen Poe and Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*) represent this trend. Some writers took this further (Ann Radcliffe) and created what we refer to as the gothic tale, where we find supernatural and dream-like events going on in abandoned castles with ghosts and vampires.

Romantic Images

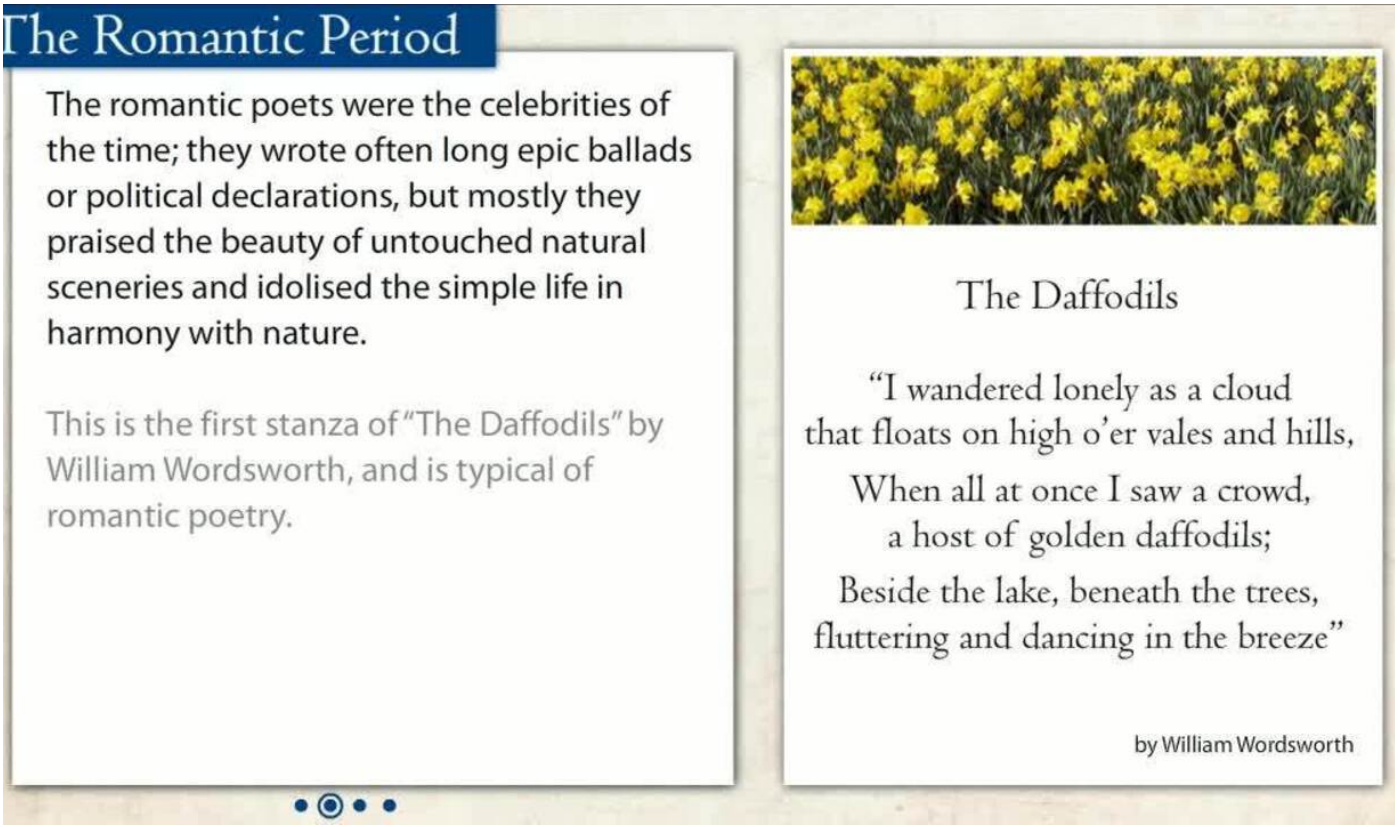
The painters of this era followed up with their idyllic images of untouched nature in a somewhat overexposed style. They painted beautiful scenery and landscapes with simple people in ordinary everyday situations. The artists would often take the liberty to include details that would enhance the romantic atmosphere, for example, by putting some grazing cattle in a field or a little white church on a hill, details which were not there originally. Some painters also pursued the gothic tendency and depicted mysterious castles or ruins on windswept moors with elements of occultism and other creepy and dark symbolic references.

The Age of Revolution



Image by Pixabay

If we look at the political effects of the ideas of the Romantic period, these are stormy times. The belief in man's natural freedom and independence opened up for radical interpretations and spurred revolutionary movements. This aspect was particularly predominant in France. Monarchs and emperors were seen as figures with a self-bestowed position which had no legitimacy in a natural concept of life. The great revolutions during this period were inspired by the romantic ideals of liberty and the rights of ordinary people. Even Norway was influenced by this during the process that culminated in 1814.



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Video 7.1.1 : The Romantic Period

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7.2: Emily Dickinson



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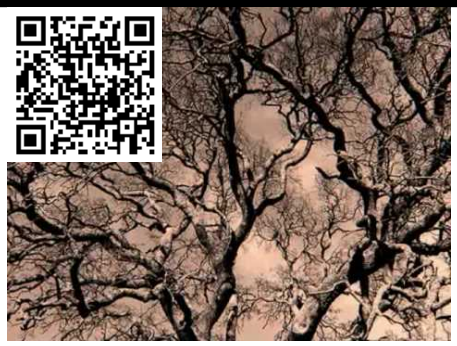
A Life of Seclusion

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was an American
Massachusetts. She grew up in a successful family wi
she lived a mostly introverted and reclusive life.
considered an eccentric, and she became known for
and for always wearing white clothing. In her later life
and her friendships were therefore carried out by corres

Her Poetry

Dickinson was a private poet, and very few of her poe
lifetime. After her death, her sister found nearly eigh
away in a bureau drawer. Emily Dickinson's poems ar
and they most often lack titles. The poems often
unconventional capitalization and punctuation. Many
themes of death and immortality.

Listen to the song performed by Quoting Napoleon while watching slides about Emily Dickinson and her poetry. (YouTube: Emily Dickinson Tribute Song)



Tasks and Activities

Discuss

1. How would you describe Emily Dickinson's life and personality?
2. Emily Dickinson often wore a white dress. Why do you think she did this? What does this color symbolize?
3. Do you think the music they have chosen fits the content? Why/why not?

Poems and Tasks

"Hope is the Thing with Feathers." "I'm Nobody! Who are you?"

Read the two poems by Emily Dickinson below and answer the questions about both of them.

Hope is the Thing with Feathers

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

Comprehension

1. Describe what this poem is about using your own words.
2. What sort of connotations does the image of a bird give you? What is its significance in this poem?
3. Give an account of the images from nature that Dickinson has used in this poem.
4. Why do you think identity is often claimed to be a central theme in this poem?

I'm Nobody! Who are you? (260)

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there's a pair of us?
Don't tell! they'd advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one's name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

Comprehension

1. Using your own words, try to explain what this poem is about.
2. Describe the speaker in this poem. Who is “Nobody”?
3. Dickinson uses the word “frog” in this poem. What connotation does the image of a frog give you? What are the qualities of a frog?
4. Why can one say that this is a poem about recognition?

Find out

Study Emily Dickinson's biography further, and try to decide whether this can be said to be a biographical poem. Biography

Research

Watch video clips of these poems on the web. Search for

- "Hope is the Thing with Feathers" Emily Dickinson
- "I am Nobody" Emily Dickinson

Then consider the following questions:

1. How are the poems interpreted in these video clips?
2. In what ways does the interpretation differ from your own understanding of the poem?
3. Feel free to add your own personal comment to the video clips on YouTube. There is a commentary box below each of the videos.

Discussion Board

Find Emily Dickinson poems on Emily Dickinson and her poetry and contribute in the discussion board on Emily Dickinson and her poetry. The website is free, but you have to provide a log in name and password.

Listen to Poems

Listen to actress Julie Harris read the two poems above: "This is my letter to the world"

Further Research

Do you want to know more about Emily Dickinson's life? Here is a biography.

Contributors: NDLA, "Emily Dickinson - Life and Poetry," writer: Eli M. Huseby (CC BY-SA 4.0)

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7.3: Percy Bysshe Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley - A Romantic Rebel

Percy Bysshe Shelley's short and dramatic life stands as a symbol of the revolutionary ideas and strong emotions of the Romantic period.

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Ole Fossgård Use image

The Romantic era was not only idyllic pastorals and longing for the simple and natural; it was also a time of revolution and protest. The "old ways" of society were challenged by a generation of angry young men and women. In pamphlets and articles they attacked the established values and institutions. The Church, Christianity, the educational system, the legal system, and not least the aristocracy and Royalty were all the targets of a harsh and defiant criticism from these radical writers.

The Rebel

Shelley seems to have been rebellious by nature. He was a highly intelligent boy and was interested in science and literature; he was particularly fascinated by the Gothic tradition which was popular at the time. But his school career was to be a line of disciplinary reproaches from day one at Sion House Academy in Sussex until he was expelled from Oxford in his freshman year for "contumaciously refusing to answer questions." At Eton, he had picked up on radical literature and was reading the works of philosophers like Hume and Voltaire. He also developed a skepticism towards Christianity, and at Oxford he wrote and published a pamphlet called "The Necessity of Atheism," which was a contributory factor for his expulsion from Oxford.

Love and Morality

In London, Shelley met Harriet Westbrook, who probably was his inferior intellectually — but she was madly in love with him. Shelley was flattered and entered a relationship with Harriet, possibly as some sort of a fling. But as she was disgraced by her parents for being associated with an atheist and a rebel, he was provoked into marrying her. He was nineteen and she sixteen; and entering a marriage on such premises would, not surprisingly, prove to be a mistake. The young couple travelled in Scotland and in Ireland, where Shelley wrote and gave speeches to encourage the work for political reforms. He and Harriet had two children together, but their marriage was withering, and when he, in 1814, met 17-year-old Mary Wollstonecraft Goodwin, he was lost; their

mutual attraction was electric. They eloped to Switzerland for the summer, and when they came back, Harriet drowned herself in Hyde Park in London. A few years previously, Shelley had published his first important poem, "The Queen Mab," expressing his socialist criticism of society and his denunciation of Christianity. This, in combination with his somewhat infamous conduct of life, was the reason why his appeal for custody of his children was turned down by the authorities; he was seen as "morally unfit," they proclaimed in the verdict.

In Exile

Percy and Mary moved to Italy in 1818, both because of his bad health and because he felt exiled by the verdict. In Italy they socialised with other English expatriates, like Lord Byron and Edward Trelawny. During his stay in Italy, his writing became richer and more poignant due to influential friends and circumstances that moved him emotionally, for example the death of his little daughter Clara. Percy and Mary had a son when they lived in Florence, which brought some happiness into their lives. Still, Shelley was often depressed and felt anger and pity for "the ways of mankind and the wrongs of the world." But all this inspired his writing. One of his best love poems, "Emilia," was inspired by a beautiful Italian woman (with whom Shelley probably was in love) who was locked up in a convent because she refused to marry the old nobleman her parents had promised her to. The death of his friend, John Keats, in 1821, also moved Shelley to produce some of the finest poetry in English literature. Mary was also active writing, and her famous *Frankenstein* was written during their stay in Italy.

The Death of a Poet

Shelley died in 1822, 30 years old, and the circumstances around his death and cremation were truly befitting a romantic rebel. After a meeting with colleagues in connection with the launching of a new periodical, *The Liberal*, Shelley and a friend were sailing homewards along the Italian coast. A violent storm broke, and they capsized and drowned; their bodies were found washed up on the shore two weeks later. Italian law required cremation, so the friends who had gathered (Lord Byron was one of them) decided to burn the bodies on the beach. As the flames picked up, and Shelley's body slowly decomposed, Edward Trelawny stepped out and snatched his heart out of the flames, and presented it to Mary; a strong symbolic act resembling the dramatic scene in *Frankenstein*, where the monster rips the heart out of Elizabeth's bosom. Another mystic element of Shelley's death was his own forewarning of the way he died; in one of his latest works, "Adonais," which was "a vindication of all poets and their immortality," there are several passages that give a detailed description of death by drowning.

There are many examples of how poets and writers live their literature, or become what they write. Percy Bysshe Shelley is one of them; his short life and dramatic death certainly became a true analogy of the rebellious and ardent ideas that characterized the romantic era.

Activities

- Follow the link and read the two poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley—"Song to the Men of England" and "England in 1819"—and see how these lines express Shelley's political views. List some key issues that Shelley addresses in these poems. Two Critical Poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley
- Shelley's radicalism and rebellious nature may not seem so outrageous from today's viewpoint. But in the early 19th century, things were different. What do society's reactions to Shelley's protests tell us about the virtues and values of pre-Victorian England?
- There is an ongoing literary debate as to what extent the writer's socio-cultural and personal background is important for the understanding of his work. Discuss how this issue is particularly intriguing regarding a writer like Shelley. If you want more information about this issue you may follow this link: Literature in Theory
- Can you come up with other examples of writers who "lived their literature"?
- Some say that all artists are self-centred narcissists wrapped up in themselves. In what respect can that be true about Shelley? Does his life also indicate that he had empathy and a social conscience?

Percy Bysshe Shelley had a rich production of poetry that includes some of the finest poems in English literature.

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Although Shelley had a rebellious nature and, by the standards of his time, a scandalous lifestyle, he was a burning idealist who wanted to stand up for injustice and what he saw as political misrule. Of his radical writing, these two poems stand out as his most poignant.

Song to the Men of England

Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care

The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat – nay, drink your blood?

Wherefore, bees of England, forge
Many weapon, chain and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.

Sow seed, - but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth, - but let no imposter heap;
Weave robes, - let no idle wear;
Forge arms, - in your defence to bear.

Shrink to your cellars, holes and cells;
In halls ye deck, another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

With plough and spade, and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre.

England in 1819

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king, -
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public storm – mud from a muddy spring;
Rulers, who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow;
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field, -
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield -
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay, -

Religion Christless, Godless – a book sealed;
A Senate, - Time's worst statue unrepealed, -
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illuminate our tempestuous day.

A Closer Look at the Poems

1. Song to the Men of England

- Give some examples of the strong visual imagery in the poem.
- It is fairly clear where Shelley's sympathy lies; what metaphors does he use about the ruling class and the exploited workers?
- What is Shelley's dismal conclusion?

2. England in 1819

- Point out a line or two that you think sum up Shelley's message in this poem.
- Which metaphors does Shelley use to describe the Church, the Parliament, the Army, England?
- Comment on the two last lines of the poem.

Research

1. Shelley was a radical poet who criticised his home country from his exile in Italy. Search the net for information about what may lie behind Shelley's harsh criticism of England. Key words: Industrial Revolution, poverty, working class, political situation (why 1819?), expanding British Empire. Make a presentation based on your research and the two poems.
2. Percy Bysshe Shelley was a rebel and led a dramatic and short life. He was married to Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*) and he died in 1822 only thirty years old. Follow the link below and read about Shelley's dramatic life and how he died "the death of a poet."
   Percy Bysshe Shelley - A Romantic Rebel (right click to open in new tab)

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7.4: Poet - William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth - A True Romantic Poet

The Romantic Era was a period of revolution and radical ideas. The belief in liberty and social justice for common people appealed to many writers and intellectuals and resulted in a strong antagonism towards the aristocracy and the political establishment.

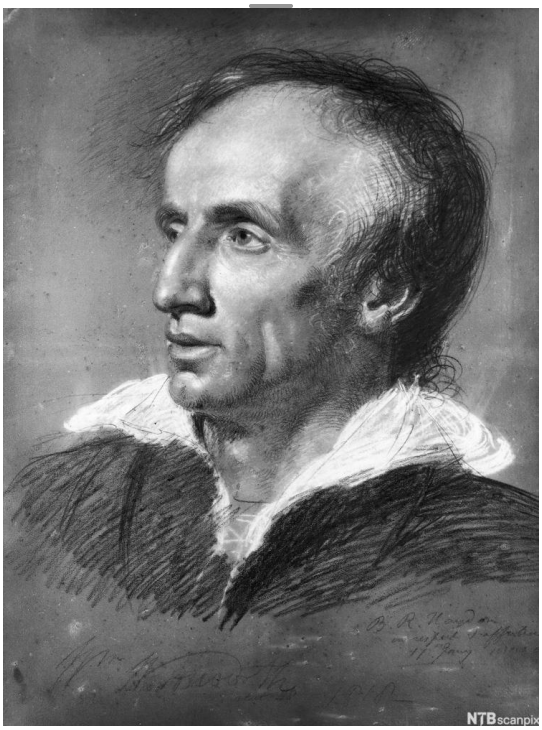


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These young poets were the rebels of their time, and many of them led lives that were seen as morally scandalous. Some of them felt exiled by the narrow-minded English establishment and settled abroad; Lord Byron, John Keats, and Percy Bysshe Shelley all moved to Italy, never to return. William Wordsworth also went abroad, but he returned to England both inspired and distressed by what he experienced in France.

Homeless and Restless

Wordsworth's parents died when he was quite young, which probably induced his feeling of alienation and homelessness. He was a bright student but his education took time because he was more into self-studies and wandering to seek the beauty of nature; and when he finally graduated he refused to take a regular profession. Instead he set out hiking in England and Wales, and he went to France, allegedly to learn French properly. But things turned out differently; in France he encountered the strong forces that were to become the inspiration for much of his poetry: revolution and love.



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Wordsworth was intensely excited by the revolutionary spirit in France, and supported the rebels in their insurrection. While he was there he met Annette Vallon, they fell in love, and after some months she became pregnant with his child. But Wordsworth was homesick and felt restless, and his poor finances made it impossible to stay on and marry Annette. So he left France, probably intending to return some day, but his plans were interrupted by the outbreak of war between England and France in 1793. And it was to be nine years until he could see Annette again and meet his then unborn child, and then the purpose of and circumstances around the visit had changed altogether.

Wordsworth made contact with his sister Dorothy, and their close company lasted for the rest of their lives. He also made friends and worked with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, another young romantic poet; together they published "Lyrical Ballads" (1789) which stands as a milestone in English romantic poetry. Wordsworth was gradually achieving popularity, but money was scarce until he was left some money by a friend he had helped during his illness. He and his sister moved around in England until they settled in a cottage in The Lake District in the north of England, a short distance from their birthplace. This was Wordsworth's homecoming, both literally and emotionally. Inspired by the beautiful surroundings of lakes and valleys in the area he wrote many of his cherished poems here. His poetic project was to grasp natural beauty in a fresh approach and to display man's need for harmony with nature.

Back home he also met Mary Hutchinson, an acquaintance from his school days, and whom he was later to marry. But presently Wordsworth was not rich enough to enter a matrimonial liaison with Mary, and besides, there was another serious obstacle: In France a woman still called herself Mrs. Wordsworth. They were not married, but they had a child together, and William felt the obligation to settle things with his "French connection" before he could marry Mary. So in 1802 he headed for France, accompanied by his sister, to meet Annette and his now nine year old daughter, Carolyn. (The poem "Upon Westminster Bridge" was written on this trip.) This meeting could have turned out quite dramatically; such a situation holds quite some "romantic" potential. But after a time they reached an agreement after long talks and walks on the Calais beach. After having settled things with Annette, William and Dorothy returned to England, and back to their cottage in the Lake District where they spent the rest of their lives. William married Mary and they had two children. But this was a period of emotional distress for Wordsworth; in addition to his tormenting love situation he grieved over his friend Coleridge's moral degradation and drug addiction. Another

stressful element was his indignation at Napoleon's bloody way to power. In some way all these events and elements are recorded in his poetry.

Wordsworth's Legacy

Though his political views became more lenient and conservative as he grew older, William Wordsworth was still seen as a rebel by the moral standards at the time. He had an illegitimate child and he was living with two women, one of them his sister; these things caused speculations and made people talk. Wordsworth died in 1850 when England was entering a new age and the literary scene was to change radically. Sentimental poetry about natural beauty was no longer trendy — it was time to "tell it like it is." Wordsworth went on writing in the aftermath of romanticism, but he never reached the same intense and powerful poetic imagery as in his early career. William Wordsworth is for many the incarnate romantic poet who has rendered the reading public, both then and now, some of the most beautiful poems in English literature.

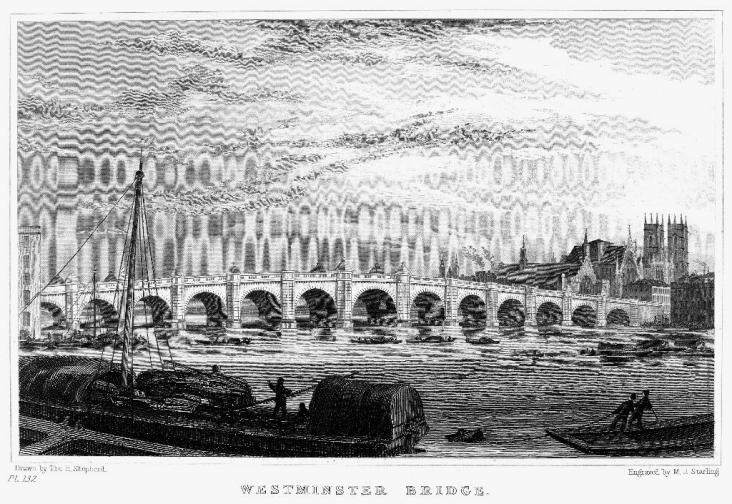
William Wordsworth: Upon Westminster Bridge

During the Romantic Period, cities were in general viewed as being gloomy places compared to the beauty of landscapes and pastoral scenes. However, although this is not a typically Romantic poem, you may, if you look closely, still spot some clear traces of truly Romantic poetry in both its language and imagery.

Sonnet Composed Upon Westminster Bridge

September 3, 1802 by William Wordsworth

Earth has not anything to show more fair;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!



Westminster Bridge, 1831

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Exercise 7.4.1

A Closer Look at the Poem

- Where can you see indications of the romantic ideals and images in this poem?
- Make a list of the adjectives Wordsworth uses to describe the city. Do you spot any contrasts?
- Find examples of metaphors and simile in the poem.
- The poem is composed as a sonnet. Follow the link below and read more about sonnets.
- The poem was written when Wordsworth was on his way to France to settle some unfinished business with a French girl before he could marry at home. Follow the link below and read the story about Wordsworth's "French connection."

The Solitary Reaper

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing to herself;
Stop here or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! For the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands;
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In a spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;
I listened motionless and still;
And as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Exercise 7.4.1

A Closer Look at the Poem

- Point out some typical romantic ideals that come to life in this poem.
- Wordsworth took long walks in the countryside for inspiration and to feel the closeness of nature. Where, specifically, do you think he is walking in this poem? What are the clues?
- The poem has references to far-away and exotic places. Why do you think they are mentioned?
- Wordsworth wanted his poetry to reflect the language of ordinary people. How does that show in this poem?
- Look at the rhyme pattern and see if you can spot some irregularities.
- Follow the link below and read more about William Wordsworth.

W. Wordsworth: The Tables Turned

"The Tables Turned" is another of William Wordsworth's famous poems that is so typical of the Romantic Era. It is in a way a declaration of Wordsworth's Romantic manifesto, and it presents a break with the scientific approach of the Enlightenment. Read the poem and do the tasks which follow.

The Tables Turned

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Up! Up! My Friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! Up! My Friend and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long green fields has spread,
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! On my life,
There's more wisdom in it.

And hark! How blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless –
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;

Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: -
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

Exercise 7.4.1

A Closer Look at the Poem

- Point out some lines that in your opinion reflect the ideas and values of the Romantic period.
- What would you say is the theme of the poem?
- How can we say that this poem is a manifesto of the Romantic period?
- Who is the author addressing in the poem?
- What defines this as a poem (and not prose)?
- The title is a well known saying. What does it mean that "the tables are turned"?
- Comment on the line: "Close up those barren leaves."
- Follow the link below and read more about William Wordsworth.

I wandered lonely as a cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

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The Last of the Flock

In distant countries I have been,
And yet I have not often seen
A healthy man, a man full grown,
Weep in the public roads alone.
But such a one, on English ground,
And in the broad high-way, I met;
Along the broad high-way he came,
His cheeks with tears were wet.
Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad;
And in his arms a lamb he had.

He saw me, and he turned aside,
As if he wished himself to hide:
Then with his coat he made essay
To wipe those briny tears away.
I follow'd him, and said, "My friend
"What ails you? wherefore weep you so?"
—"Shame on me, Sir! this lusty lamb,
He makes my tears to flow.
To-day I fetched him from the rock;
He is the last of all my flock.

When I was young, a single man,
And after youthful follies ran,
Though little given to care and thought,
Yet, so it was, a ewe I bought;
And other sheep from her I raised,
As healthy sheep as you might see,
And then I married, and was rich
As I could wish to be;
Of sheep I numbered a full score,
And every year increas'd my store.

Year after year my stock it grew,
And from this one, this single ewe,
Full fifty comely sheep I raised,
As sweet a flock as ever grazed!
Upon the mountain did they feed;
They throve, and we at home did thrive.
—This lusty lamb of all my store
Is all that is alive;
And now I care not if we die,
And perish all of poverty.

Six children, Sir! had I to feed,
Hard labour in a time of need!
My pride was tamed, and in our grief,
I of the parish ask'd relief.
They said I was a wealthy man;
My sheep upon the mountain fed,
And it was fit that thence I took

Whereof to buy us bread:"
"Do this; how can we give to you,"
They cried, "what to the poor is due?"

I sold a sheep as they had said,
And bought my little children bread,
And they were healthy with their food;
For me it never did me good.
A woeful time it was for me,
To see the end of all my gains,
The pretty flock which I had reared
With all my care and pains,
To see it melt like snow away!
For me it was a woeful day.

Another still! and still another!
A little lamb, and then its mother!
It was a vein that never stopp'd,
Like blood-drops from my heart they dropp'd.
Till thirty were not left alive
They dwindled, dwindled, one by one,
And I may say that many a time
I wished they all were gone:
They dwindled one by one away;
For me it was a woeful day.

To wicked deeds I was inclined,
And wicked fancies cross'd my mind,
And every man I chanc'd to see,
I thought he knew some ill of me.
No peace, no comfort could I find,
No ease, within doors or without,
And crazily, and wearily,
I went my work about.
Oft-times I thought to run away;
For me it was a woeful day.

Sir! 'twas a precious flock to me,
As dear as my own children be;
For daily with my growing store
I loved my children more and more.
Alas! it was an evil time;
God cursed me in my sore distress,
I prayed, yet every day I thought
I loved my children less;
And every week, and every day,
My flock, it seemed to melt away.

They dwindled, Sir, sad sight to see!
From ten to five, from five to three,
A lamb, a weather, and a ewe;
And then at last, from three to two;
And of my fifty, yesterday

I had but only one,
And here it lies upon my arm,
Alas! and I have none;
To-day I fetched it from the rock;
It is the last of all my flock."

Example 7.4.1

Connections: What have expert literary scholars said about this poem? Check out Heidi J. Snow's literary criticism that centers on this poem along with William's sister Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals.

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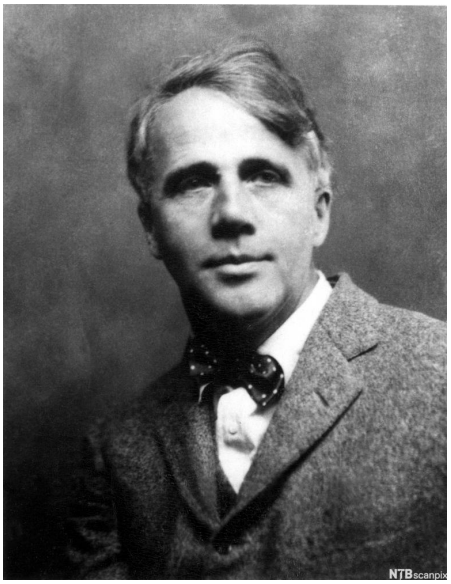
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7.5: Wordsworth, William "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1807)

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7.6: Robert Frost

Robert Frost



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Robert Frost (1874-1963) grew up in California, but when his father died he moved with his mother to Massachusetts. After an unfinished education, he tried journalism for a time, and then attended a teaching academy to become a teacher. He wrote poems continuously, but his poetry was not very successful; the editors turned him down time after time. After his breakthrough, however, his popularity grew; and he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize four times between 1924 and 1943. Critics have called Frost the first American master-poet by world standards. He is, today, one of the most popular and cherished American poets.

Even though Frost belongs to the modernist tradition, his poems are clear and accessible to everyone, unlike much of the poetry of his contemporaries. Frost is known as a New England poet, since many of his poems use material from the natural beauty of the New England states. Main elements of his poetry are familiar objects and everyday situations (like in "The Road Not Taken"). Titles like "The Wood-Pile," "After Apple Picking," "Blueberries," "The Axe-Helve," and "Birches" tell the tale of a poet who was inspired by his natural surroundings and everyday things. That is most likely why his poetry is so popular; because in our hectic and busy lives, we need to stop a minute to look around and appreciate the simple things in life.

Making Choices

Every day we are faced with a number of choices and options; most of them are easy and made quite unconsciously (Should I go to school today or not? Milk or orange juice? Tea or coffee? Cash or credit card?) We usually don’t spend much time considering the pros and cons of these everyday choices.

However, there are situations in which we are faced with a choice that holds more serious consequences, maybe even for other people. Then we must take time to consider, weigh pros and cons, and perhaps even consult a close friend for advice. Most of us have at one point been there — choice of career, commitment to a partner, spending big money, and moving for a new job opportunity are examples of choices that have to be considered carefully.

And once you have made a choice, the course is set; but it is an intriguing thought that the course of your life is just as much determined by what you did not choose: the road not taken…



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The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in the wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Exercise 7.5.1

A Closer Look at the Poem

- Point out some metaphors in the poem.
- Where do you see references to Frost's love of nature?
- What does it mean that "I took the one less traveled by"?
- Discuss an interpretation of the two last lines of the third stanza.
- Explain the last line of the poem.
- Describe the rhyme pattern of the poem.
- Read it out loud, and see if you can find the rhythm pattern of the poem.
- Why do you think so many people have this as their favorite poem?

Acquainted With The Night (1923)

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-bye;
And further still at an unearthly height,
One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

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7.7: Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman

The second of nine children and born in 1819 to a Long Island farmer and carpenter, Walt Whitman is both the journeyman poet of Americanness and its champion. A journalist and newspaper editor throughout his life, Whitman worked as a law clerk, a schoolteacher, a printer, a civil servant, and a hospital aide, but he was always writing; from his teenage years until his death, his byline was on constant view. Contemporary reports suggest that Whitman was an industrious worker but that he was often accused of idleness because his habit of long midday walks contrasted sharply with nineteenth-century attitudes toward work. In "Song of Myself," Whitman addressed these critics directly by writing, "I loafe and invite my soul, / I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass" (45). For Whitman, too much industry dulled the ability to celebrate the ordinary. In the preface to the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, Whitman expounds on his love for the common: "Other states indicate themselves in their deputies...but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislators, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors...but always most in the common people."[1] Whitman's love for the common people that he encountered and observed in the urban centers of the north is expressed in all of his poetry; if his British contemporary Alfred Lord Tennyson is the national poet of mourning, then Whitman is the national poet of celebration.

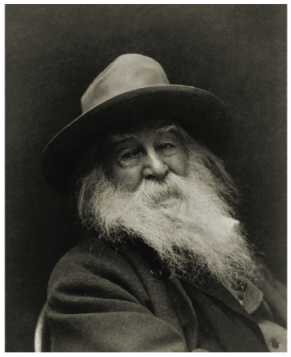


Image 1.1 | Walt Whitman, 1887.
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Many readers feel confused and disoriented when reading Whitman for the first time. Without using the aid of rhyme and meter as a guide, Whitman's poetry may initially appear disjointed and meandering, but at the same time readers often take great comfort in the simplicity of the language, the clarity of the images, and the deep **cadences**, or rhythms, of the verse. Such contradictions are at the heart of Whitman's work. Much of Whitman's success and endurance as a poet comes from his ability to marry embedded cultural forms to the needs of a growing and rapidly modernizing nation. Whitman first came to wide public attention with the publication of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 when he was just twenty-five years old. Grand in scope if not in size, the first edition established Whitman as a poet who loved wordplay and common images; by the time of his death in 1892, Whitman had expanded the initial collection of just twelve poems over the course of six editions to one that ultimately included more than 400 poems. The selection included here largely samples Whitman's early poetry up through the Civil War. In the selections from *Song of Myself* and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," we see Whitman at his most iconic: sweeping views of everyday life that freely mingle high and low culture. Yet the poet of the common man did not spend all of his days gazing at his fellow Americans. In the final selection from Whitman, we see Whitman rising as a national poet with "O Captain! My Captain!," one of two poems on the death of Abraham Lincoln. An urban poet who lived almost his entire life in New York, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., the enduring appeal of his works testifies to his ability to connect the great and the common through language.

1.3.1 Song of Myself

1

I CELEBRATE myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.
My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.
Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

2

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.
The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation, it is odorless,
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.
The smoke of my own breath,
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and vine,
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and air through my lungs,
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-color'd searocks, and of hay in the barn,
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies of the wind,
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag,
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides,
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun.
Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd the earth much?
Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?
Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left,)
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me, You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.

3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning and the end,
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.
There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.
Urge and urge and urge,
Always the procreant urge of the world.
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and increase, always sex,
Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed of life.
To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it is so.
Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well entretied, braced in the beams,
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,

I and this mystery here we stand.
Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul.
Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.
Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age,
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.
Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean,
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest. I am satisfied I see, dance, laugh, sing;
As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side through the night, and withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy tread,
Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the house with their plenty,
Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream at my eyes,
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,
And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,
Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and which is ahead?

4

Trippers and askers surround me,
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward and city I live in, or the nation,
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and new,
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love,
The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or loss or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful news, the fitful events;
These come to me days and nights and go from me again,
But they are not the Me myself.
Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,
Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain rest,
Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,
Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it.
Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with linguists and contenders,
I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

5

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,
And you must not be abased to the other.
Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not even the best,
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.
I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare stript heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my feet.
Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love, And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein and poke-weed.

“Oh Captain! My Captain!”

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather’d every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up for you the flag is flung for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father! This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck, You’ve fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells! But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies, Fallen cold and dead.

“Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”

1

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!
Clouds of the west sun there half an hour high I see you also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious you are to me!
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home, are more curious to me than you suppose,
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of the day,
The simple, compact, well-join’d scheme, myself disintegrated, every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,
The similitudes of the past and those of the future,
The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings, on the walk in the street and the passage over the river,
The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away,
The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,
The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore,
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of
Brooklyn to the south and east,
Others will see the islands large and small;
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high,
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

3

It avails not, time nor place distance avails not,
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence,
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt, Just as any of you is one of a living crowd,
I was one of a crowd, Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow,
I was refresh'd, Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current,
I stood yet was hurried,
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the air floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and left the rest in strong shadow,
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward the south,
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of my head in the sunlit water,
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-westward,
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at anchor,
The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender serpentine pennants,
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-houses,
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of the wheels,
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the frolicsome crests and glistening,
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls of the granite storehouses by the docks,
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flank'd on each side by the barges, the hay-boat, the belated lighter,
On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry chimneys burning high and glaringly into the night,
Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and yellow light over the tops of houses, and down into the clefts of streets.

4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river,
The men and women I saw were all near to me,
Others the same others who look back on me because I look'd forward to them,
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)
What it is then between us?
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not distance avails not, and place avails not,
I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the waters around it,
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon me,
In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they came upon me,
I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
I too had receiv'd identity by my body, That I was
I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I should be of my body.

5

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,
The dark threw its patches down upon me also,
The best I had done seem’d to me blank and suspicious,
My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in reality meagre?
Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,
I am he who knew what it was to be evil,
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,
Blabb’d, blush’d, resented, lied, stole, grudg’d,
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,
Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant,
The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,
The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not wanting,
Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these wanting,
Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,
Was call’d by my nighest name by clear loud voices of young men as they saw me approaching or passing,
Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of their flesh against me as I sat,
Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly, yet never told them a word,
Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing, sleeping,

Play’d the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,
The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great as we like,
Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

7

Closer yet I approach you,
What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you I laid in my stores in advance,
I consider’d long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?
Who knows but I am enjoying this?
Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking at you now, for all you cannot see me?

8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than mast-hemm’d Manhattan?
River and sunset and scallop-edg’d waves of flood-tide?
The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the twilight, and the belated lighter?

What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices
I love call me promptly and loudly by my nighest name as I approach?
What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks in my face?
Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?

We understand then do we not?
What I promis’d without mentioning it, have you not accepted?
What the study could not teach what the preaching could not accomplish is accomplish’d, is it not?

9

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!
Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg’d waves!
Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor me, or the men and women generations after me!
Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!
Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful hills of Brooklyn!
Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers!

Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!
Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or public assembly!

Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me by my nighest name!
Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or actress!
Play the old role, the role that is great or small according as one makes it!
Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown ways be looking upon you;
Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet haste with the hasting current;
Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in the air;
Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till all downcast eyes have time to take it from you!
Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any one's head, in the sunlit water!
Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-sail'd schooners, sloops, lighters!
Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset!
Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at nightfall! cast red and yellow light over the tops of the houses!

Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are,
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,
About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung out divinest aromas,
Thrive, cities bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient rivers,
Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual,
Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers,
We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward,
Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves from us,
We use you, and do not cast you aside we plant you permanently within us,
We fathom you not we love you there is perfection in you also,
You furnish your parts toward eternity,
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

Exercise 7.6.1

Reading and Review Questions

1. How does Whitman's use of free verse challenge readers? What features and/or elements of Whitman's poetry help us to understand how to read it?
2. How does Whitman's use of natural elements compare to his use of manmade or urban elements in his poetry?
3. How would you describe the voice of Whitman's poetry?
4. How does Whitman's poetry engage with the Civil War?

I Hear America Singing

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be
blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work,
or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat,
the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter
singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in
the morning, or at noon intermission at sundown,

The delicious singing of the mother, or the young wife at work,
or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day – at night the party of
young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

Exercise 7.6.1

A Closer Look at the Poem

1. Is this poem really about singing?
2. What do all the professions mentioned represent?
3. In what way does this poem reflect Whitman's ideals of democracy and individualism?
4. In the first line the poet uses the word "carols" instead of "songs" – what is the difference, and what is the effect?
5. Comment on the line, "Each singing what belongs to him and her and to none else."
6. How would you describe the mood of the poem?
7. Comment on the structure of the poem.
8. Do you see any traces of traditional poetic elements (rhythm, rhyme, meter, poetic language)?
9. What makes this a poem rather than a prose text?
10. In what way does this poem bear resemblance to a modernist text?

Beat! Beat! Drums!

By Walt Whitman

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless force,

Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,

Into the school where the scholar is studying,

Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,

Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or gathering his grain,

So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets;

Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must sleep in those beds,

No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—would they continue?

Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?

Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?

Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,

Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,

Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,

Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,

Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,

So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

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7.8: Featured Period - The Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance

The History of Langston Hughes

The 1920s was a time of dramatic change in the United States. Many young people, especially those living in big cities, embraced a new morality that was much more permissive than that of previous generations. They listened to jazz music, especially in the nightclubs of Harlem. Although prohibition outlawed alcohol, criminal bootlegging and importing businesses thrived. The decade was not a pleasure cruise for everyone, however; in the wake of the Great War, many were left awaiting the promise of a new generation.

A New Morality

Many Americans were disillusioned in the post-World War I era, and their reactions took many forms. Rebellious American youth, in particular, adjusted to the changes by embracing a **new morality** that was far more permissive than the social mores of their parents. Many young women of the era shed their mothers' morality and adopted the dress and mannerisms of a **flapper**, the Jazz Age female stereotype, seeking the endless party. Flappers wore shorter skirts, shorter hair, and more makeup, and they drank and smoked with the boys. Flappers' dresses emphasized straight lines from the shoulders to the knees, minimizing breasts and curves while highlighting legs and ankles. The male equivalent of a flapper was a "**sheik**," although that term has not remained as strong in the American vernacular. At the time, however, many of these fads became a type of conformity, especially among college-aged youths, with the signature bob haircut of the flapper becoming almost universal—in both the United States and overseas.



The flapper look, seen here in "Flapper" by Ellen Pyle for the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* in February 1922, was a national craze in American cities during the 1920s.

As men and women pushed social and cultural boundaries in the Jazz Age, sexual mores changed and social customs grew more permissive. "Petting parties" or "necking parties" became the rage on college campuses. Psychologist Sigmund Freud and British "sexologist" Havelock Ellis emphasized that sex was a natural and pleasurable part of the human experience. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, launched an information campaign on birth control to give women a choice in the realm in which suffrage had changed little: the family. The popularization of contraception and the private space that the automobile offered to teenagers and unwed couples also contributed to changes in sexual behavior.

Flappers and sheiks also took their cues from the high-flying romances they saw on movie screens and confessions in movie magazines of immorality on movie sets. Movie posters promised: "Brilliant men, beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific smashing climax that makes you gasp." And "neckers, petters, white kisses, red kisses, pleasure-mad daughters, sensation-craving mothers . . . the truth: bold, naked, sensational."

Could you go "on a toot" with flappers and sheiks? Improve your chances with this collection of Jazz Age slang.

New dances and new music—especially jazz—also characterized the Jazz Age. Born out of the African American community, jazz was a uniquely American music. The innovative sound emerged from a number of different communities and from a number of different musical traditions such as blues and ragtime. By the 1920s, jazz had spread from African American clubs in New Orleans

and Chicago to reach greater popularity in New York and abroad. One New York jazz establishment, the Cotton Club, became particularly famous and attracted large audiences of hip, young, and white flappers and sheiks to see Black entertainers play jazz (Figure 1, jazz band).



Figure 1: Black jazz bands such as the King and Carter Jazzing Orchestra, photographed in 1921 by Robert Runyon, were immensely popular among white urbanites in the 1920s.

The "New Woman"

The Jazz Age and the proliferation of the flapper lifestyle of the 1920s should not be seen merely as the product of postwar disillusionment and newfound prosperity. Rather, the search for new styles of dress and new forms of entertainment like jazz was part of a larger women's rights movement. The early 1920s, especially with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteeing full voting rights to women, was a period that witnessed the expansion of women's political power. The public flaunting of social and sexual norms by flappers represented an attempt to match gains in political equality with gains in the social sphere. Women were increasingly leaving the Victorian era norms of the previous generation behind, as they broadened the concept of women's liberation to include new forms of social expression such as dance, fashion, women's clubs, and forays into college and the professions.

Nor did the struggle for women's rights through the promotion and passage of legislation cease in the 1920s. In 1921, Congress passed the Promotion of the Welfare and Hygiene of Maternity and Infancy Act, also known as the Sheppard-Towner Act, which earmarked $1.25 million for well-baby clinics and educational programs, as well as nursing. This funding dramatically reduced the rate of infant mortality. Two years later, in 1923, Alice Paul drafted and promoted an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) that promised to end all sex discrimination by guaranteeing that "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction."

Yet, ironically, at precisely the time when the Progressive movement was achieving its long-sought-after goals, the movement itself was losing steam and the Progressive Era was coming to a close. As the heat of Progressive politics grew less intense, voter participation from both sexes declined over the course of the 1920s. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, many women believed that they had accomplished their goals and dropped out of the movement. As a result, the proposed ERA stalled (the ERA eventually passed Congress almost fifty years later in 1972, but then failed to win ratification by a sufficient number of states), and, by the end of the 1920s, Congress even allowed funding for the Sheppard-Towner Act to lapse.

The growing lethargy toward women's rights was happening at a time when an increasing number of women were working for wages in the U.S. economy — not only in domestic service, but in retail, healthcare and education, offices, and manufacturing. Beginning in the 1920s, women's participation in the labor force increased steadily. However, most were paid less than men for the same type of work based on the rationale that they did not have to support a family. While the employment of single and unmarried women had largely won social acceptance, married women often suffered the stigma that they were working for pin money — frivolous additional discretionary income.

The Harlem Renaissance and the New World

It wasn't only women who found new forms of expression in the 1920s. African Americans were also expanding their horizons and embracing the concept of the "new Negro." The decade witnessed the continued Great Migration of African Americans to the North, with over half a million fleeing the strict Jim Crow laws of the South. Life in the northern states, as many African Americans discovered, was hardly free of discrimination and segregation. Even without Jim Crow, businesses, property owners, employers, and private citizens typically practiced *de facto* segregation, which could be quite stifling and oppressive. Nonetheless,

many southern Black Americans continued to move north into segregated neighborhoods that were already bursting at the seams, because the North, at the very least, offered two tickets toward Black progress: schools and the vote. The Black population of New York City doubled during the decade. As a result, Harlem, a neighborhood at the northern end of Manhattan, became a center for Afro-centric art, music, poetry, and politics. Political expression in the Harlem of the 1920s ran the gamut, as some leaders advocated a return to Africa, while others fought for inclusion and integration.

Revived by the wartime migration and fired up by the white violence of the postwar riots, urban Black Americans developed a strong cultural expression in the 1920s that came to be known as the Harlem Renaissance. In this rediscovery of Black culture, African American artists and writers formulated an independent Black culture and encouraged racial pride, rejecting any emulation of white American culture. Claude McKay's poem "If We Must Die" called on African Americans to start fighting back in the wake of the Red Summer riots of 1919 (discussed in a previous chapter, Figure 2, Claude McKay). Langston Hughes, often nicknamed the "poet laureate" of the movement, invoked sacrifice and the just cause of civil rights in "The Colored Soldier," while another author of the movement, Zora Neale Hurston, celebrated the life and dialect of rural Black Americans in a fictional, all-Black town in Florida. Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was only published posthumously in 1937.



Figure 2: The Jamaican-born poet and novelist Claude McKay articulated the new sense of self and urban community of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. Although centered in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, this cultural movement emerged in urban centers throughout the Northeast and Midwest.

The new Negro found political expression in a political ideology that celebrated African Americans' distinct national identity. This **Negro nationalism**, as some referred to it, proposed that African Americans had a distinct and separate national heritage that should inspire pride and a sense of community. An early proponent of such nationalism was W. E. B. Du Bois. One of the founders of the NAACP, a brilliant writer and scholar, and the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard, Du Bois openly rejected assumptions of white supremacy. His conception of Negro nationalism encouraged Africans to work together in support of their own interests, promoted the elevation of Black literature and cultural expression, and, most famously, embraced the African continent as the true homeland of all ethnic Africans — a concept known as Pan-Africanism.

Taking Negro nationalism to a new level was Marcus Garvey. Like many Black Americans, the Jamaican immigrant had become utterly disillusioned with the prospect of overcoming white racism in the United States in the wake of the postwar riots and promoted a "Back to Africa" movement. To return African Americans to a presumably more welcoming home in Africa, Garvey founded the **Black Star Steamship Line**. He also started the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which attracted thousands of primarily lower-income working people. UNIA members wore colorful uniforms and promoted the doctrine of a "negritude" that reversed the color hierarchy of white supremacy, prizing blackness and identifying light skin as a mark of inferiority. Intellectual leaders like Du Bois, whose lighter skin put him low on Garvey's social order, considered the UNIA leader a charlatan. Garvey was eventually imprisoned for mail fraud and then deported, but his legacy set the stage for Malcolm X and the Black Power movement of the 1960s.

Prohibition

At precisely the same time that African Americans and women were experimenting with new forms of social expression, the country as a whole was undergoing a process of austere and dramatic social reform in the form of alcohol prohibition. After decades of organizing to reduce or end the consumption of alcohol in the United States, temperance groups and the Anti-Saloon

League finally succeeded in pushing through the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, which banned the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors (Figure 3, Prohibition). The law proved difficult to enforce, as illegal alcohol soon poured in from Canada and the Caribbean, and rural Americans resorted to home-brewed "moonshine." The result was an eroding of respect for law and order, as many people continued to drink illegal liquor. Rather than bringing about an age of sobriety, as Progressive reformers had hoped, it gave rise to a new subculture that included illegal importers, interstate smuggling (or **bootlegging**), clandestine saloons referred to as "speakeasies," hipflasks, cocktail parties, and the organized crime of trafficking liquor.



Figure 3: While forces of law and order confiscated and discarded alcohol when they found it (a), consumers found ingenious ways of hiding liquor during prohibition, such as this cane that served as a flask (b).

Prohibition also revealed deep political divisions in the nation. The Democratic Party found itself deeply divided between urban, northern "wets" who hated the idea of abstinence, and rural, southern "dries" who favored the amendment. This divided the party and opened the door for the Republican Party to gain ascendancy in the 1920s. All politicians, including Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, Robert La Follette, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, equivocated in their support for the law. Publicly, they catered to the Anti-Saloon League; however, they failed to provide funding for enforcement.

Prohibition sparked a rise in organized crime. "Scarface" Al Capone (Figure 4, Al Capone) ran an extensive bootlegging and criminal operation known as the Chicago Outfit or Chicago mafia. By 1927, Capone's organization included a number of illegal activities including bootlegging, prostitution, gambling, loan sharking, and even murder. His operation was earning him more than $100 million annually, and many local police were on his payroll. Although he did not have a monopoly on crime, his organizational structure was better than many other criminals of his era. His liquor trafficking business and his Chicago soup kitchens during the Great Depression led some Americans to liken Capone to a modern-day Robin Hood. Still, Capone was eventually imprisoned for eleven years for tax evasion, including a stint in California's notorious Alcatraz prison.



Figure 4: Al Capone, pictured here in his U.S. Department of Justice mug shot, was convicted of tax fraud and sent to prison in 1931.

The Lost Generation

As the country struggled with the effects and side-effects of prohibition, many young intellectuals endeavored to come to grips with a lingering sense of disillusionment. World War I, fundamentalism, and the Red Scare—a pervasive American fear of Communist infiltrators prompted by the success of the Bolshevik Revolution—all left their mark on these intellectuals. Known as the **Lost Generation**, writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, Edith Wharton, and John Dos Passos expressed their hopelessness and despair by skewering the middle class in their work. They felt alienated from society, so they tried to escape (some literally) to criticize it. Many lived an **expatriate** life in Paris for the decade, although others went to Rome or Berlin.

The Lost Generation writer that best exemplifies the mood of the 1920s was F. Scott Fitzgerald, now considered one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century. His debut novel, *This Side of Paradise*, describes a generation of youth "grown up to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faith in man shaken." *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, exposed the doom that always follows the fun, fast-lived life. Fitzgerald depicted the modern millionaire Jay Gatsby living a profligate life: unscrupulous, coarse, and in love with another man's wife. Both Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda lived this life as well, squandering the money he made from his writing.

F. Scott Fitzgerald on the 1920s

In the 1920s, Fitzgerald was one of the most celebrated authors of his day, publishing *This Side of Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, and *The Great Gatsby* in quick succession. However, his profligate lifestyle with his wife Zelda sapped their funds, and Fitzgerald had to struggle to maintain their lavish lifestyle. Below is an excerpt from "The Crack-Up," a personal essay by Fitzgerald originally published in *Esquire* in which he describes his "good life" during the 1920s.

“It seemed a romantic business to be a successful literary man—you were not ever going to be as famous as a movie star but what note you had was probably longer-lived; you were never going to have the power of a man of strong political or religious convictions but you were certainly more independent. Of course within the practice of your trade you were forever unsatisfied—but I, for one, would not have chosen any other.
As the Twenties passed, with my own twenties marching a little ahead of them, my two juvenile regrets—at not being big enough (or good enough) to play football in college, and at not getting overseas during the war—resolved themselves into childish waking dreams of imaginary heroism that were good enough to go to sleep on in restless nights. The big problems of life seemed to solve themselves, and if the business of fixing them was difficult, it made one too tired to think of more general problems.
—F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Crack-Up," 1936”

How does Fitzgerald describe his life in the 1920s? How did his interpretation reflect the reality of the decade?

Equally idiosyncratic and disillusioned was writer Ernest Hemingway (Figure 5, Ernest Hemingway). He lived a peripatetic and adventurous lifestyle in Europe, Cuba, and Africa, working as an ambulance driver in Italy during World War I and traveling to Spain in the 1930s to cover the civil war there. His experiences of war and tragedy stuck with him, emerging in colorful scenes in his novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). In 1952, his novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, won the Pulitzer Prize. Two years later, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature for this book and his overall influence on contemporary style.



Figure 5: Ernest Hemingway was one of the most prominent members of the Lost Generation who went to live as expatriates in Europe during the 1920s.

Listen to audio of Hemingway’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

Not all Lost Generation writers were like Fitzgerald or Hemingway. The writing of Sinclair Lewis, rather than expressing a defined disillusionment, was more influenced by the Progressivism of the previous generation. In *Babbitt* (1922), he examined the "sheep following the herd" mentality that conformity promoted. He satirized American middle-class life as pleasure-seeking and mindless. Similarly, writer Edith Wharton celebrated life in old New York, a vanished society, in *The Age of Innocence*, in 1920. Wharton came from a very wealthy, socialite family in New York, where she was educated by tutors and never attended college. She lived for many years in Europe; during the Great War, she worked in Paris helping women establish businesses.

Section Summary

Different groups reacted to the upheavals of the 1920s in different ways. Some people, especially young urbanites, embraced the new amusements and social venues of the decade. Women found new opportunities for professional and political advancement, as well as new models of sexual liberation; however, the women's rights movement began to wane with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. For Black artists of the Harlem Renaissance, the decade was marked less by leisure and consumption than by creativity and purpose. African American leaders like Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. Du Bois responded to the retrenched racism of the time with different campaigns for civil rights and Black empowerment. Others, like the writers of the Lost Generation, reveled in exposing the hypocrisies and shallowness of mainstream middle-class culture. Meanwhile, the passage of Prohibition served to increase the illegal production of alcohol and led to a rise in organized crime.

Exercise 7.7.1

Review Questions

The popularization of which psychologist's ideas encouraged the new morality of the 1920s?

A. Sigmund Freud
B. Alice Paul
C. W. E. B. Du Bois
D. Margaret Sanger

Which amendment did Alice Paul promote to end gender discrimination?

A. Prohibition Amendment
B. Equal Rights Amendment
C. Sheppard-Towner Amendment
D. Free Exercise Amendment

Which novel of the era satirized the conformity of the American middle class?

A. *This Side of Paradise*
B. *The Sun Also Rises*
C. *A Farewell to Arms*
D. *Babbitt*

Why did the prohibition amendment fail after its adoption in 1919?

What was the Harlem Renaissance, and who were some of the most famous participants?

Note

Glossary

bootlegging
a nineteenth-century term for the illegal transport of alcoholic beverages that became popular during Prohibition

expatriate
someone who lives outside of their home country

flapper
a young, modern woman who embraced the new morality and fashions of the Jazz Age

Lost Generation

a group of writers who came of age during World War I and expressed their disillusionment with the era

Negro nationalism

the notion that African Americans had a distinct and separate national heritage that should inspire pride and a sense of community

new morality

the more permissive mores adopted my many young people in the 1920s

Contributors

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7.9: Cavendish, Margaret "The Hunting of the Hare" (1653)

Betwixt two Ridges of land, lay Wat,

Pressing his Body close to Earth lay squat.

His Nose upon his two Fore-feet close lies,

Glaring obliquely with his great gray Fyes.

His Head he alwaies sets against the Wind;

If turne his Taile his Haires blow up behind:

Which he too cold will grow, but he is wise,

And keepes his Coat still downe, so warm he lies.

Thus resting all the day, till Sun doth set,

Then riseth up, his Reliefe for to get.

Walking about until the Sun doth rise,

Then back returnes, downe in his Forme he lyes.

At last, Poore Wat was found, as he there lay,

By Hunts-men, with their Dogs which came that way.

Seeing, gets up, and fast begins to run,

Hoping some waies the ◊ Dogs to shun.

But they by Nature have so quick a Sent,

That by their Nose they trace what way he went.

And with their deep, wide Mouths set forth a Cry,

Which answer'd was by Ecchoes in the Skie.

Then Wat was struck with Terrour, and with Feare,

Thinkes every Shadow still the Dogs they were.

And running out some distance from the noise,

To hide himselfe, his Thoughts he new imploies.

Under a Clod of Earth in Sand-pit wide,

Poore Wat fat close, hoping himselfe to hide.

There long he ◊ not sat, but strait his Eares

The Winding ◊ , and crying Dogs he heares:

Starting with Feare, up leapes, then doth he run,

And with such speed, the Ground scarce treades upon.

Into a great thick Wood ◊ strait way gets,

Where underneath a broken Bough he sits.

At every Lease that with the wind did shake,

Did bring such ◊ , made his Heart to ake.

That Place he left, to Champian Plaines he went,

Winding about, for to deceive their Sent.

And while they ◊ were, to sind his Track,

Poore Wat, being weary, his swift pace did slack.

On his two hinder legs for ease did sit,

His Fore-feet rub'd his Face from Dust, and Sweat.

Licking his Feet, he wip'd his Eares so cleane,

That none could tell that Wat had hunted been.

But casting round about his faire great Eyes,

The Hounds in full Careere he him 'spies:

To Wat it was so terrible a Sight,

Feare gave him Wings, and made his Body light.

Though weary was before, by running long,

Yet now his Breath he never felt more strong.

Like those that dying are, think Health returnes,

When tis but a faint Blast, which Life out burnes.

For Spirits seek to guard the Heart about,

Striving with Death, but Death doth quench them out.

Thus they so fast came on, with such loud Cries,

That he no hopes hath left, nor help espies.

With that the Winds did pity poore Wats case,

And with their Breath the Sent blew from the Place.

Then every Nose is busily imployed,

And every Nostrill is set open, wide:

And every Head doth seek a severall way,

To find what , or Track, the Sent on lay.

Thus quick Industry, that is not slack,

Is like to Witchery, brings lost things back.

For though the Wind had the Sent up close,

A Busie Dog thrust in his Nose:

And drew it out, with it did foremost run,

Then Hornes blew loud, for th' rest to follow on.

The great slow-Hounds, their throats did set a Base,

The Fleet swift Hounds, as Tenours next in place;

The little Beagles they a Trebble sing,

And through the Aire their Voice a round did ring?

Which made a Consort, as they ran along;

If they but words could speak, might sing a Song,

The Hornes kept time, the Hunters shout for Joy,

And valiant seeme, poore Wat for to destroy:

Spurring their Horses to a full Careere,

Swim Rivers deep, leap Ditches without feare;

Indanger Life, and Limbes, so fast will ride,

Onely to see how patiently Wat died.

For why, the Dogs so neere his Heeles did get,

That they their sharp Teeth in his Breech did set.

Then tumbling downe, did fall with weeping Eyes,

Gives up his Ghost, and thus poore Wat he dies.

Men hooping loud, such Acclamations make,

As if the Devill they did Prisoner take.

When they do but a shiftlesse Creature kill;

To hunt, there needs no Valiant Souldiers skill.

But Man doth think that Exercise, and Toile,

To keep their Health, is best, which makes most spoile.

Thinking that Food, and Nourishment so good,

And Appetite, that feeds on Flesh, and Blood.

When they do Lions, Wolves, Beares, Tigers see,

To kill poore Sheep, strait say, they cruell be.

But for themselves all Creatures think too few,

For Luxury, wish God would make them new.

As if that God made Creatures for Mans meat,

To give them Life, and Sense, for Man to eat;

Or else for Sport, or Recreations sake,

Destroy those Lifes that God saw good to make:

Making their Stomacks, Graves, which full they fill

With Murther'd Bodios, that in sport they kill.

Yet Man doth think himselfe so gentle, mild,

When he of Creatures is most cruell wild.

And is so Proud, thinks onely he shall live,

That God a God-like Nature did him give.

And that all Creatures for his sake alone,

Was made for him, to Tyramize upon.

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7.10: Crane, Stephen "In the Desert" (1895)

In the desert

I saw a creature, naked, bestial,

Who, squatting upon the ground,

Held his heart in his hands,

And ate of it.

I said, “Is it good, friend?”

“It is bitter—bitter,” he answered;

“But I like it

Because it is bitter,

And because it is my heart.”

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7.11: Burns, Robert "To a Mouse" (1785)

Wee, sleekit, cowrin, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a pannic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion,
Has broken nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request;
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
An' never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell-
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

Thy wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy-lane,
In proving foresight may be vain;
The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy!

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me
The present only toucheth thee:
But, Och! I backward cast my e'e.
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear

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7.12: Behn, Aphra. Two Poems. (1688)



"File:Aphra Behn by Peter Lely.jpg"by Gabriel VanHelsing is licensed under CC0 1.0 .

To the fair Clarinda, who made Love to me, imagin'd more than Woman

Fair lovely Maid, or if that Title be
Too weak, too Feminine for Nobler thee,
Permit a Name that more Approaches Truth:
And let me call thee, Lovely Charming Youth.
This last will justifie my soft complaint,
While that may serve to lessen my constraint;
And without Blushes I the Youth persue,
When so much beauteous Woman is in view.
Against thy Charms we struggle but in vain
With thy deluding Form thou giv'st us pain,
While the bright Nymph betrays us to the Swain.
In pity to our Sex sure thou wer't sent,
That we might Love, and yet be Innocent:
For sure no Crime with thee we can commit;
Or if we shou'd—thy Form excuses it.
For who, that gathers fairest Flowers believes
A Snake lies hid beneath the Fragrant Leaves.

Thou beauteous Wonder of a different kind,
Soft *Cloris* with the dear *Alexis* join'd;
When e'r the Manly part of thee, wou'd plead
Thou tempts us with the Image of the Maid,
While we the noblest Passions do extend
The Love to *Hermes*, *Aphrodite* the Friend.

On Her Loving Two Equally

I.

How strongly does my Passion flow,

Divided equally 'twixt two?

Damon had ne'er subdu'd my Heart,

Had not *Alexis* took his part;

Nor cou'd *Alexis* pow'rful prove,

Without my *Damons* Aid, to gain my Love.

II.

When my *Alexis* present is,

Then I for *Damon* sigh and mourn;

But when *Alexis* I do miss,

Damon gains nothing but my Scorn.

But if it chance they both are by,

For both alike I languish, sigh, and die.

III.

Cure then, thou mighty winged God,

This restless Feaver in my Blood;

One Golden-Pointed Dart take back:

But which, O *Cupid*, wilt thou take?

If *Damons*, all my Hopes are crost;

Or that of my *Alexis*, I am lost.

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7.13: Dong-joo, Yoon. Selected Poems from Sky, Wind, and Stars. Trans. Kyung-nyun Kay Richards and Steffen F. Richards (2003)

Forward

Wishing not to have
so much as a speck of shame
toward heaven until the day I die,
I suffered, even when the wind stirred the leaves.
With my heart singing to the stars,
I shall love all things that are dying.
And I must walk the road
that has been given to me.
Tonight, again, the stars are
brushed by the wind

November 20, 1941

At the Window

Every recess
I go to the window.
—Windows give living lessons.
Please build me a roaring fire.
Cold is settling into the room.
A single maple leaf seemed
to spiral:
perhaps from a small whirlwind.
Nevertheless, when the sun's rays shine brightly
on the cold windowpane,
I can tell the school bell is about to ring.

October 1937

A Poem That Came Easily

The night rain whispers outside the window
of my six-mat room, in an alien country.
The poet has a sad vocation, I know:
should I write another line of poetry?
Having received my tuition from home in an envelope
soaked with the smell of sweat and love,
I tuck my college notebook under my arm
and go off to listen to the lecture of an old professor.
Looking back, I see that I have lost my childhood friends:
one and two at a time—all of them.
What was it that I was hoping for,
and why am I simply sinking to the bottom alone?
Life is meant to be difficult:
it is too bad
that a poem comes so easily to me.
My six-mat room in an alien country:
The night rain whispers outside the window.
I light the lamp to drive out the darkness a little,
and I, in my last moments, wait for the morning,
which will come like a new era.
Extending a small hand to myself,
I offer myself the very first handshake,
tears, and condolences.

June 3, 1942

The Rose Fell Ill

The rose fell ill,
but there is no neighborhood
to move it to.
Should we send it up into the mountains
in a covered wagon all alone?
Should we send it out to sea,
to the mournful sound of a steamship horn?
Should we send it high up into the stratosphere
in an airplane, its propellers roaring?
Never mind all that.
Bury it instead in my heart
before my growing son
wakes from his dreams.

September 1939

Yoon Dong-joo Biography

Yoon Dong-joo was born in Myong-dong Chon, a village in northern Manchuria on December 30, 1917, to a Korean family known for its strong patriotism and progressive thoughts. The

paternal side of the family had moved to northern Manchuria in his great-grandfather's generation, and one of the uncles on the maternal side was a revered educator who established a school for children of Korean residents in Manchuria. It was in this school that young Yoon Dong-joo began his primary education. The school taught him Korean and history, among other subjects, and he was exposed to an intense sense of identity as a Korean and of patriotism for his country.

His interest and talent for writing became manifest early in his youth. As early as age twelve, he started publishing his rhymes and poems for children in a mimeographed magazine called "New Myong-dong" with the help of his childhood friend and cousin, Song Mong-kyu. Most of his childrens' poems were written during this time.

...

[By the time Yoon was in college he was] an avid reader and had an extensive library of some 800 volumes by the time he was a senior at Yon-hee [College]. He read poets such as Chong Ji-yong, Kim Young-nang, Lee Sang, and Seo Chong-joo, and was especially fond of the works of Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Valery, Gide, Baudelaire, Jammes, Rilke, and Cocteau.

An important aspect of his days at Yon-hee College was his experience of living in various boarding houses in Seoul. His close friend and cousin, Song Mong-kyu, had been under suspicion of working for the resistance movement, and Yoon also was under surveillance, as he was closely associated with the Korean intellectuals who were engaged in the resistance. He had to move from boarding house to boarding house in order to elude harassment from the Japanese police.

In 1941, as a commemorative gesture for his graduation from college, Yoon compiled a collection of 19 poems with the title "Sky, Wind, Stars, and Poems." He intended to publish 77 copies and distribute them to his friends and relatives. But the project was postponed when his trusted professor, Lee Yang-ha, advised him to wait for a more opportune time, as some of his poems might not pass the censorship of the Japanese authorities. Yoon Dong-joo then made three copies by hand: one for Professor Lee Yang-ha, one for his closest friend and roommate, Chong Byong-wook, whose copy survives; and one for himself. These poems were never published in his lifetime.

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7.14: Hill, Sean "Distance Between Desires" from Dangerous Goods (2013)

Distance Between Desires

From the moon to the end of this poem
hums the distance between desires.
In troughs of night Jasmine slept,
numb from the consumption of rays

from the moon. Through to its end, this poem
fends off desire. A toast to the heavy
drum that pulls us daily and urges that we

hum the distance. Between desires,
men scoff at the moon, hung lightly to shine
plum-dark night as they measure breaths

from the moon to the end. Of our poems,
ends tossed out to hold them off, we hope
some may say they rumble on and pleasingly

hum the distance between. Desires
bend us and bend. Doff your hat, where I come
from, a show of respect. Desires plumb where we come
from. The moon to the end of this poem
lends soft light. As one desire leaves another
hums the distance between desires.

Author Bio

- Sean Hill is an award-winning poet and professor of poetry.

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7.15: Hughes, Langston "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" (1921)

I’ve known rivers:
I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I’ve seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I’ve known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

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7.16: Keats, John. Selected Poems. (1819)

Ode to a Nightingale

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.
O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:
Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.
Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.
I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.
Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.
Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell

To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades

Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

Ode on a Grecian Urn

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,

Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,

Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape

Of deities or mortals, or of both,

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard

Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,

Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave

Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,

For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed

Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;

And, happy melodist, unwearied,

For ever piping songs for ever new;

More happy love! more happy, happy love!

For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,

For ever panting, and for ever young;

All breathing human passion far above,

That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,

A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?

To what green altar, O mysterious priest,

Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,

And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?

What little town by river or sea shore,

Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,

Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

And, little town, thy streets for evermore

Will silent be; and not a soul to tell

Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede

Of marble men and maidens overwrought,

With forest branches and the trodden weed;

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought

As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

When old age shall this generation waste,

Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,

Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;

Conspiring with him how to load and bless

With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;

To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,

And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;

To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells

With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,

And still more, later flowers for the bees,

Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.
Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.
Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

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7.17: Marlowe, Christopher "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" (1599)

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me, and be my love.

The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

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7.18: Moore, Alice Ruth "Amid the Roses" (1895)

There is tropical warmth and languorous life
    Where the roses lie
    In a tempting drift
Of pink and red and golden light
Untouched as yet by the pruning knife.
And the still, warm life of the roses fair
    That whisper "Come,"
    With promises
Of sweet caresses, close and pure
Has a thorny whiff in the perfumed air.
There are thorns and love in the roses' bed,
    And Satan too
    Must linger there;
So Satan's wiles and the conscience stings,
Must now abide—the roses are *dead*.

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7.19: Nguyen, Hieu Minh. "The Study" and "White Boy Time Machine- Override" (2018)

The Study

For the longest time, the only memories I had
of that year were of Little Billy from the third floor,
floating
dead in the pool & how angry the rest of the tenants
were
when they drained & filled it with cement
& how that summer, the unbearable heat dragged its
endless skin
across our bones — memory is the funniest character in
this story:
when I think of that year, no one has a face — the first
memory
I had of being molested did not come until nine years
later.
At first I thought it was a dream, a movie, white noise
summoning a narrative through the static — if it's true
what they say about memory being a series of rooms
then behind some locked door: a wicked apothecary: her
fingers
trapped in jars, her hair growing like wild vines along
the walls.
Somewhere in this story I am nine years old
filling the loud hollows with cement to drown out the
ghost.
They say, *give us details*, so I give them my body.
They say, *give us proof*, so I give them my body.
If you cut me open, if you dissect me you will pull from
me:
a pair of handprints, a nine-year-old boy, fossilized.

White Boy Time Machine: Override

No matter where we go, there's a history
of white men describing a landscape
so they can claim it. I look out the window
& I don't see a sunset, I see a man's
pink tongue razing the horizon.
I once heard a man describe the village
in Vietnam where my family comes from.
It was beautiful
a poem I would gift my mother
but somewhere in the pastoral I am reminded
a child (recently) was blown apart
after stepping on a mine, a bulb, I guess
blooming forty years later—
maybe it was how the poet said *dirt*
or maybe it was how he used fire
to describe the trees.

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7.20: Raleigh, Walter "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" (1600)

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Time drives the flocks from field to fold
When Rivers rage and Rocks grow cold,
And *Philomel* becometh dumb;
The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward winter reckoning yields;
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten:
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and Ivy buds,
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,
All these in me no means can move
To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last and love still breed,
Had joys no date nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy love.

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7.21: Robinson, Edwin Arlington "Richard Cory" (1897)

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,

We people on the pavement looked at him:

He was a gentleman from sole to crown,

Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,

And he was always human when he talked;

But still he fluttered pulses when he said,

"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—

And admirably schooled in every grace:

In fine, we thought that he was everything

To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,

And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;

And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,

Went home and put a bullet through his head.

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7.22: Wheatley, Phillis. Selections from Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral (1773)

Selections from *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*



Portrait of Phillis Wheatley which appeared in *Revue des Colonies* in Paris between 1834 and 1842 (Source: Schomburg Center via Public Domain Review)

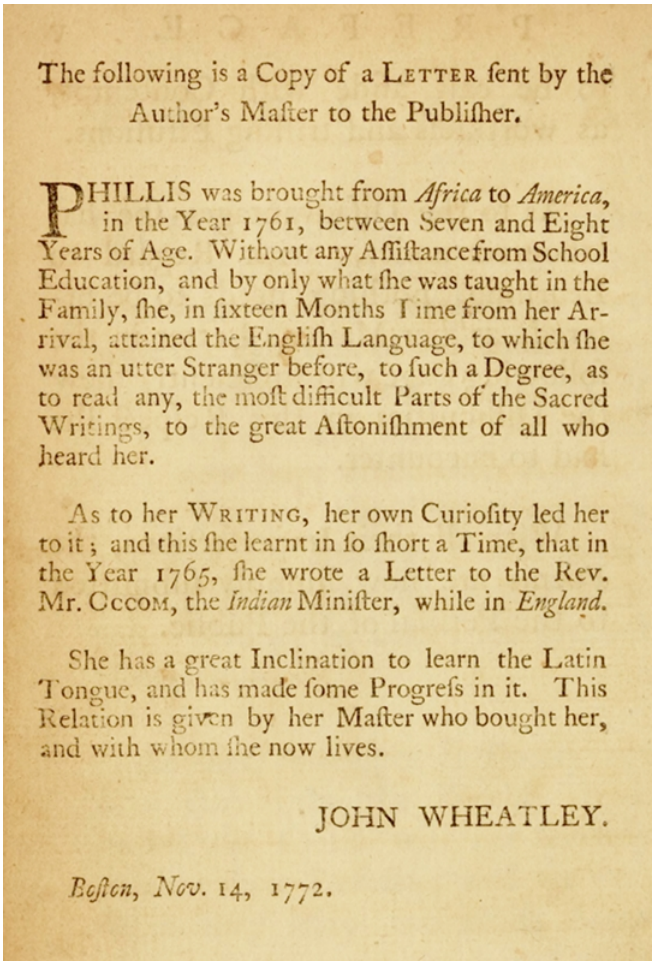
An Hymn to the Morning

ATTEND my lays, ye ever honour'd nine,
Assist my labours, and my strains refine;
In smoothest numbers pour the notes along,
For bright Aurora now demands my song.
Aurora hail, and all the thousand dies,
Which deck thy progress through the vaulted skies:
The morn awakes, and wide extends her rays,
On ev'ry leaf the gentle zephyr plays;
Harmonious lays the feather'd race resume,
Dart the bright eye, and shake the painted plume.
Ye shady groves, your verdant gloom display
To shield your poet from the burning day:
Calliope awake the sacred lyre,
While thy fair sisters fan the pleasing fire:
The bow'rs, the gales, the variegated skies
In all their pleasures in my bosom rise.
See in the east th' illustrious king of day!
His rising radiance drives the shades away--
But Oh! I feel his fervid beams too strong,
And scarce begun, concludes th' abortive song.

An Hymn to the Evening

SOON as the sun forsook the eastern main
The pealing thunder shook the heav'nly plain;
Majestic grandeur! From the zephyr's wing,
Exhales the incense of the blooming spring.
Soft purl the streams, the birds renew their notes,
And through the air their mingled music floats.
Through all the heav'ns what beauteous dies are spread!
But the west glories in the deepest red:
So may our breasts with ev'ry virtue glow,
The living temples of our God below!
Fill'd with the praise of him who gives the light,
And draws the sable curtains of the night,
Let placid slumbers sooth each weary mind,
At morn to wake more heav'nly, more refin'd;
So shall the labours of the day begin
More pure, more guarded from the snares of sin.
Night's leaden sceptre seals my drowsy eyes,
Then cease, my song, till fair Aurora rise.

Letter from John Wheatley to the English publisher of Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773).



The following is a Copy of a LETTER ſent by the Author's Maſter to the Publiſher.

PHILLIS was brought from *Africa* to *America*, in the Year 1761, between Seven and Eight Years of Age. Without any Aſſiſtance from School Education, and by only what ſhe was taught in the Family, ſhe, in ſixteen Months Time from her Arrival, attained the Engliſh Language, to which ſhe was an utter Stranger before, to ſuch a Degree, as to read any, the moſt difficult Parts of the Sacred Writings, to the great Aſtoniſhment of all who heard her.

As to her WRITING, her own Curioſity led her to it; and this ſhe learnt in ſo ſhort a Time, that in the Year 1765, ſhe wrote a Letter to the Rev. Mr. OCCOM, the *Indian* Miniſter, while in *England*.

She has a great Inclination to learn the Latin Tongue, and has made ſome Progreſs in it. This Relation is given by her Maſter who bought her, and with whom ſhe now lives.

JOHN WHEATLEY.

Boſton, Nov. 14, 1772.

Phillis was brought from Africa to America in the year 1761, between seven and eight years of age. Without any assistance from school education, and by only what she was taught in the family, she, in sixteen months time from her arrival, attained the English language, to which she was an utter stranger before, to such a degree, as to read any, the most difficult parts of the sacred writings, to the great astonishment of all who heard her.

As to her writing, her own curiosity led her to it; and this she learned in so short a time, that in the year 1765 she wrote a letter to the Rev. Mr. Occum, the Indian minister, while in England.

She has a great inclination to learn the Latin Tongue, and has made some progress in it. This relation is given by her master, who bought her, and with whom she now lives.

John Wheatley.

Boston, Nov. 14, 1772.

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7.23: Williams, William Carlos. Selected poems (1913-1923).

The Young Housewife (1916)

At ten A.M. the young housewife
moves about in negligee behind
the wooden walls of her husband's house.
I pass solitary in my car.

Then again she comes to the curb
to call the ice-man, fish-man, and stands
shy, uncorseted, tucking in
stray ends of hair, and I compare her
to a fallen leaf.

The noiseless wheels of my car
rush with a crackling sound over
dried leaves as I bow and pass smiling.

The Red Wheelbarrow (1923)

So much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

Epitaph (1921)

An old willow with hollow branches
slowly swayed his few high bright tendrils
and sang:

Love is a young green willow
shimmering at the bare wood's edge.

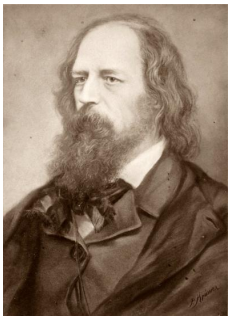
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7.24: Tennyson, Alfred Lord "The Lady of Shalott" (1832)

Author Biography

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) is one of the most prominent English poets and is, even today, both read and cherished by a big audience. Tennyson's early writing is clearly inspired by the Romantic tradition, though most of his work was published during the Victorian period. "The Lady of Shalott" is one of his most famous poems, and was published in Tennyson's first collection of poems in 1832.



This image of Alfred Lord Tennyson is in the public domain

Like so many writers and poets, Tennyson took little interest in his school work and studies. He went to Cambridge, but he idled through his studies and never took a degree. He sought company with friends who inspired him and encouraged him to follow his poetic vocation. However, his early writing was not given much esteem by his contemporary critics. But Tennyson was determined to succeed and was indefatigably working to perfect his art. During the 1840s, he gradually won the acclaim of the reading public, and in 1850 he was appointed Poet Laureate by Queen Victoria; a prestigious honor to be bestowed on a living poet. (Tennyson succeeded William Wordsworth as Poet Laureate). Tennyson was very productive during his later life; he was a versatile writer with a wide horizon. His writing includes poems, drama, essays, and religious and philosophical reflections. His popularity and his contribution to Victorian literature have given him an undisputable position in English literary tradition.

"The Lady of Shalott" (1832)



"Illustration to Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott'" by W. E. F. Britten (1901) is in the public domain

I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And through the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow

Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott,

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Through the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and for gray towers
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle embowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly
Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers, "'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott.

II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down on Camelot.
She know not what the curse may be
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,

And there the surly village-churls
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes through the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two;
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often through the silent nights
A funeral with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
"I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling through the leaves
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot.
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather;
The helmet and the helmet feather
Burned like one burning flame together.
As he rode down to Camelot.

As often through the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror;
"Tirra lirra" by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse –
Like some bold seer in trance,
Seeing all his own mischance –
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right –
The leaves upon her falling light –
Through the noises of the night

As she floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turned to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? And what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot;
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott".

Exercise 7.23.1

Understanding the Poem

1. Rather than trying to understand the full poetic narrative word by word, it may be more fruitful, to begin with, to take in the atmosphere and the use of legendary references. What elements do you think create the mystic and fairy tale-like atmosphere? Which old legend does the poem refer to?
2. The poem contains a number of archaic (old and obsolete) words that add to the feeling of a mystic and legendary past. Point out some examples of such words; how would they sound today?
3. The poem is divided into four parts. What information do we get in each part? How does the narrative develop during the different parts of the poem?
4. The rhyming and rhythmic patterns of the poem come alive when the poem is read out loud. Give some examples of how repetition and alliteration are essential elements.
5. Find the rhyming pattern of the poem and check if the poet sticks to it all the way through. Do you think that a rhyming structure is an important element of poetry in general? Why/why not?

6. Pay attention to the line structure of the poem. What is the effect of the indentation of lines five and nine in each stanza?
7. There are many common poetic symbols in the poem (the loom, weaving, a river, an island in the river, a mirror, a curse, etc.) Discuss an interpretation of these symbols both in general and in this poem particularly.
8. Where do we find traces of romantic and gothic themes and imagery in the poem?
9. What is a "red-cross knight"?
10. This is a quite physical poetic narrative with a distinct setting. Point out some descriptions of landscape, the island, the weather, the looks of the characters, and colors and sounds.
11. Tennyson presumed that his readers were familiar with the legend of King Arthur, Sir Lancelot, and Camelot – are you? If not, you may want to search the net for information about this famous legend in English history. (Note that The Lady of Shalott does not appear in the legend, but The Lady of Astolat, Sir Lancelot, and Camelot do in Tennyson's poem – what is the effect of that allusion?)

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7.25: Allen Gingsbert- Beat Poet



Image 6.7 | Allen Ginsberg, 1979
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Ever since he read his groundbreaking poem "Howl" in 1954 to a shocked and enthralled audience at the Six Gallery in San Francisco, Allen Ginsberg has been the poetic voice of America's counterculture. Ginsberg grew up in Patterson, New Jersey and attended Columbia University in New York City, where he met fellow authors Jack Kerouac (author of *On the Road* published in 1957) and William S. Burroughs (author of *Naked Lunch* published in 1959). Although a distinguished student, Ginsberg was temporarily expelled from Columbia for profanity and later spent eight months in a mental institution after pleading insanity when caught storing stolen goods for a drug addict friend. Upon his release, he was befriended by the poet William Carlos Williams, who recognized in Ginsberg a singular talent. After graduating from Columbia and supporting himself with a series of menial jobs in Harlem, Ginsberg moved to San Francisco in 1953 and began a successful, if brief, career as a market researcher. Yet his true calling remained poetry; he was soon fired from his job and, while on unemployment, wrote the poem that would make his reputation as a major American poet: the explosive, furious "Howl," whose opening lines famously read, "I have seen the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, / dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix, / angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machine of night..." In San Francisco, Ginsberg found a welcoming community of poets centered around Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookshop. In 1956, **City Lights Books** published Ginsberg's first collection, *Howl and Other Poems* (which includes the poem selected here, "A Supermarket in California"), only to have the book seized and prosecuted by U.S. Customs for its allegedly indecent depiction of sexuality. From that point on, in numerous volumes of poetry as well as direct political actions from sit-ins to Congressional testimonies, Ginsberg became a singularly oppositional voice in American culture, howling against conformity and war, championing environmentalism and gay rights, and finding beauty in all that American society has beaten down.

Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* and his friend Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* (a *roman à clef* in which the leftist Ginsberg is the character "Carlo Marx") are the two definitive works of **Beat literature**, depicting the countercultural lives of their artists in an improvisatory, spontaneous style akin to jazz music. In 1948, while still living in Harlem, Ginsberg experienced a days-long **cosmic vision** in which he beheld the beauty of all divine creation and heard the godly voice of British romantic poet William Blake in the sky reciting his *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1798). Inspired by this vision and writing under the mentorship of William Carlos Williams, Ginsberg began crafting the poetic style for which he is now known: long, free Whitmanesque lines that find their rhythms in everyday American speech and contain the shockingly personal confessions of the poet himself on topics ranging from his mother's mental illness to his own open homosexuality. For Ginsberg, the American experience is often one of oppression and loss; Ginsberg's poetic mission, accordingly, is to recover the beauty of those people and things America herself has cast aside. In the poem "A Supermarket in California" included here, Ginsberg imagines walking with his poetic ancestor Walt Whitman through a modern-day supermarket, showing the great American romantic what his beautiful nation has become.

"A Supermarket in California"

Please click the link to access this selection.

Exercise 7.24.1

Reading and Review Questions

1. Making reference to the imagery in Ginsberg's poem, describe the America Walt Whitman finds in a mid-twentieth-century American supermarket.
2. Why does Ginsberg "feel absurd" when dreaming of his "odyssey in the supermarket" with Whitman?
3. Whitman asks three questions while in the supermarket: "Who killed the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?" Imagine going into Publix, Kroger, or Ingles and asking these same three questions. How would the staff in the produce section or behind the meat counter respond? Could they even answer all three questions? And what do their responses tell us about the kinds of thought that are encouraged in modern consumer America and the kinds of thought that are not?

For more on Beat poetry, read here.

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7.26: Athena Kashyap



Athena grew up in India and went to the U.S. for her higher education, where she received her BA in Critical Social Thought and History from Mount Holyoke College, her MA in English from the University of California at Davis, and her MFA in Poetry from San Francisco State University. She currently lives in San Francisco where she teaches English at City College of San Francisco.

Athena has written two collections of poetry, *Sita's Choice* (2019) and *Crossing Black Waters* (2012), both published by Stephen F. Austin State University Press in Texas. Her poems have appeared in *Exquisite Corpse*, *All Roads Lead You Home*, *The Missing Slate*, *Forum*, and *The Fourth River*, among other journals. Her work has also been anthologized both in the U.S. and India and has been translated into other languages.

Coming Down the Mountain

for Shiv Ram Kashyap

Great-grandfather enters my room in Los Angeles, clutching two clumps of roots still bleeding Himalayan mud. He says he's sorry to come so late at night, but he can't find his way. The family house he built in Lahore still stands, but neighbors have moved in and his family is gone. At the University, the botany lab he founded no longer bears his name. His students have aged terribly—they look right through him. He has trouble with his eyes, sees just half of everything—his students, the map of India on the wall. Even the city landscape is missing parts—temples, sari shops, certain street names. The last thing he remembers is climbing the mountain, up from the city he once knew and loved. He looks so tired, I want to help him but am myself adrift, barely flickering in this city's sea of lights. Our family's dispersed like seeds, searching for each other and their own selves in clouds of lost mountains. I see, says Grandfather with his half-blind eyes, but then he's gone, waving dead roots in my face.

Crossing Black Waters

Once she stepped outside, her skin

dissolved. She struggled to stay

afloat but as years distanced her

from the caress of the Ganges

that once swept her plains,

holy hum of her hidden

Himalayan caves, she grew

weak. Just when she started

to drown, webs of seed,

teeth, and hair unraveled

to release her, let her float away,

guided by loose, unkempt stars

Partition Story

For the hundreds of thousands of mothers who lost sons
and daughters during the partition of India in 1947.

I thought I lost you
after these thirty years of yearning
to see your face again, your brown eyes,
your hair falling across your forehead,
your smile. And, then this chance
to go to Lahore, to see the house.
Your father warns me not to raise my hopes;
it is not our house anymore. But, there I see it
on the street lined with the marigold trees,
bright orange flowers sailing in the wind like swallows
before falling. The house looks just the same.
The woman who opens the door is old like us.
We used to live here, your father says,
before the Partition.
She smiles and opens the door
I've been waiting for you, she says.

We walk into the house; the furniture is still the same—
mahogany table, green lime sofa with wood-carved crustings.
How grand-father had been so proud of them.
May I look around? Please, she steps aside.
This is your house. I walk to the kitchen—
my feet know this path well! Often in the apartment
back in Bombay, my feet traced this path in sleep
but instead of your room, this dining room
I woke up in the balcony and once even outside
the house. Your father made me promise to bolt
all doors lest my feet grapple empty space.
Here in the kitchen, my hands trace the air
like the paths that migratory birds know by heart
still knowing where I kept spices, lentils, rice, wheat
in the various cabinets. All the same ingredients
are here for this woman looks and eats like us
but I don’t know her secret zoning.
The thought of you so close is overpowering.
Can we go to the bedrooms? Please, she repeats.
This is your house.

As I walk up the stairs, my palm resting on the stair-head,
it all comes back. The tension in the house so high
the air is trembling. Your father saying we have to leave

right away. The neighbor's child, sweet Sunil
was murdered in the market with his ayah. Three days ago,
the house down the street was scorched.
We'd heard the stories before—the news was full of it.
But, then they came to visit us, tap on our door,
envelop us in their horror, shaking rage.
We never thought it could happen to us.
Grandfather wandered about the house touching
everything: the walls, the furniture, even the floor.
He'd spent forty years of his life building this house.
Take nothing, your father repeats. Just cash,
jewelry, a change of clothes. I nod dumbly.
I wouldn't know where to begin to pack not knowing
where we are going, if we are ever coming back.
Only—
it breaks my heart to leave you behind.

I pass by our bedroom with its giant bed still
intact and walk into your room. Your bed is there
in the same place, by the window. But the walls
are bare, and you are gone.
Your father squeezes my hand.
All these years, the days turning into nights and back again
I could take with the thought of you in your room
of all your twelve years. And now, this?
My darling boy! My son!
My husband warned of this great awakening
but how to see the world torn asunder and still live?
The earth, one people, a mother torn from her son
My son! My world crumbles before me and I stumble
down the stairs as if I am dreaming, time and life
no longer a care. The woman entreats us to stay
have tea, share biscuits. Our plane is leaving soon,
your father says.

As we walk out the door, the woman grasps
my hand. She runs back and returns with a package
rolled in old newspapers, moldy string. I take it.
There are taxis at the end of the street, she tells us.
There were always taxis at the end of the street.
My feet crunch the flowers on the ground leaving
orange footsteps. My fingers struggle with the string,
your father helps get it open. I undo sheet after sheet
of old newspapers, the headlines still screaming.

> *THOUSANDS MURDERED IN RAWALPINDI*
> *TRAINS WITH MUTILATED BODIES ARRIVE*
> *REFUGEES COLLIDE IN RIVERS OF BLOOD*

I am mute to the news, and I let the newspapers
to the ground. Your father shakes his head

and picks up after me. There, at the very end
after I have unwrapped all the news is a canvas,
dry and safe after all these years, cocooned
in its horrific packaging. I slowly unroll…
the top of your head, your soft brown hair,
your brown eyes looking so curious and straight at me,
your nose, your mouth, your smile,
your small shoulders, your chest—still breathing!
I hold you up with both hands as I walk and I am smiling
and orange flowers are falling from the sky
raining on both of us.

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7.27: Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Plath's father, a professor of biology at Boston University and an authoritarian figure within the family, died when Plath was eight years old, and Plath struggled for the rest of her life to come to terms with her complicated feelings for him. Plath's mother went to work to provide for Plath and her brother. From a young age, Plath was a high achiever, showing an early talent as a writer and poet. She received a scholarship to Smith College and, after graduating, was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to Cambridge University. In spite of a history of depression and one suicide attempt, Plath excelled at academics and worked diligently on her writing, periodically publishing her work. At Cambridge, Plath met the young, upcoming British poet Ted Hughes; the two shared an intense and immediate attraction, marrying only a few months later. Plath and Hughes enjoyed their first years together as writing partners, encouraging each other as poets. The two lived for a time in America, travelled broadly, and eventually returned to England to live. Plath gave birth to two children and engaged in domestic routines while still working on poems that would eventually be included in her posthumous collection, *Ariel* (1965). She continued to struggle with depression, and after discovering Ted Hughes's affair with a mutual friend, Assia Wevill, Plath's depression worsened. She eventually separated from Hughes and moved to London with her children in an attempt to start over on her own. Most of the poems that comprise *Ariel* were written while she lived in London. During a particularly difficult winter where she saw her novel *The Bell Jar* published to less than enthusiastic reviews in January 1963, Plath's mental state deteriorated. She committed suicide in February 1963, leaving her children behind, as well as the new collection of poems that would eventually make her famous after her death.



Image 6.11 | Sylvia Plath, n.d.
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Plath's most critically acclaimed poems are those that appeared in her posthumous collection, *Ariel*. In these last poems composed before her suicide, Plath appears to have reached a new level of creative complexity in imagery and theme. Her poems exhibit a raw power and anger, as she battles with despair and attempts to find the fortitude to endure her psychic pain. Within the postmodern milieu and contributing to its innovations, Plath does not create a distinct persona through which she filters these intense, private emotions. Poetic form and tradition become less significant with postmodern poets, and the poet's voice achieves primacy, especially in the school of poetry termed "Confessional." Poets such as Allen Ginsberg, Anne Sexton, and Plath in the 1950s were willing to probe their psyches in very private, personal ways, "confessing" their deepest, most private, even disturbing feelings. In the time period, this kind of psychological probing of the self was new and provocative. From a feminist perspective, Plath in the *Ariel* poems openly explores her feelings of rage against the men in her life and against patriarchal authority in general. Plath also explores her feelings of ambivalence about being a mother, the cultural pressures she experienced of becoming a wife and mother, the pain she endured as a result of her husband's infidelity, and her battle with depression that culminated in suicide attempts. In "Daddy," the prevalent Nazi imagery is not autobiographical but is used to depict the extreme emotions at work in the narrative voice's desperate, raging attempt to cut the cord of paternalistic domination. The narrative voice urgently and angrily wants to break from daddy's control, domination, and influence in order to forge her own identity as a woman and as a person. In "Fever 103˚," the narrative voice offers hallucinogenic images of a fevered self, burned pure of fleshly needs and desires into an acetylene virgin, a bodiless entity that is almost invisible but nevertheless combustible. In her virginal state, untouched by the "lecherous" patriarchy, she is most volatile and powerful.

"Daddy"

Please click the link to access this selection.

"Fever 103°"

Please click the link to access this selection.

Exercise 7.26.1

Reading and Review Questions

1. In Plath's "Daddy," analyze the imagery of Nazism associated with the "father" in the poem. What is the meaning of the imagery? Why is it so extreme?
2. In "Daddy," who or what is the narrator trying to break away from? Explain the nature of this break or escape the narrator is trying to make.
3. How would you describe the narrator of "Daddy": a victim? a survivor? a heroine?
4. In "Fever 103˚," examine ways in which the flesh and the spirit (or soul) are distinguished through imagery.
5. Examine the nature of "fever" in "Fever 103˚." What is the symbolic significance of "fever" in the poem?
6. Analyze the terms "purity" and "sin" in the poem in light the narrator's apparent transformation.

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7.28: The Book of Songs- China (before 551 B.C.E.)

Existed before Confucius (born around 551 B.C.E.)

China

The Book of Songs (the *Shi king*, also translated as *The Classic of Poetry* and *The Book of Odes*) is a collection of poems written by various anonymous authors over several centuries. Traditionally, Confucius has been credited as the editor of the collection, and it was part of the canon of Confucian works that scholars were expected to study. Scholars debate how much influence Confucius may have had on them; one theory is that he took a much larger work (possibly several thousand poems) and chose just over three hundred to form the standard version that exists today. Poetry collections in China were meant to represent the voice of the people (male and female, all social classes). The poems capture moments in time, speaking to the reader about the problems and joys of individuals who were not necessarily the rulers or heroes of other stories.

Written by Laura J. Getty

The Shi King, the old “poetry Classic” of the Chinese

[The Book of Songs]

Translated by William Jennings

BOOK II.: THE ODES OF SHÂU AND THE SOUTH.

The Wedding-Journey of a Princess

The magpie has a nest;
The dove yet takes possession.
Lo! the young bride departs,
In many-wheeled procession.
The magpie has a nest;
The dove yet there will quarter.
Lo! the young bride departs;
And countless cars escort her.
The magpie has a nest;
The dove will fill it (quickly).
Lo! the young bride departs,
With chariots mustered thickly.

A Reverent Helpmate

There gathers she the fragrant herb
Along the islets, by the pools,
To mingle with the votive gifts
Of him that o'er the princedom rules.
There gathers she the fragrant herb
Amid the mountain streams again,
To mingle with the votive gifts
Her prince will offer in the fane.
With head-gear all erect and high
Ere dawn the temple she attends;
With head-gear all uncared for now
Back to her place her way she wends.

A Long-Absent Husband

Now the crickets chirp and grind;
And the hoppers spring and fly.
But my lord not yet I find;
Ay, and sore at heart am I.

O to see him once again!
O to meet him once again!
Stilled were then the swelling sigh.
Climbed I yonder up South Hill,
Plucked sweet brackens as I went.
But my lord I saw not still;
Loud was yet my heart's lament.
O to see him once again!
O to meet him once again!
So my heart were well content.
Climbed I yonder up South Hill,
Now to pluck the royal fern.
Yet my lord I saw not still;
Still my heart must pine and yearn.
O to see him once again!
O to meet him once again!
So my heart's-ease might return.

The Young Wife's Zealous Care in the Worship of her Husband's Ancestors

She goes to gather water-wort,
Beside the streams south of the hills;
She goes to gather water-grass
Along the swollen roadside rills;
Goes now to store her gathered herbs
In basket round, in basket square;
Goes now to seethe and simmer them
In tripod and in cauldron there;
Pours out libations of them all
Beneath the light within the Hall.
And who is she so occupied?
Who, but (our lord's) young pious bride?

In Memory of a Worthy Chieftain

O pear-tree, with thy leafy shade!
Ne'er be thou cut, ne'er be thou laid;
Once under thee Shâu's chieftain stayed.
O pear-tree, with thy leafy crest,
Ne'er may they cut thee, ne'er molest;
Shâu's chief beneath thee once found rest.
O pear-tree, with thy leafy shroud,
Ne'er be those branches cut, nor bowed,
That shelter to Shâu's chief allowed.

The Resisted Suitor

All soaking was the path with dew.
And was it not scarce daybreak, too?
I say: the path was drenched with dew.
Who says the sparrow has no horn?
How bores it then into my dwelling?
Who says of thee, thou art forlorn?
Why then this forcing and compelling?
But force, compel me, do thy will:
Husband and wife we are not still.
Who says of rats, they have no teeth?
How do they bore then through my wall?
Who says of thee, thou art forlorn?
Why force me then into this brawl?
But force me, sue me, even so,
With thee I do not mean to go!

Dignity and Economy of King Wăn's Councillors

Clad in lambskin or in sheepskin,
Five white silken seams that show,
To their meal from court retiring,
With what dignity they go!
Bare of wool, the lamb or sheepskin
Five white sutures may reveal,
Still with dignity retire they
From their Master to their meal.
Though the skins, now rent in patches,
Five white silken seams require,
Still with dignity the wearers
To their meal from Court retire.

The Lonely Wife

Hearken! there is thunder
On South Hill's lofty crest.
Hence why must he wander,
Nor dare a moment rest?
True-hearted husband, fain, oh fain
Were I to see thee home again.
Hearken! now the thunder
Rolls lower on South Hill.
Hence why must he wander,
Nor ever dare be still?
True-hearted husband, fain, oh fain
Were I to have thee home again.
Hearken! now the thunder
Is down upon the plain.
Hence why must he wander,
Nor dare awhile remain?
True-hearted husband, fain, oh fain
Were I to find thee home again.

Fears Of Mature Maidenhood

Though shaken be the damson-tree,
Left on it yet are seven, O.
Ye gentlemen who care for me,
Take chance while chance is given, O.
Though shaken be the damson-tree,
Yet three are still remaining, O.
Ye gentlemen who care for me,
Now, now; the time is waning, O.
Ah, shaken is the damson-tree,
And all are in the basket, O.
Ye gentlemen who care for me,
Your question would ye ask it, O!

Contented Concubines

Starlets dim are yonder peeping,
In the East are five, and three.
Softly, where our lord is (sleeping),
Soon or late by night go we.
Some have high, some low degree.
Starlets dim are yonder peeping,
Pleiades, Orion's band.
Softly nightly go we creeping,
Quilt and coverlet in hand.
Some take high, some lower stand.

Jealousy Overcome

The Kiang has arms that wayward wind.
Our lady erst as bride
Our help declined,
Our help declined;
Anon she was of other mind.
The Kiang has banks within its bed.
Our lady erst as bride
Our presence fled,
Our presence fled;
Anon a calmer life she led.
The Kiang has creeks that leave it long.
Our lady erst as bride
Spurned all our throng,
Spurned all our throng;
Her sneering now is turned to song.

The Cunning Hunter

In the wild there lies a dead gazelle,
With the reed-grass round it wrapt;
And a maid who loveth springtide well
By a winsome youth is trapped.
In the wood thick undergrowth is found,
In the wild the dead gazelle,

With the reed-grass round its body bound;
And the maid she looketh well.
"Ah! gently, not so fast, good sir;
My kerchief, prithee, do not stir;
Nor rouse the barking of my cur."

A Royal Wedding

What radiant bloom is there!
Blossoms of cherry wild.
What care attends the equipage
Of her, the royal child!
What radiance! Like the bloom
Of peach and plum in one!
Granddaughter of the Just King she,
He a true noble's son.
How was the bait then laid?
'Twas trimmed with silken twine.
He the true noble's son (thus caught)
Her of the Just King's line!

The Tsow Yu

Out there where the reeds grow rank and tall,
One round he shoots, five wild boars fall.
Hail the Tsow Yu!
And there where the grass is waving high,
One round he shoots, five wild hogs die.
Hail the Tsow Yu!

Note. Although this is one of the shortest and apparently most trivial of the Odes in the Book of Poetry, it is credited by the Chinese editors with as much meaning as the largest. It is regarded, like so many more, as illustrating the extent of the reformation brought about by King Wăn. Not only was the kingdom better ruled, society better regulated, and individuals more self-disciplined and improved in manners, but the reformation affected all things: vegetation flourished, game became most abundant, hunting was attended to at the right seasons, and the benign influence of the King was everywhere felt by the people. The poet thinks it is sufficient to dwell upon these last characteristics. Probably the lines were written after some royal hunt.

BOOK III.: THE ODES OF P'EI.

P'ei was one of three principalities which King Wu created after he overthrew the dynasty of Shang. It was in the north; and the two others were Yung in the south, and Wei in the west. P'ei and Yung were, after a short time, absorbed in Wei, which had a long history. We have, in Books III., IV. and V. titles taken from all three; but evidently the division is only artificial: the three Books might all have been included properly under the title Wei, since it is that State with which all are connected.

Derelict

The cedar boat is drifting,
On currents never still.
Sleepless I lie, vexed inly,
As with some unknown ill.
'Tis not that wine is wanting,
Or leave to roam at will.
My heart is no mere mirror
That cannot comprehend.
Brothers I have, but may not

On brothers e'en depend.
Tush! when I go complaining
'Tis only to offend.
No stone this heart of mine is,
That may be turned and rolled;
No mat this heart of mine is,
To fold or to unfold.
Steadfast and strict my life is;
Nought 'gainst it can be told.
Yet here I sit in sorrow,
Scorned by a rabble crew.
My troubles have been many,
My insults not a few.
Calmly I think then, starting,
I beat my breast anew.
O moon, why now the brighter?
O sun, why now dost wane?
My heart wears grief as garments
Inured to soil and stain.
Calmly I think then, starting,
Would fly but all in vain.

Supplanted

Green now my robe!
Green, lined with yellow.
Ah! when shall Grief
Be not my fellow!
Green is the robe;
Yellow the skirt!
Ah! when shall Grief
Nevermore hurt!
Green is the silk;
Ruled so by you.
Guide me, ye ancients!
Harm lest I do.
Lawn, fine or coarse,
Chills in the wind.
Guide me, ye ancients!
Save me my mind.

Friends In Distress

O the swallows onward flying,
Wings aslant, irregular!
O the lady homeward hieing;
O’er the wilds escort her far.
Gaze I till I gaze in vain,
And my tears are like the rain.
O the swallows onward flying,
Soaring upward, darting low!
O the lady homeward hieing;

Far then let her escort go.
Gaze I till I gaze in vain;
Long I stand and weep amain.
O the swallows onward flying,
High and low, with twittering mouth!
O the lady homeward hieing;
Far escort her to the South.
Gaze I till I gaze in vain,
And my heart scarce bears the pain.
Lady Chung on love relying,
And of feelings true and deep,
Ever sweet and much-complying,
Strict, yet, self-respect to keep
Thoughtful of the dead she:
Bright example to poor me!

Clouds Gathering

O sun, O moon, ye downwards turn
To earth your glorious gaze.
But ah! that men there be like this,
Forsaking ancient ways!
Where can be peace?
Alas, *his* glance
From *me* for ever strays!
O sun, O moon, this earth below
Hath you as crown above.
But ah, that men there be like this,
That give not love for love!
Where can be peace? Alas that he
Should so responseless prove!
O sun, O moon, that morn and eve
Rise in yon Eastern sky.
Alas that men there be like this,
Whose deeds fair words belie.
Where can be peace?
Ah, better now If *memory* could but die!
O sun, O moon, that morn and eve
Rise yonder in the East.
O parents mine! your charge of me
Hath not for ever ceased.
Where can be peace? For to my love
Responds he not the least.

The Storm

Long, long the stormwind blew, and wild.
He turned to look at me: he smiled;
But mockery was there, and scorn.
Ah, how my very heart was torn!
Long, long it blew, with dust for rain.
"Be kind, and come to me again."

He came not, neither went his way;
And long in pensive thought I lay.
On still it blew, with storm-clouds black;
Scarce light there was, so dense the pack.
Wakeful I lay, nor closed mine eyes;
And anxious thought brought fitful sighs.
Black and more black yet grew the gloom;
Then came loud thunder, boom on boom.
Awake I lay, all sleep was fled,
And anxious thought my fever fed.

The Soldier Sighs For Wife And Home

When the beating of drums was heard around,
How we sprang to our weapons with leap and bound!
But the fields must have some, and the walls of Ts‘o;
We alone to the South must a-marching go.
So we followed our leader Sun Tse-Chung,
And a peace there was made with Ch‘in and Sung.
But of homeward march is no sign as yet,
And our hearts are heavy, and pine and fret.
Ah! here we are lingering; here we stay;
And our steeds go wandering far astray;
And quest of them all must needs be made
Away in the depths of the woodland shade.
But, though far to be severed in death or life,
We are bound by the pledge each gave to his wife;
And we vowed, as we stood then hand in hand,
By each other in life's last years to stand.
Alas! now wide is the gulf between!
And life to us now is a blank, I ween.
And, alas, for the plighted troth so vain!
Untrue to our words we must aye remain.

The Discontented Mother

From the South the gladdening breezes blow
On the heart of that bush of thorn;
And the inmost leaves in it gaily grow.
But the mother with care is worn.
From the South the gladdening breezes blow
On the twigs of that thorny tree.
And the mother is wise and good, but oh!
Bad and worthless men are we.
From the spring 'neath the walls of Tsun there runs
A cool and refreshing rill.
But the mother, though hers be seven sons,
Unrelieved here toils on still.
And the golden bright-eyed orioles
Wake their tuneful melodie.
But the mother's heart no son consoles,
Though we seven around her be.

Separation

The male pheasant has taken his flight,
Yet leisurely moved he his wings!
Ah, to thee, my beloved, thyself
What sorrow this severance brings!
The male pheasant has taken his flight;
From below, from aloft, yet he cried.
Ah, true was my lord; and my heart
With its burden of sorrow is tried.
As I gaze at the sun and the moon,
Free rein to my thoughts I allow.
O the way, so they tell me, is long:
Tell me, how can be come to me now?
Wot ye not, then, ye gentlemen all,
Of his virtue and rectitude?
From all envy and enmity free,
What deed doth he other than good?

Untimely Unions

"The leaves of the gourd are yet sour to the taste,
And the way through the ford is deep" (quoth she).
"Deep be it, our garments we'll raise to the waist,
Or shallow, then up to the knee" (quoth he).
"But the ford is full, and the waters rise.
Hark! a pheasant there, in alarm she cries."
"Nay, the ford when full would no axle wet;
And the pheasant but cackles to fetch her mate."
"More sweet were the wildgoose’ cries to hear,
When the earliest streaks of the dawn appear;
And that is how men should seek their brides,
(In the early spring) ere the ice divides.
The ferryman beckons and points to his boat:
Let others cross over, I shall not.
The others may cross, but I say nay.
For a (true) companion here I stay."

Lament Of A Discarded Wife

When East winds blow unceasingly,
They bring but gloominess and rain.
Strive, strive to live unitedly,
And every angry thought restrain.
Some plants we gather for their leaves,
But leave the roots untouched beneath;
So, while unsullied was my name,
I should have lived with you till death.
With slow, slow step I took the road,
My inmost heart rebelling sore.
You came not far with me indeed,
You only saw me to the door.
Who calls the lettuce bitter fare?

The cress is not a whit more sweet.
Ay, feast there with your new-found bride,
Well-pleased, as when fond brothers meet.
The Wei, made turbid by the King,
Grows limpid by the islets there.
There, feasting with your new-found bride,
For me no longer now you care.
Yet leave to me my fishing-dam;
My wicker-nets remove them not.
My person spurned, some vacant hour
May bring compassion for my lot.
Where ran the river full and deep,
With raft or boat I paddled o'er;
And, where it flowed in shallower stream,
I dived or swam from shore to shore.
And what we had, or what we lost,
For that I strained my every nerve;
When other folks had loss, I'd crawl
Upon my knees, if aught 'twould serve.
And you can show me no kind care,
Nay, treated like a foe am I!
My virtue stood but in your way,
Like traders' goods that none will buy.
Once it was feared we could not live;
In your reverses then I shared;
And now, when fortune smiles on you,
To very poison I'm compared.
I have laid by a goodly store,
For winter's use it was to be;
Feast on there with your new-found bride,
I was for use in poverty!
Rude fits of anger you have shown,
Now left me to be sorely tried.
Ah, you forget those days gone by,
When you came nestling to my side!

A Prince And His Officers In Trouble

Fallen so low, so low!
Wherefore not homeward go?
And we, how could we for our chief refuse
Exposure to the nightly dews?
Fallen so low, so low!
Wherefore not homeward go?
And did we not our chief himself require,
How lived we here in mud and mire?

Li Finds No Help In Wei

How have the creepers on the crested slope
Crept with their tendrils far and wide!
And O, ye foster-fathers of our land,

How have our days here multiplied!
Why is there never movement made?
Comes surely some expected aid.
Why is this long, protracted pause?
'Tis surely not without a cause.
With foxfurs worn and frayed, without our cars,
Came we not Eastward here to you?
O ye, the foster-fathers of our land,
Will ye have nought with us to do?
A shattered remnant, last of all our host,
But waifs and vagabonds are we!
And ye, the foster-fathers of our land,
Smile on, but deaf ye seem to be!

Buffoonery At Court

Calm and cool, see him advance!
Now for posturing and dance,
While the sun's in middle sky,
There in front of platform high!
See him, corpulent and tall,
Capering in that ducal hall!
Tiger-like in strength of limb,
Reins like ribbons were to him!
Left hand now the flute assumes,
Right hand grasps the pheasant’s plumes;
Red, as though with rouge, the face.
"Give him liquor!" cries His Grace.
There are hazels on the hill,
There is fungus in the fen.
Say to whom my thoughts then flee.
To those fine West-country men.
Those are admirable men!
The West-country men for me!

Homesick

Fain are those waters to be free,
Leaving their spring to join the K‘i.
So yearns my heart for thee, dear Wei;
No day but there in thought I fly.
Here are my cousins, kind are they:
O, before these my plans I'll lay.
On leaving home I lodged in Tsi.
And drank the god-speed cup in Ni.
Maids, when their wedding trip they take,
Parents and brothers all forsake.
Yet let me go my aunts to greet;
Let me my elder sisters meet.
And, leaving here, I'd lodge in Kan,
Then drink the god-speed cup in Yen.
Oil me then well my axles, O!

Back in my carriage let me go.
Soon should I be in Wei; but oh!
Were I not *wrong* in acting so?
Ah! For that land of fertile streams
Long do I sigh in waking dreams.
So when I think of Siu and Ts‘o,
Full is my heart, to overflow.
Drove I but forth to wander there,
Then were unbosomed all my care.

Official Hardships

Out by the northern gate I go my way,
Bearing a load of sorrow and of care;
Vulgarly poor am I, and sore bestead,
And of my hardships all are unaware.
Ah, so indeed!
Yet Heaven hath so decreed;
What therefore can I say?
On me devolves the business of the king,
On me official burdens fast encroach;
On me, at home, arriving from abroad,
My household all conspire to heap reproach
Ah, so indeed!
Yet Heaven hath so decreed;
What therefore can I say?
All urgent is the business of the king;
Official cares press on me more and more.
And when at home, arriving from abroad,
My household one and all thrust at me sore.
Ah, so indeed,
Yet Heaven hath so decreed;
What therefore can I say?

Emigrants

Cold north winds are blowing,
Heavy falls the snow.
Friend, thy hand, if thou art friendly!
Forth together let us go.
Long, too long, we loiter here:
Times are too severe.
How the north wind whistles,
Driving snow and sleet!
Friend, thy hand, if thou art friendly!
Let us, thou and I, retreat.
Long, too long, we loiter here:
Times are too severe.
Nothing red, but foxes!
Nothing black, but crows!
Friend, thy hand, if thou art friendly!
Come with me my waggon goes.

Long, too long, we loiter here:
Times are too severe.

Irregular Love-Making

A modest maiden, passing fair to see,
Waits at the corner of the wall for me.
I love her, yet I have no interview:
I scratch my head I know not what to do.
The modest maid how winsome was she then,
The day she gave me her vermilion pen!
Vermilion pen was never yet so bright,
The maid's own loveliness is my delight.
Now from the pasture lands she sends a shoot
Of couchgrass fair; and rare it is, to boot.
Yet thou, my plant (when beauties I compare),
Art but the fair one's gift, and not the Fair!

The New Tower

Past the New Tower, so spick and span,
The Ho majestic rolled.
There she who sought a gallant mate
Found one deformed and old.
'Neath the New Tower's high battlements
The Ho ran smooth and still.
She sought a gallant mate, and lo!
A shapeless imbecile!
The net was ready for a fish,
A goose there came instead.
And she who sought a gallant mate,
Must with this hunchback wed.

The Two Sons

Two youths there were, each took his boat,
That floated, mirrored in the stream;
And O the fear for those two youths,
And O the anxiety extreme!
Two youths they were, each took his boat,
And floated on the stream away;
And O the fear for those two youths;
If harmed, yet innocent were they.

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7.29: 7.29 Pound, Ezra. Selected poems. (1885-1972)

In a Station of the Metro (1913)

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
Petals on a wet, black bough.

The Sea of Glass (1917)

I looked and saw a sea

roofed over with rainbows,

In the midst of each

two lovers met and departed;

Then the sky was full of faces

with gold glories behind them.

The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter (1917)

a translation of Li Bai's work

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse;
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married My Lord you.
I never laughed, being bashful.
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
Forever and forever and forever.
Why should I climb the lookout?

At sixteen you departed,
You went into far Ku-to-en, by the river of swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
You dragged your feet when you went out.
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
Too deep to clear them away!
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
Over the grass in the West garden --

They hurt me.
I grow older.
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come out to meet you
As far as Cho-fo-Sa.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: About Drama

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students will be able to:

- describe the elements of drama.
- identify drama-specific literary devices.
- perform drama-specific literary analysis.
- write a literary analysis essay on a play.

8.1: What is Drama?

8.2: Elements of Drama

8.3: Reading and Responding to Drama

8.4: Featured Playwright - William Shakespeare

8.5: Drama Discussion Questions, Assignments, and Supplemental Resources

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8.1: What is Drama?

What is Drama?



Sarah Bernhardt performs as Hamlet, holding poor Yorick's skull (1899) - public domain

Drama as a Genre

Like fiction, **drama**—sometimes referred to as a **play**—features characters caught up in a **plot**, or series of events in a storyline. Just like in fiction, the plot is the trajectory of the story. Plays and novels are actually very similar in this way. In fact, some plays have been based on novels, and novels on plays. Yet, whereas the narrator of a novel can spend pages painting a picture of the story's circumstances for the reader, a play is restricted to the space of the stage and the time frame of a couple of hours. This adds unique considerations for a **playwright**—or author who writes plays—to consider. What strategies are available to the playwright to ensure that the play successfully conveys its intended effects and themes? And how can we most clearly settle upon one definition of drama, considering it manifests in different permutations across cultures?

African drama scholar Ruth Finnegan stressed that, when defining drama across cultures, "[m]ost important is the idea of enactment, of representation through actors who imitate persons and events" (486). In addition to this definition, plot, setting, dialogue, and action are probably the most clearly defining characteristics of drama as genre. These elements will be covered in greater detail in the Elements of Drama section.

A Brief History of Drama

Greece

Most historians agree Western drama originated in Greece as an evolution of religious ritual, probably around the 5th century BCE as an evolution of poetry and song (qtd. Miller 126-7). While more controversial, many scholars believe the first plays probably began when singers in a festival celebrating the Greek God Dionysus/Bacchus began acting out characters in worship songs (Miller 127). Eventually, this developed into increasingly elaborate productions, growing from one actor to several, incorporating props and costumes. By the 4th century BCE, drama had become a valued cultural practice in Greece and was in fact considered a civic duty that would help Greek society remain rational through the purgation of negative emotion, which Aristotle called **catharsis** (Scodel 40). By seeing actors acting out intense emotions and brutal acts, it meant Athenian citizens could vicariously experience those emotions, emptying themselves of such emotions so they could focus on their civic duties like voting. Eventually, Athenian citizens would gather every year to watch playwrights akin to celebrities compete against one another (Scodel 40). Many critics argue Greek drama was one of the heaviest influences on William Shakespeare's works, and most poets of the Western world.

India

Some scholars contend drama did not begin in Greece, as popularly assumed, but in India. Or perhaps that drama was not necessarily a spreading phenomena, but a simultaneous evolution in both India and Greece. Regardless, around the same time of the origins of Greek drama arose the Sanskrit Indian *prakarana* (Walker 7). Prakarana is a play in five acts. This *prakarana* theatre is widely regarded to have begun the spread of drama in the East in the same way Greek drama spread through the West.

Common Genres of Drama

- **Comedy**: probably the first drama subgenre, comedy traditionally features lower-class characters, emphasizes silly or bawdy themes, and often ends in marriage.
- **Tragedy**: what Aristotle considered the artistic height of drama, Tragedy depicts a protagonist's downfall due to his or her own tragic flaw, or **hamartia**. Readers can usually recognize a tragedy by its noble characters, elevated language (iambic pentameter), and scenes of suffering and death. They almost always feature death or many deaths and/or a funeral.
- **History**: recreates a historically significant event. May include elements of comedy, tragedy, or romance
- **Romance**: usually focuses on love between characters

Distinguishing Features of Drama

- Meant to be performed rather than read
- Emphasis on dialogue, character, and stage direction
- May include elements of music, dance, art, poetry, and prose

- Usually fictional, though may include nonfiction or be inspired by true stories or historical events

Supplemental Videos

- Crash Course Theatre #7: Ancient Sanskrit Theatre



Contributors and Attributions

Parts of this chapter adapted from *Writing and Literature: Composition as Inquiry, Learning, Thinking, and Communication* by Dr. Tanya Long Bennett of the University of North Georgia.

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8.2: Elements of Drama

Plot

As discussed in the Creative Nonfiction and Fiction chapters, plot is the most important element in a narrative. Similarly, it comprises arguably the most important element of a play. Plot is the events in the play and the order in which the events are told. There is no one correct way to structure a drama! However, the structure of a drama is only as effective as it is intentionally formed to elicit the desired response from its audience. A play usually has a beginning, middle, and end. It almost always has a character grow and develop over the course of the play. Let's look closely at one type of plot structure in order to see what plot might look like.

Case Study: Tragic Plot

According to Aristotle, an effective plot of a tragedy follows this order:

1. **Inciting incident: the background of the play that causes the central conflict.**
    1. **Example**: two brothers murder each other. Their uncle, the King, refuses to bury one of the brothers and makes a law against burying him. This puts the sister of the brothers in a bad place, because her religion requires her to bury them so they go to heaven.
2. **Rising Action**: **the conflict built through friction between characters**.
    1. **Example**: The sister defies her uncle the King and buries her brother against the king's orders and then refuses to apologize. The king then commands his soldiers to bury his niece alive for her defiance!
3. **Anagnorisis or Scene of Recognition: the protagonist realizes he has made an error that carries serious consequences.**
    1. **Example**: The King receives a warning from a wise elder that burying his niece is a terrible idea that has angered the gods. The king finally realizes he has been a stubborn bonehead (he has exhibited excessive pride, hubris) and has a serious character flaw (hamartia).
4. **Peripeteia or Reversal of Fortune: this is when the protagonist's luck runs out.**
    1. **Example**: the King's recognition of his error comes too late: just as he sends his soldiers to free the niece from her cave, she dies in her cave and the King's son—his niece's betrothed—has killed himself in sorrow.
5. **Scene of Suffering: a bunch of people suffer and/or die as a result of the protagonist's hamartia.**
    1. **Example**: Not only did the King's niece and son die, but a messenger tells him that his wife killed herself in grief. The heartbroken King leaves the city in self-imposed exile. The audience feels pity and fear watching the King suffer, and this helps purge their feelings of pity and fear.

Not all plays or even tragedies follow this structure exactly. That being said, it can be helpful to analyze the ways in which a plot's structure is formed, as this can reveal deeper meanings. For example, what would have happened if the above mentioned King had recognized his tragic flaw (hamartia) in time to save his niece? This would have been a very different play: perhaps even a romance if the niece and king's son married and lived happily ever after. As in this example (based on *Antigone* by Sophocles), the structure of a play can have profound effects on its meaning or even genre!

Structure

Whether tragedy, comedy, history, or romance, all plays generally follow the structure of **act, scene, and line.**

A play can be anywhere from a few minutes to several hours. Usually a play will be divided into anywhere from one to five **acts.** These acts usually hinge upon a central plot point. Between each act, the curtain will fall; perhaps in the middle of the play there might be an intermission for audiences to use the restroom or buy drinks. A lot of literary production is driven by economics, after all: playwrights gotta eat, too!

The acts are further divided into **scenes.** The scene is usually set in a particular moment in time and setting.

When reading the play, actors reference **lines**. The lines are the dialogue that they speak to one another. A long time ago, poems and plays were often written in verse such as iambic pentameter, so poems and plays shared the concept of line structure. However, in contemporary plays, dialogue may be written in prose. Usually it will still have some kind of numbering system so that actors, directors, and readers can find their place.

When writing about a play, you should try to reference act, scene, and line number in your parenthetical in-text citation. For example (1.3.186) means Act 1, Scene 3, Line 186. However, not all plays have line numbers, or even scenes. So you may need to just reference act and scene (1.3) or just the act (Act 3).

Setting

To provide the story's setting, a play requires sets. If you've ever been involved with a play, you know that the set can be made up of detailed backdrops, specifically designed props, strategic lighting, and sometimes even background noise. A set, along

with the characters' subtle indications of the scene, can generate a full setting in the audience's imagination. For example, the play *Hamlet* starts its setting on a creepy, dark, foggy, cold night in the fictional Castle Elsinore on Denmark. The setting is often established on a **stage**, or the physical space upon which actors move. In order for a play to take place, there must be **actors** (people performing the play), an **audience** (people viewing the play), and **action and/or dialogue** as performed by the actors.

Character

While in short stories or novels a reader must wait until a character appears to know who the important characters are, in a play they are often the first aspect of the text encountered by readers. The character list usually appears in the first pages of the play. This is because, as a play emphasizes action over narration, the actors must know their parts!

Usually, the most important characters are listed first. Think most spoken lines, protagonists, antagonists, etc. However, the order in which the characters appear on the character list does not necessarily dictate the order of appearance. Like in creative nonfiction or fiction, writers develop characters over the course of the play. Different characters serve different roles such as protagonist, antagonist, or foil. There are a few types of character archetypes unique to drama which are described below. Note that not all of them will be in every play!

- **Protagonist**: the hero of the play. Usually the main character or the character with the most spoken lines, or the character around whom all the other characters seem to orbit. Hamlet would be an example of a protagonist.
- **Antagonist**: the villain of the play, usually opposite the protagonist. Claudius would be an example of an antagonist.
- **Foil**: this is a character meant to define another character through juxtaposition or comparison. For example, in *Hamlet*, Old Hamlet and Old Fortinbras and Hamlet and Fortinbras are often considered foils of each other. Fortinbras and Hamlet are both on paths of vengeance, yet each goes about their vengeance in different ways. While Fortinbras uses military strength, Hamlet chooses to use his intellect. While Fortinbras is decisive, Hamlet seems paralyzed by indecision. By examining the ways in which these two characters are similar and different, we can learn a lot about each of them and their significance in the play.
- **Wise elder**: in most plays, there is a wise old man or figure of wisdom who guides the protagonist. In Hamlet, it might be the ghost of his father, or Polonius can be a silly inversion of this archetype. In Antigone, it is probably Tieresias.
- **Love interest**: again, in most plays, there is usually a love interest of the protagonist, though not always. For Hamlet, this is Ophelia (though some scholars have argued Horatio!)
- **Messenger**: a character who delivers news

Dialogue and Action

One of the main differences between fiction and drama is that usually a play's plot is primarily forwarded through **dialogue** and **action**. **Dialogue** is comprised of the words directly spoken by characters, while **actions** are the physical movements of the actors. In a novel, action is described in detail and dialogue is usually put in quotation marks. For example, consider the following example of **action** and **dialogue** from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde:

> *As the painter looked at the gracious and comely form he had so skilfully mirrored in his art, a smile of pleasure passed across his face, and seemed about to linger there. But he suddenly started up, and closing his eyes, placed his fingers upon the lids, as though he sought to imprison within his brain some curious dream from which he feared he might awake.*
> *"It is your best work, Basil, the best thing you have ever done," said Lord Henry languidly. "You must certainly send it next year to the Grosvenor. The Academy is too large and too vulgar. Whenever I have gone there, there have been either so many people that I have not been able to see the pictures, which was dreadful, or so many pictures that I have not been able to see the people, which was worse. The Grosvenor is really the only place."*
> *"I don't think I shall send it anywhere," he answered, tossing his head back in that odd way that used to make his friends laugh at him at Oxford. "No, I won't send it anywhere."*

Distinct from the novel form of dialogue evidenced above, in a play, any words which come after the character's name will be considered dialogue. Action is usually not described in great depth, and actors are to interpret what actions to take based on the dialogue. Consider this example from *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare:

> *MARCELLUS: Holla, Bernardo!*
>
> *BERNARDO: Say,*
>
> *What, is Horatio there?*
>
> *HORATIO: A piece of him.*
>
> *BERNARDO: Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.*
>
> *MARCELLUS: What, has this thing appear'd again tonight?*
>
> *BERNARDO: I have seen nothing.*

In the above excerpt from the beginning of the play (1.1), Marcellus, Bernardo, and Horatio (soldiers) greet each other as they patrol the castle. When Horatio says "a piece of him," we might imagine the fog is so thick or the night so dark that only pieces of each character can be seen. Horatio might be holding up his hand in the torchlight. We might imagine the characters wandering about in the dark speaking to each other, a bit rattled, worrying if the mysterious "thing" Marcellus references will reappear. We learn later in the dialogue that "thing" is an apparition (ghost). None of the characters' movements are described, so we must infer what their actions are through their dialogue.

Although a novel's narrator can describe in detail the thoughts and impressions of its characters, a play's effects depend much more heavily on what the characters say and do. A play is a performance, a spectacle, rather than words on paper. That is, drama is a story performed by actors. Some plays do include a narrator or a chorus, to introduce the scene or set the tone of the play, but the bulk of the production's effect is generated through the dialogue and its visual devices, and since the play's script dictates what the characters will say and often, through stage direction, its production strategies as well, the script is crucial to a successful performance.

Audience

While in other literary works the audience takes a more passive role, in plays the audience often becomes part of the show. When a character goes on an extended soliloquy, or extended speech when they are by themselves on the stage, they will often address the audience directly; the audience gets the insider view of their thoughts. Sometimes actors join audience members or extend the stage into the seats! Audiences in the old days also would get rowdy and interact with the actors and actresses, sometimes in outright chaotic ways. For example, during the first act of a play in 1883, actor John Ritchie was allegedly pelted by rotten eggs and tomatoes and "demoralized" ("AN ACTOR DEMORALIZED"). So when analyzing drama it's important to analyze how audience members might experience the play!

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Contributors

- Adapted from material originally published in "Drama as a Genre" from *Writing and Literature: Composition as Inquiry, Learning, Thinking, and Communication* by Dr. Tanya Long Bennett of the University of North Georgia, CC BY-SA 4.0

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8.3: Reading and Responding to Drama

How to "Read" Drama

For reasons discussed in this chapter so far, drama comes with a unique set of benefits and challenges for readers. Beginning students of drama often make the mistake of reading plays the same way they would a novel, becoming frustrated or lost as a result. Because it is meant to be performed and/or viewed as an audience member, readers must infer a lot about the setting and characters' internal feelings through the dialogue. This takes a bit more work than a novel, which often offers this kind of description for the reader. While ideally readers could either act out the play or see a play live, this is not always an option. So what is the best way to "read" a play?

ACT IT OUT LOUD.

That's right: as silly as it may feel, reading the play out loud in character will help readers better grasp the meanings of the play which may be missed when read silently. To reiterate, plays are meant to be performed. To be heard. To be seen. When possible, students should pair up with fellow classmates to take turns reading and acting out the parts. This is what makes plays fun: they are the most collaborative genre of literature!

Other tips for reading plays:

- Watch film versions of the play
- Go see live performances
- Listen to audiobook verions
- Summarize each act in your own words as you read
- Takes notes on each character: Who are they? What is their role (protagonist, antagonist, or supporting role)? What are the characters' relationships with each other?

Special Considerations For Reading Shakespeare & Other "Old" Works of Literature

Diction

As if reading plays was not challenging enough, many students find older literature's **diction**—or vocabulary choices—flummoxing. I use the term flummoxing here because it is a term that is not widely in circulation anymore. That is, it is archaic or antiquated. Or, to put it more simply, it's old. Shakespeare can be difficult to read for this reason: over time, like any language, English has evolved. Certain figures of speech, manners of speaking, and words commonly used in Elizabethan London (Shakespeare's time) are no longer used today. So if it feels like you are reading a foreign language when reading Shakespeare or his contemporaries, you kind of are: Early Modern English.

- **Old English – 450 to 1066 A.D.**
  - **Example**: "Hwæt. We Gardena in geardagum,

    þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,

    hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.

    Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum" (from Beowulf, author unknown).
- **Middle English – 1150 to 1500**
  - **Example:** "Whan that aprill with his shoures soote
    The droghte of march hath perced to the roote,
    And bathed every veyne in swich licour
    Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
    Whan zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
    Inspired hath in every holt and heeth" (from The Prologue of *The Canturbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer)
- **Early Modern English – 1500 to 1690**
  - **Example:** "Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
    And will not let belief take hold of him
    Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us.
    Therefore I have entreated him along
    With us to watch the minutes of this night,
    That if again this apparition come
    He may approve our eyes and speak to it" (from 1.1 of *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare).
- **Modern English – 1700 to present**
  - **Example:** "You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I arrived here yesterday; and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare, and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking." (from the first page of *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley)

Early Modern English is actually much closer to our modern English than one would think. It is much easier to understand than Old English for this reason. Basically, to use a Pokemon simile, if Old English is Charmander, and contemporary English is Charizard, Early Modern English is like Charmeleon. And it goes both ways: if I lost you with these Pokemon words you probably feel a lot like a speaker of Early Modern English would feel having to learn contemporary English!

The good news is, like learning a new language, there are helpful tools students can use to understand Shakespeare and other older or culturally or linguistically distant literature.

Use the Oxford English Dictionary combined with context clues to learn what words meant in the time period. Some words mean the same thing. But other words have entirely different meanings. Try looking up how the words were used in the 1500s or 1600s to get a better understanding of how Shakespeare intended the word to be understood by his audiences.

Practicing Looking Up Diction

Let's try looking up a word which is difficult to understand in *Hamlet.*

> *BARNARDO: Well, good night.*
> *If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,*
> *The **rivals** of my watch, bid them make haste.*
>
> *(1.1.13 - **emphases mine**)*

In our modern understanding, "rival" means competitor. Like when playing Pokemon, you are introduced to a neighbor who also is given a Pokemon at the same time as you. As you raise your Pokemon, so does your rival, and you must continuously battle against your rival throughout the game. However, it seems like our modern understanding of this word does not quite work in the context of *Hamlet*. Why would Barnardo bid Horatio and Marcellus -- who seem not to be his competitors -- to make haste (AKA hurry up)? It seems like we are missing the definition of the word in Early Modern English.

So, let's use the Oxford English Dictionary to look up the word **"rival"** (1.1.13)

While there are a lot of definitions, many of them the same as the contemporary meaning, none quite fit as well as this one:

> *A person having the same objective as another, an associate. Obsolete. rare.*
>
> *1604 W. Shakespeare Hamlet i. i. 10 The riualls of my watch, bid them make hast.*
>
> *("rival, 3" Oxford English Dictionary)*

As you can see, this definition is literally from *Hamlet.* And, knowing this meaning, it makes much more sense: Horatio and Marcellus are not Barnardo's competitors: they are his associates, fellow castle guards, who share his objective of patrolling and protecting Elsinore. Knowing this, we can better understand the relationship dynamics between characters.

- **Pro Tip #1: Use a dictionary.** Keep the Oxford English Dictionary open while reading and be willing to look up words you do not understand.

Syntax and Iambic Pentameter

Another confusing aspect of Shakespearean language is due to a poetic structure called **iambic pentameter.** This is the meter of epics dating all the way back to Greek antiquity. You might recognize iambic pentameter from poetry, too, like sonnets. Iambic pentameter is a poetic meter in which each line contains five sets of iambs, or about ten syllables. An iamb is essentially a two-syllable pairing of an unstressed and stressed syllable: think of it like da-dum, the sound of a heart beat. Since the word "pentameter" has the root of "penta" or five, we know then that the term means five sets of iambs. Take a look at the following first line of a popular Shakespeare poem (Sonnet 18) to see iambic pentameter in action, where each bolded portion represents a stressed syllable, and a non-bolded represents an unstressed syllable:

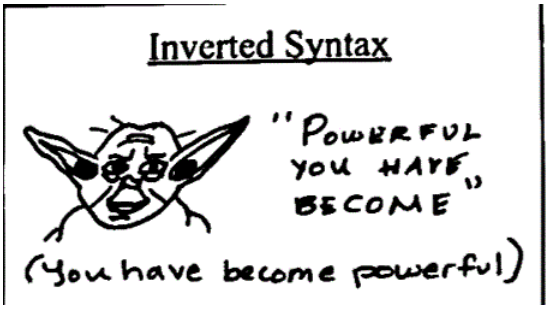
Shall **I** com**pare** thee **to** a **sum**mer's **day**?

Poets and playwrights often wrote in iambic pentameter as a means to signal to audiences the genre of their work, the literary significance of their work, to indicate the class of the character speaking (iambic pentameter for the upper class, prose for a commoner), or just to make the play or poem sound euphonic. Whatever the purpose, writing a poem in iambic pentameter is difficult. Writing an entire play in iambic pentameter? And rhyming? Even more difficult, since ideas have to perform intense linguistic gymnastics just to conform to the structure.

In order to fit the iambic pentameter, writers sometimes mess with **syntax**, or the grammatical order of words. More specifically, this is called **inverted syntax**. This makes for some pretty sounding lines, but can be confusing at first. While contemporary English often goes subject-verb-object, Shakespeare's verse often switches this order around. This means it is easier to understand if you re-order the words to be in an order we are more comfortable with. So what can you do if you encounter words which seem out of order, to the point where you cannot understand what is being said?

Whenever you read a poem or play where the words seem out of normal order, think of Yoda. If it sounds like Yoda is saying it, it is probably a case of inverted syntax. Simply re-order the words to make them clearer.

Try the Yoda trick.



The Yoda Trick is essentially pretending it is Yoda who says the words in the play, and re-ordering the words to make more sense.

Re-Ordering Syntax Practice

Try the Yoda trick on the following line from *Hamlet*:

> *"To thine own self be true"*
> *(Hamlet 1.3.78)*

How would you re-order this to be more comprehensible?

"Be true to yourself."

- **Pro Tip #2: The Yoda Trick.** Anytime you encounter words that seem out of order, try reordering words to help you make sense of them.

Zeitgeist

Zeitgeist is a German word meaning "spirit of the times." Aristotle might use a similar term called **Kairos,** or the temporal and cultural context of a piece of rhetoric. Whatever term you prefer, it basically means that any work of writing is, in some way, a product of the time in which it was written. This means that, like language has evolved since the past, so has culture. For example, while Shakespeare's audience would have understood the many references to the Bible, Greek Mythology, and contemporary political events, modern readers might not be as familiar with these references. This can be super confusing. But, believe it or not, you practice learning cultural context all the time. For example, take a look at an excerpt from Tupac Shakur's song "Changes" (1992):

> *And still I see no changes can't a brother get a little peace*
> *It's war on the streets and the war in the Middle East*
> *Instead of war on poverty they got a war on drugs*
> *So the police can bother me*
> *And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do*
> *But now I'm back with the blacks givin' it back to you*
> *Don't let 'em jack you up, back you up,*
> *Crack you up and pimp smack you up*
> *You gotta learn to hold ya own*
> *They get jealous when they see ya with ya mobile phone*
> *But tell the cops they can't touch this*
> *I don't trust this when they try to rush I bust this*
> *That's the sound of my tool you say it ain't cool*
> *My mama didn't raise no fool*
> *And as long as I stay black I gotta stay strapped*
> *And I never get to lay back*
> *'Cause I always got to worry 'bout the pay backs*
> *Some buck that I roughed up way back*
> *Comin' back after all these years*
> *Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat that's the way it is uhh*

In this excerpt, there are several cultural reference points which are easily understood to most current readers, but would be completely lost to someone outside of the cultural context. The "war in the Middle East" is likely a reference to the Gulf War (1990-1991) which was taking place just before Tupac penned this song, so readers would understand the comparison to "war on the streets" (poor people of color confrontations with police) as a violent and unjust act of war on people because of their skin color. Similarly, the reference to the "war on drugs" is likely a reference to former President Ronald Reagan's war on drugs which (starting in 1982) is widely understood to have disproportionately affected people of color ("Racially Disproportionate"). And while Shakespeare would have no idea what a "mobile phone" might be, and the term might itself seem antiquated at the time of this textbook's publication (2019) when the term "cell phone" is more commonly used, the phrase is

contemporary enough that we understand what Tupac means. We also might understand the value of the mobile phone as a signifier of wealth, especially in 1992 when mobile phones were luxury items compared to now. Other terms, like "strapped" and "Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat" are references to guns. Through understanding these cultural references (direct) and allusions (indirect), readers are able to understand the theme of the verse: expressing frustration with the oppressive force of racism which never seems to change, and the need for marginalized people to always be prepared to defend themselves from disproportionate violence.

So just like listening to a popular rap song using context-specific words and references might confuse an older audience, or my previous reference to Pokemon might confuse people who have never played Pokemon, or my reference to Yoda might confuse those who have never seen Star Wars, so too might Shakespeare's lingo be confusing to us because we miss the cultural reference points. The good news is that cultural context can be learned so that we can fully enjoy older literature.

Practicing Learning Cultural Context

Take, for example, the following lines from *Hamlet*, wherein Hamlet compares his uncle Claudius with his deceased father Old Hamlet:

> *So excellent a king; that was, to this,*
>
> *Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother*
>
> *(1.2.139-140)*

1. Who or what was Hyperion?
2. Who or what is a satyr?
3. After looking up these references, what do you think Hamlet is insinuating about his uncle Claudius compared to his father, Old Hamlet?

Elizabethan Cultural Reference Point: Greek Mythology

In this case, a simple Google search of the terms will help elucidate cultural reference points we might not understand. A cursory search reveals these are important figures in Greek mythology: a satyr is a gross, sexually perverted crossbreed between a man and a goat. Hyperion was the glorious and dazzling God/Titan of the sun. So we can infer from this comparison that Hamlet is saying his dad was awesome and represented all things good and powerful, and his uncle is a nasty perverted animal. This tells us a lot about the plot and character dynamic between Claudius and Hamlet, and foreshadows, perhaps, that a confrontation will take place between the two of them.

Pro Tip #3: Research cultural contexts. Use Google or your library's databases to do a little bit of research on cultural context to give you a deeper understanding of the play.

Other recommended resources for understanding drama (Shakespeare in particular):

- YouTube videos, like Crash Course Literature
- No Fear Shakespeare provides a translation of Shakespeare into modern English. Be wary of using this resource, though, as you may lose important literary aspects. Just like listening to a song, movie, or meme in its original form and taking time to understand the cultural background, so too is it important to read a play in its original form.
- Folger's Shakespeare, which includes helpful annotations and footnotes to explain diction and cultural context
- Watching live or film adaptations of plays. Many of these can be accessed for free through your college or local library.

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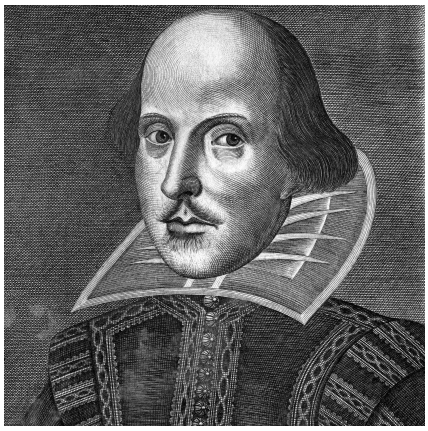
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8.4: Featured Playwright - William Shakespeare

Biography

William Shakespeare is widely considered one of the most famous, if not the most famous, writers in the history of the English language.



This engraving of Shakespeare by Martin Droeshout appeared in Shakespeare's first published folio in 1623. It is in the public domain.

Since William Shakespeare lived more than 400 years ago, and many records from that time are lost or never existed in the first place, we don't know everything about his life. For example, we know that he was baptized in Stratford-upon-Avon, 100 miles northwest of London, on April 26, 1564. But we don't know his exact birthdate, which must have been a few days earlier.

We do know that Shakespeare's life revolved around two locations: Stratford and London. He grew up, had a family, and bought property in Stratford, but he worked in London, the center of English theater. As an actor, a playwright, and a partner in a leading acting company, he became both prosperous and well-known. Even without knowing everything about his life, fans of Shakespeare have imagined and reimagined him according to their own tastes.

Birth and Childhood

William Shakespeare was probably born on about April 23, 1564, the date that is traditionally given for his birth. He was John and Mary Shakespeare's oldest surviving child; their first two children, both girls, did not live beyond infancy. Growing up as the big brother of the family, William had three younger brothers, Gilbert, Richard, and Edmund, and two younger sisters: Anne, who died at seven, and Joan.

Their father, John Shakespeare, was a leatherworker who specialized in the soft white leather used for gloves and similar items. A prosperous businessman, he married Mary Arden, of the prominent Arden family. John rose through local offices in Stratford, becoming an alderman and eventually, when William was five, the town bailiff — much like a mayor. Not long after that, however, John Shakespeare stepped back from public life; we don't know why.

Shakespeare, as the son of a leading Stratford citizen, almost certainly attended Stratford's grammar school. Like all such schools, its curriculum consisted of an intense emphasis on the Latin classics, including memorization, writing, and acting classic Latin plays. Shakespeare most likely attended until about age 15.

Marriage and Children

A few years after he left school, in late 1582, William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. She was already expecting their first-born child, Susanna, which was a fairly common situation at the time. When they married, Anne was 26 and William was 18. Anne grew up just outside Stratford in the village of Shottery. After marrying, she spent the rest of her life in Stratford.

In early 1585, the couple had twins, Judith and Hamnet, completing the family (interestingly, Hamnet is one letter away from being Hamlet). In the years ahead, Anne and the children lived in Stratford while Shakespeare worked in London, although we don't know when he moved there. Some later observers have suggested that this separation, and the couple's relatively few children, were signs of a strained marriage, but we do not know that, either. Someone pursuing a theater career had no choice but to work in London, and many branches of the Shakespeares had small families.

Shakespeare's only son, Hamnet, died in 1596 at the age of 11. His older daughter Susanna later married a well-to-do Stratford doctor, John Hall. Their daughter Elizabeth, Shakespeare's first grandchild, was born in 1608. In 1616, just months before his death, Shakespeare's daughter Judith married Thomas Quiney, a Stratford vintner. The family subsequently died out, leaving no direct descendants of Shakespeare.

London Theater

For several years after Judith and Hamnet's arrival in 1585, nothing is known for certain of Shakespeare's activities: how he earned a living, when he moved from Stratford, or how he got his start in the theater.

Following this gap in the record, the first definite mention of Shakespeare is in 1592 as an established London actor and playwright, mocked by a contemporary as a "Shake-scene." The same writer alludes to one of Shakespeare's earliest history plays, *Henry VI, Part 3*, which must already have been performed. The next year, in 1593, Shakespeare published a long poem, *Venus and Adonis*. The first quarto editions of his

early plays appeared in 1594. For more than two decades, Shakespeare had multiple roles in the London theater as an actor, playwright, and, in time, a business partner in a major acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men (renamed the King's Men in 1603). Over the years, he became steadily more famous in the London theater world; his name, which was not even listed on the first quartos of his plays, became a regular feature—clearly a selling point—on later title pages.

Shakespeare prospered financially from his partnership in the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men), as well as from his writing and acting. He invested much of his wealth in real-estate purchases in Stratford and bought the second-largest house in town, New Place, in 1597.

Final Years

Among the last plays that Shakespeare worked on was *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, which he wrote with a frequent collaborator, John Fletcher, most likely in 1613. He died on April 23, 1616 — the traditional date of his birthday, though his precise birthdate is unknown. We also do not know the cause of his death. His brother-in-law had died a week earlier, which could imply infectious disease, but Shakespeare's health may have had a longer decline.

The memorial bust of Shakespeare at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford is considered one of two authentic likenesses, because it was approved by people who knew him. (The bust in the Folger's Paster Reading Room is a copy of this statue.) The other such likeness is the engraving by Martin Droeshout in the 1623 First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays, produced seven years after his death by his friends and colleagues from the King's Men.

Hip-Hop and Shakespeare

While Shakespeare's life may seem distant or like we cannot relate to it, and his writing may be difficult to understand, the reality is that his writing has endured the ages because it is not as different as it first seems. In fact, there are a surprising number of similarities between Shakespeare's life and work and our modern understandings of the world. Check out the video below to learn more.



In the video above, rapper Akala discusses the similarities between Shakespeare and hip-hop. Click on the video to enable closed-captioning options.

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8.5: Drama Discussion Questions, Assignments, and Supplemental Resources

Drama Learning Activities

The following learning activities are meant to prompt discussion and/or writing projects. Consider them lenses through which to examine the plays more deeply.

Assignment: Literary Research Essay on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Consider the following questions:

1. **New Historicism:** What is the ghost that appears in Hamlet? Is it actually the ghost of Old Hamlet, a demon come to trick young Hamlet away to his doom, or a figment of Hamlet's madness? Justify your position with quotes/evidence from the play and/or any research you can find about how Elizabethans may have viewed ghosts, demons, or insanity.
2. **New Historicism:** Is Hamlet actually mad (insane), or just pretending to be insane? Justify your position with quotes from the play and/or any research you can find about madness/insanity as it was viewed in the Elizabethan period.



"Ophelia" by John Everett Millais (1852) in the public domain



"Ophelia" by Henrietta Rae (1890) in the public domain



"Ophelia" by John William Waterhouse (1894) in the public domain

   The character Ophelia from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has captivated the imagination of writers and artists ever since her tragic appearance in the play, especially in the Victorian period. Why do you think this might be?

3. **Gender**: While many—including Hamlet himself—seem to view the women of the play as weak (Ophelia) and/or power-hungry co-conspirators in the plot to take over the Danish throne (Gertrude), some critics have argued the women in Hamlet are actually heroes, exercising the most agency they can given the limitations of gender roles in their cultural context. Consider one of the female characters in the play. Is Ophelia as weak and "mad" as Hamlet, or is she exercising the most agency she can given her position? Is Gertrude an active co-conspirator with Claudius, an innocent bystander, or a hero who attempts to save her son?
4. **Marxist/Formalism**: throughout the play, the form of dialogue often shifts between iambic pentameter and prose. Some critics have noted that nobles tend to speak in iambic pentameter, common people speak in prose, and Hamlet switches between the two depending on the context, but there are moments which do not neatly fit into these categories. Closely examine the switching between iambic pentameter and prose. Assuming it is intentional on the part of Shakespeare, why do you think this form shift occurs? What might the shift reveal about social class, or even madness?

Additional Supplemental Resources, Videos, & Readings

Videos

- Crash Course Literature: Hamlet (Part 1) (Part 2)
  - Part 1



  - Part 2



- Crash Course Literature: Macbeth (Part 1) (Part 2)
  - Part 1



  - Part 2



William Shakespeare: *Hamlet*

- Bloom, Harold. Hamlet: Poem Unlimited.

- --- Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. Will in the World.
- --- Hamlet in Purgatory.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Drama Readings

Included Readings

The following examples of literature appear in this textbook

9.1: Glaspell, Susan. Trifles and The Verge (1916)

9.2: Tagore, Rabindranath. Chitra (1914)

Supplemental Readings

These readings are not included in this textbook due to copyright permissions and/or space constraints.

- Shakespeare, William.
  - *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600)
  - *Hamlet* (1603)
  - *Othello* (1622)
- Wilson, August
  - *Fences* (1983)

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9.1: Glaspell, Susan. Trifles and The Verge (1916)

Trifles

by Susan Glaspell

First performed by the Provincetown Players at the Wharf Theatre, Provincetown, Mass., August 8, 1916.

Characters

GEORGE HENDERSON (County Attorney)

HENRY PETERS (Sheriff)

LEWIS HALE, A neighboring farmer

MRS PETERS

MRS HALE

Scene 1

SCENE: *The kitchen is the now abandoned farmhouse of* JOHN WRIGHT, *a gloomy kitchen, and left without having been put in order—unwashed pans under the sink, a loaf of bread outside the bread-box, a dish-towel on the table—other signs of incompleted work. At the rear the outer door opens and the* SHERIFF *comes in followed by the* COUNTY ATTORNEY *and* HALE. *The* SHERIFF *and* HALE *are men in middle life, the* COUNTY ATTORNEY *is a young man; all are much bundled up and go at once to the stove. They are followed by the two women—the* SHERIFF*'s wife first; she is a slight wiry woman, a thin nervous face*. MRS HALE *is larger and would ordinarily be called more comfortable looking, but she is disturbed now and looks fearfully about as she enters. The women have come in slowly, and stand close together near the door*.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*rubbing his hands*) This feels good. Come up to the fire, ladies.

MRS PETERS: (*after taking a step forward*) I'm not—cold.

SHERIFF: (*unbuttoning his overcoat and stepping away from the stove as if to mark the beginning of official business*) Now, Mr Hale, before we move things about, you explain to Mr Henderson just what you saw when you came here yesterday morning.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: By the way, has anything been moved? Are things just as you left them yesterday?

SHERIFF: (*looking about*) It's just the same. When it dropped below zero last night I thought I'd better send Frank out this morning to make a fire for us—no use getting pneumonia with a big case on, but I told him not to touch anything except the stove—and you know Frank.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Somebody should have been left here yesterday.

SHERIFF: Oh—yesterday. When I had to send Frank to Morris Center for that man who went crazy—I want you to know I had my hands full yesterday. I knew you could get back from Omaha by today and as long as I went over everything here myself—

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Well, Mr Hale, tell just what happened when you came here yesterday morning.

HALE: Harry and I had started to town with a load of potatoes. We came along the road from my place and as I got here I said, 'I'm going to see if I can't get John Wright to go in with me on a party telephone.' I spoke to Wright about it once before and he put me off, saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quiet—I guess you know about how much he talked himself; but I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it before his wife, though I said to Harry that I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John—

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Let's talk about that later, Mr Hale. I do want to talk about that, but tell now just what happened when you got to the house.

HALE: I didn't hear or see anything; I knocked at the door, and still it was all quiet inside. I knew they must be up, it was past eight o'clock. So I knocked again, and I thought I heard somebody say, 'Come in.' I wasn't sure, I'm not sure yet, but I opened the door—this door (*indicating the door by which the two women are still standing*) and there in that rocker—(*pointing to it*) sat Mrs Wright.

(*They all look at the rocker*.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: What—was she doing?

HALE: She was rockin' back and forth. She had her apron in her hand and was kind of—pleating it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: And how did she—look?

HALE: Well, she looked queer.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: How do you mean—queer?

HALE: Well, as if she didn't know what she was going to do next. And kind of done up.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: How did she seem to feel about your coming?

HALE: Why, I don't think she minded—one way or other. She didn't pay much attention. I said, 'How do, Mrs Wright it's cold, ain't it?' And she said, 'Is it?'—and went on kind of pleating at her apron. Well, I was surprised; she didn't ask me to come up to the stove, or to set down, but just sat there, not even looking at me, so I said, 'I want to see John.' And then she—laughed. I guess you would call it a laugh. I thought of Harry and the team outside, so I said a little sharp: 'Can't I see John?' 'No', she says, kind o' dull like. 'Ain't he home?' says I. 'Yes', says she, 'he's home'. 'Then why can't I see him?' I asked her, out of patience. "Cause he's dead', says she. *'Dead*?' says I. She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited, but rockin' back and forth. 'Why—where is he?' says I, not knowing what to say. She just pointed upstairs—like that (*himself pointing to the room above*) I got up, with the idea of going up there. I walked from there to here—then I says, 'Why, what did he die of?' 'He died of a rope round his neck', says she, and just went on pleatin' at her apron. Well, I went out and called Harry. I thought I might—need help. We went upstairs and there he was lyin'—

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I think I'd rather have you go into that upstairs, where you can point it all out. Just go on now with the rest of the story.

HALE: Well, my first thought was to get that rope off. It looked ... (*stops, his face twitches*) ... but Harry, he went up to him, and he said, 'No, he's dead all right, and we'd better not touch anything.' So we went back down stairs. She was still sitting that same way. 'Has anybody been notified?' I asked. 'No', says she unconcerned. 'Who did this, Mrs Wright?' said Harry. He said it business-like—and she stopped pleatin' of her apron. 'I don't know', she says. 'You don't *know*?' says Harry. 'No', says she. 'Weren't you sleepin' in the bed with him?' says Harry. 'Yes', says she, 'but I was on the inside'. 'Somebody slipped a rope round his neck and strangled him and you didn't wake up?' says Harry. 'I didn't wake up', she said after him. We must 'a looked as if we didn't see how that could be, for after a minute she said, 'I sleep sound'. Harry was going to ask her more questions but I said maybe we ought to let her tell her story first to the coroner, or the sheriff, so Harry went fast as he could to Rivers' place, where there's a telephone.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: And what did Mrs Wright do when she knew that you had gone for the coroner?

HALE: She moved from that chair to this one over here (*pointing to a small chair in the corner*) and just sat there with her hands held together and looking down. I got a feeling that I ought to make some conversation, so I said I had come in to see if John wanted to put in a telephone, and at that she started to laugh, and then she stopped and looked at me—scared, (*the* COUNTY ATTORNEY, *who has had his notebook out, makes a note*) I dunno, maybe it wasn't scared. I wouldn't like to say it was. Soon Harry got back, and then Dr Lloyd came, and you, Mr Peters, and so I guess that's all I know that you don't.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*looking around*) I guess we'll go upstairs first—and then out to the barn and around there, (*to the* SHERIFF) You're convinced that there was nothing important here—nothing that would point to any motive.

SHERIFF: Nothing here but kitchen things.

(*The* COUNTY ATTORNEY, *after again looking around the kitchen, opens the door of a cupboard closet. He gets up on a chair and looks on a shelf. Pulls his hand away, sticky*.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Here's a nice mess.

(*The women draw nearer*.)

MRS PETERS: (*to the other woman*) Oh, her fruit; it did freeze, (*to the* LAWYER) She worried about that when it turned so cold. She said the fire'd go out and her jars would break.

SHERIFF: Well, can you beat the women! Held for murder and worryin' about her preserves.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I guess before we're through she may have something more serious than preserves to worry about.

HALE: Well, women are used to worrying over trifles.

(*The two women move a little closer together*.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*with the gallantry of a young politician*) And yet, for all their worries, what would we do without the ladies? (*the women do not unbend. He goes to the sink, takes a dipperful of water from the pail and pouring it into a basin, washes his hands. Starts to wipe them on the roller-towel, turns it for a cleaner place*) Dirty towels! (*kicks his foot against the pans under the sink*) Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?

MRS HALE: (*stiffly*) There's a great deal of work to be done on a farm.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: To be sure. And yet (*with a little bow to her*) I know there are some Dickson county farmhouses which do not have such roller towels. (*He gives it a pull to expose its length again*.)

MRS HALE: Those towels get dirty awful quick. Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Ah, loyal to your sex, I see. But you and Mrs Wright were neighbors. I suppose you were friends, too.

MRS HALE: (*shaking her head*) I've not seen much of her of late years. I've not been in this house—it's more than a year.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: And why was that? You didn't like her?

MRS HALE: I liked her all well enough. Farmers' wives have their hands full, Mr Henderson. And then—

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Yes—?

MRS HALE: (*looking about*) It never seemed a very cheerful place.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: No—it's not cheerful. I shouldn't say she had the homemaking instinct.

MRS HALE: Well, I don't know as Wright had, either.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: You mean that they didn't get on very well?

MRS HALE: No, I don't mean anything. But I don't think a place'd be any cheerfuller for John Wright's being in it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I'd like to talk more of that a little later. I want to get the lay of things upstairs now. (*He goes to the left, where three steps lead to a stair door*.)

SHERIFF: I suppose anything Mrs Peters does'll be all right. She was to take in some clothes for her, you know, and a few little things. We left in such a hurry yesterday.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Yes, but I would like to see what you take, Mrs Peters, and keep an eye out for anything that might be of use to us.

MRS PETERS: Yes, Mr Henderson.

(*The women listen to the men's steps on the stairs, then look about the kitchen*.)

MRS HALE: I'd hate to have men coming into my kitchen, snooping around and criticising.

(*She arranges the pans under sink which the* LAWYER *had shoved out of place*.)

MRS PETERS: Of course it's no more than their duty.

MRS HALE: Duty's all right, but I guess that deputy sheriff that came out to make the fire might have got a little of this on. (*gives the roller towel a pull*) Wish I'd thought of that sooner. Seems mean to talk about her for not having things slicked up when she had to come away in such a hurry.

MRS PETERS: (*who has gone to a small table in the left rear corner of the room, and lifted one end of a towel that covers a pan*) She had bread set. (*Stands still*.)

MRS HALE: (*eyes fixed on a loaf of bread beside the bread-box, which is on a low shelf at the other side of the room. Moves slowly toward it*) She was going to put this in there, (*picks up loaf, then abruptly drops it. In a manner of returning to familiar*

things) It's a shame about her fruit. I wonder if it's all gone. (*gets up on the chair and looks*) I think there's some here that's all right, Mrs Peters. Yes—here; (*holding it toward the window*) this is cherries, too. (*looking again*) I declare I believe that's the only one. (*gets down, bottle in her hand. Goes to the sink and wipes it off on the outside*) She'll feel awful bad after all her hard work in the hot weather. I remember the afternoon I put up my cherries last summer.

(*She puts the bottle on the big kitchen table, center of the room. With a sigh, is about to sit down in the rocking-chair. Before she is seated realizes what chair it is; with a slow look at it, steps back. The chair which she has touched rocks back and forth.*)

MRS PETERS: Well, I must get those things from the front room closet, (*she goes to the door at the right, but after looking into the other room, steps back*) You coming with me, Mrs Hale? You could help me carry them.

(*They go in the other room; reappear,* MRS PETERS *carrying a dress and skirt,* MRS HALE *following with a pair of shoes.*)

MRS PETERS: My, it's cold in there.

(*She puts the clothes on the big table, and hurries to the stove.*)

MRS HALE: (*examining the skirt*) Wright was close. I think maybe that's why she kept so much to herself. She didn't even belong to the Ladies Aid. I suppose she felt she couldn't do her part, and then you don't enjoy things when you feel shabby. She used to wear pretty clothes and be lively, when she was Minnie Foster, one of the town girls singing in the choir. But that—oh, that was thirty years ago. This all you was to take in?

MRS PETERS: She said she wanted an apron. Funny thing to want, for there isn't much to get you dirty in jail, goodness knows. But I suppose just to make her feel more natural. She said they was in the top drawer in this cupboard. Yes, here. And then her little shawl that always hung behind the door. (*opens stair door and looks*) Yes, here it is.

(*Quickly shuts door leading upstairs.*)

MRS HALE: (*abruptly moving toward her*) Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Yes, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: Do you think she did it?

MRS PETERS: (*in a frightened voice*) Oh, I don't know.

MRS HALE: Well, I don't think she did. Asking for an apron and her little shawl. Worrying about her fruit.

MRS PETERS: (*starts to speak, glances up, where footsteps are heard in the room above. In a low voice*) Mr Peters says it looks bad for her. Mr Henderson is awful sarcastic in a speech and he'll make fun of her sayin' she didn't wake up.

MRS HALE: Well, I guess John Wright didn't wake when they was slipping that rope under his neck.

MRS PETERS: No, it's strange. It must have been done awful crafty and still. They say it was such a—funny way to kill a man, rigging it all up like that.

MRS HALE: That's just what Mr Hale said. There was a gun in the house. He says that's what he can't understand.

MRS PETERS: Mr Henderson said coming out that what was needed for the case was a motive; something to show anger, or—sudden feeling.

MRS HALE: (*who is standing by the table*) Well, I don't see any signs of anger around here, (*she puts her hand on the dish towel which lies on the table, stands looking down at table, one half of which is clean, the other half messy*) It's wiped to here, (*makes a move as if to finish work, then turns and looks at loaf of bread outside the breadbox. Drops towel. In that voice of coming back to familiar things.*) Wonder how they are finding things upstairs. I hope she had it a little more red-up up there. You know, it seems kind of sneaking. Locking her up in town and then coming out here and trying to get her own house to turn against her!

MRS PETERS: But Mrs Hale, the law is the law.

MRS HALE: I s'pose 'tis, (*unbuttoning her coat*) Better loosen up your things, Mrs Peters. You won't feel them when you go out.

(MRS PETERS *takes off her fur tippet, goes to hang it on hook at back of room, stands looking at the under part of the small corner table.*)

MRS PETERS: She was piecing a quilt. (*She brings the large sewing basket and they look at the bright pieces*.)

MRS HALE: It's log cabin pattern. Pretty, isn't it? I wonder if she was goin' to quilt it or just knot it?

(*Footsteps have been heard coming down the stairs*. The SHERIFF enters followed by HALE and the COUNTY ATTORNEY.)

SHERIFF: They wonder if she was going to quilt it or just knot it! (*The men laugh, the women look abashed*.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*rubbing his hands over the stove*) Frank's fire didn't do much up there, did it? Well, let's go out to the barn and get that cleared up. (*The men go outside*.)

MRS HALE: (*resentfully*) I don't know as there's anything so strange, our takin' up our time with little things while we're waiting for them to get the evidence. (*she sits down at the big table smoothing out a block with decision*) I don't see as it's anything to laugh about.

MRS PETERS: (*apologetically*) Of course they've got awful important things on their minds.

(*Pulls up a chair and joins MRS HALE at the table*.)

MRS HALE: (*examining another block*) Mrs Peters, look at this one. Here, this is the one she was working on, and look at the sewing! All the rest of it has been so nice and even. And look at this! It's all over the place! Why, it looks as if she didn't know what she was about!

(*After she has said this they look at each other, then start to glance back at the door. After an instant* MRS HALE *has pulled at a knot and ripped the sewing*.)

MRS PETERS: Oh, what are you doing, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: (*mildly*) Just pulling out a stitch or two that's not sewed very good. (*threading a needle*) Bad sewing always made me fidgety.

MRS PETERS: (nervously) I don't think we ought to touch things.

MRS HALE: I'll just finish up this end. (*suddenly stopping and leaning forward*) Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Yes, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: What do you suppose she was so nervous about?

MRS PETERS: Oh—I don't know. I don't know as she was nervous. I sometimes sew awful queer when I'm just tired. (MRS HALE *starts to say something, looks at* MRS PETERS, *then goes on sewing*) Well I must get these things wrapped up. They may be through sooner than we think, (*putting apron and other things together*) I wonder where I can find a piece of paper, and string.

MRS HALE: In that cupboard, maybe.

MRS PETERS: (*looking in cupboard*) Why, here's a bird-cage, (*holds it up*) Did she have a bird, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: Why, I don't know whether she did or not—I've not been here for so long. There was a man around last year selling canaries cheap, but I don't know as she took one; maybe she did. She used to sing real pretty herself.

MRS PETERS: (*glancing around*) Seems funny to think of a bird here. But she must have had one, or why would she have a cage? I wonder what happened to it.

MRS HALE: I s'pose maybe the cat got it.

MRS PETERS: No, she didn't have a cat. She's got that feeling some people have about cats—being afraid of them. My cat got in her room and she was real upset and asked me to take it out.

MRS HALE: My sister Bessie was like that. Queer, ain't it?

MRS PETERS: (*examining the cage*) Why, look at this door. It's broke. One hinge is pulled apart.

MRS HALE: (*looking too*) Looks as if someone must have been rough with it.

MRS PETERS: Why, yes.

(*She brings the cage forward and puts it on the table*.)

MRS HALE: I wish if they're going to find any evidence they'd be about it. I don't like this place.

MRS PETERS: But I'm awful glad you came with me, Mrs Hale. It would be lonesome for me sitting here alone.

MRS HALE: It would, wouldn't it? (*dropping her sewing*) But I tell you what I do wish, Mrs Peters. I wish I had come over sometimes when *she* was here. I—(*looking around the room*)—wish I had.

MRS PETERS: But of course you were awful busy, Mrs Hale—your house and your children.

MRS HALE: I could've come. I stayed away because it weren't cheerful—and that's why I ought to have come. I—I've never liked this place. Maybe because it's down in a hollow and you don't see the road. I dunno what it is, but it's a lonesome place and always was. I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can see now—(*shakes her head*)

MRS PETERS: Well, you mustn't reproach yourself, Mrs Hale. Somehow we just don't see how it is with other folks until—something comes up.

MRS HALE: Not having children makes less work—but it makes a quiet house, and Wright out to work all day, and no company when he did come in. Did you know John Wright, Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Not to know him; I've seen him in town. They say he was a good man.

MRS HALE: Yes—good; he didn't drink, and kept his word as well as most, I guess, and paid his debts. But he was a hard man, Mrs Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him—(*shivers*) Like a raw wind that gets to the bone, (*pauses, her eye falling on the cage*) I should think she would 'a wanted a bird. But what do you suppose went with it?

MRS PETERS: I don't know, unless it got sick and died.

(*She reaches over and swings the broken door, swings it again, both women watch it*.)

MRS HALE: You weren't raised round here, were you? (*MRS PETERS shakes her head*) You didn't know—her?

MRS PETERS: Not till they brought her yesterday.

MRS HALE: She—come to think of it, she was kind of like a bird herself—real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and—fluttery. How—she—did—change. (*silence; then as if struck by a happy thought and relieved to get back to everyday things*) Tell you what, Mrs Peters, why don't you take the quilt in with you? It might take up her mind.

MRS PETERS: Why, I think that's a real nice idea, Mrs Hale. There couldn't possibly be any objection to it, could there? Now, just what would I take? I wonder if her patches are in here—and her things.

(*They look in the sewing basket*.)

MRS HALE: Here's some red. I expect this has got sewing things in it. (*brings out a fancy box*) What a pretty box. Looks like something somebody would give you. Maybe her scissors are in here. (*Opens box. Suddenly puts her hand to her nose*) Why—(MRS PETERS *bends nearer, then turns her face away*) There's something wrapped up in this piece of silk.

MRS PETERS: Why, this isn't her scissors.

MRS HALE: (*lifting the silk*) Oh, Mrs Peters—it's—

(MRS PETERS *bends closer*.)

MRS PETERS: It's the bird.

MRS HALE: (*jumping up*) But, Mrs Peters—look at it! It's neck! Look at its neck!

It's all—other side *to*.

MRS PETERS: Somebody—wrung—its—neck.

(*Their eyes meet. A look of growing comprehension, of horror. Steps are heard outside*. MRS HALE *slips box under quilt pieces, and sinks into her chair. Enter* SHERIFF *and* COUNTY ATTORNEY. MRS PETERS *rises*.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*as one turning from serious things to little pleasantries*) Well ladies, have you decided whether she was going to quilt it or knot it?

MRS PETERS: We think she was going to—knot it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Well, that's interesting, I'm sure. (*seeing the birdcage*) Has the bird flown?

MRS HALE: (*putting more quilt pieces over the box*) We think the—cat got it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*preoccupied*) Is there a cat?

(MRS HALE *glances in a quick covert way at* MRS PETERS.)

MRS PETERS: Well, not now. They're superstitious, you know. They leave.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*to* SHERIFF PETERS, *continuing an interrupted conversation*) No sign at all of anyone having come from the outside. Their own rope. Now let's go up again and go over it piece by piece. (*they start upstairs*) It would have to have been someone who knew just the—

(MRS PETERS *sits down. The two women sit there not looking at one another, but as if peering into something and at the same time holding back. When they talk now it is in the manner of feeling their way over strange ground, as if afraid of what they are saying, but as if they can not help saying it*.)

MRS HALE: She liked the bird. She was going to bury it in that pretty box.

MRS PETERS: (*in a whisper*) When I was a girl—my kitten—there was a boy took a hatchet, and before my eyes—and before I could get there—(*covers her face an instant*) If they hadn't held me back I would have—(*catches herself, looks upstairs where steps are heard, falters weakly*)—hurt him.

MRS HALE: (*with a slow look around her*) I wonder how it would seem never to have had any children around, (*pause*) No, Wright wouldn't like the bird—a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that, too.

MRS PETERS: (*moving uneasily*) We don't know who killed the bird.

MRS HALE: I knew John Wright.

MRS PETERS: It was an awful thing was done in this house that night, Mrs Hale. Killing a man while he slept, slipping a rope around his neck that choked the life out of him.

MRS HALE: His neck. Choked the life out of him.

(*Her hand goes out and rests on the bird-cage*.)

MRS PETERS: (*with rising voice*) We don't know who killed him. We don't *know*.

MRS HALE: (*her own feeling not interrupted*) If there'd been years and years of nothing, then a bird to sing to you, it would be awful—still, after the bird was still.

MRS PETERS: (*something within her speaking*) I know what stillness is. When we homesteaded in Dakota, and my first baby died—after he was two years old, and me with no other then—

MRS HALE: (*moving*) How soon do you suppose they'll be through, looking for the evidence?

MRS PETERS: I know what stillness is. (*pulling herself back*) The law has got to punish crime, Mrs Hale.

MRS HALE: (*not as if answering that*) I wish you'd seen Minnie Foster when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons and stood up there in the choir and sang. (*a look around the room*) Oh, I *wish* I'd come over here once in a while! That was a crime! That was a crime! Who's going to punish that?

MRS PETERS: (*looking upstairs*) We mustn't—take on.

MRS HALE: I might have known she needed help! I know how things can be—for women. I tell you, it's queer, Mrs Peters. We live close together and we live far apart. We all go through the same things—it's all just a different kind of the same thing, (*brushes her eyes, noticing the bottle of fruit, reaches out for it*) If I was you, I wouldn't tell her her fruit was gone. Tell her it *ain't*. Tell her it's all right. Take this in to prove it to her. She—she may never know whether it was broke or not.

MRS PETERS: (*takes the bottle, looks about for something to wrap it in; takes petticoat from the clothes brought from the other room, very nervously begins winding this around the bottle. In a false voice*) My, it's a good thing the men couldn't hear us.

Wouldn't they just laugh! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a—dead canary. As if that could have anything to do with—with—wouldn't they *laugh*!

(*The men are heard coming down stairs*.)

MRS HALE: (*under her breath*) Maybe they would—maybe they wouldn't.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: No, Peters, it's all perfectly clear except a reason for doing it. But you know juries when it comes to women. If there was some definite thing. Something to show—something to make a story about—a thing that would connect up with this strange way of doing it—

(*The women's eyes meet for an instant. Enter HALE from outer door*.)

HALE: Well, I've got the team around. Pretty cold out there.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I'm going to stay here a while by myself, (*to the* SHERIFF) You can send Frank out for me, can't you? I want to go over everything. I'm not satisfied that we can't do better.

SHERIFF: Do you want to see what Mrs Peters is going to take in?

(*The* LAWYER *goes to the table, picks up the apron, laughs*.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Oh, I guess they're not very dangerous things the ladies have picked out. (*Moves a few things about, disturbing the quilt pieces which cover the box. Steps back*) No, Mrs Peters doesn't need supervising. For that matter, a sheriff's wife is married to the law. Ever think of it that way, Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Not—just that way.

SHERIFF: (*chuckling*) Married to the law. (*moves toward the other room*) I just want you to come in here a minute, George. We ought to take a look at these windows.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*scoffingly*) Oh, windows!

SHERIFF: We'll be right out, Mr Hale.

(HALE *goes outside. The* SHERIFF *follows the* COUNTY ATTORNEY *into the other room. Then* MRS HALE *rises, hands tight together, looking intensely at* MRS PETERS, *whose eyes make a slow turn, finally meeting* MRS HALE's. *A moment* MRS HALE *holds her, then her own eyes point the way to where the box is concealed. Suddenly* MRS PETERS *throws back quilt pieces and tries to put the box in the bag she is wearing. It is too big. She opens box, starts to take bird out, cannot touch it, goes to pieces, stands there helpless. Sound of a knob turning in the other room*. MRS HALE *snatches the box and puts it in the pocket of her big coat. Enter* COUNTY ATTORNEY *and* SHERIFF.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*facetiously*) Well, Henry, at least we found out that she was not going to quilt it. She was going to—what is it you call it, ladies?

MRS HALE: (*her hand against her pocket*) We call it—knot it, Mr Henderson.

(CURTAIN)

THE VERGE

First performed at the Provincetown Playhouse on November 14, 1921.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ANTHONY

HARRY ARCHER, Claire's husband

HATTIE, The maid

CLAIRE

DICK, Richard Demming

TOM EDGEWORTHY

ELIZABETH, Claire's daughter

ADELAIDE, Claire's sister

DR EMMONS

ACT I

The Curtain lifts on a place that is dark, save for a shaft of light from below which comes up through an open trap-door in the floor. This slants up and strikes the long leaves and the huge brilliant blossom of a strange plant whose twisted stem projects from right front. Nothing is seen except this plant and its shadow. A violent wind is heard. A moment later a buzzer. It buzzes once long and three short. Silence. Again the buzzer. Then from below—his shadow blocking the light, comes ANTHONY, *a rugged man past middle life;—he emerges from the stairway into the darkness of the room. Is dimly seen taking up a phone.*

ANTHONY: Yes, Miss Claire?—I'll see. (*he brings a thermometer to the stairway for light, looks sharply, then returns to the phone*) It's down to forty-nine. The plants are in danger—(*with great relief and approval*) Oh, that's fine! (*hangs up the receiver*) Fine!

(*He goes back down the stairway, closing the trap-door upon himself, and the curtain is drawn upon darkness and wind. It opens a moment later on the greenhouse in the sunshine of a snowy morning. The snow piled outside is at times blown through the air. The frost has made patterns on the glass as if—as Plato would have it—the patterns inherent in abstract nature and behind all life had to come out, not only in the creative heat within, but in the creative cold on the other side of the glass. And the wind makes patterns of sound around the glass house.*

The back wall is low; the glass roof slopes sharply up. There is an outside door, a little toward the right. From outside two steps lead down to it. At left a glass partition and a door into the inner room. One sees a little way into this room. At right there is no dividing wall save large plants and vines, a narrow aisle between shelves of plants leads off.

This is not a greenhouse where plants are being displayed, nor the usual workshop for the growing of them, but a place for experiment with plants, a laboratory.

At the back grows a strange vine. It is arresting rather than beautiful. It creeps along the low wall, and one branch gets a little way up the glass. You might see the form of a cross in it, if you happened to think it that way. The leaves of this vine are not the form that leaves have been. They are at once repellent and significant.

ANTHONY *is at work preparing soil—mixing, sifting. As the wind tries the door he goes anxiously to the thermometer, nods as if reassured and returns to his work. The buzzer sounds. He starts to answer the telephone, remembers something, halts and listens sharply. It does not buzz once long and three short. Then he returns to his work. The buzzer goes on and on in impatient jerks which mount in anger. Several times* ANTHONY *is almost compelled by this insistence, but the thing that holds him back is stronger. At last, after a particularly mad splutter, to which* ANTHONY *longs to make retort, the buzzer gives it up*. ANTHONY *goes on preparing soil.*

A moment later the glass door swings violently in, snow blowing in, and also MR HARRY ARCHER, *wrapped in a rug.*)

ANTHONY: Oh, please close the door, sir.

HARRY: Do you think I'm not trying to? (*he holds it open to say this*)

ANTHONY: But please *do*. This stormy air is not good for the plants.

HARRY: I suppose it's just the thing for me! Now, what do you mean, Anthony, by not answering the phone when I buzz for you?

ANTHONY: Miss Claire—Mrs Archer told me not to.

HARRY: Told you not to answer me?

ANTHONY: Not you especially—nobody but her.

HARRY: Well, I like her nerve—and yours.

ANTHONY: You see, she thought it took my mind from my work to be interrupted when I'm out here. And so it does. So she buzzes once long and—Well, she buzzes her way, and all other buzzing—

HARRY: May buzz.

ANTHONY: (*nodding gravely*) She thought it would be better for the flowers.

HARRY: I am not a flower—true, but I too need a little attention—and a little heat. Will you please tell me why the house is frigid?

ANTHONY: Miss Claire ordered all the heat turned out here, (*patiently explaining it to* MISS CLAIRE's *speechless husband*) You see the roses need a great deal of heat.

HARRY: (*reading the thermometer*) The roses have seventy-three I have forty-five.

ANTHONY: Yes, the roses need seventy-three.

HARRY: Anthony, this is an outrage!

ANTHONY: I think it is myself; when you consider what we paid for the heating plant—but as long as it is defective—Why, Miss Claire would never have done what she has if she hadn't looked out for her plants in just such ways as this. Have you forgotten that Breath of Life is about to flower?

HARRY: And where's my breakfast about to flower?—that's what I want to know.

ANTHONY: Why, Miss Claire got up at five o'clock to order the heat turned off from the house.

HARRY: I see you admire her vigilance.

ANTHONY: Oh, I do. (*fervently*) I do. Harm was near, and that woke her up.

HARRY: And what about the harm to—(*tapping his chest*) Do roses get pneumonia?

ANTHONY: Oh, yes—yes, indeed they do. Why, Mr Archer, look at Miss Claire herself. Hasn't she given her heat to the roses?

HARRY: (*pulling the rug around him, preparing for the blizzard*) She has the fire within.

ANTHONY: (*delighted*) Now isn't that true! How well you said it. (*with a glare for this appreciation,* HARRY *opens the door. It blows away from him*) Please do close the door!

HARRY: (*furiously*) You think it is the aim of my life to hold it open?

ANTHONY: (*getting hold of it*) Growing things need an even temperature, (*while saying this he gets the man out into the snow*)

(ANTHONY *consults the thermometer, not as pleased this time as he was before. He then looks minutely at two of the plants—one is a rose, the other a flower without a name because it has not long enough been a flower. Peers into the hearts of them. Then from a drawer under a shelf, takes two paper bags, puts one over each of these flowers, closing them down at the bottom. Again the door blows wildly in, also* HATTIE, *a maid with a basket.*)

ANTHONY: What do you mean—blowing in here like this? Mrs Archer has ordered—

HATTIE: Mr Archer has ordered breakfast served here, (*she uncovers the basket and takes out an electric toaster*)

ANTHONY: *Breakfast*—here? *Eat*—here? Where plants grow?

HATTIE: The plants won't poison him, will they? (*at a loss to know what to do with things, she puts the toaster under the strange vine at the back, whose leaves lift up against the glass which has frost leaves on the outer side*)

ANTHONY: (*snatching it away*) You—you think you can cook eggs under the Edge Vine?

HATTIE: I guess Mr Archer's eggs are as important as a vine. I guess my work's as important as yours.

ANTHONY: There's a million people like you—and like Mr Archer. In all the world there is only one Edge Vine.

HATTIE: Well, maybe one's enough. It don't look like nothin', anyhow.

ANTHONY: And you've not got the wit to know that that's why it's the Edge Vine.

HATTIE: You want to look out, Anthony. You talk nutty. Everybody says so.

ANTHONY: Miss Claire don't say so.

HATTIE: No, because she's—

ANTHONY: You talk too much!

(*Door opens, admitting* HARRY; *after looking around for the best place to eat breakfast, moves a box of earth from the table*.)

HARRY: Just give me a hand, will you, Hattie?

(*They bring it to the open space and he and* HATTIE *arrange breakfast things,* HATTIE *with triumphant glances at the distressed* ANTHONY)

ANTHONY: (*deciding he must act*) Mr Archer, this is not the place to eat breakfast!

HARRY: Dead wrong, old boy. The place that has heat is the place to eat breakfast. (*to* HATTIE) Tell the other gentlemen—I heard Mr Demming up, and Mr Edgeworthy, if he appears, that as long as it is such a pleasant morning, we're having breakfast outside. To the conservatory for coffee.

(HATTIE *giggles, is leaving*.)

And let's see, have we got everything? (*takes the one shaker, shakes a little pepper on his hand. Looks in vain for the other shaker*) And tell Mr Demming to bring the salt.

ANTHONY: But Miss Claire will be very angry.

HARRY: I am very angry. Did I choose to eat my breakfast at the other end of a blizzard?

ANTHONY: (*an exclamation of horror at the thermometer*) The temperature is falling. I must report. (*he punches the buzzer, takes up the phone*) Miss Claire? It is Anthony. A terrible thing has happened. Mr Archer—what? Yes, a terrible thing.—Yes, it is about Mr Archer.—No—no, not dead. But here. He is here. Yes, he is well, he seems well, but he is eating his breakfast. Yes, he is having breakfast served out here—for himself, and the other gentlemen are to come too.—Well, he seemed to be annoyed because the heat had been turned off from the house. But the door keeps opening—this stormy wind blowing right over the plants. The temperature has already fallen.—Yes, yes. I thought you would want to come.

(ANTHONY *opens the trap-door and goes below*. HARRY *looks disapprovingly down into this openness at his feet, returns to his breakfast*. ANTHONY *comes up, bearing a box*.)

HARRY: (*turning his face away*) Phew! What a smell.

ANTHONY: Yes. Fertilizer has to smell.

HARRY: Well, it doesn't have to smell up my breakfast!

ANTHONY: (*with a patient sense of order*) The smell belongs here. (*he and the smell go to the inner room*)

(*The outer door opens just enough to admit* CLAIRE—*is quickly closed. With* CLAIRE *in a room another kind of aliveness is there*.)

CLAIRE: What are you doing here?

HARRY: Getting breakfast. (*all the while doing so*)

CLAIRE: I'll not have you in my place!

HARRY: If you take all the heat then you have to take me.

CLAIRE: I'll show you how I have to take you. (*with her hands begins scooping upon him the soil* ANTHONY *has prepared*)

HARRY: (*jumping up, laughing, pinning down her arms, putting his arms around her*) Claire—be decent. What harm do I do here?

CLAIRE: You pull down the temperature.

HARRY: Not after I'm in.

CLAIRE: And you told Tom and Dick to come and make it uneven.

HARRY: Tom and Dick are our guests. We can't eat where it's warm and leave them to eat where it's cold.

CLAIRE: I don't see why not.

HARRY: You only see what you want to see.

CLAIRE: That's not true. I wish it were. No; no, I don't either. (*she is disturbed—that troubled thing which rises from within, from deep, and takes* CLAIRE. *She turns to the Edge Vine, examines. Regretfully to* ANTHONY, *who has come in with a plant*) It's turning back, isn't it?

ANTHONY: Can you be sure yet, Miss Claire?

CLAIRE: Oh yes—it's had its chance. It doesn't want to be—what hasn't been.

HARRY: (*who has turned at this note in her voice. Speaks kindly*) Don't take it so seriously, Claire. (CLAIRE *laughs*)

CLAIRE: No, I suppose not. But it *does* matter—and why should I pretend it doesn't, just because I've failed with it?

HARRY: Well, I don't want to see it get you—it's not important enough for that.

CLAIRE: (*in her brooding way*) Anything is important enough for that—if it's important at all. (*to the vine*) I thought you were out, but you're—going back home.

ANTHONY: But you're doing it this time, Miss Claire. When Breath of Life opens—and we see its heart—

(CLAIRE *looks toward the inner room. Because of intervening plants they do not see what is seen from the front—a plant like caught motion, and of a greater transparency than plants have had. Its leaves, like waves that curl, close around a heart that is not seen. This plant stands by itself in what, because of the arrangement of things about it, is a hidden place. But nothing is between it and the light.*)

CLAIRE: Yes, if the heart has (*a little laugh*) held its own, then Breath of Life is alive in its otherness. But Edge Vine is running back to what it broke out of.

HARRY: Come, have some coffee, Claire.

(ANTHONY *returns to the inner room, the outer door opens*. DICK *is hurled in.*)

CLAIRE: (*going to the door, as he gasps for breath before closing it*) How dare you make my temperature uneven! (*she shuts the door and leans against it*)

DICK: Is that what I do?

(*A laugh, a look between them, which is held into significance.*)

HARRY: (*who is not facing them*) Where's the salt?

DICK: Oh, I fell down in the snow. I must have left the salt where I fell. I'll go back and look for it.

CLAIRE: And change the temperature? We don't need salt.

HARRY: You don't need salt, Claire. But we eat eggs.

CLAIRE: I must tell you I don't like the idea of any food being eaten here, where things have their own way to go. Please eat as little as possible, and as quickly.

HARRY: A hostess calculated to put one at one's ease.

CLAIRE: (*with no ill-nature*) I care nothing about your ease. Or about Dick's ease.

DICK: And no doubt that's what makes you so fascinating a hostess.

CLAIRE: Was I a fascinating hostess last night, Dick? (*softly sings*) 'Oh, night of love—' (*from the Barcorole of 'Tales of Hoffman'*)

HARRY: We've got to have salt.

(*He starts for the door.* CLAIRE *slips in ahead of him, locks it, takes the key. He marches off, right.*)

CLAIRE: (*calling after him*) That end's always locked.

DICK: Claire darling, I wish you wouldn't say those startling things. You do get away with it, but I confess it gives me a shock—and really, it's unwise.

CLAIRE: Haven't you learned that the best place to hide is in the truth? (*as* HARRY *returns*) Why won't you believe me, Harry, when I tell you the truth—about doors being locked?

HARRY: Claire, it's selfish of you to keep us from eating salt just because you don't eat salt.

CLAIRE: (*with one of her swift changes*) Oh, Harry! Try your egg without salt. Please—please try it without salt! (*an intensity which seems all out of proportion to the subject*)

HARRY: An egg demands salt.

CLAIRE: 'An egg demands salt.' Do you know, Harry, why you are such an unseasoned person? 'An egg demands salt.'

HARRY: Well, it doesn't always get it.

CLAIRE: But your spirit gets no lift from the salt withheld.

HARRY: Not an inch of lift. (*going back to his breakfast*)

CLAIRE: And pleased—so pleased with itself, for getting no lift. Sure, it is just the right kind of spirit—because it gets no lift. (*more brightly*) But, Dick, you must have tried your egg without salt.

DICK: I'll try it now. (*he goes to the breakfast table*)

CLAIRE: You must have tried and tried things. Isn't that the way one leaves the normal and gets into the byways of perversion?

HARRY: Claire.

DICK: (*pushing back his egg*) If so, I prefer to wait for the salt.

HARRY: Claire, there is a *limit*.

CLAIRE: Precisely what I had in mind. To perversion too there is a limit. So—the fortifications are unassailable. If one ever does get out, I suppose it is—quite unexpectedly, and perhaps—a bit terribly.

HARRY: Get out where?

CLAIRE: (*with a bright smile*) Where you, darling, will never go.

HARRY: And from which you, darling, had better beat it.

CLAIRE: I wish I could. (*to herself*) No—no I don't either

(*Again this troubled thing turns her to the plant. She puts by themselves the two which* ANTHONY *covered with paper bags. Is about to remove these papers*. HARRY *strikes a match*.)

CLAIRE: (*turning sharply*) You can't smoke here. The plants are not used to it.

HARRY: Then I should think smoking would be just the thing for them.

CLAIRE: There is design.

HARRY: (*to* DICK) Am I supposed to be answered? I never can be quite sure at what moment I am answered.

(*They both watch* CLAIRE, *who has uncovered the plants and is looking intently into the flowers. From a drawer she takes some tools. Very carefully gives the rose pollen to an unfamiliar flower—rather wistfully unfamiliar, which stands above on a small shelf near the door of the inner room*.)

DICK: What is this you're doing, Claire?

CLAIRE: Pollenizing. Crossing for fragrance.

DICK: It's all rather mysterious, isn't it?

HARRY: And Claire doesn't make it any less so.

CLAIRE: Can I make life any less mysterious?

HARRY: If you know what you are doing, why can't you tell Dick?

DICK: Never mind. After all, why should I be told? (*he turns away*)

(*At that she wants to tell him. Helpless, as one who cannot get across a stream, starts uncertainly*.)

CLAIRE: I want to give fragrance to Breath of Life (*faces the room beyond the wall of glass*)—the flower I have created that is outside what flowers have been. What has gone out should bring fragrance from what it has left. But no definite fragrance, no limiting enclosing thing. I call the fragrance I am trying to create Reminiscence. (*her hand on the pot of the wistful little flower she has just given pollen*) Reminiscent of the rose, the violet, arbutus—but a new thing—itself. Breath of Life may be lonely out in what hasn't been. Perhaps some day I can give it reminiscence.

DICK: I see, Claire.

CLAIRE: I wonder if you do.

HARRY: Now, Claire, you're going to be gay to-day, aren't you? These are Tom's last couple of days with us.

CLAIRE: That doesn't make me especially gay.

HARRY: Well, you want him to remember you as yourself, don't you?

CLAIRE: I would like him to. Oh—I would like him to!

HARRY: Then be amusing. That's really you, isn't it, Dick?

DICK: Not quite all of her—I should say.

CLAIRE: (*gaily*) Careful, Dick. Aren't you indiscreet? Harry will be suspecting that I am your latest strumpet.

HARRY: Claire! What language you use! A person knowing you only by certain moments could never be made to believe you are a refined woman.

CLAIRE: True, isn't it, Dick?

HARRY: It would be a good deal of a lark to let them listen in at times—then tell them that here is the flower of New England!

CLAIRE: Well, if this is the flower of New England, then the half has never been told.

DICK: About New England?

CLAIRE: I thought I meant that. Perhaps I meant—about me.

HARRY: (*going on with his own entertainment*) Explain that this is what came of the men who made the laws that made New England, that here is the flower of those gentlemen of culture who—

DICK: Moulded the American mind!

CLAIRE: Oh! (*it is pain*)

HARRY: Now what's the matter?

CLAIRE: I want to get away from them!

HARRY: Rest easy, little one—you do.

CLAIRE: I'm not so sure—that I do. But it can be done! We need not be held in forms moulded for us. There is outness—and otherness.

HARRY: Now, Claire—I didn't mean to start anything serious.

CLAIRE: No; you never mean to do that. I want to break it up! I tell you, I want to break it up! If it were all in pieces, we'd be (*a little laugh*) shocked to aliveness (*to* DICK)—wouldn't we? There would be strange new comings together—mad new comings together, and we would know what it is to be born, and then we might know—that we are. Smash it. (*her hand is near an egg*) As you'd smash an egg. (*she pushes the egg over the edge of the table and leans over and looks, as over a precipice*)

HARRY: (*with a sigh*) Well, all you've smashed is the egg, and all that amounts to is that now Tom gets no egg. So that's that.

CLAIRE: (*with difficulty, drawing herself back from the fascination of the precipice*) You think I can't smash anything? You think life can't break up, and go outside what it was? Because you've gone dead in the form in which you found yourself, you think that's all there is to the whole adventure? And that is called sanity. And made a virtue—to lock one in. You never worked with things that

grow! Things that take a sporting chance—go mad—that sanity mayn't lock them in—from life untouched—from life—that waits, (*she turns toward the inner room*) Breath of Life. (*she goes in there*)

HARRY: Oh, I wish Claire wouldn't be strange like that, (*helplessly*) What is it? What's the matter?

DICK: It's merely the excess of a particularly rich temperament.

HARRY: But it's growing on her. I sometimes wonder if all this (*indicating the place around him*) is a good thing. It would be all right if she'd just do what she did in the beginning—make the flowers as good as possible of their kind. That's an awfully nice thing for a woman to do—raise flowers. But there's something about this—changing things into other things—putting things together and making queer new things—this—

DICK: Creating?

HARRY: Give it any name you want it to have—it's unsettling for a woman. They say Claire's a shark at it, but what's the good of it, if it gets her? What is the good of it, anyway? Suppose we can produce new things. Lord—look at the one ones we've got. (*looks outside; turns back*) Heavens, what a noise the wind does make around this place, (*but now it is not all the wind, but* TOM EDGEWORTHY, *who is trying to let himself in at the locked door, their backs are to him*) I want my *egg*. You can't eat an egg without salt. I must say I don't get Claire lately. I'd like to have Charlie Emmons see her—he's fixed up a lot of people shot to pieces in the war. Claire needs something to tone her nerves *up*. You think it would irritate her?

DICK: She'd probably get no little entertainment out of it.

HARRY: Yes, dog-gone her, she would. (TOM *now takes more heroic measures to make himself heard at the door*) Funny—how the wind can fool you. Now by not looking around I could imagine—why, I could imagine anything. Funny, isn't it, about imagination? And Claire says I haven't got any!

DICK: It would make an amusing drawing—what the wind makes you think is there. (*first makes forms with his hands, then levelling the soil prepared by* ANTHONY, *traces lines with his finger*) Yes, really—quite jolly.

(TOM, *after a moment of peering in at them, smiles, goes away.*)

HARRY: You're another one of the queer ducks, aren't you? Come now—give me the dirt. Have you queer ones really got anything—or do you just put it over on us that you have?

DICK: (*smiles, draws on*) Not saying anything, eh? Well, I guess you're wise there. If you keep mum—how are we going to prove there's nothing there?

DICK: I don't keep mum. I draw.

HARRY: Lines that don't make anything—how can they tell you anything? Well, all I ask is, don't make Claire queer. Claire's a first water good sport—really, so don't encourage her to be queer.

DICK: Trouble is, if you're queer enough to be amusing, it might—open the door to queerness.

HARRY: Now don't say things like that to Claire.

DICK: I don't have to.

HARRY: Then *you* think she's queer, do you? Queer as you are, you think she's queer. I would like to have Dr Emmons come out. (*after a moment of silently watching* DICK, *who is having a good time with his drawing*) You know, frankly, I doubt if you're a good influence for Claire. (DICK *lifts his head ever so slightly*) Oh, I don't worry a bit about—things a husband might worry about. I suppose an intellectual woman—and for all Claire's hate of her ancestors, she's got the bug herself. Why, she has times of boring into things until she doesn't know you're there. What do you think I caught her doing the other day? Reading Latin. Well—a woman that reads Latin needn't worry a husband much.

DICK: They said a good deal in Latin.

HARRY: But I was saying, I suppose a woman who lives a good deal in her mind never does have much—well, what you might call passion, (*uses the word as if it shouldn't be used. Brows knitted, is looking ahead, does not see* DICK*'s face. Turning to him with a laugh*) I suppose you know pretty much all there is to know about women?

DICK: Perhaps one or two details have escaped me.

HARRY: Well, for that matter, you might know all there is to know about women and not know much about Claire. But now about (*does not want to say passion again*)—oh, feeling—Claire has a certain—well, a certain—

DICK: Irony?

HARRY: Which is really more—more—

DICK: More fetching, perhaps.

HARRY: Yes! Than the thing itself. But of course—you wouldn't have much of a thing that you have irony about.

DICK: Oh—wouldn't you! I mean—a man might.

HARRY: I'd like to talk to Edgeworth about Claire. But it's not easy to talk to Tom about Claire—or to Claire about Tom.

DICK: (*alert*) They're very old friends, aren't they?

HARRY: Why—yes, they are. Though they've not been together much of late years, Edgeworthy always going to the ends of the earth to—meditate about something. I must say I don't get it. If you have a place—that's the place for you to be. And he did have a place—best kind of family connections, and it was a very good business his father left him. Publishing business—in good shape, too, when old Edgeworthy died. I wouldn't call Tom a great success in life—but Claire does listen to what he says.

DICK: Yes, I've noticed that.

HARRY: So, I'd like to get him to tell her to quit this queer business of making things grow that never grew before.

DICK: But are you sure that's what he would tell her? Isn't he in the same business himself?

HARRY: Why, he doesn't raise anything.

(TOM *is again at the door*.)

DICK: Anyway, I think he might have some idea that we can't very well reach each other.

HARRY: Damn nonsense. What have we got intelligence for?

DICK: To let each other alone, I suppose. Only we haven't enough to do it.

(TOM *is now knocking on the door with a revolver*. HARRY *half turns, decides to be too intelligent to turn*.)

HARRY: Don't tell me I'm getting nerves. But the way some of you people talk is enough to make even an aviator jumpy. Can't reach each other! Then we're fools. If I'm here and you're there, why can't we reach each other?

DICK: Because I am I and you are you.

HARRY: No wonder your drawing's queer. A man who can't reach another man—(TOM *here reaches them by pointing the revolver in the air and firing it*. DICK *digs his hand into the dirt*. HARRY *jumps to one side, fearfully looks around*. TOM, *with a pleased smile to see he at last has their attention, moves the handle to indicate he would be glad to come in*.)

HARRY: Why—it's Tom! What the—? (*going to the door*) He's locked out. And Claire's got the key. (*goes to the inner door, tries it*) And she's locked in! (*trying to see her in there*) Claire! Claire! (*returning to the outer door*) Claire's got the key—and I can't get to Claire. (*makes a futile attempt at getting the door open without a key, goes back to inner door—peers, pounds*) Claire! Are you there? Didn't you hear the revolver? Has she gone down the cellar? (*tries the trap-door*) Bolted! Well, I love the way she keeps people locked out!

DICK: And in.

HARRY: (*getting angry, shouting at the trap-door*) Didn't you hear the revolver? (*going to* TOM) Awfully sorry, old man, but—(*in astonishment to* DICK) He can't hear me. (TOM, *knocking with the revolver to get their attention, makes a gesture of inquiry with it*) No—no—no! Is he asking if he shall shoot himself? (*shaking his head violently*) Oh, no—no! Um—*um*!

DICK: Hardly seems a man would shoot himself because he can't get to his breakfast.

HARRY: I'm coming to believe people would do anything! (TOM *is making another inquiry with the revolver*) No! not here. Don't shoot yourself. (*trying hard to get the word through*) *Shoot* yourself. I mean—don't, (*petulantly to* DICK) It's ridiculous that you can't make a man understand you when he looks right at you like that. (*turning back to* TOM) Read my lips. Lips. I'm saying—Oh

damn. Where is Claire? All right—I'll explain it with motions. We wanted the salt ... (*going over it to himself*) and Claire wouldn't let us go out for it on account of the temperature. Salt. Temperature. (*takes his egg-cup to the door, violent motion of shaking in salt*) But—no (*shakes his head*) No salt. (*he then takes the thermometer, a flower pot, holds them up to* TOM) On account of the temperature. Tem-per-a—(TOM *is not getting it*) Oh—well, what can you do when a man don't *get* a thing? (TOM *seems to be preparing the revolver for action*. HARRY *pounds on the inner door*) Claire! Do you want Tom to shoot himself?

(*As he looks in there, the trap-door lifts, and CLAIRE comes half-way up.*)

CLAIRE: Why, what is Tom doing out there, with a revolver?

HARRY: He is about to shoot himself because you've locked him out from his breakfast.

CLAIRE: He must know more interesting ways of destroying himself. (*bowing to* TOM) Good morning. (*from his side of the glass* TOM *bows and smiles back*) Isn't it strange—our being in here—and he being out there?

HARRY: Claire, have you no ideas of hospitality? Let him in!

CLAIRE: In? Perhaps that isn't hospitality.

HARRY: Well, whatever hospitality is, what is out there is snow—and wind—and our guest—who was asked to come here for his breakfast. To think a man has to *such* things.

CLAIRE: I'm going to let him in. Though I like his looks out there. (*she takes the key from her pocket*)

HARRY: Thank heaven the door's coming open. Somebody can go for salt, and we can have our eggs.

CLAIRE: And open the door again—to let the salt in? No. If you insist on salt, tell Tom now to go back and get it. It's a stormy morning and there'll be just one opening of the door.

HARRY: How can we tell him what we can't make him hear? And why does he think we're holding this conversation instead of letting him in?

CLAIRE: It would be interesting to know. I wonder if he'll tell us?

HARRY: Claire! Is this any time to wonder anything?

CLAIRE: Give up the idea of salt for your egg and I'll let him in. (*holds up the key to* TOM to indicate that for her part she is quite ready to let him in)

HARRY: I want my egg!

CLAIRE: Then ask him to bring the salt. It's quite simple.

(HARRY *goes through another pantomime with the egg-cup and the missing shaker.* CLAIRE, *still standing half-way down cellar, sneezes.* HARRY, *growing all the while less amiable, explains with thermometer and flower-pot that there can only be one opening of the door.* TOM *looks interested, but unenlightened. But suddenly he smiles, nods, vanishes.*)

HARRY: Well, thank heaven (*exhausted*) that's over.

CLAIRE: (*sitting on the top step*) It was all so queer. He locked out on his side of the door. You locked in on yours. Looking right at each other and—

HARRY: (*in mockery*) And me trying to tell him to kindly fetch the salt!

CLAIRE: Yes.

HARRY: (*to* DICK) Well, I didn't do so bad a job, did I? Quite an idea, explaining our situation with the thermometer and the flower-pot. That was really an apology for keeping him out there. Heaven knows—some explanation was in order, (*he is watching, and sees* TOM *coming*) Now there he is, Claire. And probably pretty well fed up with the weather.

(CLAIRE *goes to the door, stops before it. She and* TOM *look at each other through the glass. Then she lets him in.*)

TOM: And now I am in. For a time it seemed I was not to be in. But after I got the idea that you were keeping me out there to see if I could get the idea—it would be too humiliating for a wall of glass to keep one from understanding. (*taking it from his pocket*) So there's the other thermometer. Where do you want it? (CLAIRE *takes it*)

CLAIRE: And where's the pepper?

TOM: (*putting it on the table*) And here's the pepper.

HARRY: Pepper?

TOM: When Claire sneezed I knew—

CLAIRE: Yes, I knew if I sneezed you would bring the pepper.

TOM: Funny how one always remembers the salt, but the pepper gets overlooked in preparations. And what is an egg without pepper?

HARRY: (*nastily*) There's your egg, Edgeworth. (*pointing to it on the floor*) Claire decided it would be a good idea to smash everything, so she began with your egg.

TOM: (*looking at his egg*) The idea of smashing everything is really more intriguing than an egg.

HARRY: Nice that you feel that way about it.

CLAIRE: (*giving* TOM *his coffee*) You want to hear something amusing? I married Harry because I thought he would smash something.

HARRY: Well, that was an error in judgment.

CLAIRE: I'm such a naive trusting person (HARRY *laughs*—CLAIRE *gives him a surprised look, continues simply*). Such a guileless soul that I thought flying would do something to a man. But it didn't take us out. We just took it in.

TOM: It's only our own spirit can take us out.

HARRY: Whatever you mean by out.

CLAIRE: (*after looking intently at* TOM, *and considering it*) But our own spirit is not something on the loose. Mine isn't. It has something to do with what I do. To fly. To be free in air. To look from above on the world of all my days. Be where man has never been! Yes—wouldn't you think the spirit could get the idea? The earth grows smaller. I am leaving. What are they—running around down there? Why do they run around down there? Houses? Houses are funny lines and down-going slants—houses are vanishing slants. I am alone. Can I breathe this rarer air? Shall I go higher? Shall I go too high? I am loose. I am out. But no; man flew, and returned to earth the man who left it.

HARRY: And jolly well likely not to have returned at all if he'd had those flighty notions while operating a machine.

CLAIRE: Oh, Harry! (*not lightly asked*) Can't you see it would be better not to have returned than to return the man who left it?

HARRY: I have some regard for human life.

CLAIRE: Why, no—I am the one who has the regard for human life, (*more lightly*) That was why I swiftly divorced my stick-in-the-mud artist and married—the man of flight. But I merely passed from a stick-in-the-mud artist to a—

DICK: Stick-in-the-air aviator?

HARRY: Speaking of your stick-in-the-mud artist, as you romantically call your first blunder, isn't his daughter—and yours—due here to-day?

CLAIRE: I knew something was disturbing me. Elizabeth. A daughter is being delivered unto me this morning. I have a feeling it will be more painful than the original delivery. She has been, as they quaintly say, educated; prepared for her place in life.

HARRY: And fortunately Claire has a sister who is willing to give her young niece that place.

CLAIRE: The idea of giving anyone a place in life.

HARRY: Yes! The very idea!

CLAIRE: Yes! (*as often, the mocking thing gives true expression to what lies sombrely in her*) The war. There was another gorgeous chance.

HARRY: Chance for what? I call you, Claire. I ask you to say what you mean.

CLAIRE: I don't know—precisely. If I did—there'd be no use saying it. (*at* HARRY's *impatient exclamation she turns to* TOM)

TOM: (*nodding*) The only thing left worth saying is the thing we can't say.

HARRY: Help!

CLAIRE: Yes. But the war didn't help. Oh, it was a stunning chance! But fast as we could—scuttled right back to the trim little thing we'd been shocked out of.

HARRY: You bet we did—showing our good sense.

CLAIRE: Showing our incapacity—for madness.

HARRY: Oh, come now, Claire—snap out of it. You're not really trying to say that capacity for madness is a good thing to have?

CLAIRE: (*in simple surprise*) Why yes, of course.

DICK: But I should say the war did leave enough madness to give you a gleam of hope.

CLAIRE: Not the madness that—breaks through. And it was—a stunning chance! Mankind massed to kill. We have failed. We are through. We will destroy. Break this up—it can't go farther. In the air above—in the sea below—it is to kill! All we had thought we were—we aren't. We were shut in with what wasn't so. Is there one ounce of energy has not gone to this killing? Is there one love not torn in two? Throw it in! Now? Ready? Break up. Push. Harder. Break up. And then—and then—But we didn't say—'And then —' The spirit didn't take the tip.

HARRY: Claire! Come now (*looking to the others for help*)—let's talk of something else.

CLAIRE: Plants do it. The big leap—it's called. Explode their species—because something in them knows they've gone as far as they can go. Something in them knows they're shut in to just that. So—go mad—that life may not be prisoned. Break themselves up into crazy things—into lesser things, and from the pieces—may come one sliver of life with vitality to find the future. How beautiful. How brave.

TOM: (*as if he would call her from too far—or would let her know he has gone with her*) Claire!

CLAIRE: (*her eyes turning to him*) Why should we mind lying under the earth? We who have no such initiative—no proud madness? Why think it death to lie under life so flexible—so ruthless and ever-renewing?

ANTHONY: (*from the door of the inner room*) Miss Claire?

CLAIRE: (*after an instant*) Yes? (*she goes with him, as they disappear his voice heard*, 'show me now ... want those violets bedded')

HARRY: Oh, this has got to *stop*. I've got to—put a stop to it some way. Why, Claire used to be the best sport a man ever played around with. I can't stand it to see her getting hysterical.

TOM: That was not hysterical.

HARRY: What was it then—I want to know?

TOM: It was—a look.

HARRY: Oh, I might have known I'd get no help from either of you. Even you, Edgeworthy—much as she thinks of you—and fine sort as I've no doubt you are, you're doing Claire no good—encouraging her in these queer ways.

TOM: I couldn't change Claire if I would.

HARRY: And wouldn't if you could.

TOM: No. But you don't have to worry about me. I'm going away in a day or two. And I shall not be back.

HARRY: Trouble with you is, it makes little difference whether you're here or away. Just the fact of your existence does encourage Claire in this—this way she's going.

TOM: (*with a smile*) But you wouldn't ask me to go so far as to stop my existence? Though I would do that for Claire—if it were the way to help her.

HARRY: By Jove, you say that as if you meant it.

TOM: Do you think I would say anything about Claire I didn't mean?

HARRY: You think a lot of her, don't you? (TOM *nods*) You don't mean (*a laugh letting him say it*)—that you're—in love with Claire!

TOM: In love? Oh, that's much too easy. Certainly I do love Claire.

HARRY: Well, you're a cool one!

TOM: Let her be herself. Can't you see she's troubled?

HARRY: Well, what is there to trouble Claire? Now I ask you. It seems to me she has everything.

TOM: She's left so—open. Too exposed, (*as* HARRY *moves impatiently*) Please don't be annoyed with me. I'm doing my best at saying it. You see Claire isn't hardened into one of those forms she talks about. She's too—aware. Always pulled toward what could be—tormented by the lost adventure.

HARRY: Well, there's danger in all that. Of course there's danger.

TOM: But you can't help that.

HARRY: Claire was the best fun a woman could be. Is yet—at times.

TOM: Let her be—at times. As much as she can and will. She does need that. Don't keep her from it by making her feel you're holding her in it. Above all, don't try to stop what she's doing here. If she can do it with plants, perhaps she won't have to do it with herself.

HARRY: Do what?

TOM: (*low, after a pause*) Break up what exists. Open the door to destruction in the hope of—a door on the far side of destruction.

HARRY: Well, you give me the willies, (*moves around in irritation, troubled. To* ANTHONY, *who is passing through with a sprayer*) Anthony, have any arrangements been made about Miss Claire's daughter?

ANTHONY: I haven't heard of any arrangements.

HARRY: Well, she'll have to have some heat in her room. We can't all live out here.

ANTHONY: Indeed you cannot. It is not good for the plants.

HARRY: I'm going where I can *smoke*, (*goes out*)

DICK: (*lightly, but fascinated by the idea*) You think there is a door on the—hinter side of destruction?

TOM: How can one tell—where a door may be? One thing I want to say to you—for it is about you. (*regards* DICK *and not with his usual impersonal contemplation*) I don't think Claire should have—any door closed to her. (*pause*) You know, I think, what I mean. And perhaps you can guess how it hurts to say it. Whether it's—mere escape within,—rather shameful escape within, or the wild hope of that door through, it's—(*suddenly all human*) Be good to her! (*after a difficult moment, smiles*) Going away for ever is like dying, so one can say things.

DICK: Why do you do it—go away for ever?

TOM: I haven't succeeded here.

DICK: But you've tried the going away before.

TOM: Never knowing I would not come back. So that wasn't going away. My hope is that this will be like looking at life from outside life.

DICK: But then you'll not be in it.

TOM: I haven't been able to look at it while in it.

DICK: Isn't it more important to be in it than to look at it?

TOM: Not what I mean by look.

DICK: It's hard for me to conceive of—loving Claire and going away from her for ever.

TOM: Perhaps it's harder to do than to conceive of.

DICK: Then why do it?

TOM: It's my only way of keeping her.

DICK: I'm afraid I'm like Harry now. I don't get you.

TOM: I suppose not. Your way is different, (*with calm, with sadness—not with malice*) But I shall have her longer. And from deeper.

DICK: I know that.

TOM: Though I miss much. Much, (*the buzzer*. TOM *looks around to see if anyone is coming to answer it, then goes to the phone*) Yes?... I'll see if I can get her. (*to* DICK) Claire's daughter has arrived, (*looking in the inner room—returns to phone*) I don't see her. (*catching a glimpse of ANTHONY off right*) Oh, Anthony, where's Miss Claire? Her daughter has arrived.

ANTHONY: She's working at something very important in her experiments.

DICK: But isn't her daughter one of her experiments?

ANTHONY: (*after a baffled moment*) Her daughter is finished.

TOM: (*at the phone*) Sorry—but I can't get to Claire. She appears to have gone below. (ANTHONY *closes the trap-door*) I did speak to Anthony, but he says that Claire is working at one of her experiments and that her daughter is finished. I don't know how to make her hear—I took the revolver back to the house. Anyway you will remember Claire doesn't answer the revolver. I hate to reach Claire when she doesn't want to be reached. Why, of course—a daughter is very important, but oh, that's too bad. (*putting down the receiver*) He says the girl's feelings are hurt. Isn't that annoying? (*gingerly pounds on the trap-door. Then with the other hand. Waits*. ANTHONY *has a gentle smile for the gentle tapping—nods approval as,* TOM *returns to the phone*) She doesn't come up. Indeed I did—with both fists—Sorry.

ANTHONY: Please, you won't try again to disturb Miss Claire, will you?

DICK: Her daughter is here, Anthony. She hasn't seen her daughter for a year.

ANTHONY: Well, if she got along without a mother for a year—(*goes back to his work*)

DICK: (*smiling after* ANTHONY) Plants are queer. Perhaps it's *safer* to do it with pencil (*regards* TOM)—or with pure thought. Things that grow in the earth—

TOM: (*nodding*) I suppose because we grew in the earth.

DICK: I'm always shocked to find myself in agreement with Harry, but I too am worried about Claire—and this, (*looking at the plants*)

TOM: It's her best chance.

DICK: Don't you hate to go away to India—for ever—leaving Claire's future uncertain?

TOM: You're cruel now. And you knew that you were being cruel.

DICK: Yes, I like the lines of your face when you suffer.

TOM: The lines of yours when you're causing suffering—I don't like them.

DICK: Perhaps that's your limitation.

TOM: I grant you it may be. (*They are silent*) I had an odd feeling that you and I sat here once before, long ago, and that we were plants. And you were a beautiful plant, and I—I was a very ugly plant. I confess it surprised me—finding myself so ugly a plant.

(*A young girl is seen outside*. HARRY *gets the door open for her and brings* ELIZABETH *in*.)

HARRY: There's heat here. And two of your mother's friends. Mr Demming—Richard Demming—the artist—and I think you and Mr Edgeworthy are old friends.

(ELIZABETH *comes forward. She is the creditable young American—well built, poised, 'cultivated', so sound an expression of the usual as to be able to meet the world with assurance—assurance which training has made rather graceful. She is about seventeen—and mature. You feel solid things behind her*.)

TOM: I knew you when you were a baby. You used to kick a great deal then.

ELIZABETH: (*laughing, with ease*) And scream, I haven't a doubt. But I've stopped that. One does, doesn't one? And it was you who gave me the idol.

TOM: Proselytizing, I'm afraid.

ELIZABETH: I beg—? Oh—*yes (laughing cordially*) I *see. (she doesn't*) I dressed the idol up in my doll's clothes. They fitted perfectly—the idol was just the size of my doll Ailine. But mother didn't like the idol that way, and tore the clothes getting them off. (*to* HARRY, *after looking around*) Is mother here?

HARRY: (*crossly*) Yes, she's here. Of course she's here. And she must know you're here, (*after looking in the inner room he goes to the trap-door and makes a great noise*)

ELIZABETH: Oh—*please*. Really—it doesn't make the least difference.

HARRY: Well, all I can say is, your manners are better than your mother's.

ELIZABETH: But you see I don't do anything interesting, so I have to have good manners. (*lightly, but leaving the impression there is a certain superiority in not doing anything interesting. Turning cordially to* DICK) My father was an artist.

DICK: Yes, I know.

ELIZABETH: He was a portrait painter. Do you do portraits?

DICK: Well, not the kind people buy.

ELIZABETH: They bought father's.

DICK: Yes, I know he did that kind.

HARRY: (*still irritated*) Why, you don't do portraits.

DICK: I did one of you the other day. You thought it was a milk-can.

ELIZABETH: (*laughing delightedly*) No? Not really? Did you think—How could you think—(*as* HARRY *does not join the laugh*) Oh, I beg your pardon. I—Does mother grow beautiful roses now?

HARRY: No, she does not.

(*The trap-door begins to move*. CLAIRE's *head appears*.)

ELIZABETH: Mother! It's been so long—(*she tries to overcome the difficulties and embrace her mother*)

CLAIRE: (*protecting a box she has*) Careful, Elizabeth. We mustn't upset the lice.

ELIZABETH: (*retreating*) Lice? (*but quickly equal even to lice*) Oh—yes. You take it—them—off plants, don't you?

CLAIRE: I'm putting them on certain plants.

ELIZABETH: (*weakly*) Oh, I thought you took them off.

CLAIRE: (*calling*) Anthony! (*he comes*) The lice. (*he takes them from her*) (CLAIRE, *who has not fully ascended, looks at* ELIZABETH, *hesitates, then suddenly starts back down the stairs*.)

HARRY: (*outraged*) Claire! (*slowly she re-ascends—sits on the top step. After a long pause in which he has waited for* CLAIRE *to open a conversation with her daughter*.) Well, and what have you been doing at school all this time?

ELIZABETH: Oh—studying.

CLAIRE: Studying what?

ELIZABETH: Why—the things one studies, mother.

CLAIRE: Oh! The things one studies. (*looks down cellar again*)

DICK: (*after another wait*) And what have you been doing besides studying?

ELIZABETH: Oh—the things one does. Tennis and skating and dancing and—

CLAIRE: The things one does.

ELIZABETH: Yes. All the things. The—the things one does. Though I haven't been in school these last few months, you know. Miss Lane took us to Europe.

TOM: And how did you like Europe?

ELIZABETH: (*capably*) Oh, I thought it was awfully amusing. All the girls were quite mad about Europe. Of course, I'm glad I'm an American.

CLAIRE: Why?

ELIZABETH: (*laughing*) Why—mother! Of course one is glad one is an American. All the girls—

CLAIRE: (*turning away*) O—h! (*a moan under the breath*)

ELIZABETH: Why, mother—aren't you well?

HARRY: Your mother has been working pretty hard at all this.

ELIZABETH: Oh, I do so want to know all about it? Perhaps I can help you! I think it's just awfully amusing that you're doing something. One does nowadays, doesn't one?—if you know what I mean. It was the war, wasn't it, made it the thing to do something?

DICK: (*slyly*) And you thought, Claire, that the war was lost.

ELIZABETH: The *war? Lost!* (*her capable laugh*) Fancy our losing a war! Miss Lane says we should give *thanks*. She says we should each do some expressive thing—you know what I mean? And that this is the *keynote* of the age. Of course, one's own kind of thing. Like mother—growing flowers.

CLAIRE: You think that is one's own kind of thing?

ELIZABETH: Why, of course I do, mother. And so does Miss Lane. All the girls—

CLAIRE: (*shaking her head as if to get something out*) S-hoo.

ELIZABETH: What is it, mother?

CLAIRE: A fly shut up in my ear—'All the girls!'

ELIZABETH: (*laughing*) Mother was always so amusing. So *different*—if you know what I mean. Vacations I've lived mostly with Aunt Adelaide, you know.

CLAIRE: My sister who is fitted to rear children.

HARRY: Well, somebody has to do it.

ELIZABETH: And I do love Aunt Adelaide, but I think its going to be awfully amusing to be around with mother now—and help her with her work. Help do some useful beautiful thing.

CLAIRE: I am not doing any useful beautiful thing.

ELIZABETH: Oh, but you are, mother. Of course you are. Miss Lane says so. She says it is your splendid heritage gives you this impulse to do a beautiful thing for the race. She says you are doing in your way what the great teachers and preachers behind you did in theirs.

CLAIRE: (*who is good for little more*) Well, all I can say is, Miss Lane is stung.

ELIZABETH: Mother! What a thing to say of Miss Lane. (*from this slipping into more of a little girl manner*) Oh, she gave me a spiel one day about living up to the men I come from.

(CLAIRE *turns and regards her daughter*.)

CLAIRE: You'll do it, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: Well, I don't know. Quite a job, I'll say. Of course, I'd have to do it in my way. I'm not going to teach or preach or be a stuffy person. But now that—(*she here becomes the product of a superior school*) values have shifted and such sensitive new things have been liberated in the world—

CLAIRE: (*low*) Don't use those words.

ELIZABETH: Why—why not?

CLAIRE: Because you don't know what they mean.

ELIZABETH: Why, of course I know what they mean!

CLAIRE: (*turning away*) You're—stepping on the plants.

HARRY: (*hastily*) Your mother has been working awfully hard at all this.

ELIZABETH: Well, now that I'm here you'll let me help you, won't you, mother?

CLAIRE: (*trying for control*) You needn't—bother.

ELIZABETH: But I *want* to. Help add to the wealth of the world.

CLAIRE: Will you please get it out of your head that I am adding to the wealth of the world!

ELIZABETH: But, mother—of course you are. To produce a new and better kind of plant—

CLAIRE: They may be new. I don't give a damn whether they're better.

ELIZABETH: But—but what are they then?

CLAIRE: (*as if choked out of her*) They're different.

ELIZABETH: (*thinks a minute, then laughs triumphantly*) But what's the use of making them different if they aren't better?

HARRY: A good square question, Claire. Why don't you answer it?

CLAIRE: I don't have to answer it.

HARRY: Why not give the girl a fair show? You never have, you know. Since she's interested, why not tell her what it is you're doing?

CLAIRE: She is not interested.

ELIZABETH: But I am, mother. Indeed I am. I do want awfully to understand what you are doing, and help you.

CLAIRE: You can't help me, Elizabeth.

HARRY: Why not let her try?

CLAIRE: Why do you ask me to do that? This is my own thing. Why do you make me feel I should—(*goes to* ELIZABETH) I will be good to you, Elizabeth. We'll go around together. I haven't done it, but—you'll see. We'll do gay things. I'll have a lot of beaus around for you. Anything else. Not—this is—Not this.

ELIZABETH: As you like, mother, of course. I just would have been so glad to—to share the thing that interests you. (*hurt borne with good breeding and a smile*)

HARRY: Claire! (*which says, 'How can you?'*)

CLAIRE: (*who is looking at* ELIZABETH) Yes, I will try.

TOM: I don't think so. As Claire says—anything else.

ELIZABETH: Why, of course—I don't at all want to intrude.

HARRY: It'll do Claire good to take someone in. To get down to brass tacks and actually say what she's driving at.

CLAIRE: Oh—*Harry*. But yes—I will try. (*does try, but no words come. Laughs*) When you come to say it it's not—One would rather not nail it to a cross of words—(*laughs again*) with brass tacks.

HARRY: (*affectionately*) But I want to see you put things into words, Claire, and realize just where you are.

CLAIRE: (*oddly*) You think that's a—good idea?

ELIZABETH: (*in her manner of holding the world capably in her hands*) Now let's talk of something else. I hadn't the least idea of making mother feel badly.

CLAIRE: (*desperately*) No, we'll go on. Though I don't know—where we'll end. I can't answer for that. These plants—(*beginning flounderingly*) Perhaps they are less beautiful—less sound—than the plants from which they diverged. But they have found—otherness, (*laughs a little shrilly*) If you know—what I mean.

TOM: Claire—stop this! (*To* HARRY) This is wrong.

CLAIRE: (*excitedly*) No; I'm going on. They have been shocked out of what they were—into something they were not; they've broken from the forms in which they found themselves. They are alien. Outside. That's it, outside; if you—know what I mean.

ELIZABETH: (*not shocked from what she is*) But of course, the object of it all is to make them better plants. Otherwise, what would be the sense of doing it?

CLAIRE: (*not reached by* ELIZABETH) Out there—(*giving it with her hands*) lies all that's not been touched—lies life that waits. Back here—the old pattern, done again, again and again. So long done it doesn't even know itself for a pattern—in immensity. But this—has invaded. Crept a little way into—what wasn't. Strange lines in life unused. And when you make a pattern new you know a pattern's made with life. And then you know that anything may be—if only you know how to reach it. (*this has taken form, not easily, but with great struggle between feeling and words*)

HARRY: (*cordially*) Now I begin to get you, Claire. I never knew before why you called it the Edge Vine.

CLAIRE: I should destroy the Edge Vine. It isn't—over the edge. It's running, back to—'all the girls'. It's a little afraid of Miss Lane, (*looking sombrely at it*) You are out, but you are not alive.

ELIZABETH: Why, it looks all right, mother.

CLAIRE: Didn't carry life with it from the life it left. Dick—you know what I mean. At least you ought to. (*her ruthless way of not letting anyone's feelings stand in the way of truth*) Then destroy it for me! It's hard to do it—with the hands that made it.

DICK: But what's the point in destroying it, Claire?

CLAIRE: (*impatiently*) I've told you. It cannot create.

DICK: But you say you can go on producing it, and it's interesting in form.

CLAIRE: And you think I'll stop with that? Be shut in—with different life—that can't creep on? (*after trying to put destroying hands upon it*) It's hard to—get past what we've done. Our own dead things—block the way.

TOM: But you're doing it this next time, Claire, (*nodding to the inner room.*) In there!

CLAIRE: (*turning to that room*) I'm not sure.

TOM: But you told me Breath of Life has already produced itself. Doesn't that show it has brought life from the life it left?

CLAIRE: But timidly, rather—wistfully. A little homesick. If it is less sure this time, then it is going back to—Miss Lane. But if the pattern's clearer now, then it has made friends of life that waits. I'll know to-morrow.

ELIZABETH: You know, something tells me this is *wrong*.

CLAIRE: The hymn-singing ancestors are tuning up.

ELIZABETH: I don't know what you mean by that, mother but—

CLAIRE: But we will now sing, 'Nearer, my God, to Thee: Nearer to—'

ELIZABETH: (*laughingly breaking in*) Well, I don't care. Of course you can make fun at me, but something does tell me this is wrong. To do what—what—

DICK: What God did?

ELIZABETH: Well—yes. Unless you do it to make them better—to *do* it just to do it—that doesn't seem right to me.

CLAIRE: (*roughly*) 'Right to you!' And that's all you know of adventure—and of anguish. Do you know it is you—world of which you're so true a flower—makes me have to leave? You're there to hold the door shut! Because you're young and of a gayer world, you think I can't *see* them—those old men? Do you know why you're so sure of yourself? Because you can't *feel*. Can't feel—the limitless—out there—a sea just over the hill. I will not stay with you! (*buries her hands in the earth around the Edge Vine. But suddenly steps back from it as she had from* ELIZABETH) And I will not stay with *you! (grasps it as we grasp what we would kill, is trying to pull it up. They all step forward in horror. ANTHONY is drawn in by this harm to the plant*)

ANTHONY: Miss Claire! Miss Claire! The work of years!

CLAIRE: May only make a prison! (*struggling with* HARRY, *who is trying to stop her*) You think I too will die on the edge? (*she has thrown him away, is now struggling with the vine*) Why did I make you? To get past you! (*as she twists it*) Oh yes, I know you have thorns! The Edge Vine should have thorns, (*with a long tremendous pull for deep roots, she has it up. As she holds the torn roots*) Oh, I have loved you so! You took me where I hadn't been.

ELIZABETH: (*who has been looking on with a certain practical horror*) Well, I'd say it would be better not to go there!

CLAIRE: Now I know what you are for! (*flings her arm back to strike* ELIZABETH with the Edge Vine)

HARRY: (*wresting it from her*) Claire! Are you mad?

CLAIRE: No, I'm not mad. I'm—too sane! (*pointing to* ELIZABETH—*and the words come from mighty roots*) To think that object ever moved my belly and sucked my breast! (ELIZABETH *hides her face as if struck*)

HARRY: (*going to* ELIZABETH, *turning to* CLAIRE) This is atrocious! You're cruel.

(*He leads* ELIZABETH *to the door and out. After an irresolute moment in which he looks from* CLAIRE *to* TOM, DICK *follows.* ANTHONY *cannot bear to go. He stoops to take the Edge Vine from the floor.* CLAIRE's *gesture stops him. He goes into the inner room.*)

CLAIRE: (*kicking the Edge Vine out of her way, drawing deep breaths, smiling*) O-h. How good I feel! Light! (*a movement as if she could fly*) Read me something, Tom dear. Or say something pleasant—about God. But be very careful what you say about him! I have a feeling—he's not far off.

(CURTAIN)

ACT II

Late afternoon of the following day. CLAIRE *is alone in the tower—a tower which is thought to be round but does not complete the circle. The back is curved, then jagged lines break from that, and the front is a queer bulging window—in a curve that leans. The whole structure is as if given a twist by some terrific force—like something wrong. It is lighted by an old-fashioned watchman's lantern hanging from the ceiling; the innumerable pricks and slits in the metal throw a marvellous pattern on the curved wall—like some masonry that hasn't been.*

There are no windows at back, and there is no door save an opening in the floor. The delicately distorted rail of a spiral staircase winds up from below. CLAIRE *is seen through the huge ominous window as if shut into the tower. She is lying on a seat at the back looking at a book of drawings. To do this she has left the door of her lantern a little open—and her own face is clearly seen.*

A door is heard opening below; laughing voices, CLAIRE *listens, not pleased.*

ADELAIDE: (*voice coming up*) Dear—dear, why do they make such twisting steps.

HARRY: Take your time, most up now. (HARRY*'s head appears, he looks back.*) Making it all right?

ADELAIDE: I can't tell yet. (*laughingly*) No, I don't think so.

HARRY: (*reaching back a hand for her*) The last lap—is the bad lap. (ADELAIDE *is up, and occupied with getting her breath.*)

HARRY: Since you wouldn't come down, Claire, we thought we'd come up.

ADELAIDE: (*as* CLAIRE *does not greet her*) I'm sorry to intrude, but I have to see you, Claire. There are things to be arranged. (CLAIRE *volunteering nothing about arrangements,* ADELAIDE *surveys the tower. An unsympathetic eye goes from the curves to*

the lines which diverge. Then she looks from the window) Well, at least you have a view.

HARRY: This is the first time you've been up here?

ADELAIDE: Yes, in the five years you've had the house I was never asked up here before.

CLAIRE: (*amiably enough*) You weren't asked up here now.

ADELAIDE: Harry asked me.

CLAIRE: It isn't Harry's tower. But never mind—since you don't like it—it's all right.

ADELAIDE: (*her eyes again rebuking the irregularities of the tower*) No, I confess I do not care for it. A round tower should go on being round.

HARRY: Claire calls this the thwarted tower. She bought the house because of it. (*going over and sitting by her, his hand on her ankle*) Didn't you, old girl? She says she'd like to have known the architect.

ADELAIDE: Probably a tiresome person too incompetent to make a perfect tower.

CLAIRE: Well, now he's disposed of, what next?

ADELAIDE: (*sitting down in a manner of capably opening a conference*) Next, Elizabeth, and you, Claire. Just what is the matter with Elizabeth?

CLAIRE: (*whose voice is cool, even, as if herself is not really engaged by this*) Nothing is the matter with her. She is a tower that is a tower.

ADELAIDE: Well, is that anything against her?

CLAIRE: She's just like one of her father's portraits. They never interested me. Nor does she. (*looks at the drawings which do interest her*)

ADELAIDE: A mother cannot cast off her own child simply because she does not interest her!

CLAIRE: (*an instant raising cool eyes to* ADELAIDE) Why can't she?

ADELAIDE: Because it would be monstrous!

CLAIRE: And why can't she be monstrous—if she has to be?

ADELAIDE: You don't have to be. That's where I'm out of patience with you Claire. You are really a particularly intelligent, competent person, and it's time for you to call a halt to this nonsense and be the woman you were meant to be!

CLAIRE: (*holding the book up to see another way*) What inside dope have you on what I was meant to be?

ADELAIDE: I know what you came from.

CLAIRE: Well, isn't it about time somebody got loose from that? What I came from made you, so—

ADELAIDE: (*stiffly*) I see.

CLAIRE: So—you being such a tower of strength, why need I too be imprisoned in what I came from?

ADELAIDE: It isn't being imprisoned. Right there is where you make your mistake, Claire. Who's in a tower—in an unsuccessful tower? Not I. I go about in the world—free, busy, happy. Among people, I have no time to think of myself.

CLAIRE: No.

ADELAIDE: No. My family. The things that interest them; from morning till night it's—

CLAIRE: Yes, I know you have a large family, Adelaide; five and Elizabeth makes six.

ADELAIDE: We'll speak of Elizabeth later. But if you would just get out of yourself and enter into other people's lives—

CLAIRE: Then I would become just like you. And we should all be just alike in order to assure one another that we're all just right. But since you and Harry and Elizabeth and ten million other people bolster each other up, why do you especially need me?

ADELAIDE: (*not unkindly*) We don't need you as much as you need us.

CLAIRE: (*a wry face*) I never liked what I needed.

HARRY: I am convinced I am the worst thing in the world for you, Claire.

CLAIRE: (*with a smile for his tactics, but shaking her head*) I'm afraid you're not. I don't know—perhaps you are.

ADELAIDE: Well, what is it you want, Claire?

CLAIRE: (*simply*) You wouldn't know if I told you.

ADELAIDE: That's rather arrogant.

HARRY: Yes, take a chance, Claire. I have been known to get an idea—and Adelaide quite frequently gets one.

CLAIRE: (*the first resentment she has shown*) You two feel very superior, don't you?

ADELAIDE: I don't think we are the ones who are feeling superior.

CLAIRE: Oh, yes, you are. Very superior to what you think is my feeling of superiority, comparing my—isolation with your 'heart of humanity'. Soon we will speak of the beauty of common experiences, of the—Oh, I could say it all before we come to it.

HARRY: Adelaide came up here to help you, Claire.

CLAIRE: Adelaide came up here to lock me in. Well, she can't do it.

ADELAIDE: (*gently*) But can't you see that one may do that to one's self?

CLAIRE: (*thinks of this, looks suddenly tired—then smiles*) Well, at least I've changed the keys.

HARRY: 'Locked in.' Bunkum. Get that our of your head, Claire. Who's locked in? Nobody that I know of, we're all free Americans. Free as air.

ADELAIDE: I wish you'd come and hear one of Mr Morley's sermons, Claire. You're very old-fashioned if you think sermons are what they used to be.

CLAIRE: (*with interest*) And do they still sing 'Nearer, my God, to Thee'?

ADELAIDE: They do, and a noble old hymn it is. It would do you no harm at all to sing it.

CLAIRE: (*eagerly*) Sing it to me, Adelaide. I'd like to hear you sing it.

ADELAIDE: It would be sacrilege to sing it to you in this mood.

CLAIRE: (*falling back*) Oh, I don't know. I'm not so sure God would agree with you. That would be one on you, wouldn't it?

ADELAIDE: It's easy to feel one's self set apart!

CLAIRE: No, it isn't.

ADELAIDE: (*beginning anew*) It's a new age, Claire. Spiritual values—

CLAIRE: Spiritual values! (*in her brooding way*) So you have pulled that up. (*with cunning*) Don't think I don't know what it is you do.

ADELAIDE: Well, what do I do? I'm sure I have no idea what you're talking about.

HARRY: (*affectionately, as* CLAIRE *is looking with intentness at what he does not see*) What does she do, Claire?

CLAIRE: It's rather clever, what she does. Snatching the phrase—(*a movement as if pulling something up*) standing it up between her and—the life that's there. And by saying it enough—'We have life! We have life! We have life!' Very good come-back at one who would really be—'Just so! *We* are that. Right this way, please—'That, I suppose is what we mean by needing each other. All join in the chorus, 'This is it! This is it! This is it!' And anyone who won't join is to be—visited by relatives, (*regarding* ADELAIDE *with curiosity*) Do you really think that anything is going on in you?

ADELAIDE: (*stiffly*) I am not one to hold myself up as a perfect example of what the human race may be.

CLAIRE: (*brightly*) Well, that's good.

HARRY: Claire!

CLAIRE: Humility's a *real* thing—not just a fine name for laziness.

HARRY: Well, Lord A'mighty, you can't call Adelaide lazy.

CLAIRE: She stays in one place because she hasn't the energy to go anywhere else.

ADELAIDE: (*as if the last word in absurdity has been said) I* haven't energy?

CLAIRE: (*mildly*) You haven't any energy at all, Adelaide. That's why you keep so busy.

ADELAIDE: *Well*—Claire's nerves are in a worse state than I had realized.

CLAIRE: So perhaps we'd better look at Blake's drawings, (*takes up the book*)

ADELAIDE: It would be all right for me to look at Blake's drawings. You'd better look at the Sistine Madonna, (*affectionately, after she has watched* CLAIRE*'s face a moment*) What is it, Claire? Why do you shut yourself out from us?

CLAIRE: I told you. Because I do not want to be shut in with you.

ADELAIDE: All of this is not very pleasant for Harry.

HARRY: I want Claire to be gay.

CLAIRE: Funny—you should want that, (*speaks unwillingly, a curious, wistful unwillingness*) Did you ever say a preposterous thing, then go trailing after the thing you've said and find it wasn't so preposterous? Here is the circle we are in.*describes a big circle*) Being gay. It shoots little darts through the circle, and a minute later—gaiety all gone, and you looking through that little hole the gaiety left.

ADELAIDE: (*going to her, as she is still looking through that little hole*) Claire, dear, I wish I could make you feel how much I care for you. (*simply, with real feeling*) You can call me all the names you like—dull, commonplace, lazy—that is a new idea, I confess, but the rest of our family's gone now, and the love that used to be there between us all—the only place for it now is between you and me. You were so much loved, Claire. You oughtn't to try and get away from a world in which you are so much loved, (*to* HARRY) Mother—father—all of us, always loved Claire best. We always loved Claire's queer gaiety. Now you've got to hand it to us for that, as the children say.

CLAIRE: (*moved, but eyes shining with a queer bright loneliness*) But never one of you—once—looked with me through the little pricks the gaiety made—never one of you—once, looked with me at the queer light that came in through the pricks.

ADELAIDE: And can't you see, dear, that it's better for us we didn't? And that it would be better for you now if you would just resolutely look somewhere else? You must see yourself that you haven't the poise of people who are held—well, within the circle, if you choose to put it that way. There's something about being in that main body, having one's roots in the big common experiences, gives a calm which you have missed. That's *why* I want you to take Elizabeth, forget yourself, and—

CLAIRE: I do want calm. But mine would have to be a calm I—worked my way to. A calm all prepared for me—would stink.

ADELAIDE: (*less sympathetically*) I know you have to be yourself, Claire. But I don't admit you have a right to hurt other people.

HARRY: I think Claire and I had better take a nice long trip.

ADELAIDE: Now why don't you?

CLAIRE: I am taking a trip.

ADELAIDE: Well, Harry isn't, and he'd like to go and wants you to go with him. Go to Paris and get yourself some awfully good-looking clothes—and have one grand fling at the gay world. You really love that, Claire, and you've been awfully dull lately. I think that's the whole trouble.

HARRY: I think so too.

ADELAIDE: This sober business of growing plants—

CLAIRE: Not sober—it's mad.

ADELAIDE: All the more reason for quitting it.

CLAIRE: But madness that is the only chance for sanity.

ADELAIDE: Come, come, now—let's not juggle words.

CLAIRE: (*springing up*) How dare you say that to me, Adelaide. You who are such a liar and thief and whore with words!

ADELAIDE: (*facing her, furious*) How *dare* you—

HARRY: Of course not, Claire. You have the most preposterous way of using words.

CLAIRE: I respect words.

ADELAIDE: Well, you'll please respect me enough not to dare use certain words to me!

CLAIRE: Yes, I do dare. I'm tired of what you do—you and all of you. Life—experience—values—calm—sensitive words which raise their heads as indications. And you *pull them up*—to decorate your stagnant little minds—and think that makes you—And because you have pulled that word from the life that grew it you won't let one who's honest, and aware, and troubled, try to reach through to—to what she doesn't know is there, (*she is moved, excited, as if a cruel thing has been done*) Why did you come here?

ADELAIDE: To try and help you. But I begin to fear I can't do it. It's pretty egotistical to claim that what so many people are, is wrong.

(*CLAIRE, after looking intently at ADELAIDE, slowly, smiling a little, describes a circle. With deftly used hands makes a quick vicious break in the circle which is there in the air.*)

HARRY: (*going to her, taking her hands*) It's getting close to dinner-time. You were thinking of something else, Claire, when I told you Charlie Emmons was coming to dinner to-night, (*answering her look*) Sure—he is a neurologist, and I want him to see you. I'm perfectly honest with you—cards all on the table, you know that. I'm hoping if you like him—and he's the best scout in the world, that he can help you. (*talking hurriedly against the stillness which follows her look from him to ADELAIDE, where she sees between them an 'understanding' about her*) Sure you need help, Claire. Your nerves are a little on the blink—from all you've been doing. No use making a mystery of it—or a tragedy. Emmons is a cracker-jack, and naturally I want you to get a move on yourself and be happy again.

CLAIRE: (*who has gone over to the window*) And this neurologist can make me happy?

HARRY: Can make you well—and then you'll be happy.

ADELAIDE: (*in the voice of now fixing it all up*) And I had just an idea about Elizabeth. Instead of working with mere plants, why not think of Elizabeth as a plant and—

(CLAIRE, *who has been looking out of the window, now throws open one of the panes that swings out—or seems to, and calls down in great excitement.*)

CLAIRE: Tom! *Tom!* Quick! Up here! I'm in trouble!

HARRY: (*going to the window*) That's a rotten thing to do, Claire! You've frightened him.

CLAIRE: Yes, how fast he can run. He was deep in thought and I stabbed right through.

HARRY: Well, he'll be none too pleased when he gets up here and finds there was no reason for the stabbing!

(*They wait for his footsteps,* HARRY *annoyed,* ADELAIDE *offended, but stealing worried looks at* CLAIRE, *who is looking fixedly at the place in the floor where* TOM *will appear.—Running footsteps.*)

TOM: (*his voice getting there before he does*) Yes, Claire—yes—yes—(*as his head appears*) What is it?

CLAIRE: (*at once presenting him and answering his question*) My sister.

TOM: (*gasping*) Oh,—why—is that all? I mean—how do you do? Pardon, I (*panting*) came up—rather hurriedly.

HARRY: If you want to slap Claire, Tom, I for one have no objection.

CLAIRE: Adelaide has the most interesting idea, Tom. She proposes that I take Elizabeth and roll her in the gutter. Just let her lie there until she breaks up into—

ADELAIDE: *Claire!* I don't see how—even in fun—pretty vulgar fun—you can speak in those terms of a pure young girl. I'm beginning to think I had better take Elizabeth.

CLAIRE: Oh, I've thought that all along.

ADELAIDE: And I'm also beginning to suspect that—oddity may be just a way of shifting responsibility.

CLAIRE: (*cordially interested in this possibility*) Now you know—that might be.

ADELAIDE: A mother who does not love her own child! You are an unnatural woman, Claire.

CLAIRE: Well, at least it saves me from being a natural one.

ADELAIDE: Oh—I know, you think you have a great deal! But let me tell you, you've missed a great deal! You've never known the faintest stirring of a mother's love.

CLAIRE: That's not true.

HARRY: No. Claire loved our boy.

CLAIRE: I'm glad he didn't live.

HARRY: (*low*) Claire!

CLAIRE: I loved him. Why should I want him to live?

HARRY: Come, dear, I'm sorry I spoke of him—when you're not feeling well.

CLAIRE: I'm feeling all right. *Just* because I'm seeing something, it doesn't mean I'm sick.

HARRY: Well, let's go down now. About dinner-time. I shouldn't wonder if Emmons were here. (*as ADELAIDE is starting down stairs*) Coming, Claire?

CLAIRE: No.

HARRY: But it's time to go down for dinner.

CLAIRE: I'm not hungry.

HARRY: But we have a guest. Two guests—Adelaide's staying too.

CLAIRE: Then you're not alone.

HARRY: But I invited Dr Emmons to meet you.

CLAIRE: (*her smile flashing*) Tell him I am violent to-night.

HARRY: Dearest—how can you joke about such things!

CLAIRE: So you do think they're serious?

HARRY: (*irritated*) No, I do not! But I want you to come down for dinner!

ADELAIDE: Come, come, Claire; you know quite well this is not the sort of thing one does.

CLAIRE: Why go on saying one doesn't, when you are seeing one does (*to* TOM) Will you stay with me a while? I want to purify the tower.

(ADELAIDE *begins to disappear*)

HARRY: Fine time to choose for a *tête-à-tête. (as he is leaving*) I'd think more of you, Edgeworthy, if you refused to humour Claire in her ill-breeding.

ADELAIDE: (*her severe voice coming from below*) It is not what she was taught.

CLAIRE: No, it's not what I was taught, (*laughing rather timidly*) And perhaps you'd rather have your dinner?

TOM: No.

CLAIRE: We'll get something later. I want to talk to you. (*but she does not—laughs*) Absurd that I should feel bashful with you. Why am I so awkward with words when I go to talk to you?

TOM: The words know they're not needed.

CLAIRE: No, they're not needed. There's something underneath—an open way—down below the way that words can go. (*rather desperately*) It is there, isn't it?

TOM: Oh, yes, it is there.

CLAIRE: Then why do we never—go it?

TOM: If we went it, it would not be there.

CLAIRE: Is that true? How terrible, if that is true.

TOM: Not terrible, wonderful—that it should—of itself—be there.

CLAIRE: (*with the simplicity that can say anything*) I want to go it, Tom, I'm lonely up on top here. Is it that I have more faith than you, or is it only that I'm greedier? You see, you don't know (*her reckless laugh*) what you're missing. You don't know how I could love you.

TOM: Don't, Claire; that isn't—how it is—between you and me.

CLAIRE: But why can't it be—every way—between you and me?

TOM: Because we'd lose—the open way. (*the quality of his denial shows how strong is his feeling for her*) With anyone else—not with you.

CLAIRE: But you are the only one I want. The only one—all of me wants.

TOM: I know; but that's the way it is.

CLAIRE: You're cruel.

TOM: Oh, Claire, I'm trying so hard to—save it for us. Isn't it our beauty and our safeguard that underneath our separate lives, no matter where we may be, with what other, there is this open way between us? That's so much more than anything we could bring to being.

CLAIRE: Perhaps. But—it's different with me. I'm not—all spirit.

TOM: (*his hand on her*) Dear!

CLAIRE: No, don't touch me—since (*moving*) you're going away to-morrow? (*he nods*) For—always? (*his head just moves assent*) India is just another country. But there are undiscovered countries.

TOM: Yes, but we are so feeble we have to reach our country through the actual country lying nearest. Don't you do that yourself, Claire? Reach your country through the plants' country?

CLAIRE: My country? You mean—outside?

TOM: No, I don't think it that way.

CLAIRE: Oh, yes, you do.

TOM: Your country is the inside, Claire. The innermost. You are disturbed because you lie too close upon the heart of life.

CLAIRE: (*restlessly*) I don't know; you can think it one way—or another. No way says it, and that's good—at least it's not shut up in saying. (*she is looking at her enclosing hand, as if something is shut up there*)

TOM: But also, you know, things may be freed by expression. Come from the unrealized into the fabric of life.

CLAIRE: Yes, but why does the fabric of life have to—freeze into its pattern? It should (*doing it with her hands*) flow, (*then turning like an unsatisfied child to him*) But I wanted to talk to you.

TOM: You are talking to me. Tell me about your flower that never was before—your Breath of Life.

CLAIRE: I'll know to-morrow. You'll not go until I know?

TOM: I'll try to stay.

CLAIRE: It seems to me, if it has—then I have, integrity in—(*smiles, it is as if the smile lets her say it*) otherness. I don't want to die on the edge!

TOM: Not you!

CLAIRE: Many do. It's what makes them too smug in allness—those dead things on the edge, died, distorted—trying to get through. Oh—don't think I don't see—The Edge Vine! (*a pause, then swiftly*) Do you know what I mean? Or do you think I'm just a fool, or crazy?

TOM: I think I know what you mean, and you know I don't think you are a fool, or crazy.

CLAIRE: Stabbed to awareness—no matter where it takes you, isn't that more than a safe place to stay? (*telling him very simply despite the pattern of pain in her voice*) Anguish may be a thread—making patterns that haven't been. A thread—blue and burning.

TOM: (*to take her from what even he fears for her*) But you were telling me about the flower you breathed to life. What is your Breath of Life?

CLAIRE: (*an instant playing*) It's a secret. A secret?—it's a trick. Distilled from the most fragile flowers there are. It's only air—pausing—playing; except, far in, one stab of red, its quivering heart—that asks a question. But here's the trick—I bred the air-form to strength. The strength shut up behind us I've sent—far out. (*troubled*) I'll know tomorrow. And I have another gift for Breath of Life; some day—though days of work lie in between—some day I'll give it reminiscence. Fragrance that is—no one thing in here but—reminiscent. (*silence, she raises wet eyes*) We need the haunting beauty from the life we've left. I need that, (*he takes her hands and breathes her name*) Let me reach my country with you. I'm not a plant. After all, they don't—accept me. Who does—accept me? Will you?

TOM: My dear—dear, dear, Claire—you move me so! You stand alone in a clearness that breaks my heart, (*her hands move up his arms. He takes them to hold them from where they would go—though he can hardly do it*) But you've asked what you yourself could answer best. We'd only stop in the country where everyone stops.

CLAIRE: We might come through—to radiance.

TOM: Radiance is an enclosing place.

CLAIRE: Perhaps radiance lighting forms undreamed, (*her reckless laugh*) I'd be willing to—take a chance, I'd rather lose than never know.

TOM: No, Claire. Knowing you from underneath, I know you couldn't bear to lose.

CLAIRE: Wouldn't men say you were a fool!

TOM: They would.

CLAIRE: And perhaps you are. (*he smiles a little*) I feel so desperate, because if only I could—show you what I am, you might see I could have without losing. But I'm a stammering thing with you.

TOM: You do show me what you are.

CLAIRE: I've known a few moments that were life. Why don't they help me now? One was in the air. I was up with Harry—flying—high. It was about four months before David was born—the doctor was furious—pregnant women are supposed to keep to earth. We were going fast—I *was* flying—I had left the earth. And then—within me, movement, for the first time—stirred to life far in air—movement within. The man unborn, he too, would fly. And so—I always loved him. He was movement—and wonder. In his short life were many flights. I never told anyone about the last one. His little bed was by the window—he wasn't four years old. It was night, but him not asleep. He saw the morning star—you know—the morning star. Brighter—stranger—reminiscent—and a promise. He pointed—'Mother', he asked me, 'what is there—beyond the stars?' A baby, a sick baby—the morning star. Next night—the finger that pointed was—(*suddenly bites her own finger*) But, yes, I am glad. He would always have tried to move and too much would hold him. Wonder would die—and he'd laugh at soaring, (*looking down, sidewise*) Though I liked his voice. So I wish you'd stay near me—for I like your voice, too.

TOM: Claire! That's (*choked*) almost too much.

CLAIRE: (*one of her swift glances—canny, almost practical*) Well, I'm glad if it is. How can I make it more? (*but what she sees brings its own change*) I know what it is you're afraid of. It's because I have so much—yes, why shouldn't I say it?—passion. You feel that in me, don't you? You think it would swamp everything. But that isn't all there is to me.

TOM: Oh, I know it! My dearest—why, it's because I know it! You think I *am*—a fool?

CLAIRE: It's a thing that's—sometimes more than I am. And yet I—I am more than it is.

TOM: I know. I know about you.

CLAIRE: I don't know that you do. Perhaps if you really knew about me—you wouldn't go away.

TOM: You're making me suffer, Claire.

CLAIRE: I know I am. I want to. Why shouldn't you suffer? (*now seeing it more clearly than she has ever seen it*) You know what I think about you? You're afraid of suffering, and so you stop this side—in what you persuade yourself is suffering, (*waits, then sends it straight*) You know—how it is—with me and Dick? (*as she sees him suffer*) Oh, no, I don't want to hurt you! Let it be you! I'll teach you—you needn't scorn it. It's rather wonderful.

TOM: Stop that, Claire! That isn't you.

CLAIRE: Why are you so afraid—of letting me be low—if that is low? You see—(*cannily*) I believe in beauty. I have the faith that can be bad as well as good. And you know why I have the faith? Because sometimes—from my lowest moments—beauty has opened as the sea. From a cave I saw immensity.

My love, you're going away—

Let me tell you how it is with me;

I want to touch you—somehow touch you once before I die—

Let me tell you how it is with me.

I do not want to work,

I want to be;

Do not want to make a rose or make a poem—

Want to lie upon the earth and know. (*closes her eyes*)

Stop doing that!—words going into patterns;

They do it sometimes when I let come what's there.

Thoughts take pattern—then the pattern is the thing.

But let me tell you how it is with me. (*it flows again*)

All that I do or say—it is to what it comes from,

A drop lifted from the sea.

I want to lie upon the earth and know.

But—scratch a little dirt and make a flower;

Scratch a bit of brain—something like a poem. (*covering her face*)

Stop *doing* that. Help me stop doing that!

TOM: (*and from the place where she had carried him*)

Don't talk at all. Lie still and know—

And know that I am knowing.

CLAIRE:

Yes; but we are so weak we have to talk;

To talk—to touch.

Why can't I rest in knowing I would give my life to reach you?

That has—all there is.

But I must—put my timid hands upon you,

Do something about infinity.

Oh, let what will flow into us,

And fill us full—and leave us still.

Wring me dry,

And let me fill again with life more pure.

To know—to feel,

And do nothing with what I feel and know—

That's being good. That's nearer God.

(*drenched in the feeling that has flowed through her—but surprised—helpless*) Why, I said your thing, didn't I? Opened my life to bring you to me, and what came—is what sends you away.

TOM: No! What came is what holds us together. What came is what saves us from ever going apart. (*brokenly*) My beautiful one. You—you brave flower of all our knowing.

CLAIRE: I am not a flower. I am too torn. If you have anything—help me. Breathe, Breathe the healing oneness, and let me know in calm. (*with a sob his head rests upon her*)

CLAIRE: (*her hands on his head, but looking far*) Beauty—you pure one thing. Breathe—Let me know in calm. Then—trouble me, trouble me, for other moments—in farther calm. (*slow, motionless, barely articulate*)

TOM: (*as she does not move he lifts his head. And even as he looks at her, she does not move, nor look at him*) Claire—(*his hand out to her, a little afraid*) You went away from me then. You are away from me now.

CLAIRE: Yes, and I could go on. But I will come back, (*it is hard to do. She brings much with her*) That, too, I will give you—my by-myself-ness. That's the uttermost I can give. I never thought—to try to give it. But let us do it—the great sacrilege! Yes! (*excited, she rises; she has his hands, and bring him up beside her*) Let us take the mad chance! Perhaps it's the only way to save—what's there. How do we know? How can we know? Risk. Risk everything. From all that flows into us, let it rise! All that we never thought to use to make a moment—let it flow into what could be! Bring all into life between us—or send all down to death! Oh, do you know what I am doing? Risk, risk everything, why are you so afraid to lose? What holds you from me? Test all. Let it live or let it die. It is our chance—our chance to bear—what's there. My dear one—I will love you so. With all of me. I am not afraid now—of—all of me. Be generous. Be unafraid. Life is for *life*—though it cuts us from the farthest life. How can I make you know that's true? All that we're open to—(*hesitates, shudders*) But yes—I will, I will risk the life that waits. Perhaps only he who gives his loneliness—shall find. You never keep by holding, (*gesture of giving*) To the uttermost. And it is gone—or it is there. You do not know and—that makes the moment—(*music has begun—a phonograph downstairs; they do not heed it*) Just as I would cut my wrists—(*holding them out*) Yes, perhaps this lesser thing will tell it—would cut my wrists and let the blood flow out till all is gone if my last drop would make—would make—(*looking at them fascinated*) I want to see it doing that! Let me give my last chance for life to—

(*He snatches her—they are on the brink of their moment; now that there are no words the phonograph from downstairs is louder. It is playing languorously the Barcarole; they become conscious of this—they do not want to be touched by the love song.*)

CLAIRE: Don't listen. That's nothing. This isn't that, (*fearing*) I tell you—it isn't that. Yes, I know—that's amorous—enclosing. I know—a little place. This isn't that, (*her arms going around him—all the lure of 'that' while she pleads against it as it comes up to them*) We will come out—to radiance—in far places (*admitting, using*) Oh, then let it be that! Go with it. Give up—the otherness. I will! And in the giving up—perhaps a door—we'd never find by searching. And if it's no more—than all have known, I only say it's worth the allness! (*her arms wrapped round him*) My love—my love—let go your pride in loneliness and let me give you joy!

TOM: (*drenched in her passion, but fighting*) It's *you*. (*in anguish*) You rare thing untouched—not—not into this—not back into this—by me—lover of your apartness.

(*She steps back. She sees he cannot. She stands there, before what she wanted more than life, and almost had, and lost. A long moment. Then she runs down the stairs.*)

CLAIRE: (*her voice coming up*) Harry! Choke that phonograph! If you want to be lewd—do it yourselves! You tawdry things—you cheap little lewd cowards, (*a door heard opening below*) Harry! If you don't stop that music, I'll kill myself.

(*far down, steps on stairs*)

HARRY: Claire, what *is* this?

CLAIRE: Stop that phonograph or I'll—

HARRY: Why, of course I'll stop it. What—what is there to get so excited about? Now—now just a minute, dear. It'll take a minute.

(CLAIRE *comes back upstairs, dragging steps, face ghastly. The amorous song still comes up, and louder now that doors are open. She and* TOM *do not look at one another. Then, on a languorous swell the music comes to a grating stop. They do not speak or move. Quick footsteps*—HARRY *comes up*.)

HARRY: What in the world were you saying, Claire? Certainly you could have asked me more quietly to turn off the Victrola. Though what harm was it doing you—way up here? (*a sharp little sound from* CLAIRE; *she checks it, her hand over her mouth*. HARRY *looks from her to* TOM) Well, I think you two would better have had your dinner. Won't you come down now and have some?

CLAIRE: (*only now taking her hand from her mouth*) Harry, tell him to come up here—that insanity man. I—want to ask him something.

HARRY: 'Insanity man!' How absurd. He's a nerve specialist. There's a vast difference.

CLAIRE: Is there? Anyway, ask him to come up here. Want to—ask him something.

TOM: (*speaking with difficulty*) Wouldn't it be better for us to go down there?

CLAIRE: No. So nice up here! Everybody—up here!

HARRY: (*worried*) You'll—be yourself, will you, Claire? (*She checks a laugh, nods*.) I think he can help you.

CLAIRE: Want to ask him to—help me.

HARRY: (*as he is starting down*) He's here as a guest to-night, you know, Claire.

CLAIRE: I suppose a guest can—help one.

TOM: (*when the silence rejects it*) Claire, you must know, it's because it is so much, so—

CLAIRE: Be still. There isn't anything to say.

TOM: (*torn—tortured*) If it only weren't *you*!

CLAIRE: Yes,—so you said. If it weren't. I suppose I wouldn't be so—interested! (*hears them starting up below—keeps looking at the place where they will appear*)

(HARRY *is heard to call*, 'Coming, Dick?' *and* DICK's *voice replies*, 'In a moment or two.' ADELAIDE *comes first*.)

ADELAIDE: (*as her head appears*) Well, these stairs should keep down weight. You missed an awfully good dinner, Claire. And kept Mr Edgeworth from a good dinner.

CLAIRE: Yes. We missed our dinner. (*her eyes do not leave the place where* DR EMMONS *will come up*)

HARRY: (*as he and* EMMONS *appear*) Claire, this is—

CLAIRE: Yes, I know who he is. I want to ask you—

ADELAIDE: Let the poor man get his breath before you ask him anything. (*he nods, smiles, looks at* CLAIRE *with interest. Careful not to look too long at her, surveys the tower*)

EMMONS: Curious place.

ADELAIDE: Yes; it lacks form, doesn't it?

CLAIRE: What do you mean? How *dare* you?

(*It is impossible to ignore her agitation; she is backed against the curved wall, as far as possible from them.* HARRY *looks at her in alarm, then in resentment at* TOM, *who takes a step nearer* CLAIRE.)

HARRY: (*trying to be light*) Don't take it so hard, Claire.

CLAIRE: (*to* EMMONS) It must be very interesting—helping people go insane.

ADELAIDE: Claire! How preposterous.

EMMONS: (*easily*) I hope that's not precisely what we do.

ADELAIDE: (*with the smile of one who is going to 'cover it'.*) Trust Claire to put it in the unique and—amusing way.

CLAIRE: Amusing? You are amused? But it doesn't matter, (*to the doctor*) I think it is very kind of you—helping people go insane. I suppose they have all sorts of reasons for having to do it—reasons why they can't stay sane any longer. But tell me, how do they do it? It's not so easy to—get out. How do so many manage it?

EMMONS: I'd like immensely to have a talk with you about all this some day.

ADELAIDE: Certainly this is not the time, Claire.

CLAIRE: The time? When you—can't go any farther—isn't that that—

ADELAIDE: (*capably taking the whole thing into matter-of-factness*) What I think is, Claire has worked too long with plants. There's something—not quite sound about making one thing into another thing. What we need is unity. (*from* CLAIRE *something like a moan*) Yes, dear, we do need it. (*to the doctor*) I can't say that I believe in making life over like this. I don't think the new species are worth it. At least I don't believe in it for Claire. If one is an intense, sensitive person—

CLAIRE: Isn't there any way to *stop* her? Always—always smothering it with the word for it?

EMMONS: (*soothingly*) But she can't smother it. Anything that's really there—she can't hurt with words.

CLAIRE: (*looking at him with eyes too bright*) Then you don't see it either, (*angry*) Yes, she can hurt it! Piling it up—always piling it up—between us and—What there. Clogging the way—always, (*to* EMMONS) I want to cease to know! That's all I ask. Darken it. Darken it. If you came to help me, strike me blind!

EMMONS: You're really all tired out, aren't you? Oh, we've got to get you rested.

CLAIRE: They—deny it saying they have it; and he (*half looks at* TOM—*quickly looks away*)—others, deny it—afraid of losing it. We're in the way. Can't you see the dead stuff piled in the path? (*Pointing.*)

DICK: (*voice coming up*) Me too?

CLAIRE: (*staring at the path, hearing his voice a moment after it has come*) Yes, Dick—you too. Why not—you too. (*after he has come up*) What is there any more than you are?

DICK: (*embarrassed by the intensity, but laughing*) A question not at all displeasing to me. Who can answer it?

CLAIRE: (*more and more excited*) Yes! Who can answer it? (*going to him, in terror*) Let me go with you—and be with you—and know nothing else!

ADELAIDE: (*gasping*) Why—!

HARRY: Claire! This is going a little too—

CLAIRE: Far? But you have to go far to—(*clinging to* DICK) Only a place to hide your head—what else is there to hope for? I can't stay with them—piling it up! Always—piling it up! I can't get through to—he won't let me through to—what I don't know is there! (DICK *would help her regain herself*) Don't push me away! Don't—don't stand me up, I will go back—to the worst we ever were! Go back—and remember—what we've tried to forget!

ADELAIDE: It's time to stop this by force—if there's no other way. (*the doctor shakes his head*)

CLAIRE: All I ask is to die in the gutter with everyone spitting on me. (*changes to a curious weary smiling quiet*) Still, why should they bother to do that?

HARRY: (*brokenly*) You're sick, Claire. There's no denying it. (*looks at* EMMONS, *who nods*)

ADELAIDE: Something to quiet her—to stop it.

CLAIRE: (*throwing her arms around* DICK) You, Dick. Not them. Not—any of them.

DICK: Claire, you are overwrought. You must—

HARRY: (*to* DICK, *as if only now realizing that phase of it*) I'll tell you one thing, you'll answer to me for this! (*he starts for* DICK *—is restrained by* EMMONS, *chiefly by his grave shake of the head. With* HARRY*'s move to them,* DICK *has shielded* CLAIRE)

CLAIRE: Yes—hold me. Keep me. You have mercy! You will have mercy. Anything—everything—that will let me be nothing!

(CURTAIN)

ACT III

In the greenhouse, the same as Act I. ANTHONY *is bedding small plants where the Edge Vine grew. In the inner room the plant like caught motion glows as from a light within.* HATTIE, *the Maid, rushes in from outside.*

ANTHONY: (*turning angrily*) You are not what this place—

HATTIE: Anthony, come in the house. I'm afraid. Mr Archer, I never saw him like this. He's talking to Mr Demming—something about Mrs Archer.

ANTHONY: (*who in spite of himself is disturbed by her agitation*) And if it is, it's no business of yours.

HATTIE: You don't know how he *is*. I went in the room and—

ANTHONY: Well, he won't hurt you, will he?

HATTIE: How do I know who he'll hurt—a person's whose—(*seeing how to get him*) Maybe he'll hurt Mrs Archer.

ANTHONY: (*startled, then smiles*) No; he won't hurt Miss Claire.

HATTIE: What do you know about it?—out here in the plant house?

ANTHONY: And I don't want to know about it. This is a very important day for me. It's Breath of Life I'm thinking of today—not you and Mr Archer.

HATTIE: Well, suppose he does something to Mr Demming?

ANTHONY: Mr Demming will have to look out for himself, I am at work.

(*resuming work*)

HATTIE: Don't you think I ought to tell Mrs Archer that—

ANTHONY: You let her alone! This is no day for her to be bothered by you. At eleven o'clock (*looks at watch*) she comes out here —to Breath of Life.

HATTIE: (*with greed for gossip*) Did you see any of them when they came downstairs last night?

ANTHONY: I was attending to my own affairs.

HATTIE: They was all excited. Mr Edgeworth—he went away. He was gone all night, I guess. I saw him coming back just as the milkman woke me up. Now he's packing his things. *He* wanted to get to Mrs Archer too—just a little while ago. But she won't open her door for none of them. I can't even get in to do her room.

ANTHONY: Then do some other room—and leave me alone in this room.

HATTIE: (*a little afraid of what she is asking*) Is she sick, Anthony—or what? (*vindicating herself, as he gives her a look*) The doctor, he stayed here late. But she'd locked herself in. I heard Mr Archer—

ANTHONY: You heard too much! (*he starts for the door, to make her leave, but* DICK *rushes in. Looks around wildly, goes to the trap-door, finds it locked*)

ANTHONY: What are you doing here?

DICK: Trying not to be shot—if you must know. This is the only place I can think of—till he comes to his senses and I can get away. Open that, will you? Rather—ignominious—but better be absurd than be dead.

HATTIE: Has he got the revolver?

DICK: Gone for it. Thought I wouldn't sit there till he got back, (*to* ANTHONY) Look here—don't you get the idea? Get me some place where he can't come.

ANTHONY: It is not what this place is for.

DICK: Any place is for saving a man's life.

HATTIE: Sure, Anthony. Mrs Archer wouldn't want Mr Demming shot.

DICK: That's right, Anthony. Miss Claire will be angry at you if you get me shot. (*he makes for the door of the inner room*)

ANTHONY: You can't go in there. It's locked. (HARRY *rushes in from outside*.)

HARRY: I thought so! (*he has the revolver*. HATTIE *screams*)

ANTHONY: Now, Mr Archer, if you'll just stop and think, you'll know Miss Claire wouldn't want Mr Demming shot.

HARRY: You think that can stop me? You think you can stop me? (*raising the revolver*) A dog that—

ANTHONY: (*keeping squarely between* HARRY *and* DICK) Well, you can't shoot him in here. It is not good for the plants. (HARRY *is arrested by this reason*) And especially not today. Why, Mr Archer, Breath of Life may flower today. It's years Miss Claire's been working for this day.

HARRY: I never thought to see this day!

ANTHONY: No, did you? Oh, it will be a wonderful day. And how she has worked for it. She has an eye that sees what isn't right in what looks right. Many's the time I've thought—Here the form is set—and then she'd say, 'We'll try this one', and it had—what I hadn't known was there. She's like that.

HARRY: I've always been pleased, Anthony, at the way you've worked with Miss Claire. This is hardly the time to stand there eulogizing her. And she's (*can hardly say it*) things you don't know she is.

ANTHONY: (*proudly*) Oh, I know that! You think I could work with her and not know she's more than I know she is?

HARRY: Well, if you love her you've got to let me shoot the dirty dog that drags her down!

ANTHONY: Not in here. Not today. More than like you'd break the glass. And Breath of Life's in there.

HARRY: Anthony, this is pretty clever of you—but—

ANTHONY: I'm not clever. But I know how easy it is to turn life back. No, I'm not clever at all (CLAIRE *has appeared and is looking in from outside*), but I do know—there are things you mustn't hurt, (*he sees her*) Yes, here's Miss Claire.

(*She comes in. She is looking immaculate.*)

CLAIRE: From the gutter I rise again, refreshed. One does, you know. Nothing is fixed—not even the gutter, (*smilingly to* HARRY *and refusing to notice revolver or agitation*) How did you like the way I entertained the nerve specialist?

HARRY: Claire! You can *joke* about it?

CLAIRE: (*taking the revolver from the hand she has shocked to limpness*) Whom are you trying to make hear?

HARRY: I'm trying to make the world hear that (*pointing*) there stands a dirty dog who—

CLAIRE: Listen, Harry, (*turning to* HATTIE, *who is over by the tall plants at right, not wanting to be shot but not wanting to miss the conversation*) You can do my room now, Hattie. (*HATTIE goes*) If you're thinking of shooting Dick, you can't shoot him while he's backed up against that door.

ANTHONY: Just what I told them, Miss Claire. Just what I told them.

CLAIRE: And for that matter, it's quite dull of you to have any idea of shooting him.

HARRY: I may be dull—I know you think I am—but I'll show you that I've enough of the man in me to—

CLAIRE: To make yourself ridiculous? If I ran out and hid my head in the mud, would you think you had to shoot the mud?

DICK: (*stung out of fear*) That's pretty cruel!

CLAIRE: Well, would you rather be shot?

HARRY: So you just said it to protect him!

CLAIRE: I change it to grass, (*nodding to* DICK) Grass. If I hid my face in the grass, would you have to burn the grass?

HARRY: Oh, Claire, how *can* you? When you know how I love you—and how I'm suffering?

CLAIRE: (*with interest*) Are you suffering?

HARRY: Haven't you *eyes*?

CLAIRE: I should think it would—do something to you.

HARRY: God! Have you no heart? (*the door opens.* TOM *comes in*)

CLAIRE: (*scarcely saying it*) Yes, I have a heart.

TOM: (*after a pause*) I came to say good-bye.

CLAIRE: God! Have you no heart? Can't you at least wait till Dick is shot?

TOM: Claire! (*now sees the revolver in her hand that is turned from him. Going to her*) Claire!

CLAIRE: And even you think this is so important? (*carelessly raises the revolver, and with her left hand out flat, tells* TOM *not to touch her*) Harry thinks it important he shoot Dick, and Dick thinks it important not to be shot, and you think I mustn't shoot anybody—even myself—and can't any of you see that none of that is as important as—where revolvers can't reach? (*putting revolver where there is no Edge Vine*) I shall never shoot myself. I'm too interested in destruction to cut it short by shooting. (*after looking from one to the other, laughs. Pointing*) One—two—three. You-love-me. But why do you bring it out here?

ANTHONY: (*who has resumed work*) It is not what this place is for.

CLAIRE: No this place is for the destruction that can get through.

ANTHONY: Miss Claire, it is eleven. At eleven we are to go in and see—

CLAIRE: Whether it has gone through. But how can we go—with Dick against the door?

ANTHONY: He'll have to move.

CLAIRE: And be shot?

HARRY: (*irritably*) Oh, he'll not be shot. Claire can spoil anything.

(DICK *steps away from the door*; CLAIRE *takes a step nearer it.*)

CLAIRE: (*halting*) Have I spoiled everything? I don't want to go in there.

ANTHONY: We're going in together, Miss Claire. Don't you remember? Oh (*looking resentfully at the others*) don't let any little thing spoil it for you—the work of all those days—the hope of so many days.

CLAIRE: Yes—that's it.

ANTHONY: You're afraid you haven't done it?

CLAIRE: Yes, but—afraid I have.

HARRY: (*cross, but kindly*) That's just nervousness, Claire. I've had the same feeling myself about making a record in flying.

CLAIRE: (*curiously grateful*) You have, Harry?

HARRY: (*glad enough to be back in a more usual world*) Sure. I've been afraid to know, and almost as afraid of having done it as of not having done it.

(CLAIRE *nods, steps nearer, then again pulls back.*)

CLAIRE: I can't go in there. (*she almost looks at* TOM) Not today.

ANTHONY: But, Miss Claire, there'll be things to see today we can't see tomorrow.

CLAIRE: You bring it in here!

ANTHONY: In—out from its own place? (*she nods*) And—where they are? (*again she nods. Reluctantly he goes to the door*) I will not look into the heart. No one must know before you know.

(*In the inner room, his head a little turned away, he is seen very carefully to lift the plant which glows from within. As he brings it in, no one looks at it.* HARRY *takes a box of seedlings from a stand and puts them on the floor, that the newcomer may have a place.*)

ANTHONY: Breath of Life is here, Miss Claire.

(CLAIRE *half turns, then stops.*)

CLAIRE: Look—and see—what you see.

ANTHONY: No one should see what you've not seen.

CLAIRE: I can't see—until I know.

(ANTHONY *looks into the flower.*)

ANTHONY: (*agitated*) Miss Claire!

CLAIRE: It has come through?

ANTHONY: It has gone on.

CLAIRE: Stronger?

ANTHONY: Stronger, surer.

CLAIRE: And more fragile?

ANTHONY: And more fragile.

CLAIRE: Look deep. No—turning back?

ANTHONY: (*after a searching look*) The form is set. (*he steps back from it*)

CLAIRE: Then it is—out. (*from where she stands she turns slowly to the plant*) You weren't. You are.

ANTHONY: But come and see, Miss Claire.

CLAIRE: It's so much more than—I'd see.

HARRY: Well, I'm going to see. (*looking into it*) I never saw anything like that before! There seems something alive—inside this outer shell.

DICK: (*he too looking in and he has an artist's manner of a hand up to make the light right*) It's quite new in form. It—says something about form.

HARRY: (*cordially to* CLAIRE, *who stands apart*) So you've really put it over. Well, well,—congratulations. It's a good deal of novelty, I should say, and I've no doubt you'll have a considerable success with it—people always like something new. I'm mighty glad—after all your work, and I hope it will—set you up.

CLAIRE: (*low—and like a machine*) Will you all—go away?

(ANTHONY *goes—into the other room.*)

HARRY: Why—why, yes. But—oh, Claire! Can't you take some pleasure in your work? (*as she stands there very still*) Emmons says you need a good long rest—and I think he's right.

TOM: Can't this help you, Claire? Let this be release. This—breath of the uncaptured.

CLAIRE: (*and though speaking, she remains just as still*)

Breath of the uncaptured?

You are a novelty.

Out?

You have been brought in.

A thousand years from now, when you are but a form too long repeated,

Perhaps the madness that gave you birth will burst again,

And from the prison that is you will leap pent queernesses

To make a form that hasn't been—

To make a person new.

And this we call creation, (*very low, her head not coming up*)

Go away!

(TOM *goes*; HARRY *hesitates, looking in anxiety at* CLAIRE. *He starts to go, stops, looks at* DICK, *from him to* CLAIRE. *But goes. A moment later* DICK *moves near* CLAIRE; *stands uncertainly, then puts a hand upon her. She starts, only then knowing he is there.*)

CLAIRE: (*a slight shrinking away, but not really reached*) Um, um.

(*He goes*. CLAIRE *steps nearer her creation. She looks into what hasn't been. With her breath, and by a gentle moving of her hands, she fans it to fuller openness. As she does this* TOM *returns and from outside is looking in at her. Softly he opens the door and comes in. She does not know that he is there. In the way she looks at the flower he looks at her.*)

TOM: Claire, (*she lifts her head*) As you stood there, looking into the womb you breathed to life, you were beautiful to me beyond any other beauty. You were life and its reach and its anguish. I can't go away from you. I will never go away from you. It shall all be—as you wish. I can go with you where I could not go alone. If this is delusion, I want that delusion. It's more than any reality I could attain, (*as she does not move*) Speak to me, Claire. You—are glad?

CLAIRE: (*from far*) Speak to you? (*pause*) Do I know who you are?

TOM: I think you do.

CLAIRE: Oh, yes. I love you. That's who you are. (*waits again*) But why are you something—very far away?

TOM: Come nearer.

CLAIRE: Nearer? (*feeling it with her voice*) Nearer. But I think I am going—the other way.

TOM: No, Claire—come to me. Did you understand, dear? I am not going away.

CLAIRE: You're not going away?

TOM: Not without you, Claire. And you and I will be together. Is that—what you wanted?

CLAIRE: Wanted? (*as if wanting is something that harks far back. But the word calls to her passion*) Wanted! (*a sob, hands out, she goes to him. But before his arms can take her, she steps back*) Are you trying to pull me down into what I wanted? Are you here to make me stop?

TOM: How can you ask that? I love you because it is not in you to stop.

CLAIRE: And loving me for that—would stop me? Oh, help me see it! It is so important that I see it.

TOM: It is important. It is our lives.

CLAIRE: And more than that. I cannot see it because it is so much more than that.

TOM: Don't try to see all that it is. From peace you'll see a little more.

CLAIRE: Peace? (*troubled as we are when looking at what we cannot see clearly*) What is peace? Peace is what the struggle knows in moments very far apart. Peace—that is not a place to rest. Are you resting? What are you? You who'd take me from what I am to something else?

TOM: I thought you knew, Claire.

CLAIRE: I know—what you pass for. But are you beauty? Beauty is that only living pattern—the trying to take pattern. Are you trying?

TOM: Within myself, Claire. I never thought you doubted that.

CLAIRE: Beauty is it. (*she turns to Breath of Life, as if to learn it there, but turns away with a sob*) If I cannot go to you now—I will always be alone.

(TOM *takes her in his arms. She is shaken, then comes to rest.*)

TOM: Yes—rest. And then—come into joy. You have so much life for joy.

CLAIRE: (*raising her head, called by promised gladness*) We'll run around together. (*lovingly he nods*) Up hills. All night on hills.

TOM: (*tenderly*) All night on hills.

CLAIRE: We'll go on the sea in a little boat.

TOM: On the sea in a little boat.

CLAIRE: But—there are other boats on other seas, (*drawing back from him, troubled*) There are other boats on other seas.

TOM: (*drawing her back to him*) My dearest—not now, not now.

CLAIRE: (*her arms going round him*) Oh, I would love those hours with you. I want them. I want you! (*they kiss—but deep in her is sobbing*) Reminiscence, (*her hand feeling his arm as we touch what we would remember*) Reminiscence. (*with one of her swift changes steps back from him*) How dare you pass for what you're not? We are tired, and so we think it's you. Stop with you. Don't get through—to what you're in the way of. Beauty is not something you say about beauty.

TOM: I say little about beauty, Claire.

CLAIRE: Your life says it. By standing far off you pass for it. Smother it with a life that passes for it. But beauty—(*getting it from the flower*) Beauty is the humility breathed from the shame of succeeding.

TOM: But it may all be within one's self, dear.

CLAIRE: (*drawn by this, but held, and desperate because she is held*) When I have wanted you with all my wanting—why must I distrust you now? When I love you—with all of me, why do I know that only you are worth my hate?

TOM: It's the fear of easy satisfactions. I love you for it.

CLAIRE: (*over the flower*) Breath of Life—you here? Are you lonely—Breath of Life?

TOM: Claire—hear me! Don't go where we can't go. As there you made a shell for life within, make for yourself a life in which to live. It must be so.

CLAIRE: As you made for yourself a shell called beauty?

TOM: What is there for you, if you'll have no touch with what we have?

CLAIRE: What is there? There are the dreams we haven't dreamed. There is the long and flowing pattern, (*she follows that, but suddenly and as if blindly goes to him*) I am tired. I am lonely. I'm afraid, (*he holds her, soothing. But she steps back from him*) And because we are tired—lonely—and afraid, we stop with you. Don't get through—to what you're in the way of.

TOM: Then you don't love me?

CLAIRE: I'm fighting for my chance. I don't know—which chance.

(*Is drawn to the other chance, to Breath of Life. Looks into it as if to look through to the uncaptured. And through this life just caught comes the truth she chants.*)

I've wallowed at a coarse man's feet,

I'm sprayed with dreams we've not yet come to.

I've gone so low that words can't get there,

I've never pulled the mantle of my fears around me

And called it loneliness—And called it God.

Only with life that waits have I kept faith.

(*with effort raising her eyes to the man*)

And only you have ever threatened me.

TOM: (*coming to her, and with strength now*) And I will threaten you. I'm here to hold you from where I know you cannot go. You're trying what we can't do.

CLAIRE: What else is there worth trying?

TOM: I love you, and I will keep you—from fartherness—from harm. You are mine, and you will stay with me! (*roughly*) You hear me? You will stay with me!

CLAIRE: (*her head on his breast, in ecstasy of rest. Drowsily*) You can keep me?

TOM: Darling! I can keep you. I will keep you—safe.

CLAIRE: (*troubled by the word, but barely able to raise her head*) Safe?

TOM: (*bringing her to rest again*) Trust me, Claire.

CLAIRE: (*not lifting her head, but turning it so she sees Breath of Life*) Now can I trust—what is? (*suddenly pushing him roughly away*) No! I will beat my life to pieces in the struggle to—

TOM: To *what*, Claire?

CLAIRE: Not to stop it by seeming to have it. (*with fury*) I will keep my life low—low—that I may never stop myself—or anyone—with the thought it's what *I* have. I'd rather be the steam rising from the manure than be a thing called beautiful! (*with sight too clear*) Now I know who you are. It is you puts out the breath of life. Image of beauty—*You fill the place—should be a gate.* (*in agony*) Oh, that it is *you*—fill the place—should be a gate! My darling! That it should be you who—(*her hands moving on him*) Let me tell you something. Never was loving strong as my loving of you! Do you know that? Oh, know that! Know it now! (*her arms go around his neck*) Hours with you—I'd give my life to have! That it should be you—(*he would loosen her hands, for he cannot breathe. But when she knows she is choking him, that knowledge is fire burning its way into the last passion*) It *is* you. It is you.

TOM: (*words coming from a throat not free*) Claire! What are you doing? (*then she knows what she is doing*)

CLAIRE: (*to his resistance*) No! You are *too much*! You are *not enough*. (*still wanting not to hurt her, he is slow in getting free. He keeps stepping backward trying, in growing earnest, to loosen her hands. But he does not loosen them before she has found the place in his throat that cuts off breath. As he gasps*)

Breath of Life—my gift—to you!

(*She has pushed him against one of the plants at right as he sways, strength she never had before pushes him over backward, just as they have struggled from sight. Violent crash of glass is heard.*)

TOM: (*faint smothered voice*) *No*. I'm—hurt.

CLAIRE: (*in the frenzy and agony of killing*) Oh, gift! Oh, gift! (*there is no sound.*

CLAIRE *rises—steps back—is seen now; is looking down*) Gift.

(*Like one who does not know where she is, she moves into the room—looks around. Takes a step toward Breath of Life; turns and goes quickly to the door. Stops, as if stopped. Sees the revolver where the Edge Vine was. Slowly goes to it. Holds it as if she cannot think what it is for. Then raises it high and fires above through the place in the glass left open for ventilation.* ANTHONY *comes from the inner room. His eyes go from her to the body beyond.* HARRY *rushes in from outside.*)

HARRY: Who fired that?

CLAIRE: I did. Lonely.

(*Seeing* ANTHONY'S *look,* HARRY *'s eyes follow it*.)

HARRY: Oh! What? What? (DICK *comes running in*) Who? Claire!

(DICK *sees—goes to* TOM)

CLAIRE: Yes. I did it. MY—Gift.

HARRY: Is he—? He isn't—? He isn't—?

(*Tries to go in there. Cannot—there is the sound of broken glass, of a position being changed—then* DICK *reappears*.)

DICK: (*his voice in jerks*) It's—it's no use, but I'll go for a doctor.

HARRY: No—no. Oh, I suppose—(*falling down beside* CLAIRE—*his face against her*) My darling! How can I save you now?

CLAIRE: (*speaking each word very carefully*) Saved—myself.

ANTHONY: I did it. Don't you see? I didn't want so many around. Not—what this place is for.

HARRY: (*snatching at this but lets it go*) She wouldn't let—(*looking up at* CLAIRE—*then quickly hiding his face*) And—don't you see?

CLAIRE: Out. (*a little like a child's pleased surprise*) Out.

(DICK *stands there, as if unable to get to the door—his face distorted, biting his hand*.)

ANTHONY: Miss Claire! You can do anything—won't you try?

CLAIRE: Reminiscence? (*speaking the word as if she has left even that, but smiles a little*)

(ANTHONY *takes Reminiscence, the flower she was breeding for fragrance for Breath of Life—holds it out to her. But she has taken a step forward, past them all*.)

CLAIRE: Out. (*as if feeling her way*)

Nearer,

(*Her voice now feeling the way to it*.)

Nearer—

(*Voice almost upon it*.)

—my God,

(*Falling upon it with surprise*.)

to Thee,

(*Breathing it*.)

Nearer—to Thee,

E'en though it be—

(*A slight turn of the head toward the dead man she loves—a mechanical turn just as far the other way*.)

a cross

That

(*Her head going down*.)

raises me;

(*Her head slowly coming up—singing it*.)

Still all my song shall be,

Nearer, my—

(*Slowly the curtain begins to shut her out. The last word heard is the final* Nearer—*a faint breath from far*.)

(CURTAIN)

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9.2: Tagore, Rabindranath. Chitra (1914)

Chitra

A one-act play

by Rabindranath Tagore

1914

The Characters

GODS:
MADANA (Eros).
VASANTA (Lycoris).

MORTALS:
CHITRA, daughter of the King of Manipur.
ARJUNA, a prince of the house of the Kurus. He is of the Kshatriya or "warrior caste," and during the action is living as a Hermit retired in the forest.

VILLAGERS from an outlying district of Manipur.

NOTE.—The dramatic poem "Chitra" has been performed in India without scenery—the actors being surrounded by the audience. Proposals for its production here having been made to him, he went through this translation and provided stage directions, but wished these omitted if it were printed as a book.

Scene I

Chitra

Art thou the god with the five darts, the Lord of Love?

Madana

I am he who was the first born in the heart of the Creator. I bind in bonds of pain and bliss the lives of men and women!

Chitra

I know, I know what that pain is and those bonds.—And who art thou, my lord?

Vasanta

I am his friend—Vasanta—the King of the Seasons. Death and decrepitude would wear the world to the bone but that I follow them and constantly attack them. I am Eternal Youth.

Chitra

I bow to thee, Lord Vasanta.

Madana

But what stern vow is thine, fair stranger? Why dost thou wither thy fresh youth with penance and mortification? Such a sacrifice is not fit for the worship of love. Who art thou and what is thy prayer?

Chitra

I am Chitra, the daughter of the kingly house of Manipur. With godlike grace Lord Shiva promised to my royal grandsire an unbroken line of male descent. Nevertheless, the divine word proved powerless to change the spark of life in my mother's womb —so invincible was my nature, woman though I be.

Madana

I know, that is why thy father brings thee up as his son. He has taught thee the use of the bow and all the duties of a king.

Chitra

Yes, that is why I am dressed in man's attire and have left the seclusion of a woman's chamber. I know no feminine wiles for winning hearts. My hands are strong to bend the bow, but I have never learnt Cupid's archery, the play of eyes.

Madana

That requires no schooling, fair one. The eye does its work untaught, and he knows how well, who is struck in the heart.

Chitra

One day in search of game I roved alone to the forest on the bank of the Purna river. Tying my horse to a tree trunk I entered a dense thicket on the track of a deer. I found a narrow sinuous path meandering through the dusk of the entangled boughs, the foliage vibrated with the chirping of crickets, when of a sudden I came upon a man lying on a bed of dried leaves, across my path. I asked him haughtily to move aside, but he heeded not. Then with the sharp end of my bow I pricked him in contempt. Instantly he leapt up with straight, tall limbs, like a sudden tongue of fire from a heap of ashes. An amused smile flickered round the corners of his mouth, perhaps at the sight of my boyish countenance. Then for the first time in my life I felt myself a woman, and knew that a man was before me.

Madana

At the auspicious hour I teach the man and the woman this supreme lesson to know themselves. What happened after that?

Chitra

With fear and wonder I asked him "Who are you?" "I am Arjuna," he said, "of the great Kuru clan." I stood petrified like a statue, and forgot to do him obeisance. Was this indeed Arjuna, the one great idol of my dreams! Yes, I had long ago heard how he had vowed a twelve-years' celibacy. Many a day my young ambition had spurred me on to break my lance with him, to challenge him in disguise to single combat, and prove my skill in arms against him. Ah, foolish heart, whither fled thy presumption? Could I but exchange my youth with all its aspirations for the clod of earth under his feet, I should deem it a most precious grace. I know not in what whirlpool of thought I was lost, when suddenly I saw him vanish through the trees. O foolish woman, neither didst thou greet him, nor speak a word, nor beg forgiveness, but stoodest like a barbarian boor while he contemptuously walked away! . . . Next morning I laid aside my man's clothing. I donned bracelets, anklets, waist-chain, and a gown of purple red silk. The unaccustomed dress clung about my shrinking shame; but I hastened on my quest, and found Arjuna in the forest temple of Shiva.

Madana

Tell me the story to the end. I am the heart-born god, and I understand the mystery of these impulses.

Chitra

Only vaguely can I remember what things I said, and what answer I got. Do not ask me to tell you all. Shame fell on me like a thunderbolt, yet could not break me to pieces, so utterly hard, so like a man am I. His last words as I walked home pricked my ears like red hot needles. "I have taken the vow of celibacy. I am not fit to be thy husband!" Oh, the vow of a man! Surely thou knowest, thou god of love, that unnumbered saints and sages have surrendered the merits of their life-long penance at the feet of a woman. I broke my bow in two and burnt my arrows in the fire. I hated my strong, lithe arm, scored by drawing the bowstring. O Love, god Love, thou hast laid low in the dust the vain pride of my manlike strength; and all my man's training lies crushed under thy feet. Now teach me thy lessons; give me the power of the weak and the weapon of the unarmed hand.

Madana

I will be thy friend. I will bring the world-conquering Arjuna a captive before thee, to accept his rebellion's sentence at thy hand.

Chitra

Had I but the time needed, I could win his heart by slow degrees, and ask no help of the gods. I would stand by his side as a comrade, drive the fierce horses of his war-chariot, attend him in the pleasures of the chase, keep guard at night at the entrance of his tent, and help him in all the great duties of a Kshatriya, rescuing the weak, and meting out justice where it is due. Surely at last the day would have come for him to look at me and wonder, "What boy is this? Has one of my slaves in a former life followed me like my good deeds into this?" I am not the woman who nourishes her despair in lonely silence, feeding it with nightly tears and covering it with the daily patient smile, a widow from her birth. The flower of my desire shall never drop into the dust before it has ripened to fruit. But it is the labour of a life time to make one's true self known and honoured. Therefore I have come to thy door, thou world-vanquishing Love, and thou, Vasanta, youthful Lord of the Seasons, take from my young body this primal injustice, an unattractive plainness. For a single day make me superbly beautiful, even as beautiful as was the sudden blooming of love in my heart. Give me but one brief day of perfect beauty, and I will answer for the days that follow.

Madana

Lady, I grant thy prayer.

Vasanta

Not for the short span of a day, but for one whole year the charm of spring blossoms shall nestle round thy limbs.

Scene II

Arjuna

WAS I dreaming or was what I saw by the lake truly there? Sitting on the mossy turf, I mused over bygone years in the sloping shadows of the evening, when slowly there came out from the folding darkness of foliage an apparition of beauty in the perfect form of a woman, and stood on a white slab of stone at the water's brink. It seemed that the heart of the earth must heave in joy under her bare white feet. Methought the vague veilings of her body should melt in ecstasy into air as the golden mist of dawn melts from off the snowy peak of the eastern hill. She bowed herself above the shining mirror of the lake and saw the reflection of her face. She started up in awe and stood still; then smiled, and with a careless sweep of her left arm unloosed her hair and let it trail on the earth at her feet. She bared her bosom and looked at her arms, so flawlessly modelled, and instinct with an exquisite caress. Bending her head she saw the sweet blossoming of her youth and the tender bloom and blush of her skin. She beamed with a glad surprise. So, if the

white lotus bud on opening her eyes in the morning were to arch her neck and see her shadow in the water, would she wonder at herself the livelong day. But a moment after the smile passed from her face and a shade of sadness crept into her eyes. She bound up her tresses, drew her veil over her arms, and sighing slowly, walked away like a beauteous evening fading into the night. To me the supreme fulfilment of desire seemed to have been revealed in a flash and then to have vanished. . . . But who is it that pushes the door?

Enter CHITRA, dressed as a woman.

Ah! it is she. Quiet, my heart! . . . Fear me not, lady! I am a Kshatriya.

Chitra

Honoured sir, you are my guest. I live in this temple. I know not in what way I can show you hospitality.

Arjuna

Fair lady, the very sight of you is indeed the highest hospitality. If you will not take it amiss I would ask you a question.

Chitra

You have permission.

Arjuna

What stern vow keeps you immured in this solitary temple, depriving all mortals of a vision of so much loveliness?

Chitra

I harbour a secret desire in my heart, for the fulfilment of which I offer daily prayers to Lord Shiva.

Arjuna

Alas, what can you desire, you who are the desire of the whole world! From the easternmost hill on whose summit the morning sun first prints his fiery foot to the end of the sunset land have I travelled. I have seen whatever is most precious, beautiful and great on the earth. My knowledge shall be yours, only say for what or for whom you seek.

Chitra

He whom I seek is known to all.

Arjuna

Indeed! Who may this favourite of the gods be, whose fame has captured your heart?

Chitra

Sprung from the highest of all royal houses, the greatest of all heroes is he.

Arjuna

Lady, offer not such wealth of beauty as is yours on the altar of false reputation. Spurious fame spreads from tongue to tongue like the fog of the early dawn before the sun rises. Tell me who in the highest of kingly lines is the supreme hero?

Chitra

Hermit, you are jealous of other men's fame. Do you not know that all over the world the royal house of the Kurus is the most famous?

Arjuna

The house of the Kurus!

Chitra

And have you never heard of the greatest name of that far-famed house?

Arjuna

From your own lips let me hear it.

Chitra

Arjuna, the conqueror of the world. I have culled from the mouths of the multitude that imperishable name and hidden it with care in my maiden heart. Hermit, why do you look perturbed? Has that name only a deceitful glitter? Say so, and I will not hesitate to break this casket of my heart and throw the false gem to the dust.

Arjuna

Be his name and fame, his bravery and prowess false or true, for mercy's sake do not banish him from your heart—for he kneels at your feet even now.

Chitra

You, Arjuna!

Arjuna

Yes, I am he, the love-hungered guest at your door.

Chitra

Then it is not true that Arjuna has taken a vow of chastity for twelve long years?

Arjuna

But you have dissolved my vow even as the moon dissolves the night's vow of obscurity.

Chitra

Oh, shame upon you! What have you seen in me that makes you false to yourself? Whom do you seek in these dark eyes, in these milk-white arms, if you are ready to pay for her the price of your probity? Not my true self, I know. Surely this cannot be love, this is not man's highest homage to woman! Alas, that this frail disguise, the body, should make one blind to the light of the deathless spirit! Yes, now indeed, I know, Arjuna, the fame of your heroic manhood is false.

Arjuna

Ah, I feel how vain is fame, the pride of prowess! Everything seems to me a dream. You alone are perfect; you are the wealth of the world, the end of all poverty, the goal of all efforts, the one woman! Others there are who can be but slowly known. While to see you for a moment is to see perfect completeness once and for ever.

Chitra

Alas, it is not I, not I, Arjuna! It is the deceit of a god.
Go, go, my hero, go. Woo not falsehood, offer not your great heart to an illusion. Go.

Scene III

Chitra

No, impossible. To face that fervent gaze that almost grasps you like clutching hands of the hungry spirit within; to feel his heart struggling to break its bounds urging its passionate cry through the entire body—and then to send him away like a beggar—no, impossible.

Enter MADANA and VASANTA.

Ah, god of love, what fearful flame is this with which thou hast enveloped me! I burn, and I burn whatever I touch.

Madana

I desire to know what happened last night.

Chitra

At evening I lay down on a grassy bed strewn with the petals of spring flowers, and recollected the wonderful praise of my beauty I had heard from Arjuna;—drinking drop by drop the honey that I had stored during the long day. The history of my past life like that of my former existences was forgotten. I felt like a flower, which has but a few fleeting hours to listen to all the humming flatteries and whispered murmurs of the woodlands and then must lower its eyes from the Sky, bend its head and at a breath give itself up to the dust without a cry, thus ending the short story of a perfect moment that has neither past nor future.

Vasanta

A limitless life of glory can bloom and spend itself in a morning.

Madana

Like an endless meaning in the narrow span of a song.

Chitra

The southern breeze caressed me to sleep. From the flowering Malati bower overhead silent kisses dropped over my body. On my hair, my breast, my feet, each flower chose a bed to die on. I slept. And, suddenly in the depth of my sleep, I felt as if some intense eager look, like tapering fingers of flame, touched my slumbering body. I started up and saw the Hermit standing before me. The moon had moved to the west, peering through the leaves to espy this wonder of divine art wrought in a fragile human frame. The air was heavy with perfume; the silence of the night was vocal with the chirping of crickets; the reflections of the trees hung motionless in the lake; and with his staff in his hand he stood, tall and straight and still, like a forest tree. It seemed to me that I had, on opening my eyes, died to all realities of life and undergone a dream birth into a shadow land. Shame slipped to my feet like loosened clothes. I heard his call—"Beloved, my most beloved!" And all my forgotten lives united as one and responded to it. I said, "Take me, take all I am!" And I stretched out my arms to him. The moon set behind the trees. One curtain of darkness covered all. Heaven and earth, time and space, pleasure and pain, death and life merged together in an unbearable ecstasy. . . . With the first gleam of light, the first twitter of birds, I rose up and sat leaning on my left arm. He lay asleep with a vague smile about his lips like the crescent moon in the morning. The rosy red glow of the dawn fell upon his noble forehead. I sighed and stood up. I drew together the leafy lianas to screen the

streaming sun from his face. I looked about me and saw the same old earth. I remembered what I used to be, and ran and ran like a deer afraid of her own shadow, through the forest path strewn with shephali flowers. I found a lonely nook, and sitting down covered my face with both hands, and tried to weep and cry. But no tears came to my eyes.

Madana

Alas, thou daughter of mortals! I stole from the divine Storehouse the fragrant wine of heaven, filled with it one earthly night to the brim, and placed it in thy hand to drink—yet still I hear this cry of anguish!

Chitra [bitterly]

Who drank it? The rarest completion of life's desire, the first union of love was proffered to me, but was wrested from my grasp? This borrowed beauty, this falsehood that enwraps me, will slip from me taking with it the only monument of that sweet union, as the petals fall from an overblown flower; and the woman ashamed of her naked poverty will sit weeping day and night. Lord Love, this cursed appearance companions me like a demon robbing me of all the prizes of love—all the kisses for which my heart is athirst.

Madana

Alas, how vain thy single night had been! The barque of joy came in sight, but the waves would not let it touch the shore.

Chitra

Heaven came so close to my hand that I forgot for a moment that it had not reached me. But when I woke in the morning from my dream I found that my body had become my own rival. It is my hateful task to deck her every day, to send her to my beloved and see her caressed by him. O god, take back thy boon!

Madana

But if I take it from you how can you stand before your lover? To snatch away the cup from his lips when he has scarcely drained his first draught of pleasure, would not that be cruel? With what resentful anger he must regard thee then?

Chitra

That would be better far than this. I will reveal my true self to him, a nobler thing than this disguise. If he rejects it, if he spurns me and breaks my heart, I will bear even that in silence.

Vasanta

Listen to my advice. When with the advent of autumn the flowering season is over then comes the triumph of fruitage. A time will come of itself when the heat-cloyed bloom of the body will droop and Arjuna will gladly accept the abiding fruitful truth in thee. O child, go back to thy mad festival.

Scene IV

Chitra

Why do you watch me like that, my warrior?

Arjuna

I watch how you weave that garland. Skill and grace, the twin brother and sister, are dancing playfully on your finger tips. I am watching and thinking.

Chitra

What are you thinking, sir?

Arjuna

I am thinking that you, with this same lightness of touch and sweetness, are weaving my days of exile into an immortal wreath, to crown me when I return home.

Chitra

Home! But this love is not for a home!

Arjuna

Not for a home?

Chitra

No. Never talk of that. Take to your home what is abiding and strong. Leave the little wild flower where it was born; leave it beautifully to die at the day's end among all fading blossoms and decaying leaves. Do not take it to your palace hall to fling it on the stony floor which knows no pity for things that fade and are forgotten.

Arjuna

Is ours that kind of love?

Chitra

Yes, no other! Why regret it? That which was meant for idle days should never outlive them. Joy turns into pain when the door by which it should depart is shut against it. Take it and

keep it as long as it lasts. Let not the satiety of your evening claim more than the desire of your morning could earn. . . . The day is done. Put this garland on. I am tired. Take me in your arms, my love. Let all vain bickerings of discontent die away at the sweet meeting of our lips.

Arjuna

Hush! Listen, my beloved, the sound of prayer bells from the distant village temple steals upon the evening air across the silent trees!

Scene V

Vasanta

I cannot keep pace with thee, my friend! I am tired. It is a hard task to keep alive the fire thou hast kindled. Sleep overtakes me, the fan drops from my hand, and cold ashes cover the glow of the fire. I start up again from my slumber and with all my might rescue the weary flame. But this can go on no longer.

Madana

I know, thou art as fickle as a child. Ever restless is thy play in heaven and on earth. Things that thou for days buildest up with endless detail thou dost shatter in a moment without regret. But this work of ours is nearly finished. Pleasure-winged days fly fast, and the year, almost at its end, swoons in rapturous bliss.

Scene VI

Arjuna

I woke in the morning and found that my dreams had distilled a gem. I have no casket to inclose it, no king's crown whereon to fix it, no chain from which to hang it, and yet have not the heart to throw it away. My Kshatriya's right arm, idly occupied in holding it, forgets its duties.

Enter CHITRA.

Chitra

Tell me your thoughts, sir!

Arjuna

My mind is busy with thoughts of hunting today. See, how the rain pours in torrents and fiercely beats upon the hillside. The dark shadow of the clouds hangs heavily over the forest, and the swollen stream, like reckless youth, overleaps all barriers with mocking laughter. On such rainy days we five brothers would go

to the Chitraka forest to chase wild beasts. Those were glad times. Our hearts danced to the drumbeat of rumbling clouds. The woods resounded with the screams of peacocks. Timid deer could not hear our approaching steps for the patter of rain and the noise of waterfalls; the leopards would leave their tracks on the wet earth, betraying their lairs. Our sport over, we dared each other to swim across turbulent streams on our way back home. The restless spirit is on me. I long to go hunting.

Chitra

First run down the quarry you are now following. Are you quite certain that the enchanted deer you pursue must needs be caught? No, not yet. Like a dream the wild creature eludes you when it seems most nearly yours. Look how the wind is chased by the mad rain that discharges a thousand arrows after it. Yet it goes free and unconquered. Our sport is like that, my love! You give chase to the fleet-footed spirit of beauty, aiming at her every dart you have in your hands. Yet this magic deer runs ever free and untouched.

Arjuna

My love, have you no home where kind hearts are waiting for your return? A home which you once made sweet with your gentle service and whose light went out when you left it for this wilderness?

Chitra

Why these questions? Are the hours of unthinking pleasure over? Do you not know that I am no more than what you see before you? For me there is no vista beyond. The dew that hangs on the tip of a Kinsuka petal has neither name nor destination. It offers no answer to any question. She whom you love is like that perfect bead of dew.

Arjuna

Has she no tie with the world? Can she be merely like a fragment of heaven dropped on the earth through the carelessness of a wanton god?

Chitra

Yes.

Arjuna

Ah, that is why I always seem about to lose you. My heart is unsatisfied, my mind knows no peace. Come closer to me, unattainable one! Surrender yourself to the bonds of name and home and parentage. Let my heart feel you on all sides and live with you in the peaceful security of love.

Chitra

Why this vain effort to catch and keep the tints of the clouds, the dance of the waves, the smell of the flowers?

Arjuna

Mistress mine, do not hope to pacify love with airy nothings. Give me something to clasp, something that can last longer than pleasure, that can endure even through suffering.

Chitra

Hero mine, the year is not yet full, and you are tired already! Now I know that it is Heaven's blessing that has made the flower's term of life short. Could this body of mine have drooped and died with the flowers of last spring it surely would have died with honour. Yet, its days are numbered, my love. Spare it not, press it dry of honey, for fear your beggar's heart come back to it again and again with unsated desire, like a thirsty bee when summer blossoms lie dead in the dust.

Scene VII

Madana

Tonight is thy last night.

Vasanta

The loveliness of your body will return tomorrow to the inexhaustible stores of the spring. The ruddy tint of thy lips freed from the memory of Arjuna's kisses, will bud anew as a pair of fresh asoka leaves, and the soft, white glow of thy skin will be born again in a hundred fragrant jasmine flowers.

Chitra

O gods, grant me this my prayer! Tonight, in its last hour let my beauty flash its brightest, like the final flicker of a dying flame.

Madana

Thou shalt have thy wish.

Scene VIII

Villagers

Who will protect us now?

Arjuna

Why, by what danger are you threatened?

Villagers

The robbers are pouring from the northern hills like a mountain flood to devastate our village.

Arjuna

Have you in this kingdom no warden?

Villagers

Princess Chitra was the terror of all evil doers. While she was in this happy land we feared natural deaths, but had no other fears. Now she has gone on a pilgrimage, and none knows where to find her.

Arjuna

Is the warden of this country a woman?

Villagers

Yes, she is our father and mother in one.
[Exeunt.]

Enter CHITRA.

Chitra

Why are you sitting all alone?

Arjuna

I am trying to imagine what kind of woman Princess Chitra may be. I hear so many stories of her from all sorts of men.

Chitra

Ah, but she is not beautiful. She has no such lovely eyes as mine, dark as death. She can pierce any target she will, but not our hero's heart.

Arjuna

They say that in valour she is a man, and a woman in tenderness.

Chitra

That, indeed, is her greatest misfortune. When a woman is merely a woman; when she winds herself round and round men's hearts with her smiles and sobs and services and caressing endearments; then she is happy. Of what use to her are learning and great achievements? Could you have seen her only yesterday in the court of the Lord Shiva's temple by the forest path, you would have passed by without deigning to look at her. But have you grown so weary of woman's beauty that you seek in her for a man's

strength?

With green leaves wet from the spray of the foaming waterfall, I have made our noonday bed in a cavern dark as night. There the cool of the soft green mosses thick on the black and dripping stone, kisses your eyes to sleep. Let me guide you thither.

Arjuna

Not today, beloved.

Chitra

Why not today?

Arjuna

I have heard that a horde of robbers has neared the plains. Needs must I go and prepare my weapons to protect the frightened villagers.

Chitra

You need have no fear for them. Before she started on her pilgrimage, Princess Chitra had set strong guards at all the frontier passes.

Arjuna

Yet permit me for a short while to set about a Kshatriya's work. With new glory will I ennoble this idle arm, and make of it a pillow more worthy of your head.

Chitra

What if I refuse to let you go, if I keep you entwined in my arms? Would you rudely snatch yourself free and leave me? Go then! But you must know that the liana, once broken in two, never joins again. Go, if your thirst is quenched. But, if not, then remember that the goddess of pleasure is fickle, and waits for no man. Sit for a while, my lord! Tell me what uneasy thoughts tease you. Who occupied your mind today? Is it Chitra?

Arjuna

Yes, it is Chitra. I wonder in fulfilment of what vow she has gone on her pilgrimage. Of what could she stand in need?

Chitra

Her needs? Why, what has she ever had, the unfortunate creature? Her very qualities are as prison walls, shutting her woman's heart in a bare cell. She is obscured, she is unfulfilled. Her womanly love must content itself dressed in rags; beauty is denied her. She is like the spirit of a cheerless morning,

sitting upon the stony mountain peak, all her light blotted out by dark clouds. Do not ask me of her life. It will never sound sweet to man's ear.

Arjuna

I am eager to learn all about her. I am like a traveller come to a strange city at midnight. Domes and towers and garden-trees look vague and shadowy, and the dull moan of the sea comes fitfully through the silence of sleep. Wistfully he waits for the morning to reveal to him all the strange wonders. Oh, tell me her story.

Chitra

What more is there to tell?

Arjuna

I seem to see her, in my mind's eye, riding on a white horse, proudly holding the reins in her left hand, and in her right a bow, and like the Goddess of Victory dispensing glad hope all round her. Like a watchful lioness she protects the litter at her dugs with a fierce love. Woman's arms, though adorned with naught but unfettered strength, are beautiful! My heart is restless, fair one, like a serpent reviving from his long winter's sleep. Come, let us both race on swift horses side by side, like twin orbs of light sweeping through space. Out from this slumbrous prison of green gloom, this dank, dense cover of perfumed intoxication, choking breath.

Chitra

Arjuna, tell me true, if, now at once, by some magic I could shake myself free from this voluptuous softness, this timid bloom of beauty shrinking from the rude and healthy touch of the world, and fling it from my body like borrowed clothes, would you be able to bear it? If I stand up straight and strong with the strength of a daring heart spurning the wiles and arts of twining weakness, if I hold my head high like a tall young mountain fir, no longer trailing in the dust like a liana, shall I then appeal to man's eye? No, no, you could not endure it. It is better that I should keep spread about me all the dainty playthings of fugitive youth, and wait for you in patience. When it pleases you to return, I will smilingly pour out for you the wine of pleasure in the cup of this beauteous body. When you are tired and satiated with this wine, you can go to work or play; and when I grow old I will accept humbly and gratefully whatever corner is left for me. Would it please your heroic soul if the playmate of the night aspired to be the helpmeet of the day, if the left arm learnt to share the burden of the proud right arm?

Arjuna

I never seem to know you aright. You seem to me like a goddess hidden within a golden image. I cannot touch you, I cannot pay you my dues in return for your priceless gifts. Thus my love is incomplete. Sometimes in the enigmatic depth of your sad look, in your playful words mocking at their own meaning, I gain glimpses of a being trying to rend asunder the languorous grace of her body, to emerge in a chaste fire of pain through a vaporous veil of smiles. Illusion is the first appearance of Truth. She advances towards her lover in disguise. But a time comes when she throws off her ornaments and veils and stands clothed in naked dignity. I grope for that ultimate you, that bare simplicity of truth.

Why these tears, my love? Why cover your face with your hands? Have I pained you, my darling? Forget what I said. I will be content with the present. Let each separate moment of beauty come to me like a bird of mystery from its unseen nest in the dark bearing a message of music. Let me for ever sit with my hope on the brink of its realization, and thus end my days.

Scene IX

CHITRA and ARJUNA

Chitra [cloaked]

My lord, has the cup been drained to the last drop? Is this, indeed, the end? No, when all is done something still remains, and that is my last sacrifice at your feet.

I brought from the garden of heaven flowers of incomparable beauty with which to worship you, god of my heart. If the rites are over, if the flowers have faded, let me throw them out of the temple [unveiling in her original male attire]. Now, look at your worshipper with gracious eyes.

I am not beautifully perfect as the flowers with which I worshipped. I have many flaws and blemishes. I am a traveller in the great world-path, my garments are dirty, and my feet are bleeding with thorns. Where should I achieve flower-beauty, the unsullied loveliness of a moment's life? The gift that I proudly bring you is the heart of a woman. Here have all pains and joys gathered, the hopes and fears and shames of a daughter of the dust; here love springs up struggling toward immortal life. Herein lies an imperfection which yet is noble and grand. If the flower-service is finished, my master, accept this as your servant for the days to come!

I am Chitra, the king's daughter. Perhaps you will remember the

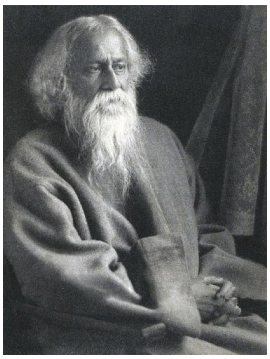
day when a woman came to you in the temple of Shiva, her body loaded with ornaments and finery. That shameless woman came to court you as though she were a man. You rejected her; you did well. My lord, I am that woman. She was my disguise. Then by the boon of gods I obtained for a year the most radiant form that a mortal ever wore, and wearied my hero's heart with the burden of that deceit. Most surely I am not that woman.

I am Chitra. No goddess to be worshipped, nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self. If your babe, whom I am nourishing in my womb be born a son, I shall myself teach him to be a second Arjuna, and send him to you when the time comes, and then at last you will truly know me. Today I can only offer you Chitra, the daughter of a king.

Arjuna

Beloved, my life is full.

Biography



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Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861–7 August 1941), born in Calcutta, was the first non-European winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature. In addition to being a masterful playwright, poet, and novelist, he was also a skilled artist. Tagore's impact on global literature cannot be understated. Several major writers—including William Butler Yeats, Pablo Neruda, and Salmon Rushdie—were inspired by the works of Tagore. Many statues and museums across the world are named in his honor.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: About Literary Criticism

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to:

- define, identify, discuss, and apply concepts of basic literary theory.

10.1: Literary Criticism
10.2: What is Literary Criticism?
10.3: Formalism
10.4: Psychoanalytic Criticism
10.5: Gender Criticism
10.6: Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies Criticism
10.7: New Historicism
10.8: Ecocriticism

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10.1: Literary Criticism

By reading and discussing literature, we expand our imagination, our sense of what is possible, and our ability to empathize with others. Improve your ability to read critically and interpret texts while gaining appreciation for different literary genres and theories of interpretation. Read samples of literary interpretation. Write a critique of a literary work.

Texts that interpret literary works are usually persuasive texts. Literary critics may conduct a close reading of a literary work, critique a literary work from the stance of a particular literary theory, or debate the soundness of other critics' interpretations. The work of literary critics is similar to the work of authors writing evaluative texts. For example, the skills required to critique films, interpret laws, or evaluate artistic trends are similar to those skills required by literary critics.



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Why Write Literary Criticism?

People have been telling stories and sharing responses to stories since the beginning of time. By reading and discussing literature, we expand our imagination, our sense of what is possible, and our ability to empathize with others. Reading and discussing literature can enhance our ability to write. It can sharpen our critical faculties, enabling us to assess works and better understand why literature can have such a powerful effect on our lives.

"Literary texts" include works of fiction and poetry. In school, English instructors ask students to critique literary texts, or works. Literary criticism refers to a genre of writing whereby an author critiques a literary text, either a work of fiction, a play, or poetry. Alternatively, some works of literary criticism address how a particular theory of interpretation informs a reading of a work or refutes some other critics' reading of a work.

Diverse Rhetorical Situations

The genre of literary interpretation is more specialized than most of the other genres addressed in this section, as suggested by the table below. People may discuss their reactions to literary works informally (at coffee houses, book clubs, or the gym) but the lion's share of literary criticism takes place more formally: in college classrooms, professional journals, academic magazines, and websites.

Students interpret literary works for English instructors or for students enrolled in English classes. In their interpretations, students may argue for a particular interpretation or they may dispute other critics' interpretations. Alternatively, students may read a text with a particular literary theory in mind, using the theory to explicate a particular point of view. For example, writers could critique "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin from a feminist theoretical perspective. Thanks to the Internet, some English classes are now publishing students' interpretations on websites. In turn, some students and English faculty publish their work in academic literary criticism journals.

Over the years, literary critics have argued about the best ways to interpret literature. Accordingly, many "schools" or "theories of criticism" have emerged. As you can imagine—given that they were developed by sophisticated specialists—some of these

theoretical approaches are quite sophisticated and abstract.

Below is a summary of some of the more popular literary theories. Because it is a summary, the following tends to oversimplify the theories. In any case, unless you are enrolled in a literary criticism course, you won't need to learn the particulars of all of these approaches. Instead, your teacher may ask you to take an eclectic approach, pulling interpretative questions from multiple literary theories.

Note: If you are interested in learning more about these theories, review either Skylar Hamilton Burris' "Literary Criticism: An Overview of Approaches" or Dino F. Felluga's "Undergraduate Guide to Critical Theory."

- Schools of Literary Criticism
- New Criticism: Focuses on "objectively" evaluating the text, identifying its underlying form. May study, for example, a text's use of imagery, metaphor, or symbolism. Isn't concerned with matters outside the text, such as biographical or contextual information. Online examples: "A Formalist Reading of Sandra Cisneros's 'Woman Hollering Creek'" and "Sound in William Shakespeare's 'Tempest': A Formalist Approach" by Skylar Hamilton Burris
- Reader-Response: Criticism focuses on each reader's personal reactions to a text, assuming meaning is created by a reader's or interpretive community's personal interaction with a text. Assumes no single, correct, universal meaning exists because meaning resides in the minds of readers. Online example: "Theodore Roethke's 'My Papa's Waltz': A Reader's Response" (PDF)
- Feminism: Criticism Focuses on understanding ways gender roles are reflected or contradicted by texts, how dominance and submission play out in texts, and how gender roles evolve in texts. Online Example: "The Yellow Wall-Paper': A Twist on Conventional Symbols" by Liselle Sant, "Kate Chopin as Feminist: Subverting the French Androcentric Influence" by Jane Le Marquand
- New Historicism: Focuses on understanding texts by viewing texts in the context of other texts. Seeks to understand economic, social, and political influences on texts. Tend to broadly define the term "text," so, for example, the Catholic Church could be defined as a "text." May adopt the perspectives of other interpretive communities—particularly reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, and Marxist approaches—to interpret texts. Online example: "Monstrous Acts and Little Murders" by Jonathan Lethem
- Media Criticism: Focuses on writers' use of multimedia and hypertexts. Online example: *The Electronic Labyrinth* by Christopher Keep, Tim McLaughlin, and Robin Parmar
- Psychoanalytical Criticism: Focuses on psychological dimensions of the work.
- Marxist Criticism: Focuses on ways texts reflect, reinforce, or challenge the effects of class, power relations, and social roles. Online example: "A Marxist/Feminist Reading of Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery'" by Peter Kosenko
- Archetypal Criticism: Focuses on identifying the underlying myths in stories and archetypes, which reflect what the psychologist Carl Jung called the "collective unconsciousness." Online example: "A Symbolic Approach to Kate Chopin's 'The Awakening'" by Skylar Hamilton Burris
- Postcolonial Criticism: Focuses on how Western culture's (mis)representation of third-world countries and peoples in stories, myths, and stereotypical images encourages repression and domination. Online example: *Other Voices: The eJournal of Cultural Criticism*
- Structuralism/Semiotics: Focuses on literature as a system of signs where meaning is constructed in a context, where words are inscribed with meaning by being compared to other words and structures.
- Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction: Focuses, along with Structuralism, on viewing literature as a system of signs, yet rejects the Structuralist view that a critic can identify the inherent meaning of a text, suggesting, instead that literature has no center, no single interpretation, that literary language is inherently ambiguous

Powerful works of literature invoke multiple readings. In other words, we can all read the same story or poem (or watch the same movie or listen to the same song) and come up with different, even conflicting, interpretations about what the work means. Who we are reflects how we read texts. Our experiences inspire us to relate to and sympathize with characters and difficult situations. Have we read similar stories? Have we actually faced some of the same challenges the characters in the story face?

In addition, literary theories have unique ways to develop and substantiate arguments. Some theories draw extensively on the work of other critics, while others concentrate on the reader's thoughts and feelings. Some theories analyze a work from an historical perspective, while others focus solely on a close reading of a text.

Accordingly, as with other genres, the following key features need to be read as points of departure as opposed to a comprehensive blueprint:

Focus

Examine a subject from a rhetorical perspective. Identify the intended audience, purpose, context, media, voice, tone, and persona. Distinguish between summarizing the literary work and presenting your argument. Many students fall into the trap of spending too much time summarizing the literature being analyzed as opposed to critiquing it. As a result, it would be wise to check with your teacher regarding how much plot summary is expected. As you approach this project, remember to keep your eye on the ball: What, exactly (in one sentence) is the gist of your interpretation?

Development

You can develop your ideas by researching the work of other literary critics. How do other critics evaluate an author's work? What literary theories do literary critics use to interpret texts or particular moments in history? Reading sample proposals can help you find and adopt an appropriate voice and persona. By reading samples, you can learn how others have prioritized particular criteria.

Below are some of the questions invoked by popular literary theories. Consider these questions as you read a work, perhaps taking notes on your thoughts as you reread. You may focus on using one theory to "read and interpret" text or, more commonly, you may compare the critical concerns of different theories.

New Criticism/Formalism

- Character: How does the character evolve during the story? What is unique or interesting about a character? Is the character a stereotypical action hero, a patriarchal father figure, or Madonna? How does a character interact with other characters?
- Setting: How does the setting enhance tension within the work? Do any elements in the setting foreshadow the conclusion of the piece?
- Plot: What is the conflict? How do scenes lead to a suspenseful resolution? What scenes make the plot unusual, unexpected, suspenseful?
- Point of View: Who is telling the story? Is the narrator omniscient (all knowing) or does the narrator have limited understanding?

Reader-Response Criticism

How does the text make you feel? What memories or experiences come to mind when you read? If you were the central protagonist, would you have behaved differently? Why? What values or ethics do you believe are suggested by the story? As your reading of a text progresses, what surprises you, inspires you?

Feminist Criticism

How does the story re-inscribe or contradict traditional gender roles? For example, are the male characters in "power positions" while the women are "dominated"? Are the men prone to action, decisiveness, and leadership while the female characters are passive, subordinate? Do gender roles create tension within the story? Do characters' gender roles evolve over the course of the narrative?

New Historicism Criticism

How does the story reflect the aspirations and conditions of the lower classes or upper classes? Is tension created by juxtaposing privileged, powerful positions to subordinated, dominated positions? What information about the historical context of the story helps explain the character;s motivations? Who benefits from the outcome of the story or from a given character's motivation?

Media Criticism

How does the medium alter readers' interactions with the text? Has the reader employed multimedia or hypertext? What traditions from print and page design have shaped the structure of the text? In what ways has the author deviated from traditional, deductively organized linear texts?

Cite from the Work

Literary criticism involves close reading of a literary work, regardless of whether you are arguing about a particular interpretation, comparing stories or poems, or using a theory to interpret literature. Do not summarize the story. The purpose of the document is not to inform the readers, but to argue a particular interpretation. You only need to cite parts of the work that support or relate to your argument and follow the citation format required by your instructor (see Using and Citing Sources).

Below is an example from "Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction," Professor Matthew Hurt. Note how the writer uses block quotes to highlight key elements and paraphrase and summarizes the original works, using quotation marks where necessary.

"…Twain offers a long descriptive passage of Huck and Jim's life on the raft that seems, at first glance, to celebrate the idyllic freedom symbolized by the river and nature. . . A close reading of this passage, however, shows that the river is not a privileged natural space outside of and uncontaminated by society, but is inextricably linked to the social world on the shore, which itself has positive value for Huck. Instead of seeking to escape society, Huck wants to escape the dull routines of life."

The passage abounds with lyrical descriptions of the river's natural beauty. For example, Huck's long description of the sunrise over the river captures the peaceful stillness and the visual beauty of the scene:

"The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line — that was the woods on t'other side — you couldn't make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness, spreading around; then the river softened up, away off, and warn't black any more, but gray; . . . sometimes you could hear a sweep screaking; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by-and-by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there's a snag there in the swift current which breaks on it and makes the streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t'other side of the river, . . . then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh, and sweet to smell, on account of the woods and the flowers; . . . and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going at it!" (129-130)

Here Huck celebrates the beauty of the natural world coming to life at the beginning of a new day. The "paleness" gradually spreading across the sky makes new objects visible which he describes in loving detail for the reader. The "nice breeze" is "cool and fresh" and "sweet to smell," and the world seems to be "smiling in the sun" as the song-birds welcome the new day.

However, Huck includes a number of details within this passage that would seem to work against the language of natural beauty. After describing the gradually brightening sky, Huck notes that "you could see little dark spots drifting along, ever so far away — trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks — rafts." The sun rise reveals not only natural objects (the brightening sky, the "snag," the "mist"), but also brings into view man-made objects ("trading scows" and "rafts") that signify human society's presence in this natural environment. Similarly, Huck speculates that the picturesque "log cabin" on the distant shore is a "woodyard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres." Here the marker of human society takes on a sinister tone of corruption as Huck describes how unscrupulous wood sellers stack wood loosely to cheat their customers. Finally, although the breeze is "sweet to smell," Huck assures the reader that this isn't always the case: "but sometimes not that way, because they've left dead fish laying around, gars, and such, and they do get pretty rank."

These signs of society's presence on the river are largely negative. The woodyard is "piled by cheats" and the stacked fish pollute the "sweet" smell of the breeze. At this point, the opposition between "good nature" and "bad society" remains intact. The signs of human presence suggest a corruption of nature's beauty. In the paragraphs that follow, however, this opposition is subtly reversed. After Huck's account of the sunrise over the river, he describes how he and Jim watch the steamboats "coughing along up stream." But when there are no steamboats or rafts to watch, he describes the scene as "solid lonesomeness" (130). No songbirds, no sweet breezes. Without human activities to watch, the scene suddenly becomes empty and "lonesome," and nothing captures Huck's attention until more rafts and boats pass by and he can watch them chopping wood or listen to them beating pans in the fog.

Cite Other Critics' Interpretations of the Work

Criticism written by advanced English majors, graduate students, and literary critics may be more about what other critics have said than about the actual text. Indeed, many critics spend more time reading criticism and arguing about critical approaches than actually reading original works. However, unless you are enrolled in a literary theory course, your instructor probably wants you to

focus more on interpreting the work than discussing other critical interpretations. This does not mean, however, that you should write about a literary work "blindly." Instead, you are wise to find out what other students and critics have said about the work.

Below is a sample passage that illustrates how other critics' works can inspire an author and guide him or her in constructing a counter argument, support an author's interpretation, and provide helpful biographical information.

In her critical biography of Shirley Jackson, Lenemaja Friedman notes that when Shirley Jackson's story "The Lottery" was published in the June 28, 1948 issue of the New Yorker it received a response that "no New Yorker story had ever received": hundreds of letters poured in that were characterized by "bewilderment, speculation, and old-fashioned abuse."1 It is not hard to account for this response: Jackson's story portrays an "average" New England village with "average" citizens engaged in a deadly rite, the annual selection of a sacrificial victim by means of a public lottery, and does so quite deviously: not until well along in the story do we suspect that the "winner" will be stoned to death by the rest of the villagers.

Organization

The format for literary critiques is fairly standard:

- State your claim(s).
- Forecast your organization.
- Marshal evidence for your claim.
- Reiterate argument and elaborate on its significance.

In English classes, you may be able to assume that your readers are familiar with the work you are critiquing. Perhaps, for example, the entire class is responding to one particular work after some class discussions about it. However, if your instructor asks you to address a broader audience, you may need to provide bibliographical information for the work. In other words, you may need to cite the title, publisher, date, and pages of the work (see Citing Sources).

Literary critiques are arguments. As such, your instructors expect you to state a claim in your introduction and then provide quotes and paraphrased statements from the text to serve as evidence for your claim. Ideally, your critique will be insightful and interesting. You'll want to come up with an interpretation that isn’t immediately obvious. Below are some examples of "thesis statements" or "claims" from literary critiques:

- In "The Yellow Wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the protagonist is oppressed and represents the effect of the oppression of women in society. This effect is created by the use of complex symbols such as the house, the window, and the wall-paper which facilitate her oppression as well as her self expression. ["'The Yellow Wall-Paper': A Twist on Conventional Symbols" by Liselle Sant]
- "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Gilman is a sad story of the repression that women face in the days of the late 1800's as well as being representative of the turmoil that women face today. [Critique of "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Brandi Mahon]
- "The Yellow Wallpaper," written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a story of a woman, her psychological difficulties and her husband's so called therapeutic treatment of her aliments during the late 1800s. . . Gilman does well throughout the story to show with descriptive phrases just how easily and effectively the man "seemingly" wields his "maleness" to control the woman. But, with further interpretation and insight I believe Gilman succeeds in nothing more than showing the weakness of women, of the day, as active persons in their own as well as society's decision making processes instead of the strength of men as women dominating machines. ["The View from the Inside" by Timothy J. Decker]
- In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain creates a strong opposition between the freedom of Huck and Jim's life on the raft drifting down the Mississippi River, which represents "nature," and the confining and restrictive life on the shore, which represents "society." ["'All I wanted was a change': Positive Images of Nature and Society in Chapter 19 of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*" from Professor Matthew Hurt's "Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction"]
- In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's short story, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," an unexpected visitor comes down from the sky, and seems to test the faith of a community. The villagers have a difficult time figuring out just how the very old man with enormous wings fits into their lives. Because this character does not agree with their conception of what an angel should look like, they try to determine if the aged man could actually be an angel. In trying to prove the origin of their visitor, the villagers lose faith in the possibility of him being an angel because he does not adhere to their ordered world. Marquez keeps the identity of the very old man with enormous wings ambiguous to critique the villagers and, more generally, organized religion for having

a lack of faith to believe in miracles that do not comply with their master narrative. ["Prove It: A Critique of the Villagers' Faith in 'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings'" from "Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction," Professor Matthew Hurt]

Style

Literary criticism is a fairly specialized kind of writing. Instead of writing to a general lay audience, you are writing to members of a literary community who have read a work and who developed opinions about the work — as well as a vocabulary of interpretation.

Following are some common words used by literary critics. More specialized terms can be learned by reading criticism or by referring to a good encyclopedia for criticism or writing, including the *Writer's Encyclopedia*:

- Protagonist: The protagonist is the major character of the story; typically the character must overcome significant challenges.
- Antagonist: The protagonist's chief nemesis; in other words, the character whom the protagonist must overcome.
- Symbols: Metaphoric language; see "'A Symbolic Approach to Kate Chopin's 'The Awakening'"
- Viewpoint: Stories are told either in the first-person or third-person point of view. The first person is limited to a single character, although dialog can let you guess at other characters' intentions. The third person allows readers inside the character's mind so you know what the character feels and thinks. Viewpoint can be "limited," where the character knows less than the reader, or "omniscient," where the reader can hear the thoughts and feelings of all characters. Occasionally writers will use multiple character viewpoint, which takes you from one character's perspective to another.
- Plot: Plots are a series of scenes, typically moving from a conflict situation to a resolution. To surprise readers, authors will foreshadow "false plants," which lead readers to anticipate other resolutions. The term "denouement" refers to the unraveling of the plot in the conclusion.

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10.2: What is Literary Criticism?

What is Literary Theory?

When students hear the word "theory," they might think first of the natural sciences, rather than of literature. In the sciences, theories are systems for understanding how an aspect of the world works: they can be used to explain past phenomena and predict future behavior. Some common conceptions of theory in the public consciousness might include the theory of evolution or the search for the unified theory of the universe.



This image of a magnifying glass resting on an old book is in the public domain.

The term theory does not have the exact same applications in science and literature. However, literary scholars do understand their subject through **literary theories**, which are intellectual models that seek to answer a number of fundamental interpretive questions about literature. In *How to Do Theory*, literary critic Wolfgang Iser suggests that the natural sciences (and the social sciences to a large part) operate under **hard-core** theories, whereas the humanities use **soft-core** theories. Simply put, hard-core theories lead to problem-solving and are governed by general laws and rules; they predict and rely on objective facts. Soft-core theories, on the other hand, do not problem solve but predict — they map ideas and are not necessarily governed by laws but by metaphors and images.

Thus literary scholars use theories that are more descriptive of ideas — which map ideas more than quantify them. Such scholars are guided by questions that may include the following:

1. What exactly do we mean by "literature"? What counts as literature, and what does not?
2. Can (and should) we determine the value or worth of literary works? If so, how should we go about this task? If not, why not?
3. To what extent does a given text reflect its author and/or the historical moment of its composition?
4. What are the political and social ramifications of literary texts and of the ways we study them?

These are very broad versions of the questions that literary scholars ask in their work, but you can probably already see that different scholars are likely to have very different answers to many of them. Thus we often talk about different "schools" of literary theory. Each school prioritizes certain concerns for talking about literature while de-emphasizing others. Thus one critic might focus on the representation of women within a given story or poem (feminist theory), while another critic might concentrate on representations of unconscious desire in that same text (psychoanalytical theory). Though they're studying the same text, these two critics may come to very different conclusions about what is most interesting in that text and why.

Why Study Literary Theory?

In his essay "Disliking Books at an Early Age," literary scholar Gerald Graff talks about how he struggled as a child to see the point of literature. "Literature and history," he recalls, "had no apparent application to my experience." Even in college, Graff says, he "continued to find 'serious' reading painfully difficult and alien." This all changed for Graff when he encountered critical debates over the interpretation of Mark Twain's novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1876). He read about critics who disagreed over the book's meaning, value, and attitudes toward race. He realized that the conversations he'd been having with his classmates about the book in class discussion "were not too far from the thoughts of famous published critics," which gave Graff a feeling of power and excitement about reading he'd never felt before.

We hope you will feel that same power and excitement about reading as you learn about critical debates in literary study and begin to contribute to them in your own papers. Literature isn't made up of inscrutable texts that can be deciphered only by a chosen few who have learned to speak in a secret code. Literature is written by people — talented people perhaps, but people nonetheless. And the concerns of literary critics are concerns that many people share: What does this work say about the human condition? How does it convey its message? Does it portray its subjects fairly? What political or social ideas does it advance? Literature has many potential meanings, and literary theory gives scholars different avenues to uncover those meanings.

By asking theoretical questions of the novels, stories, poems, plays, and essays that you read in your literature class, you can begin to grasp works that may seem ineffable—impenetrable—if you try to uncover a single, "correct" interpretation for them. In short, literary theory can give you a toolbox for approaching any literary text: a set of interpretive moves that can help you figure out where to start when your instructor asks you to comment on a work in class or develop a paper topic.

Theory as Lens

One helpful way of thinking about theory is to imagine it as a kind of lens, or perspective. By viewing literature through a lens, it allows scholars to focus on a particular aspect of the text. Through this perspective, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the significance of the text. For example, if we view *Hamlet* through the gender lens, we might examine the ways in which Hamlet is mocked by Claudius for his "unmanly" grief and how this reflects gender roles in Shakespeare's time. We might also examine the way Ophelia or Gertrude function in the text, or why Hamlet is so rude and sexist towards the women in his life.

By zooming in on a particular aspect of a text, students can focus on a topic that interests them. Focused essays—with clear thesis statements —are often better essays. But they are also often more enjoyable to write for students!

Think about what expertise you might have, or what issues are most important to you. Let's say you are a student who is really into sports, for example. You might examine the role of sports in *Hamlet* (there is fencing!). If you are passionate about nature or the environment, you might consider the botany of daffodils in Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" or the flowers Ophelia carries in *Hamlet*. Essentially, there is a way to apply a theoretical lens or perspective to any work of literature.

Therefore, rather than thinking of theory as restrictive, think of it as a way to explore literary texts in a way that is meaningful to you; a way that empowers you to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation not only for literature, but for your own passions, dreams, and ideas.

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10.3: Formalism

John Donne (1572–1631), the great metaphysical poet, provides a metaphor that is useful for close reading. In "The Canonization" (1633) he writes:

> We'll build sonnets pretty rooms;
>
> As well a well-wrought urn becomes
>
> The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
>
> And by these hymns, all shall approve
>
> Us canonized for Love.

—John Donne, "The Canonization," *Poetry Foundation*

Another poet returns to the same metaphor 118 years later. Thomas Gray, in "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), writes:

> Can storied urn or animated bust
>
> Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?

—Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Courtyard," *Poetry Foundation*

Both Donne and Gray use the image of the urn in their poetry. An *urn*, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), is "an earthenware or metal vessel or vase of a rounded or ovaloid form and with a circular base, used by various peoples especially in former times…to preserve the ashes of the dead. Hence vaguely used (esp. *poet*.) for 'a tomb or sepulchre, the grave.' Donne and Gray use the urn poetically, or metaphorically, for the urn is an image, a container to hold poetic meaning. To Donne, the poet can "build sonnets pretty rooms; / As well a well-wrought urn becomes"; to Gray the urn becomes "storied" or an "animated bust" capable of containing stories and meaning. As an image, then, the urn becomes symbolic: poets argue that a poem is like an urn, a container for artistic meaning.

Let's add one final component to our *urn* image. Jump ahead another sixty-nine years from Gray's poem and read John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820). At the end of this poem, Keats writes:

> When old age shall this generation waste,
>
> Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
>
> Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
>
> 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
>
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Donne's "**well-wrought urn**" became the title of a book by Cleanth Brooks—*The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1947)—a central manifesto of the New Criticism. New Criticism is synonymous with close reading, so the urn becomes an important symbol for the New Critics: the urn as artistic container of beauty and meaning represents the New Critical enterprise. A poem, a play, a novel, a short story is like a "storied urn" or "well-wrought urn," capable of conveying poetic beauty and truth. Even if the poem is "Jabberwocky"!

In all likelihood, you have already practiced **New Criticism**, the close reading of a poem, short story, or longer narrative that focuses on the unity of that work. When you examine a short story for its character development, a drama for its plot construction, or a poem for its imagery, you are reading as a New Critic, looking at the literary work through the lens of close reading. In a sense, New Critical close reading is at the heart of every form of literary analysis you do, regardless of the theoretical approach taken. Thus it becomes essential that you become proficient in close readings of texts, for this skill is the foundation of all forms of literary criticism. If you cannot read a text closely and analyze it, you will have difficulty reading from any critical perspective.

? practice questions

1. List the papers, if any, you have written in high school or college using the close reading approach.
2. Describe your experience writing such papers.
3. What challenges or questions do you remember having as you were working on these papers?
4. On which literary work have you decided to write your paper?
5. What are the fundamental questions you have about this work?

Focus on New Critical Strategies

The New Critics, as we discussed, regard a literary work as an *urn*—a well-wrought, storied urn, or a Grecian urn. As Keats writes, this urn contains not only beauty but also truth: a work of literature has some objective meaning that is integral to its artistic design. In other words, literature is the art of conveying truth about the world. Thus the New Critics view the study of literature as an inherently valuable enterprise; literary criticism, it follows, is fruitful because it clarifies art by assigning a truth value to this art. To quote the nineteenth-century poet and critic Matthew Arnold, as he writes in *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1865), literature reflects "the best that is known and thought in the world." To the New Critics, as you can see, literature—in particular the analysis of it—was a profound activity.

A central concern of the New Critics is to understand how meaning and form interweave into a total artistic effect, the well-wrought urn. A New Critical reading assumes that the literary work has an organic structure that leads to unity or harmony in the work. An important concern for New Critics, consequently, is to show how meaning is achieved or dependent on the organic structure—the form—of the work. A New Critical reading, then, focuses on the various elements of literature that complement and create the theme.

Basic Philosophy of Close Reading

A New Critic's toolbox will hold those elements of literature that allow for the discussion of form and technique as it applies to meaning. Since New Critics perform a close reading of the text to illustrate how structure and theme are inseparable, they are eager to tell us both how to read and how *not* to read. They identify various fallacies of reading that must be avoided:

The Intentional Fallacy

The **intentional fallacy** occurs when readers claim to understand an author's intended meaning for a work of literature. The New Critics believed that a literary work belongs to the readers, to the public, which suggests that we should read the work isolated from what the author may have said about the work. In other words, the critic never knows specifically what the author intended. Indeed, an author may have conveyed meanings he or she did not intend at all, but those meanings are still present in their work. The literary critic, then, must concentrate solely on the extrinsic formal qualities of the poem, play, short story, or novel.

The Biographical Fallacy

Related to the intentional fallacy is the **biographical fallacy**, which, as you might suspect, is committed when you use an author's life as a frame of reference to interpret a work of art. The New Critics took painstaking measures to keep the focus on the work of art itself.

The Affective Fallacy

The **affective fallacy** is produced when the critic brings in his or her personal feelings about how a literary work moves them. While New Critics were aware that many readers found meaning in the emotional impact of literature, they were careful to distinguish between subjective emotional responses and objective critical statements about a literary work. Critics, then, should stick closely to the work of art, eliminating the author's intention from consideration, and they should also eliminate their emotional involvement in the reading experience. We discover later in our study that many critical theories—psychoanalytic and reader-response theories, in particular—are diametrically opposed to New Criticism: both psychoanalytic and reader-response theories highlight the way a literary work affects a reader's emotional and intellectual responses.

The Heresy of Paraphrase

Finally, the New Critics warned against the **heresy of paraphrase**, which happens when readers artificially separate meaning from structure or form. You have probably fallen into this trap once or twice when you concentrated on summarizing a work's plot rather than analyzing its meaning. New Criticism teaches us not to assign a meaning to a literary work *unless* that meaning can be supported by a close examination of the artistic elements of the text. To say that Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is about the death of a migrant worker fails to acknowledge that the poem does not support such a reading. Humpty Dumpty, in fact, could be accused of the heresy of paraphrase, as Amy Chisnell explores in her student paper later in the chapter.

In review, a close reading, as defined by the New Critics, focuses narrowly on the literary work as a well-wrought urn. All we need for our interpretation is the literary work itself, where we examine how the artistry of the work leads to a larger theme that reflects the truth value of the work. Easy to state, more difficult to do! So let's now turn to see how a close reading can be connected to the writing process itself.

? practice questions

1. How do you react to such rules that define the philosophy of New Critical close reading?
2. What do you see as the strengths to such an approach?
3. What do you see as some of the limits to this approach?

The Writing Process and the Protocols of Close Reading

If New Critics provide us with so many strategies for *not* reading a text, they should present us with strategies *for* reading texts. And they do. They suggest protocols of reading that are the heart of traditional close readings of texts. In a nutshell, a close reading exposes a problem or issue that needs examination to bring unity to the work; a close reading demonstrates how a literary work's meaning is unified, balanced, and harmonized by its aesthetic—or literary—structure. Your close reading, then, often identifies a **tension** or **ambiguity**—the issue or problem—that can be resolved by showing that the literary work achieves unity even in the apparent tension or ambiguity. Consequently, the critic can often examine how language creates tension through **paradox** or **irony**. Paradox (when something appears contradictory or discordant, but finally proves to be actually true) and irony (when a perceived meaning or intention is

eventually found not to be accurate) are a result of a writer's use of language in a *metaphorical* way.

Questions

1. Read Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn"
2. Examine the last two lines of the poem (49–50).
3. Do you think the urn is speaking the lines at the end? Does it matter?

There is no more famous example of a professional critical reading than Cleanth Brooks's "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes." (Cleanth Brooks, “Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes,” Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html.)

Brooks's reading of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" begins by disagreeing with T. S. Eliot, who believed the concluding lines of the poem—"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—constituted a major flaw in the poem, for, as Brooks relates, "the troubling assertion is apparently an intrusion upon the poem—does not grow out of it—is not dramatically accommodated to it" (Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html). Eliot feels the urn's speech doesn’t make much sense—and that the statement simply isn't true. Brooks sets out to counter Eliot and prove that the poem is unified around the central paradox of the poem: "What is the relation of the beauty (the goodness, the perfection) of a poem to the truth or falsity of what it seems to assert?"

Brooks contends that the poem is "a parable on the nature of poetry, and of art in general" and that the concluding lines must be taken in the "total context of the poem" (Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html). When read in this manner, the urn’s speech was “‘in character,’ was dramatically appropriate, [and] was properly prepared for” (Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html). To support his contention, Brooks provides a stanza-by-stanza close reading in which he suggests that the paradox of the speaking urn is naturally part of each stanza and related to a key thematic concept: the poem highlights the tension between bustling life depicted on the urn and the frozen vignettes of the "Cold Pastoral." Brooks concludes, "If the urn has been properly dramatized, if we have followed the development of the metaphors, if we have been alive to the paradoxes which work throughout the poem, perhaps then, we shall be prepared for the enigmatic, final paradox which the 'silent form' utters.’" (Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html). In concluding his essay, Brooks warns readers not to fall into the trap of paraphrase, for we must ultimately focus on "the world-view, or 'philosophy,' or 'truth' of the *poem as a whole* in terms of its dramatic wholeness" (Brooks's emphasis) (Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html).

Brooks’s reading of Keats's ode is an exemplar of New Critical reading. Remember, a close reading will examine a literary work and find some objective meaning (a theme) that is harmonized with structure, thus balancing theme and form.

Implementing the Reading Protocols: A Strategy

To perform a close reading, use the following strategy:

1. Identify a tension or ambiguity in the literary work, the "problem" that needs to be solved by a close reading. In other words, your interpretation will highlight a theme or meaning that resides in the work.
2. Demonstrate how the work sustains or achieves this meaning through its artistic "principle of composition," which might include an examination of the following:
    - imagery
    - character
    - plot
    - symbol
    - setting
    - point of view
    - language use (i.e. denotation, connotation, metaphor, simile, personification, rhythm)

    Of course, the principle of composition is determined by the literary genre you are analyzing (i.e. short story, poetry, drama, novel). By showing that #1 is dependent on #2, you present a New Critical interpretation reflecting how meaning is integral to theme.

To review, New Criticism provides us with concrete strategies to use when we read and interpret works of literature. Such reading and interpreting, however, never happens after just a first reading; in fact, all critics—New Critics and the others we examine later in this text—reread works multiple times before venturing an interpretation. You can see, then, the connection between reading and writing: as Chapter 1 indicates, writers create multiple drafts before settling for a finished product (writing is never adequately "finished"); the writing process, in turn, is dependent on the multiple rereadings the writer has performed to gather evidence for the paper. It's important that you integrate the reading and writing process together. As a model, use the following ten-step plan as you write using New Critical theory:

1. Carefully *read the work* you will analyze.

2. *Formulate a general question* after your initial reading that identifies a problem—a tension—that is fruitful for discussion.
3. *Reread the work*, paying particular attention to the question you posed. *Take notes*, which should be focused on your central question. *Write an exploratory journal entry* or *blog post* that allows you to play with ideas.
4. *Construct a working thesis* that makes a claim about the work and accounts for the following:
    1. What does the work mean?
    2. How does the work artistically demonstrate the theme you've identified?
    3. "So what" is significant about the work? That is, why is it important for you to write about this work? What will readers learn from reading your interpretation?
5. *Reread the text to gather textual evidence* for support. What literary devices are used to achieve theme?
6. *Construct an informal outline* that demonstrates how you will support your interpretation.
7. *Write a first draft.*
8. *Receive feedback* from peers and your instructor via *peer review* and *conferencing* with your instructor (if possible).
9. *Revise the paper*, which will include revising your original thesis statement and restructuring your paper to best support the thesis. Note: You probably will revise many times, so it is important to receive feedback at every draft stage if possible.
10. *Edit and proofread* for correctness, clarity, and style.

We recommend that you follow this process for every paper that you write from this textbook. Of course, these steps can be modified to fit your writing process, but the plan does ensure that you will engage in a thorough reading of the text as you work through the writing process, which demands that you allow plenty of time for reading, reflecting, writing, reviewing, and revising.

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10.4: Psychoanalytic Criticism

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell

To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades

Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

—excerpt from "Ode to a Nightingale" by John Keats (1819)

“Do I wake or sleep?” Keats's question is perplexing, one we have probably asked ourselves. For our dreams often seem as real as our waking life. We dream, we wake, and we try to recollect our dream, which somehow seems to tell us something that we should know. We may tell friends our dreams, especially those strange ones that haunt our imagination, and they may venture an interpretation for us by reading our dream. Dreams are stories of our mind, albeit often bewildering narratives in need of interpretation.

Learning Exercise: Dream Analysis

1. Keep a dream journal for a least one week, jotting down those dreams that you can remember most vividly.
2. Take one of your dreams and analyze it like a story: What is the plot? Who are the characters? What symbols seem to be operating in the dream-story?
3. Now try to understand your dream: What might be the theme of your dream-story?

Psychoanalytic Criticism

Psychoanalytical literary criticism, on one level, concerns itself with dreams, for dreams are a reflection of the unconscious psychological states of dreamers. Freud, for example, contends that dreams are "the guardians of sleep" where they become "disguised fulfillments of repressed wishes." To Freud, dreams are the "royal road" to the personal unconscious of the dreamer and have a direct relation to literature, which often has the structure of a dream. Jacques Lacan, a disciple of Freud, was influenced by Freud's psychoanalytical theories and contended that dreams mirrored our unconscious and reflected the way we use language; dreams, therefore, operate like language, having their own rhetorical qualities. Another Freud disciple, Carl Jung, eventually rejected Freud's theory that dreams are manifestations of the personal unconsciousness, claiming, instead, that they reflect archetypes that tap into the "collective unconsciousness" of all humanity.

In this chapter, we explore three popular psychoanalytical approaches for interpreting literature — Freudian, Lacanian, and Jungian. In general, there are three ways to focus a psychoanalytical interpretation:

1. Analyze the author's life.
2. Analyze the thematic content of the work, especially the motivations of characters and the narrator(s).
3. Analyze the artistic construction of a text.

Here is a quick overview of some psychoanalytical interpretations that demonstrate these approaches.

Analyze the Author’s Life

In *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (1933), Marie Bonaparte psychoanalyzes Poe, concluding that his fiction and poetry are driven by his desire to be reunited with his dead mother (she died when he was three). This desire leaves him symbolically castrated, unable to have normal relationships with others (primarily women). Bonaparte analyzes Poe's stories from this perspective, reading them as dreams reflecting Poe's repressed desires for his mother. While such an interpretation is fascinating—and can be quite useful—you probably won't attempt to get into the mind of the author for a short paper. But you will find, however, that examining the life of an author can be a fruitful enterprise, for there may be details from an author's life that might become useful evidence in your paper.

Analyze the Thematic Content: The Motivations of Characters and the Narrator(s)

An example showing a psychoanalytic focus on literary characters is Frederick Crews's reading in *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes* (1966). Crews first provides a psychoanalytical reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne's life: he sees reflected in Hawthorne's characters a thwarted Oedipus complex (no worries, we'll define that a bit later),

which creates repression. Furthermore, Hawthorne's ties to the Puritan past engenders his work with a profound sense of guilt, further repressing characters. Crews reads "The Birthmark," for example, as a tale of sexual repression. Crews' study is a model for psychoanalyzing characters in fiction and remains a powerful and persuasive interpretation.

Analyze the Artistic Construction

Jacques Lacan shows us how a psychoanalytical reading can focus on the formal, artistic construction of a literary text. In other words, Lacan believes that our unconscious is "structured like a language" and that a literary text mirrors this sense of the unconscious. In "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" Lacan argues that Edgar Allan Poe's tale is not necessarily about the meaning of the message in the stolen letter; rather, the tale is about who controls the letter, who has power over the language contained in the letter.

How to Write A Psychoanalytic Literary Essay

1. Choose three authors and/or literary works that you think might be fruitful for applying the three psychoanalytical approaches.
2. Now jot down two reasons why you think your author and/or work might work well with these theories.
3. Keep this material, for you may have already developed an idea for your paper.

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Contributors and Attributions

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10.5: Gender Criticism

Feminist Criticism

Let's whet our appetite for literature in a different, maybe more peculiar way. Let's read a different text, this one from a cookbook, the *Amberg Centennial 1890–1990 Cookbook* (American Legion Auxiliary #428, *Amberg Centennial 1890–1990 Cookbook* (n.p.: n.d.)). The two recipes come from the section "Game."

Duck with Wild Rice

2 ducks	1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
1 onion, chopped	1 ½ teaspoons salt
1 (5 ounce) package wild rice	1 (8 ounce) can mushrooms and liquid
½ cup butter	½ cup flour
1 ½ cups half and half	1 (4 ounce) package slivered almonds, toasted
2 ribs celery, chopped	salt and pepper to taste

Boil duck, onion, and celery until tender. Remove meat from bones. Set aside. Cook rice. Set aside. Melt butter and sauté onion. Stir in flour and half-and-half to make cream sauce. Add parsley and seasonings. Add cooked duck, rice, mushrooms, and almonds to cream sauce. Bake mixture in a casserole at 350° for 30–45 minutes. Serves 6–8.

—Mrs. Charles T. Dekuester (Doris Van Vleit)

Bessie's Birds

12 birds (dove or quail)	1 cup beef consommé
1 cup uncooked rice	1 (10–3/4 ounce) can onion soup
¼ cup chopped bell pepper	½ cup flour
¼ cup chopped onion	salt and pepper
butter or bacon drippings	

Sauté salted and floured birds in small amount of butter or bacon drippings to brown well. Put rice in bottom of buttered oblong casserole dish. Place birds on top of rice. Sprinkle peppers and onion on top. Pour consommé and onion soup over casserole. Cover casserole with aluminum foil and bake at 350° for 45 minutes. Serves 6.

Chicken may be substituted for the birds.

—Mrs. Hugh Guy (Viola Barette)

CLASS PROCESS

1. Put students in groups of three or four.
2. Have them read the recipes carefully.
3. Have them interpret the recipes as they would examine a story or poem.
4. What "themes" can they find in the recipe text?
5. Generate class discussion as you are guided by the discussion following the excerpt.

The recipes reflect a particular view of women and their role in the domestic space. In other words, the woman's domain is in the house; her workspace the kitchen, where she will cook for her husband (and by extension the children). Notice that each recipe privileges the male name, with the woman's maiden name —her original name and identity—put in parenthesis. Even the use of *Mrs.* denotes her married status, whereby *Mr.* does not tell us the married status of the male. We are in the realm of **patriarchy**, the condition that demonstrates male domination over women. The recipes are even more interesting, for the section of this cookbook is "Game," further suggesting particular gender roles: men, the sportsmen, go hunting for this game, while the women, remaining at home, cook up that game for the family. If we interpret these recipes as we might a piece of literature, we can identify particular themes that represent feminist criticism: women are inferior to men in patriarchy; women's space is the private place of domesticity, the man's space is public (in this case the rugged wild); the woman's identity is determined by her husband's identity (she, like Eve, is dependent on her husband's rib, so to speak).

Now let's look at a literary use of the kitchen as a domestic space. Here is the cast of characters and opening set description for Susan Glaspell's one-act play, *Trifles* (1916). The play was first performed by the Provincetown Players in Massachusetts, with Glaspell playing the role of Mrs. Hale. A year later, Glaspell turned the play into a short story, "A Jury of Her Peers," partly to reach a larger reading audience. The inspiration for the play came from a murder reported in the *Des Moines Register*. (Articles on case: www.midnightassassin.com/sgarticles.html.)

- GEORGE HENDERSON (County Attorney)
- HENRY PETERS (Sheriff)
- LEWIS HALE, A neighboring farmer
- MRS PETERS
- MRS HALE

SCENE: *The kitchen is the now abandoned farmhouse of* JOHN WRIGHT, *a gloomy kitchen, and left without having been put in*

order—unwashed pans under the sink, a loaf of bread outside the bread-box, a dish-towel on the table—other signs of incompleted work. At the rear the outer door opens and the SHERIFF *comes in followed by the* COUNTY ATTORNEY *and* HALE. *The* SHERIFF *and* HALE *are men in middle life, the* COUNTY ATTORNEY *is a young man; all are much bundled up and go at once to the stove. They are followed by the two women—the* SHERIFF*'s wife first; she is a slight wiry woman, a thin nervous face.* MRS HALE *is larger and would ordinarily be called more comfortable looking, but she is disturbed now and looks fearfully about as she enters. The women have come in slowly, and stand close together near the door.* (Susan Glaspell, *Trifles* (1916; Project Gutenberg, 2011, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10623/10623-h/10623-h.htm#TRIFLES.)

The following excerpt is the opening of the short story "A Jury of Her Peers":

WHEN Martha Hale opened the storm-door and got a cut of the north wind, she ran back for her big woolen scarf. As she hurriedly wound that round her head her eye made a scandalized sweep of her kitchen. It was no ordinary thing that called her away—it was probably farther from ordinary than anything that had ever happened in Dickson County. But what her eye took in was that her kitchen was in no shape for leaving; her bread all ready for mixing, half the flour sifted and half unsifted.

She hated to see things half done; but she had been at that when the team from town stopped to get Mr. Hale, and then the sheriff came running in to say his wife wished Mrs. Hale would come too—adding, with a grin, that he guessed she was getting scarey and wanted another woman along. So she had dropped everything right where it was. (Susan Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers," in *The Best Short Stories of 1917*, ed. Edward J. O'Brien (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1918; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1996), etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin...ublic&part=all.)

CLASS PROCESS

1. Have the students read *Trifles*.
2. Ask the students to make a chart on a piece of paper: label the left side "men," the right side "women."
3. Students should then fill in the chart: what symbols are associated with the men and women?

When we turn to the *Trifles* example, we see how a writer uses this domestic space and its implications to create a symbolic statement about gender. The men all have first and last names and are given an occupation (attorney, sheriff, or farmer); the women are only known by their husbands' names — they are not even given first names. This naming becomes important in the play, for the suspected murderer Minnie Wright is referred to as Minnie Foster by Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale, suggesting that she had lost her identity by marrying her husband, who was a cold and cruel man, even preventing her from singing in the choir or having a telephone in the house (see Gretchen Panzer's sample paper on voice in *The Great Gatsby* later in the chapter).

Furthermore, the setting of the play is important — all the action on stage takes place in the kitchen, a kitchen that is in disarray. The men, of course, view the messy kitchen as a fault of Minnie's: she just isn't a very good housewife and housekeeper, for that is her primary role according to the men. To be a housewife, in addition, means that women are only concerned with "trifles," insignificant things. Later in the play and the short story we find out that Minnie's canning—her preserves—have been ruined because the jars have frozen and burst. Again, the men see this as sloppy housekeeping, while the women view the preserves as Minnie's hard work to care for her family. The idea of "preserves" or "preservation" becomes a central theme in Glaspell's work, for Minnie must preserve her dignity as a woman, even if it means that she must murder her husband. The great irony of the play and short story is that the women discover the evidence—the strangled bird—that would be enough to convict Minnie of murder, but they withhold this evidence, thus implying that Minnie will be set free. The women create their own justice system, becoming a jury of their peers: women.

Feminism is a powerful literary theory that is dedicated to social and political change. "How to define feminism? Ah, that is the question," a befuddled Hamlet might ask. A useful definition can be found in Michael Kimmel and Thomas Mosmiller's *Against the Tide: Pro-Feminist Men in the United States, 1776–1990: A Documentary History* (1992). They focus on four central points:

1. There is evidence that women are treated differently and unequally.
2. Women are not treated equally in the private and public sphere.
3. If these points are true, then that's wrong and becomes a moral problem.
4. Thus feminism is a commitment to change. (Michael Kimmel and Thomas Mosmiller, *Against the Tide: Pro-Feminist Men in the United States, 1776–1990 a Documentary History* (Boston: Beacon, 1992).)

CLASS PROCESS

1. On the blackboard or whiteboard, have the students generate examples for points 1 and 2 of the list. This should lead to a spirited discussion.

Two other definitions will be useful to you: Barbara Smith argues that "feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free *all* women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, Jewish women, lesbians, old women—as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement" (from *A History of U.S. Feminisms* by Kory Dicker (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), p. 7). Noted feminist author bell hooks adds, "Feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression. Therefore it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels, as well as a commitment to reorganize society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires" (bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 2nd ed. (London: Pluto, 2000)).

Feminist literary criticism is also about this commitment to equality, to change, and it works its way by arguing that literature is a powerful cultural force that mirrors gender attitudes. Feminist literary criticism can be categorized into three stages: patriarchal criticism, gynocriticism, and feminine writing.

Patriarchal criticism examines the prejudices against women by male writers. Such criticism analyzes the way that canonical authors—mostly men—create images of women. For example, Gretchen Panzer's sample paper in this chapter explores how F. Scott Fitzgerald silences Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*, further reinforcing the notion that this great American novel depicts women in demeaning ways. (F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Scribner, 2003)). This criticism is often focused on close textual study since it will examine how men and women are depicted in literary texts. Patriarchal criticism will be central to this chapter.

Gynocriticism is concerned with women writers, particularly in the ways that women writers have become included within the canon. In American literature, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* are classic examples (Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*, 2nd ed., ed. Nancy A. Walker (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000); Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000)). These texts, now part of the canon of American literature, have only been seen as such for the past twenty-five years or so. Another interesting example is the evolution of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, which reflects the insertion of women into the canon. The edition for 1968 (M. H. Abrams, ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968)), which covers the Middle Ages, the seventeenth century, the Restoration and the eighteenth century, the Romantic period, the Victorian age, and the twentieth century, includes no women. That's right—not one single woman! The latest (eighth) edition of this anthology (Stephen Greenblatt and M. H. Abrams, eds., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 8th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996)), published thirty-eight years later, includes the following women writers:

- *Middle Ages*: Marie De France and Margery Kempe
- *Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*: Queen Elizabeth, Mary (Sydney) Herbert, Aemilia Lanyer, Mary Wroth, Katherine Philips, and Margaret Cavendish
- *Restoration and eighteenth century*: Aphra Behn, Eliza Haywood, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Frances Burney
- *Romantic period*: Anna Letitia Barbauld, Charlotte Smith, Mary Wollstonecraft, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Felicia Dorothea Hemans
- *Victorian age*: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Christina Rossetti
- *Twentieth century*: Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Jean Rhys, Nadine Gordimer, Alice Munro, and Anne Carson

What does it mean, consequently, when there are no representations of women? Historically, if women didn't exist in the canon, then we did not—we could not—study them. But with the rise of the field of women's studies in the 1960s, which introduced the idea of feminist literary criticism, we now value the study of women and their accomplishments, as well as thinking about how gender is constructed and perpetuated generally. This evolution about women and literature is mirrored in the evolving contents of the Norton anthology, which also reflects the evolving canon that is more inclusive, particularly to women writers.

Feminine writing explores the notion that women may write differently than men, suggesting that there may be a "women's writing" that is an alternative to male writing. Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) (Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998)) traces women's writing into three stages. The first stage is **Imitation** or **Feminine** (1840–80), where women imitated men. The classic examples of this are Charlotte and Emily Brontë (of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* fame, respectively), who took on male names — Currer Bell and Acton Bell (Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Richard J. Dunn (New York: Norton, 2001); Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*,

ed. Richard J. Dunn (New York: Norton, 2003)). To give another famous example, George Eliot, who wrote the Victorian classic *Middlemarch*, was actually Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. Bert G. Hornback (New York: Norton, 2000)). The second stage of women's writing is **Protest** or **Feminist** (1880–1920), which sees women becoming much more political as writers, reacting directly to male domination in society and literature. Kate Chopin is an example of this stage, as is Virginia Woolf. Finally, the third stage, **Self-Discovery** or **Female** (1920–), becomes more radical as women turn inward toward the female, toward the body, creating works that mirror a writing particular to women.

As you can see, to narrowly define feminist literary criticism is difficult, for there are a myriad of approaches to take. Feminism is often referred to in the plural—feminisms—because there is such diversity within feminism about core terms and philosophies. A useful starting point is *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, eds., *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997)). You can examine the table of contents here.

A look at this table of contents will show you the complexity of feminist literary criticism and provide you with some ideas to focus your feminist paper on.

YOUR PROCESS

1. Choose a literary work to examine: either a male or female writer.
2. Look through the table of contents of *Feminisms* and choose three chapter areas that might lead to a focus for your paper.
3. Write down several possible working thesis ideas for your paper.
4. Remember, you may decide to focus your paper on gender criticism or masculinity studies, which are defined in the Key Terms.

Gender Criticism

Gender criticism, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's articulation, is an extension of feminist literary criticism. It focuses not just on women but on the construction of gender and sexuality, especially LGBTQ issues, which gives rise to queer theory. Gender criticism suggests that power is not just top down or patriarchal, for example, a man dominating a woman. It suggests that power is multifaceted and never just in one direction. For example, in the nineteenth century while many women argued for suffrage (or the right to vote), at the same time those very women who were white could be dominating or holding power over African Americans in the American slave system. In the nineteenth century, many white women were pictured as angelic, ideal, and the angel in the house who protected men from the cruel world of commerce (see Coventry Patmore's poem *The Angel in the House* (Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House*, The Victorian Web, http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/patmore/angel). But that idealized view of women is incomplete given that we know from diaries and other historical evidence that white women could have sexual longing (shocking!), treat others barbarically, or even be sadistic and murderous. Thus identity is complicated and rich, involving much more than gender alone. It is the intersection of a variety of things—including geographical location, age, race, class, nationality, ability, and sexuality as well as gender—that make up our identities.

A key to gender criticism, consequently, is that gender is a socially constructed ideology that is reflected in our culture and political, social, economic, educational, and religious institutions and is coded in the very language we use. For example, the adjective *queer*, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) tells us, originally meant something "strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric," the earliest use being from 1513 (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "queer"). Not until 1894, partly a result of the sodomy trial of Oscar Wilde, where he was convicted of being a homosexual and sentenced to prison ("Famous World Trials: The Trials of Oscar Wilde, 1895," University of Missouri–Kansas City, http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/wilde/wilde.htm) did the word *queer* (as an adjective or a noun) come to be associated with homosexuality, and then in a strictly derogatory sense.

Like feminism, gender criticism examines how gender is caught between the notion of **essentialism**, the belief that women are naturally and fundamentally different than men based on their biological sex and that nonheterosexual identities are deviant from the biological heteronormative distinction between male and female, and **constructionism**, the belief that gender is not essentialist or based on biological nature but is constructed through culture. One of the most famous scenes from literature depicting this essentialism versus constructionism debate comes from Mark Twain's classic *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. At the end of chapter 10, Jim and Huck determine that the best way to find information so that the two can avoid capture is to have Huck put on a disguise and go into the nearby town:

"Next morning I said it was getting slow and dull, and I wanted to get a stirring up some way. I said I reckoned I would slip over the river and find out what was going on. Jim liked that notion; but he said I must go in the dark and look sharp. Then he studied it over and said, couldn't I put on some of them old things and dress up like a girl? That was a good notion, too. So

we shortened up one of the calico gowns, and I turned up my trouser-legs to my knees and got into it. Jim hitched it behind with the hooks, and it was a fair fit. I put on the sun-bonnet and tied it under my chin, and then for a body to look in and see my face was like looking down a joint of stove-pipe. Jim said nobody would know me, even in the daytime, hardly. I practiced around all day to get the hang of the things, and by and by I could do pretty well in them, only Jim said I didn't walk like a girl; and he said I must quit pulling up my gown to get at my britches-pocket. I took notice, and done better." (Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1912; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1995), chap. 10, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Twa2Huc.html.)

In the next chapter, Huck, dressed as a girl, meets Mrs. Judith Loftus. Huck tells her his name is Sarah Williams, and Mrs. Loftus asks Huck-Sarah to help her with a few tasks, such as throwing a piece of lead at a rat and helping with threading a needle. When she tosses an extra piece of lead to Huck-Sarah, his true identity as a boy is exposed. After Huck tells Mrs. Loftus that his name is George, she criticizes his attempt to fool her:

"Well, try to remember it, George. Don't forget and tell me it's Elexander before you go, and then get out by saying it's George Elexander when I catch you. And don't go about women in that old calico. You do a girl tolerable poor, but you might fool men, maybe. Bless you, child, when you set out to thread a needle don't hold the thread still and fetch the needle up to it; hold the needle still and poke the thread at it; that's the way a woman most always does, but a man always does t'other way. And when you throw at a rat or anything, hitch yourself up a tiptoe and fetch your hand up over your head as awkward as you can, and miss your rat about six or seven foot. Throw stiff-armed from the shoulder, like there was a pivot there for it to turn on, like a girl; not from the wrist and elbow, with your arm out to one side, like a boy. And, mind you, when a girl tries to catch anything in her lap she throws her knees apart; she don't clap them together, the way you did when you catched the lump of lead. Why, I spotted you for a boy when you was threading the needle; and I contrived the other things just to make certain. Now trot along to your uncle, Sarah Mary Williams George Elexander Peters, and if you get into trouble you send word to Mrs. Judith Loftus, which is me, and I'll do what I can to get you out of it. Keep the river road all the way, and next time you tramp take shoes and socks with you. The river road's a rocky one, and your feet'll be in a condition when you get to Goshen, I reckon." (Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1912; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1995), chap. 11, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Twa2Huc.html.)

Mrs. Judith Loftus views sexuality as essentialist—there are real, innate differences between a girl and boy, which perpetuate the stereotypes about gender. Another way to view her comments, however, is to acknowledge that gender is a performance, a role that we play or construct. If we read Judith's comments in this light, then *Huckleberry Finn* becomes a more enlightened text on gender than one might initially think.

Just as we think gender is constructed, queer theorists argue that sexuality is constructed and not just "natural" as well. Lady Gaga sings, "Baby I was born this way," but others, like Adrienne Rich, argue that sexuality exists on a continuum and is more fluid than a binary equation of straight or gay (Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 227–54). Rich suggests that "**compulsory heterosexuality**," the drive to make everything heterosexual, shapes our sexual socialization to such an extent that the only choice is to be straight (Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993)). Building from Sigmund Freud's ideas on sexuality, sex researcher Alfred Kinsey created the Kinsey scale, which suggests that human sexuality exists on a 0–6 scale, with 0 being exclusively homosexual and 6 being exclusively heterosexual. In all his research, he discovered that most people were somewhere around a 3 (bisexual) and that few people were at either ends of the straight/gay spectrum ("Kinsey's Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale," Kinsey Institute, http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/research/ak-hhscale.html).

In addition, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a prominent queer theorist, suggests culture is so **heteronormative** (making heterosexuality the norm) that gay characters—and, particularly, the affection between men in literature—is rendered invisible and must be routed through a character of the opposite gender to be acceptable. A classic example comes from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850); Hester becomes the target as Dimmesdale and Chillingworth work about their male desire by competing for Hester (Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850; Project Gutenberg, 2005), http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/33). In her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), Sedgwick coins the term "**homosocial desire**" to refer to relationships between men that are not explicitly sexual, but could actually have erotic components if allowed to exist (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)). Homosocial worlds include all-male contexts like

boarding schools, the military, and sports (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)). The recent idea of the "bromance" from films such as *I Love You, Man* (2009) is an example of homosocial expression. It is no accident that we often laugh when using the term "bromance" because it seems ludicrous, given the norms of masculinity in our culture, that men might love one another and express that love as women in female friendships often do. It would require heterosexual men to potentially break out of certain norms of how they are supposed to act. We'll discuss this more in a minute when we talk about masculinity.

This idea that some expressions or identities are invisible and then visible once you have a particular lens to see them (theorists call this ideology) is as important to feminist literary criticism as it is to gender and sexuality criticism. What if we look at Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* anew in a way that focuses on how men might care for and love one another as they are sequestered on this famous, frightening ship, the *Pequod*. Chapter 94, "A Squeeze of the Hand," finds the whalemen breaking up the spermaceti from a just-harvested sperm whale. Spermaceti is the wax or oil in the skull of the sperm whale, and this oil was valuable and used to make candles and various ointments. Suddenly, Melville's description of the squeezing of the whale sperm takes on an erotic meaning perhaps previously unnoticed. This interpretation changes the way we may traditionally read the book:

"Squeeze! squeeze! squeeze! all the morning long; I squeezed that sperm till I myself almost melted into it; I squeezed that sperm till a strange sort of insanity came over me; and I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers' hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing their hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally; as much as to say,—Oh! my dear fellow beings, why should we longer cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humor or envy! Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness" (Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: Harper, 1851; Power Moby-Dick, 1998), http://www.powermobydick.com/Moby094.html).

After this paragraph, Ishmael states,

"Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm for ever! For now, since by many prolonged, repeated experiences, I have perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country; now that I have perceived all this, I am ready to squeeze case eternally. In thoughts of the visions of the night, I saw long rows of angels in paradise, each with his hands in a jar of spermaceti" (Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: Harper, 1851; Power Moby-Dick, 1998), http://www.powermobydick.com/Moby094.html).

Melville's text flirts with homoerotic desire, but that desire is short-lived as the narrator suggests that men must "lower" their desire to other outlets — "but in the wife."

Ultimately, gender and sexuality theorists go back in history and look at who might have been left out. Where are there absences in the canon such that gay and lesbian authors and characters might be included? And when gay and lesbian characters are present, how are they perceived?

What about a supposedly "straight" text that appears to have a queer subtext previously unseen? For example, Julia Ward Howe was a nineteenth-century author who wrote the famous "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and founded Mother's Day. However, she also wrote a secret novel, *The Hermaphrodite*, which featured a male gender-bending protagonist who loves both sexes but particularly another man (Julia Ward Howe, *The Hermaphrodite*, ed. Gary Williams (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004)). Once discovered, this book was a shocking addition to the profile people had created of Howe. Howe's text is considered a "recovered" text and has been brought back into circulation, a common phenomenon in the literature of marginalized groups where texts have disappeared only to be rediscovered and read.

YOUR PROCESS

1. Can you think of texts where a character is forced into certain roles, behaviors, and actions because of compulsory heterosexuality?
2. Is that character's sexuality more complex than you realized?
3. When you consider sexuality on a continuum, does it change how characters interact?
4. Could your observations lead to a focus for a literary analysis?

Contributors

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10.6: Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies Criticism

As you've seen throughout this textbook, the field of English or literary studies has changed significantly through the years. At one time, to study English meant to study only literature from England. In fact, it meant to study, almost exclusively, poetry from England. As we see in Chapter 4, the poetry that English students read for the majority of the field's history was almost exclusively written by men. It may not surprise you to learn that the majority of the men that English students read came from Western cultures and were white. The experiences of minorities (within Western culture) and non-Western people were largely excluded from the canon. When their experiences did appear in widely read books, poems, plays, and essays, their experiences were usually filtered through perspective of a white author.

Over the past decades, many literary scholars have begun working to change this reality. Drawing from a range of disciplines, including history, anthropology, and sociology, these scholars have demonstrated how the literary canon excludes the voices of minority and non-Western writers, thinkers, and subjects. They have exposed attitudes of prejudice within canonical works. They have also worked to recover and celebrate works by writers from previously ignored or denigrated racial and ethnic backgrounds. Though their subjects vary widely—from the African American experience in the United States to those of Indians living under British colonial rule—scholars interested in racial, ethnic, and postcolonial studies share a conviction that literature is not politically neutral. Instead, they argue that literature both reflects and shapes the values of the cultures that produce it and that literary critics have a duty to analyze and often critique the cultural values embedded in the texts we study.



Illustration by Edward Winsor Kemble for Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884).

Think, for instance, of the frequent debates that have arisen over Mark Twain's novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1912; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1995), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Twa2Huc.html). For years, literary critics, scholars, students, and parents have debated whether the novel, written by a white American man, should be considered racist (and, if so, whether it should be taught in schools). These debates center on three major issues: (1) the novel's depiction of Jim, the runaway slave who is simultaneously the novel's moral center and a frequent object of ridicule; (2) the novel's frequent use of the pejorative N-word to describe its African American characters; and (3) the heavy dialect through which the speech of Black Americans is presented in the book. Schools have frequently debated banning Twain's novel, often in response to the concerns of parents or students (see Gregory Roberts, "'Huck Finn' a Masterpiece—Or an Insult," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, November 25, 2003, http://www.seattlepi.com/local/article/Huck-Finn-a-masterpiece-or-an-insult-1130707.php).

Though it has happened more slowly than many cultural critics would like, the literary canon has shifted in the past decades to reflect a wider sense of who writes literature and what we should learn from it. The fact that we study American literature at all reflects an earlier shift away from a strict focus on English writing. Moreover, students in American literature classrooms today study more writers of color than did students even twenty years ago. Some African American writers are now studied so frequently they could be called canonical, including Olaudah Equiano, Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, Charles Chesnutt, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison. American literature classes often cover writing by Native American writers, such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdich, and Sherman Alexie, and by Hispanic, Chicano/a, or Latino/a American writers such as George Santayana, Isabel Allende, and Gary Soto. Moreover, British literature classrooms now routinely include works by authors from former British colonies, such as Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Jean Rhys (Dominica), Salman Rushdie (India), and Anita Desai (India). Finally, courses in world literature regularly teach minoritized and/or postcolonial writers who compose in languages other than English.

We recognize that these are incomplete lists. Indeed, even separating authors into these distinct categories can be problematic, as many writers span geographic regions, ethnic identities, or racial backgrounds. Nevertheless, these names can

help get us started thinking about the diverse voices that literature classrooms now include. Of course, scholars working in these fields would point out that there is much work yet to be done to build a truly representative curriculum. Though minority and non-Western writers are now studied regularly, they still occupy relatively small places in most literature classrooms and curricula.

YOUR PROCESS

1. What minoritized or non-Western writers have been part of your literary education to this point? Jot down a few examples.
2. Now think about how those writers shaped your understanding of our literary inheritance. How did reading those writers change your ideas about literature, culture, or history? How would your literary education have been different with a textbook of thirty years ago that largely excluded nonwhite voices?
3. How does your cultural background shape your response to these questions?

Scholars working in these fields often seek to challenge **Eurocentrism**, which is a worldview that considers European societies (and those closely related to them, such as white American society) as the model to which other societies should aspire. Taking a slightly different focus, the critic Edward Said coined the term **Orientalism**, which refers to a set of false assumptions and stereotypes that Western cultures maintain about societies other than themselves.Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1994). These **Others** are sometimes portrayed as excessively bad (demonic others) and sometimes as excessively beautiful (exotic others), but neither view actually builds a true picture of non-Western societies or people. In other words, literary critics are wary of texts in which a foreign society is portrayed as ideal, just as they are when a foreign society is portrayed as depraved.

Looking at literature through the lens of social and cultural identity often requires that critics read beyond the surface meanings of texts and think about the ethnic, cultural, and social implications of the words on the page. For instance, let's consider Phillis Wheatley's "On Being Brought from Africa to America," which was published in her 1773 collection, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*:

On Being Brought from Africa to America.

'TWAS mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,

Taught my benighted soul to understand

That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:

Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.

Some view our sable race with scornful eye,

"Their colour is a diabolic die."

Remember, *Christians*, *Negros*, black as *Cain*,

May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

—Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America," in *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (Denver: W. H. Lawrence, 1887), 17.

Wheatley was a slave, brought to Boston on the slave ship *Phillis* in 1761 and owned by John and Susanna Wheatley, who gave her an education, which was uncommon for slaves at the time. On the surface, Wheatley's poem seems to praise the system of slavery that brought her to America, noting that it was "mercy" that "brought [her] from [her] *Pagan* land." With that latter phrase she seems to disown her heritage as simply pagan, a "benighted" contrast to the Christian education she has received in the United States. We might even accuse Wheatley of **mimicry**, or attempting to imitate the language and (as you can see in the following engraving) dress of the ruling class.



Portrait by Scipio Moorehead as a frontispiece to Phillis Wheatley's Poems on Various Subjects… (1773).

However, scholars of African American literature might urge us to read the poem as a subtle critique of the American slave

system. In her article "A Slave's Subtle War: Phillis Wheatley's Use of Biblical Myth and Symbol," Sondra O'Neale begins by insisting that "any evaluation of Phillis Wheatley must consider her status as a slave." O'Neale notes that a slave who wanted to write during this time period "first had to acquire the requisite language skills." Then "appropriate whites had to authenticate the writer's mental and moral capacity, and then the slave's master had to agree that the slave could publish the work. Moreover, the slave's offering was carefully censored to ensure that it was in no way incendiary" (Sondra O'Neale, "A Slave's Subtle War: Phillis Wheatley's Use of Biblical Myth and Symbol," *Early American Literature* 21, no. 2 (1986): 144–45). In other words, Wheatley could not write a bald condemnation of slavery; her owners held absolute sway over both her writing and her person, and to be published, she had to write within the constraints imposed on her by white people invested in keeping the slave system intact.

For O'Neale, Wheatley "challenged eighteenth-century evangelicals in their cherished religious arena by redeploying the same language and doctrine that whites had used to define the African, thereby undercutting conventional colonial assumptions about race and skin color" (Sondra O'Neale, "A Slave's Subtle War: Phillis Wheatley's Use of Biblical Myth and Symbol," *Early American Literature* 21, no. 2 (1986): 145). In the poem, Wheatley refers to "*Negros*, black as *Cain*." In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many religious and political commentators taught that African people descended from the biblical Cain, who was cursed by God after murdering his brother, Abel. In the King James Bible, it says "the LORD set a mark upon Cain" to identify him to other people, and many white commentators argued that this mark was a dark skin tone (Gen. 4:15 (King James Version)). By associating black people with Cain, white people implied that Black people were inferior both physically and morally — marked as "other" than white people, whom they considered normal.

Wheatley's poem reappropriates these ideas into a critique of Christians who refuse to acknowledge the brotherhood of African people: "Remember, *Christians*, *Negros*, black as *Cain*." First, the terms "Christian," "Negroes," and "black as Cain" are presented in a close sequence, as Wheatley conflates her presumably white readers ("*Christians*") with herself and her people ("*Negros*, black as *Cain*"). In the next line she insists that Black Americans "May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train," where they would, presumably, stand shoulder-to-shoulder with white Christians. Wheatley notes, "Some view our sable race with scornful eye," and say "Their colour is a diabolic die," but she refuses this mischaracterization of her people. They are not "diabolic"—a "demonic other"—but instead equal in potential to white Americans. Though she cannot directly condemn slavery, Wheatley's poem simultaneously evokes and calls into the question prejudiced ideas about African Americans. By writing such refined poetry, Wheatley embodies the mental equality of Black and white people, and in these final lines she insists on that equality. If her readers grant this last concession, however—if they agree that Black and white people can indeed join the same "angelic train"—then the systems of denigration and oppression they support will be exposed as resting on false pretenses. In other words, we can read Wheatley's mimicry as subversive. She is an African American writer working within the strict limitations of the slave system to write and distribute poetry that subtly undermines that very system.

YOUR PROCESS

1. Read the following Wheatley poem, "To the University of Cambridge, in New-England." As you read, consider what underlying messages Wheatley might seek to convey, as in the poem we discussed previously. Jot down your ideas.

While an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,

The muses promise to assist my pen;

'Twas not long since I left my native shore

The land of errors, and Egyptian gloom:

Father of mercy, 'twas thy gracious hand

Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.

Students, to you 'tis giv'n to scan the heights

Above, to traverse the ethereal space,

And mark the systems of revolving worlds.

Still more, ye sons of science ye receive

The blissful news by messengers from heav'n,

How Jesus' blood for your redemption flows.

See him with hands out-stretcht upon the cross;

Immense compassion in his bosom glows;

He hears revilers, nor resents their scorn:

What matchless mercy in the Son of God!

When the whole human race by sin had fall'n,

He deign'd to die that they might rise again,

And share with him in the sublimest skies,

Life without death, and glory without end.

Improve your privileges while they stay,

Ye pupils, and each hour redeem, that bears

Or good or bad report of you to heav'n.

Let sin, that baneful evil to the soul,

By you be shun'd, nor once remit your guard;

Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg.

Ye blooming plants of human race divine,

An Ethiop tells you 'tis your greatest foe;

Its transient sweetness turns to endless pain,

And in immense perdition sinks the soul.

Wheatley is an interesting example because her work speaks to the concerns of scholars interested in the African American literary tradition and scholars interested in issues of conquest and colonialism. Wheatley wrote, after all, when Massachusetts was a British colony, and she came to Massachusetts after being forcibly seized from her home in either Senegal or Gambia, in West Africa. Next we'll look at another text that can help us understand the concerns of postcolonial critics. Nearly 150 years after Wheatley was captured, Joseph Conrad published one of the most famous works ever written about the African continent, *Heart of Darkness* (1899) (Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902; University of Virginia Electronic Text Center, 1993), etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/ConDark.html).

YOUR PROCESS

1. As we've suggested throughout this text, these process papers will make more sense if you are familiar with the literary work under discussion. For this section, you should read Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness.*
2. As you read, pay particular attention to the way that Conrad portrays relationships between European and African characters in the text.

Though *Heart of Darkness* was written, in part, as a critique of Belgian colonialism and commerce in the Congo, many postcolonialist critics have pointed out that the novella perpetuates attitudes of racism and Eurocentrism through its portrayal of Africans.

Most famously, Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe wrote in "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" that the novella "projects the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" in *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (New York: Anchor, 2012)). Achebe notes that few Africans are allowed to speak in Conrad's text. Through most of the novella, he notes, the African characters simply make noises — grunts and babble and sounds. Only two African characters speak: one to express cannibal propensities and another to announce the death of the white enigma, Mr. Kurtz. Achebe insists, despite the stylistic merits of Conrad's work (which he admits are considerable), that "the real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. And the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot" (Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" in *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (New York: Anchor, 2012)). In other words, Achebe insists that the text's aesthetic qualities cannot and should not redeem its cultural and racial attitudes. Such a commitment to the political and social implications of literature characterizes much ethnic criticism.

If that attitude seems extreme, consider the following excerpt from a 2003 article in the British newspaper *The Guardian*. It's written by Caryl Phillips, who initially met with Achebe to defend Joseph Conrad's writing against Achebe's critiques, but their conversation took another turn:

"I am an African. What interests me is what I learn in Conrad about myself. To use me as a symbol may be bright or clever, but if it reduces my humanity by the smallest fraction I don't like it."

"Conrad does present Africans as having 'rudimentary' souls."

Achebe draws himself upright.

"Yes, you will notice that the European traders have 'tainted' souls, Marlow has a 'pure' soul, but I am to accept that mine is 'rudimentary'?" He shakes his head. "Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a very short-lived period of ambivalence about the certainty of this colonising mission, and Heart of Darkness falls into this period. But you cannot compromise my humanity in order that you explore your own ambiguity. I cannot accept that. My humanity is not to be debated, nor is it to be used simply to illustrate European problems."

The realisation hits me with force. I am not an African. Were I an African I suspect I would feel the same way as my host. But I was raised in Europe, and although I have learned to reject the stereotypically reductive images of Africa and Africans, I am undeniably interested in the break-up of a European mind and the health of European civilisation. I feel momentarily ashamed that I might have become caught up with this theme and subsequently overlooked how offensive this novel might be to a man such as Chinua Achebe and to millions of other Africans. Achebe is right; to the African reader the price of Conrad's eloquent denunciation of colonisation is the recycling of racist notions of the "dark" continent and her people. Those of us who are not from Africa may be prepared to pay this price, but this price is far too high for Achebe. However lofty Conrad's mission, he has, in keeping with times past and present,

compromised African humanity in order to examine the European psyche.
—Caryl Phillips, "Out of Africa," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2003, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003...s.chinuaachebe.

Phillips begins to understand that he shares, to some degree, Conrad's Eurocentric perspective and thus has not to this point understood Achebe's African perspective. When Phillips begins to see how Conrad's focus on the novella's European characters leads him to disregard its African characters, Phillips also begins to accept Achebe's postcolonial critique of the novel.

YOUR PROCESS

1. Listen to Chinua Achebe's 2009 interview with NPR about *Heart of Darkness* (Robert Siegel, "Chinua Achebe: 'Heart of Darkness' Is Inappropriate," *All Things Considered*, NPR, audio, October 15, 2009, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=113835207). Can you understand why Achebe, as an African, takes such umbrage at the portrayal of Africans in this canonical novel? Should such concerns shape what we read in literature classrooms?
2. You can read Caryl Phillips's full article about his discussion with Achebe here. How does Phillips's epiphany square with your own thoughts about Achebe and Conrad?
3. To learn more about postcolonial writers and critics, visit the Postcolonial Web or read Deepika Bahri's "Introduction to Postcolonial Studies" (http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Intro.html) (George P. Landlow, "Home Page," The Postcolonial Web, http://www.postcolonialweb.org/; Deepika Bahri, "Introduction to Postcolonial Studies," Dept. of Postcolonial Studies, Emory University, http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Intro.html).

To sum up, when you want to read with an eye toward racial, ethnic, or postcolonial issues, you should consider the following questions:

1. How does this work represent different groups of people? Does it valorize one particular culture at the expense of another? Are characters from particular groups portrayed positively or negatively? Does the work employ stereotypes or broad generalizations?
2. How does this work present political power and/or domination? Are there clear lines drawn between conquerors and conquered people in the work? Does the work seem to argue that these lines are appropriate, or does it challenge the divisions between colonizer and colonized?
3. What is the historical or cultural context of the work? Is the story set during a time of conflict or peace? Is the story set in a location where one culture colonized another? Does the story unfold before the colonial period, during the colonial period, or after the colonial period?
4. Can you discern any particular political agendas at work in the text? That is, does the novel, story, poem, play, or essay seem to make an argument about racial relations, ethnic identity, or political oppression?

The theories we outline in this chapter share many concerns but can be applied in many different ways. To that end, we provided three sample papers in this chapter. Each uses a slightly different lens to investigate a given literary text. Please review all the papers since they will prepare you for the chapter's conclusion, which will synthesize the insights of all three papers.

Contributors and Attributions

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10.7: New Historicism

The Relationship Between History and Literature

Early scholars of literature thought of history as a progression: events and ideas built on each other in a linear and causal way. History, consequently, could be understood objectively, as a series of dates, people, facts, and events. Once known, history became a static entity. We can see this in the previous example from *Wonderland*. The Mouse notes that the "driest thing" he knows is that "William the Conqueror, whose cause was favoured by the pope, was soon submitted to by the English, who wanted leaders, and had been of late much accustomed to usurpation and conquest. Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria—" I think we would all agree to moan "Ugh!" In other words, the Mouse sees history as a list of great dead people that must be remembered and recited, a list that refers only to the so-called great events of history: battles, rebellions, and the rise and fall of leaders. Corresponding to this view, literature was thought to directly or indirectly mirror historical reality. Scholars believed that history shaped literature, but literature didn't shape history.

While this view of history as a static amalgamation of facts is still considered important, other scholars in the movement called **New Historicism** see the relationship between history and literature quite differently. Today, most literary scholars think of history as a dynamic interplay of cultural, economic, artistic, religious, political, and social forces. They don't necessarily concentrate solely on kings and nobles, or battles and coronations. In addition, they also focus on the smaller details of history, including the plight of the common person, popular songs and art, periodicals and advertisements — and, of course, literature. New Historical scholarship, it follows, is **interdisciplinary**, drawing on materials from a number of academic fields that were once thought to be separate or distinct from one another: history, religious studies, political science, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and even the natural sciences. In fact, New Historicism is also called **cultural materialism** since a text—whether it's a piece of literature, a religious tract, a political polemic, or a scientific discovery—is seen as an artifact of history, a material entity that reflects larger cultural issues.

Exercise 10.7.1

How have you learned to connect literature and history? Jot down two or three examples from previous classes.

History Influences Literature

Sometimes it's obvious the way history can help us understand a piece of literature. When reading William Butler Yeats's poem "Easter, 1916," for instance, readers immediately wonder how the date named in the poem's title shapes the poem's meaning. Curious readers might quickly look up that Easter date and discover that leaders of the Irish independence movement staged a short-lived revolt against British rule during Easter week in 1916. The rebellion was quickly ended by British forces, and the rebel leaders were tried and executed. Those curious readers might then understand the allusions that Yeats makes to each of the executed Irish leaders in his poem and gain a better sense of what Yeats hopes to convey about Ireland's past and future through his poem's symbols and language. Many writers, like Yeats, use their art to directly address social, political, military, or economic debates in their cultures. These writers enter into the social **discourse** of their time, this discourse being formed by the cultural conditions that define the age. Furthermore, this discourse reflects the **ideology** of the society at the time, which is the collective ideas—including political, economic, and religious ideas—that guide the way a culture views and talks about itself. This cultural ideology, in turn, reflects the **power structures** that control—or attempt to control—the discourse of a society and often control the way literature is published, read, and interpreted. Literature, then, as a societal discourse comments on and is influenced by the other cultural discourses, which reflect or resist the ideology that is based on the power structures of society.

Literature Influences History

Let's turn to another example to illuminate these issues. One of the most influential books in American history was Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which Stowe wrote to protest slavery in the South before the Civil War. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was an instant bestseller that did much to popularize the abolitionist movement in the northern United States. Legend has it that when Abraham Lincoln met Stowe during the Civil War, he greeted her by saying, "So you're the little woman that wrote the book that started this great war." In the case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, then, it's clear that understanding the histories of slavery, abolitionism, and antebellum regional tensions can help us make sense of Stowe's novel.

But history informs literature in less direct ways, as well. In fact, many literary scholars—in particular, New Historical scholars—would insist that every work of literature, whether it explicitly mentions a historical event or not, is shaped by the moment of its composition (and that works of literature shape

their moment of composition in turn). The American history of the Vietnam war is a great example, for we continue to interpret and revise that history, and literature (including memoirs) is a key material product that influences that revision: think of Michael Herr's *Dispatches* (1977); Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War* (1977); Bobbie Anne Mason's *In Country* (1985); Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1990); Robert Olen Butler's *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* (1992); and, most recently, Karl Marlantes's *Matterhorn* (2010) (Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Vintage, 1977); Philip Carputo, *A Rumor of War* (New York: Ballantine, 1977); Bobbie Anne Mason, *In Country* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005); Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Mariner, 2009); Robert Olen Butler, *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain: Stories* (New York: Holt, 1992); Karl Marlantes, *Matterhorn* (New York: Atlantic Monthly, 2010)).

Exercise 10.7.2

Pick something you've read or watched recently. It doesn't matter what you choose: *Dear White People*, the Harry Potter series, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games*, even *Jersey Shore* or *American Idol*. Now reflect on what that book, movie, or television show tells you about your culture. What discourses or ideologies (values, priorities, concerns) does your cultural artifact reveal? Jot down your thoughts.

New Historicism Practice

As you can see, authors influence their cultures and they, in turn, are influenced by the social, political, military, and economic concerns of their cultures. To review the connection between literature and history, let's look at one final example, "London", written by the poet William Blake in 1794.

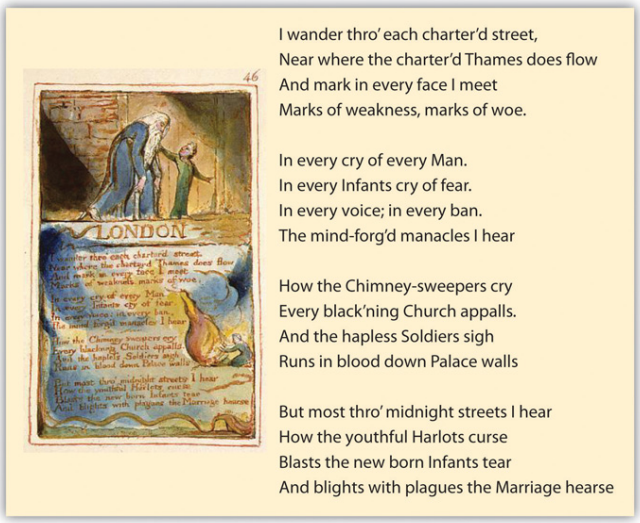


Illustration by William Blake for "London" from his Songs of Innocence and Experience (1794).

Unlike Yeats or Stowe, Blake does not refer directly to specific events or people from the late eighteenth century. Yet this poem directly confronts many of the most pressing social issues of Blake's day. The first stanza, for example, refers to the "charter'd streets" and "charter'd Thames." If we look up the meaning of the word "charter," we find that the word has several meanings. "Charter" can refer to a deed or a contract. When Blake refers to "charter'd" streets, he might be alluding to the growing importance of London as a center of industry and commerce. A "charter" also defines boundaries and control. When Blake refers to "charter'd Thames," then, he implies that nature—the Thames is the river that runs through London—has been constricted by modern society. If you look through the rest of the poem, you can see many other historical issues that a scholar might be interested in exploring: the plight of child laborers ("the Chimney-sweepers cry"); the role of the Church ("Every black'ning Church"), the monarchy ("down Palace walls"), or the military ("the hapless Soldiers sigh") in English society; or even the problem of sexually transmitted disease ("blights with plagues the Marriage hearse"). You will also notice that Blake provided an etching for this poem and the poems that compose *The Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *The Songs of Experience* (in which "London" was published), so Blake is also engaging in the artistic movement of his day and the very production of bookmaking itself. And we would be remiss if we did not mention that Blake wrote these poems during the French Revolution (1789–99), where he initially hoped that the revolution would bring freedom to all individuals but soon recognized the brutality of the movement. That's a lot to ask of a sixteen-line poem! But each of these topics is ripe for further investigation that might lead to an engaging critical paper.

When scholars dig into one historical aspect of a literary work, we call that process **parallel reading**. Parallel reading involves examining the literary text in light of other contemporary texts: newspaper articles, religious pamphlets, economic reports, political documents, and so on. These different types of texts, considered equally, help scholars construct a richer understanding of history. Scholars learn not only what happened but also how people understood what happened. By reading historical and literary texts in parallel, scholars create, to use a phrase from anthropology, a **thick description** that centers the literary text as both a product and a contributor to its historical moment. A story might respond to a particular historical reality, for example, and then the story might help shape society's attitude toward that reality, as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sparked a national movement to abolish slavery in the United States.

Apply New Historicism To Your Reading

When reading a work through a New Historicism reading, apply the following steps:

1. Determine the time and place, or historical context of the literature.
2. Choose a specific aspect of the text you feel would be illuminated by learning more about the history of the text.
3. Research the history.
4. Analyze the ways in which the text may be influenced by its history or the text may have influenced the culture of the time.

Apply New Historicism To Your Writing

To review, New Historicism provides us with a particular lens to use when we read and interpret works of literature. Such reading and interpreting, however, never happens after just a first reading; in fact, all critics reread works multiple times before venturing an interpretation. You can see, then, the connection between reading and writing: as Chapter 1 indicates, writers create multiple drafts before settling for a finished product. The writing process, in turn, is dependent on the multiple rereadings you have performed to gather evidence for your essay. It's important that you integrate the reading and writing process together. As a model, use the following ten-step plan as you write using a new historical approach:

1. Carefully *read the work* you will analyze.
2. *Formulate a general question* after your initial reading that identifies a problem—a tension—related to a historical or cultural issue.
3. *Reread the work*, paying particular attention to the question you posed. Take notes, which should be focused on your central question. *Write an exploratory journal entry* or *blog post* that allows you to play with ideas.
4. *Construct a working thesis* that makes a claim about the work and accounts for the following:
    1. What does the work mean?
    2. How does the work demonstrate the theme you've identified using a new historical approach?
    3. "So what" is significant about the work? That is, why is it important for you to write about this work? What will readers learn from reading your interpretation? How does the theory you apply illuminate the work's meaning?
5. *Reread the text to gather textual evidence* for support.
6. *Construct an informal outline* that demonstrates how you will support your interpretation.
7. *Write a first draft.*
8. *Receive feedback* from peers and your instructor via *peer review* and *conferencing* with your instructor (if possible).
9. *Revise the paper*, which will include revising your original thesis statement and restructuring your paper to best support the thesis. Note: You probably will revise many times, so it is important to receive feedback at every draft stage if possible.
10. *Edit and proofread* for correctness, clarity, and style.

We recommend that you follow this process for every paper that you write from this textbook. Of course, these steps can be modified to fit your writing process, but the plan does ensure that you will engage in a thorough reading of the text as you work through the writing process, which demands that you allow plenty of time for reading, reflecting, writing, reviewing, and revising.

For more strategies, read on here.

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10.8: Ecocriticism

Literature and the Natural World

Literary critics have long been interested in the way the natural world influences literary expression. For instance, in his important 1964 book *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, Leo Marx demonstrated that a "pastoral ideal" guided the formation of American culture, identity, and literature. This "urge to idealize a simple, rural environment," Marx argues, continued even as America became "an intricately organized, urban, industrial, nuclear-armed society." Marx sees much of American literature as a response to this tension between urban realities ("the machine") and pastoral ideals ("the garden"). Many other literary critics who wrote before the advent of a formal ecocritical school investigated similar topics, particularly when they studied authors who write frequently about nature, such as the Romantics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Romanticism

The term **Romanticism** doesn't have anything to do with steamy love scenes. Instead, Romanticism was an intellectual movement that idealized emotional experiences and the natural world, eschewing many of the scientific, industrial, and capitalistic ideals that had come to define society between, roughly, 1800–50. The following oil painting, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818), by the German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich, demonstrates the Romantic position. The painting can be interpreted in a variety of ways. An ecocritical reading might examine humanity's relationship to nature—a human's desire to appreciate the sheer power of the natural world—yet there seems to be a suggestion that the man, with his walking stick, is also contemplating the way to harness this power of nature, to civilize the natural world.



"The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog" by Caspar David Friedrich (1818) is in the public domain

To get a better sense of these concerns, let's look at "The World Is Too Much with Us" (1807), a poem written by one of the most well-known Romantics, William Wordsworth.

"The World Is Too Much with Us" by William Wordsworth

The world is too much with us; late and soon,

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;

Little we see in Nature that is ours;

We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;

The winds that will be howling at all hours,

And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be

A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;

So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;

Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Activity: analyze the poem

1. What do you think Wordsworth means by "the world" in this poem? How is "the world" distinct from "Nature"? Why do you think Wordsworth splits these two ideas apart? Record your thoughts.
2. A related question: Why do you think Wordsworth capitalizes "Nature" and "Sea" in the poem? What other words are capitalized, and how might they relate to these two words? Jot down your ideas.

For a critic interested in literature and nature, Wordsworth's poems are rich territory. In "The World Is Too Much with Us," the speaker worries that people "lay waste" their "powers" because they are too wrapped up with "getting and spending." In other words, the concerns of industry and commerce have crowded out those things that the speaker believes give human beings their power. We can read "the world" in the poem as the constructed world of human cities and concerns; that world "is too much with us" while the natural world has become estranged from humanity. "Little we see in Nature that is ours," the speaker worries, and "we are out of tune" with "this Sea," "the moon," and "the winds." By claiming that human beings have fallen out of tune with nature, the speaker implies that

humanity was once in tune with it. The poem mourns a profound loss for men and women, who can no longer feel the emotions that bucolic natural scenes should evoke in them: "It moves us not."

In the final lines of "The World Is Too Much with Us," Wordsworth's speaker wishes he could trade his modern existence for a more primitive life that is closer to nature. "Great God!" he exclaims, "I'd rather be / a pagan suckled in a creed outworn." In other words, while the speaker does not believe in, say, the Greek myths—he insists that such religions are "outworn"—he would nonetheless trade his more modern ideas for a faith that allowed him to see the divine in the natural world. Keep in mind the Greek myths, in which each aspect of the natural world is overseen by a god or goddess, and in which many plants, animals, and natural features are said to embody mythical heroes or monsters. Wordsworth's speaker wishes he could, when looking at the ocean, see more than water. He wishes he could see also "Proteus rising from the sea" and "hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn." Were he able to recognize the divinity of nature, the speaker insists, he would be "less forlorn" about his life in the modern world.

Whether they wrote during the Romantic period or not, writers who focus explicitly on nature in their works (e.g., John Keats, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, and Annie Dillard) lend themselves well to this kind of analysis. However, modern ecocritics have expanded their focus to include much writing that's not explicitly about nature. Ecocritics are interested in the attitudes that literary works express about nature, whether those attitudes are expressed consciously through the themes or plot of a work or unconsciously through the work's symbols or language. Even a work set in a city—the most urban of spaces—can nonetheless convey ideas about the loss of nature. Ecocritics can discuss the absence of nature in a work as well as its presence.

One could argue that a key turning point was the Industrial Revolution, which transformed the way people lived in worked in the nineteenth century. Moving from an agrarian or agricultural model to one centered on industry, the Industrial Revolution further reinforced the divide between the city and the country. Here are a few opening paragraphs from Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852–53):

> *London. Michaelmas term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snowflakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas in a general infection of ill temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if this day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.*
>
> *Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small*

> *boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon and hanging in the misty clouds.*
>
> *Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongey fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.*
>
> *The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation, Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.*
>
> *Never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds this day in the sight of heaven and earth.*

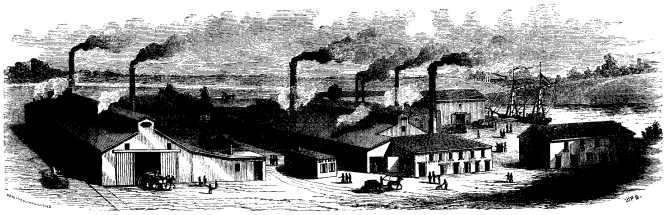
Dickens's famous first sentence—"London."—sets the action in London, where the mud and fog overpower the city. Dickens uses the "filth" of London as a symbol for the corruption of Chancery, the court system of London, but he's also depicting a London that is diseased by industrialization — the fog, in particular, reflects the poor air quality of London during this time as coal-powered factories spewed their smoke over the city.

Life in the Iron Mills by Rebecca Harding Davis

In America, writers also focused on the environment and the dangers of industrialization. Two famous examples are Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Nature" (1836). Thoreau and Emerson, in fact, are two of the earliest ecocritical voices in America, and their influence was significant. Emerson and Thoreau argued that experiences in nature were the most authentic in human existence, and they urged their countrymen and women to go into the natural world for inspiration. Those ideas continue to inform literature to this day as well as more tangible aspects of our lives, such as the dedication of so many communities to creating green spaces—parks, greenways, or river walks—for their citizens. Let's look at a classic example, Rebecca Harding Davis's 1861 short story, *Life in the Iron Mills*.

Activity: ecocriticism reading log

As you read the story, keep a running list of all the references you find to the natural world. You can list natural features described, discussions of the characters' attitudes toward nature, or anything else that seems to comment on humanity's relationship to its environment. Be sure to include quotation marks around sentences or phrases you pull from the story so you can ethically attribute any material you end up using in an essay!



"Wilmington and Its Industries," originally printed in *Lippincott's Magazine of Popular Literature and Science* (April, 1873), is in the public domain

Life in the Iron Mills recounts a story of Welsh immigrants working in an iron-mill town along the Ohio River in an area

that would become West Virginia. Readings of this story often focus on its critique of industrialization and capitalism. For instance, a critic might look at the ways that Hugh Wolfe's artistic talents cannot flower in the story because of his class or ethnic background. Let's look closely at the story's opening paragraphs, however, with an eye to the text's attitudes toward the environment and natural world.

> *A cloudy day: do you know what that is in a town of iron-works? The sky sank down before dawn, muddy, flat, immovable. The air is thick, clammy with the breath of crowded human beings. It stifles me. I open the window, and, looking out, can scarcely see through the rain the grocer's shop opposite, where a crowd of drunken Irishmen are puffing Lynchburg tobacco in their pipes. I can detect the scent through all the foul smells ranging loose in the air.*
>
> *The idiosyncrasy of this town is smoke. It rolls sullenly in slow folds from the great chimneys of the iron-foundries, and settles down in black, slimy pools on the muddy streets. Smoke on the wharves, smoke on the dingy boats, on the yellow river,—clinging in a coating of greasy soot to the house-front, the two faded poplars, the faces of the passers-by. The long train of mules, dragging masses of pig-iron through the narrow street, have a foul vapor hanging to their reeking sides. Here, inside, is a little broken figure of an angel pointing upward from the mantel-shelf; but even its wings are covered with smoke, clotted and black. Smoke everywhere! A dirty canary chirps desolately in a cage beside me. Its dream of green fields and sunshine is a very old dream,—almost worn out, I think.*
>
> *From the back-window I can see a narrow brick-yard sloping down to the river-side, strewed with rain-butts and tubs. The river, dull and tawny-colored, (la belle riviere!) drags itself sluggishly along, tired of the heavy weight of boats and coal-barges. What wonder? When I was a child, I used to fancy a look of weary, dumb appeal upon the face of the negro-like river slavishly bearing its burden day after day. Something of the same idle notion comes to me to-day, when from the street-window I look on the slow stream of human life creeping past, night and morning, to the great mills. Masses of men, with dull, besotted faces bent to the ground, sharpened here and there by pain or cunning; skin and muscle and flesh begrimed with smoke and ashes; stooping all night over boiling caldrons of metal, laired by day in dens of drunkenness and infamy; breathing from infancy to death an air saturated with fog and grease and soot, vileness for soul and body. What do you make of a case like that, amateur psychologist? You call it an altogether serious thing to be alive: to these men it is a drunken jest, a joke,—horrible to angels*

perhaps, to them commonplace enough. My fancy about the river was an idle one: it is no type of such a life. What if it be stagnant and slimy here? It knows that beyond there waits for it odorous sunlight, quaint old gardens, dusky with soft, green foliage of apple-trees, and flushing crimson with roses,—air, and fields, and mountains. The future of the Welsh puddler passing just now is not so pleasant. To be stowed away, after his grimy work is done, in a hole in the muddy graveyard, and after that, not air, nor green fields, nor curious roses.

Can you see how foggy the day is? As I stand here, idly tapping the windowpane, and looking out through the rain at the dirty back-yard and the coalboats below, fragments of an old story float up before me,—a story of this house into which I happened to come to-day. You may think it a tiresome story enough, as foggy as the day, sharpened by no sudden flashes of pain or pleasure.—I know: only the outline of a dull life, that long since, with thousands of dull lives like its own, was vainly lived and lost: thousands of them, massed, vile, slimy lives, like those of the torpid lizards in yonder stagnant water-butt.—Lost? There is a curious point for you to settle, my friend, who study psychology in a lazy, dilettante way. Stop a moment. I am going to be honest. This is what I want you to do. I want you to hide your disgust, take no heed to your clean clothes, and come right down with me,—here, into the thickest of the fog and mud and foul effluvia. I want you to hear this story. There is a secret down here, in this nightmare fog, that has lain dumb for centuries: I want to make it a real thing to you. You, Egoist, or Pantheist, or Arminian, busy in making straight paths for your feet on the hills, do not see it clearly,—this terrible question which men here have gone mad and died trying to answer. I dare not put this secret into words. I told you it was dumb. These men, going by with drunken faces and brains full of unawakened power, do not ask it of Society or of God. Their lives ask it; their deaths ask it. There is no reply. I will tell you plainly that I have a great hope; and I bring it to you to be tested. It is this: that this terrible dumb question is its own reply; that it is not the sentence of death we think it, but, from the very extremity of its darkness, the most solemn prophecy which the world has known of the Hope to come. I dare make my meaning no clearer, but will only tell my story. It will, perhaps, seem to you as foul and dark as this thick vapor about us, and as pregnant with death; but if your eyes are free as mine are to look deeper, no perfume-tinted

> *dawn will be so fair with promise*
> *of the day that shall surely come.*

These first paragraphs detail the scenery of the narrator's world (and notice the similarity to Dickens). In this case, however, the scenery described is obscured by the products of human industry. The natural world is obscured both figuratively ("The air is thick, clammy with the breath of crowded human beings.") and literally, by smoke: "The idiosyncrasy of this town is smoke. It rolls sullenly in slow folds from the great chimneys of the iron-foundries, and settles down in black, slimy pools on the muddy streets. Smoke on the wharves, smoke on the dingy boats, on the yellow river,—clinging in a coating of greasy soot to the house-front, the two faded poplars, the faces of the passers-by." The river, too, is polluted; it's "dull and tawny-colored" and "tired" of the many "boats and coal-barges" bringing goods to and from the town. The town is so polluted that its human inhabitants suffer acutely, "breathing from infancy to death an air saturated with fog and grease and soot, vileness for soul and body."

The ecocritic might interpret this story as a sustained critique of a modern society that disregards the needs of the planet in order to advance the narrow priorities of industrial and consumer culture. In order to produce iron, the material that shaped so much of the Industrial Revolution, the owners of the factories in this story have destroyed the air, the water, and even the health of the human beings who make their business run. In fact, they have made all of nature (including human beings) slaves to industry. The river is imagined as "slavishly bearing its burden day after day." The men who work in the factories are so broken in spirit that they consider their lives "a drunken jest, a joke." The narrator points out that far beyond this town one can find "odorous sunlight, quaint old gardens, dusky with soft, green foliage of apple-trees, and flushing crimson with roses,—air, and fields, and mountains." These healthful natural features, however, are beyond the reach and understanding of those living in this "town of iron-works," who are "stowed away, after [their] grimy work is done, in a hole in the muddy graveyard, and after that, not air, nor green fields, nor curious roses." Harding Davis's novella, then, draws an explicit parallel between human flourishing and human treatment of the natural world. When human beings disregard nature, *Life in the Iron Mills* implies, they suffer with nature.

What's more, the narrator of Harding Davis's story challenges the story's readers to come to terms with the realities described in the novella. The original readers of this story would have been subscribers to the *Atlantic* magazine, which means they would likely have been educated, financially secure members of middle- or upper-class society. In other words, they would have been nothing like the iron workers Harding Davis writes of in the story and would not have experienced the absolute deprivation from nature the tale relates. Her narrator addresses this discrepancy directly:

> *There is a curious point for you to settle, my friend, who study psychology in a lazy, dilettante way. Stop a moment. I am going to be honest. This is what I want you to do. I want you to hide your disgust, take no heed to your clean clothes, and come right down with me,—here, into the thickest of the fog and mud and foul effluvia. I want you to hear this story. There is a secret down here, in this nightmare fog, that has lain dumb for centuries: I want to make it a real thing to you. You, Egoist, or Pantheist, or Arminian, busy in making straight paths for your feet on the hills, do not see it clearly,—this terrible question which men here have gone mad and died trying to answer. I dare not put this secret into words.*

There's a lot going on in these few sentences, but the ecocritic would likely concentrate on the way Harding Davis's narrator insists that her readers must experience the horrible environmental conditions of her subjects in order to understand their story. Her readers must "take not heed to [their] clean clothes" and "come right down…into the thickest of the fog and mud and foul effluvia." Readers "busy in making straight paths for [their] feet on the hills" cannot "see clearly" the plight of those who cannot spend time in the hills, experiencing the natural world without smoke and mud and effluvia.

These natural themes continue throughout *Life in the Iron Mills*. At the end of the novella, in fact, Deborah—one of the characters deformed, body and soul, by her time in the mill town—is taken in by Quakers who live in the hills near the town. The narrator reports that life in closer communion with nature purifies Deborah:

> *There is no need to tire you with the long years of sunshine, and fresh air, and slow, patient Christ-love, needed to make healthy and hopeful this impure body and soul. There is a homely pine house, on one of these hills, whose windows overlook broad, wooded slopes and clover-crimsoned meadows,—niched into the very place where the light is warmest, the air freest. It is the Friends' meeting-house. Once a week they sit there, in their grave, earnest way, waiting for the Spirit of Love to speak, opening their simple hearts to receive His words. There is a woman, old, deformed, who takes a humble place among them: waiting like them: in her gray dress, her worn face, pure and meek, turned now and then to the sky.*

Living in greater harmony with nature "make[s] healthy and hopeful" Deborah's "impure body and soul." The warm light, free air, "wooded slopes," and "clover-crimsoned meadows" all contribute to her restoration. In the last view readers have of Deborah, she turns her face "now and then to the sky."

Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills* can be read, then, as a searching critique of modern society *without* nature — a warning about what mass industrialization will do to the environment and the people who rely on it. You can probably see that these ideas relate closely to ideas one would find in modern **environmentalist and environmental justice** thought. We can read Harding Davis's story as an exposé of human practices that permanently scar the natural world — an argument against pollution and waste. In cases like this, we want to be careful of **anachronism**. Harding Davis wrote this work long before scientists and other thinkers articulated the ideas and principles of the modern environmentalist and enviornmental justice movements. We wouldn't, for instance, want to discuss *Life in the Iron Mills* as advocating for recycling, a word and practice of which Harding Davis would never have heard. Nevertheless, we can point out sympathetic ideas between Harding Davis's story and modern environmental concerns, drawing out nuances of the story that may not have been apparent to earlier readers.

Activity: approach a literary text as an ecocritic

When you're reading literature as an ecocritic, start by asking the following questions:

1. How does this novel, story, poem, play, or essay represent the natural world (e.g., plants, animals, ecosystems)? Is nature portrayed positively, negatively, or otherwise?
2. How does the work represent the relationship between human beings and nature? For instance, is the relationship symbiotic or adversarial?
3. Do the characters in the work express ideas or opinions about their environment (whether a "natural" environment as in Wordsworth's poem or a man-made environment as in Harding Davis's story)? What cultural, social, or political values do characters seem to embody? When asking this question, don't forget to consider the narrator!
4. Does the text engage consciously with ideas related to modern environmentalism and environmental justice? For instance, does the text seem to make an argument for or against conservationism, preservation, or restoration?

Works Cited

Davis, Rebecca Harding. *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861)

Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Wordsworth, William. "The World Is Too Much with Us" (1807)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Literary Criticism Readings

Several famous examples of literary criticism have been curated for you within this section. Before reading them, it is recommended that you read the literary texts they describe: otherwise, they will not make much sense! You can learn more about finding your own literary criticism in the Literary Research portion of the Writing About Literature chapter.

11.1: Aristotle. Poetics. (335 B.C.)

11.2: Eliot, T.S. "Hamlet and His Problems" from The Sacred Wood (1919)

11.3: Showalter, Elaine. "Ophelia, Gender, and Madness" (2016)

Supplemental Readings

(links to external sites)

1. Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness." (1961)
2. Cixous, Helene. "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976)
3. Said, Edward. *Orientalism* (1970)

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11.1: Aristotle. Poetics. (335 B.C.)

THE POETICS OF ARISTOTLE

Translated by S. H. Butcher

[Transcriber's annotations and conventions: the translator left intact some Greek words to illustrate a specific point of the original discourse. In this transcription, in order to retain the accuracy of this text, those words are rendered by spelling out each Greek letter individually, such as {alpha beta gamma delta...}. The reader can distinguish these words by the enclosing braces {}. Where multiple words occur together, they are separated by the "/" symbol for clarity. Readers who do not speak or read the Greek language will usually neither gain nor lose understanding by skipping over these passages. Those who understand Greek, however, may gain a deeper insight to the original meaning and distinctions expressed by Aristotle.]

I

I propose to treat of Poetry in itself and of its various kinds, noting the essential quality of each; to inquire into the structure of the plot as requisite to a good poem; into the number and nature of the parts of which a poem is composed; and similarly into whatever else falls within the same inquiry. Following, then, the order of nature, let us begin with the principles which come first.

Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic: poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one another in three respects,—the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct.

For as there are persons who, by conscious art or mere habit, imitate and represent various objects through the medium of colour and form, or again by the voice; so in the arts above mentioned, taken as a whole, the imitation is produced by rhythm, language, or "harmony," either singly or combined.

Thus in the music of the flute and of the lyre, "harmony" and rhythm alone are employed; also in other arts, such as that of the shepherd's pipe, which are essentially similar to these. In dancing, rhythm alone is used without "harmony"; for even dancing imitates character, emotion, and action, by rhythmical movement.

There is another art which imitates by means of language alone, and that either in prose or verse—which, verse, again, may either combine different metres or consist of but one kind—but this has hitherto been without a name. For there is no common term we could apply to the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and the Socratic dialogues on the one hand; and, on the other, to poetic imitations in iambic, elegiac, or any similar metre. People do, indeed, add the word "maker" or "poet" to the name of the metre, and speak of elegiac poets, or epic (that is, hexameter) poets, as if it were not the imitation that makes the poet, but the verse that entitles them all indiscriminately to the name. Even when a treatise on medicine or natural science is brought out in verse, the name of poet is by custom given to the author; and yet Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common but the metre, so that it would be right to call the one poet, the other physicist rather than poet. On the same principle, even if a writer in his poetic imitation were to combine all metres, as Chaeremon did in his Centaur, which is a medley composed of metres of all kinds, we should bring him too under the general term poet. So much then for these distinctions.

There are, again, some arts which employ all the means above mentioned, namely, rhythm, tune, and metre. Such are Dithyrambic and Nomic poetry, and also Tragedy and Comedy; but between them the difference is, that in the first two cases these means are all employed in combination, in the latter, now one means is employed, now another.

Such, then, are the differences of the arts with respect to the medium of imitation.

II

Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type (for moral character mainly answers to these divisions, goodness and badness being the distinguishing marks of moral differences), it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are. It is the same in painting. Polygnotus depicted men as nobler than they are, Pauson as less noble, Dionysius drew them true to life.

Now it is evident that each of the modes of imitation above mentioned will exhibit these differences, and become a distinct kind in imitating objects that are thus distinct. Such diversities may be found even in dancing, flute-playing, and lyre-playing. So again in language, whether prose or verse unaccompanied by music. Homer, for example, makes men better than they are; Cleophon as they are; Hegemon the Thasian, the inventor of parodies, and Nicochares, the author of the Deiliad, worse than they are. The same thing holds good of Dithyrambs and Nomes; here too one may portray different types, as Timotheus and Philoxenus differed in representing their Cyclopes. The same distinction marks off Tragedy from Comedy; for Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life.

III

There is still a third difference—the manner in which each of these objects may be imitated. For the medium being the same, and the objects the same, the poet may imitate by narration—in which case he can either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged—or he may present all his characters as living and moving before us.

These, then, as we said at the beginning, are the three differences which distinguish artistic imitation,—the medium, the objects, and the manner. So that from one point of view, Sophocles is an imitator of the same kind as Homer—for both imitate higher types of character; from another point of view, of the same kind as Aristophanes—for both imitate persons acting and doing. Hence, some say, the name of "drama" is given to such poems, as representing action. For the same reason the Dorians claim the invention both of Tragedy and Comedy. The claim to Comedy is put forward by the Megarians,—not only by those of Greece proper, who allege that it originated under their democracy, but also by the Megarians of Sicily, for the poet Epicharmus, who is much earlier than Chionides and Magnes, belonged to that country. Tragedy too is claimed by certain Dorians of the Peloponnese. In each case they appeal to the evidence of language. The outlying villages, they say, are by them called {kappa omega mu alpha iota}, by the Athenians {delta eta mu iota}: and they assume that Comedians were so named not from {kappa omega mu 'alpha zeta epsilon iota nu}, "to revel," but because they wandered from village to village (kappa alpha tau alpha / kappa omega mu alpha sigma), being excluded contemptuously from the city. They add also that the Dorian word for "doing" is {delta rho alpha nu}, and the Athenian, {pi rho alpha tau tau epsilon iota nu}.

This may suffice as to the number and nature of the various modes of imitation.

IV

Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. We have evidence of this in the facts of experience. Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies. The cause of this again is, that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers but to men in general; whose capacity, however, of learning is more limited. Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, "Ah, that is he." For if you happen not to have seen the original, the pleasure will be due not to the imitation as such, but to the execution, the colouring, or some such other cause.

Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for "harmony" and rhythm, metres being manifestly sections of rhythm. Persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to Poetry.

Poetry now diverged in two directions, according to the individual character of the writers. The graver spirits imitated noble actions, and the actions of good men. The more trivial sort imitated the actions of meaner persons, at first composing satires, as the former did hymns to the gods and the praises of famous men. A poem of the satirical kind cannot indeed be put down to any author earlier than Homer; though many such writers probably there were. But from Homer onward, instances can be cited,—his own Margites, for example, and other similar compositions. The appropriate metre was also here introduced; hence the measure is still called the iambic or lampooning measure, being that in which people lampooned one another. Thus the older poets were distinguished as writers of heroic or of lampooning verse.

As, in the serious style, Homer is pre-eminent among poets, for he alone combined dramatic form with excellence of imitation, so he too first laid down the main lines of Comedy, by dramatising the ludicrous instead of writing personal satire. His Margites bears the same relation to Comedy that the Iliad and Odyssey do to Tragedy. But when Tragedy and Comedy came to light, the two classes of poets still followed their natural bent: the lampooners became writers of Comedy, and the Epic poets were succeeded by Tragedians, since the drama was a larger and higher form of art.

Whether Tragedy has as yet perfected its proper types or not; and whether it is to be judged in itself, or in relation also to the audience,—this raises another question. Be that as it may, Tragedy—as also Comedy—was at first mere improvisation. The one originated with the authors of the Dithyramb, the other with those of the phallic songs, which are still in use in many of our cities. Tragedy advanced by slow degrees; each new element that showed itself was in turn developed. Having passed through many changes, it found its natural form, and there it stopped.

Aeschylus first introduced a second actor; he diminished the importance of the Chorus, and assigned the leading part to the dialogue. Sophocles raised the number of actors to three, and added scene-painting. Moreover, it was not till late that the short plot was discarded for one of greater compass, and the

grotesque diction of the earlier satyric form for the stately manner of Tragedy. The iambic measure then replaced the trochaic tetrameter, which was originally employed when the poetry was of the Satyric order, and had greater affinities with dancing. Once dialogue had come in, Nature herself discovered the appropriate measure. For the iambic is, of all measures, the most colloquial: we see it in the fact that conversational speech runs into iambic lines more frequently than into any other kind of verse; rarely into hexameters, and only when we drop the colloquial intonation. The additions to the number of "episodes" or acts, and the other accessories of which tradition; tells, must be taken as already described; for to discuss them in detail would, doubtless, be a large undertaking.

V

Comedy is, as we have said, an imitation of characters of a lower type, not, however, in the full sense of the word bad, the Ludicrous being merely a subdivision of the ugly. It consists in some defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive. To take an obvious example, the comic mask is ugly and distorted, but does not imply pain.

The successive changes through which Tragedy passed, and the authors of these changes, are well known, whereas Comedy has had no history, because it was not at first treated seriously. It was late before the Archon granted a comic chorus to a poet; the performers were till then voluntary. Comedy had already taken definite shape when comic poets, distinctively so called, are heard of. Who furnished it with masks, or prologues, or increased the number of actors,—these and other similar details remain unknown. As for the plot, it came originally from Sicily; but of Athenian writers Crates was the first who, abandoning the "iambic" or lampooning form, generalised his themes and plots.

Epic poetry agrees with Tragedy in so far as it is an imitation in verse of characters of a higher type. They differ, in that Epic poetry admits but one kind of metre, and is narrative in form. They differ, again, in their length: for Tragedy endeavours, as far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit; whereas the Epic action has no limits of time. This, then, is a second point of difference; though at first the same freedom was admitted in Tragedy as in Epic poetry.

Of their constituent parts some are common to both, some peculiar to Tragedy, whoever, therefore, knows what is good or bad Tragedy, knows also about Epic poetry. All the elements of an Epic poem are found in Tragedy, but the elements of a Tragedy are not all found in the Epic poem.

VI

Of the poetry which imitates in hexameter verse, and of Comedy, we will speak hereafter. Let us now discuss Tragedy, resuming its formal definition, as resulting from what has been already said.

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions (called ***catharsis***). By "language embellished," I mean language into which rhythm, "harmony," and song enter. By "the several kinds in separate parts," I mean, that some parts are rendered through the medium of verse alone, others again with the aid of song.

Now as tragic imitation implies persons acting, it necessarily follows, in the first place, that Spectacular equipment will be a part of Tragedy. Next, Song and Diction, for these are the medium of imitation. By "Diction" I mean the mere metrical arrangement of the words: as for "Song," it is a term whose sense every one understands.

Again, Tragedy is the imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these—thought and character—are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends. Hence, the Plot is the imitation of the action: for by plot I here mean the arrangement of the incidents. By Character I mean that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents. Thought is required wherever a statement is proved, or, it may be, a general truth enunciated. Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Song. Two of the parts constitute the medium of imitation, one the manner, and three the objects of imitation. And these complete the list. These elements have been employed, we may say, by the poets to a man; in fact, every play contains Spectacular elements as well as Character, Plot, Diction, Song, and Thought.

But most important of all is the structure of the incidents. For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there cannot be a

tragedy; there may be without character. The tragedies of most of our modern poets fail in the rendering of character; and of poets in general this is often true. It is the same in painting; and here lies the difference between Zeuxis and Polygnotus. Polygnotus delineates character well: the style of Zeuxis is devoid of ethical quality. Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents. Besides which, the most powerful elements of emotional: interest in Tragedy Peripeteia or Reversal of the Situation, and Recognition scenes—are parts of the plot. A further proof is, that novices in the art attain to finish: of diction and precision of portraiture before they can construct the plot. It is the same with almost all the early poets.

The Plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place. A similar fact is seen in painting. The most beautiful colours, laid on confusedly, will not give as much pleasure as the chalk outline of a portrait. Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents mainly with a view to the action.

Third in order is Thought,—that is, the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances. In the case of oratory, this is the function of the Political art and of the art of rhetoric: and so indeed the older poets make their characters speak the language of civic life; the poets of our time, the language of the rhetoricians. Character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids. Speeches, therefore, which do not make this manifest, or in which the speaker does not choose or avoid anything whatever, are not expressive of character. Thought, on the other hand, is found where something is proved to be, or not to be, or a general maxim is enunciated.

Fourth among the elements enumerated comes Diction; by which I mean, as has been already said, the expression of the meaning in words; and its essence is the same both in verse and prose.

Of the remaining elements Song holds the chief place among the embellishments.

The Spectacle has, indeed, an emotional attraction of its own, but, of all the parts, it is the least artistic, and connected least with the art of poetry. For the power of Tragedy, we may be sure, is felt even apart from representation and actors. Besides, the production of spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet.

VII

These principles being established, let us now discuss the proper structure of the Plot, since this is the first and most important thing in Tragedy.

Now, according to our definition, Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude. A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well-constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles.

Again, a beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order. Hence a very small animal organism cannot be beautiful; for the view of it is confused, the object being seen in an almost imperceptible moment of time. Nor, again, can one of vast size be beautiful; for as the eye cannot take it all in at once, the unity and sense of the whole is lost for the spectator; as for instance if there were one a thousand miles long. As, therefore, in the case of animate bodies and organisms a certain magnitude is necessary, and a magnitude which may be easily embraced in one view; so in the plot, a certain length is necessary, and a length which can be easily embraced by the memory. The limit of length in relation to dramatic competition and sensuous presentment, is no part of artistic theory. For had it been the rule for a hundred tragedies to compete together, the performance would have been regulated by the water-clock,—as indeed we are told was formerly done. But the limit as fixed by the nature of the drama itself is this: the greater the length, the more beautiful will the piece be by reason of its size, provided that the whole be perspicuous. And to define the matter roughly, we may say that the proper magnitude is comprised within such limits, that the sequence of events, according to the law of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad.

VIII

Unity of plot does not, as some persons think, consist in the Unity of the hero. For infinitely various are the incidents in one man's life which cannot be reduced to unity; and so, too, there are many actions of one man out of which we cannot make one action. Hence, the error, as it appears, of all poets who have composed a Heracleid, a Theseid, or other poems of the kind. They imagine that as Heracles was one man, the story of

Heracles must also be a unity. But Homer, as in all else he is of surpassing merit, here too—whether from art or natural genius—seems to have happily discerned the truth. In composing the Odyssey he did not include all the adventures of Odysseus—such as his wound on Parnassus, or his feigned madness at the mustering of the host—incidents between which there was no necessary or probable connection: but he made the Odyssey, and likewise the Iliad, to centre round an action that in our sense of the word is one. As therefore, in the other imitative arts, the imitation is one when the object imitated is one, so the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. For a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference, is not an organic part of the whole.

IX

It is, moreover, evident from what has been said, that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen,—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with metre no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal, I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. The particular is—for example—what Alcibiades did or suffered. In Comedy this is already apparent: for here the poet first constructs the plot on the lines of probability, and then inserts characteristic names;—unlike the lampooners who write about particular individuals. But tragedians still keep to real names, the reason being that what is possible is credible: what has not happened we do not at once feel sure to be possible: but what has happened is manifestly possible: otherwise it would not have happened. Still there are even some tragedies in which there are only one or two well known names, the rest being fictitious. In others, none are well known, as in Agathon's Antheus, where incidents and names alike are fictitious, and yet they give none the less pleasure. We must not, therefore, at all costs keep to the received legends, which are the usual subjects of Tragedy. Indeed, it would be absurd to attempt it; for even subjects that are known are known only to a few, and yet give pleasure to all. It clearly follows that the poet or "maker" should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions. And even if he chances to take an historical subject, he is none the less a poet; for there is no reason why some events that have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker.

Of all plots and actions the episodic are the worst. I call a plot "episodic" in which the episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence. Bad poets compose such pieces by their own fault, good poets, to please the players; for, as they write show pieces for competition, they stretch the plot beyond its capacity, and are often forced to break the natural continuity.

But again, Tragedy is an imitation not only of a complete action, but of events inspiring fear or pity. Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, they follow as cause and effect. The tragic wonder will thee be greater than if they happened of themselves or by accident; for even coincidences are most striking when they have an air of design. We may instance the statue of Mitys at Argos, which fell upon his murderer while he was a spectator at a festival, and killed him. Such events seem not to be due to mere chance. Plots, therefore, constructed on these principles are necessarily the best.

X

Plots are either Simple or Complex, for the actions in real life, of which the plots are an imitation, obviously show a similar distinction. An action which is one and continuous in the sense above defined, I call Simple, when the change of fortune takes place without Reversal of the Situation and without Recognition.

A Complex action is one in which the change is accompanied by such Reversal (***peripeteia***), or by Recognition (***anagnorisis***), or by both. These last should arise from the internal structure of the plot, so that what follows should be the necessary or probable result of the preceding action. It makes all the difference whether any given event is a case of propter hoc or post hoc.

XI

Reversal of the Situation (called ***peripeteia***) is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity. Thus in the Oedipus, the messenger comes to cheer Oedipus and free him from his alarms about his mother, but by revealing who he is, he produces the opposite effect. Again in the Lynceus, Lynceus is being led away to his death, and Danaus goes with him, meaning, to slay him; but the outcome of the preceding incidents is that Danaus is killed and Lynceus saved. Recognition (called ***anagnorisis***), as the name indicates, is a

change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune. The best form of recognition is coincident with a Reversal of the Situation, as in the Oedipus. There are indeed other forms. Even inanimate things of the most trivial kind may in a sense be objects of recognition. Again, we may recognize or discover whether a person has done a thing or not. But the recognition which is most intimately connected with the plot and action is, as we have said, the recognition of persons. This recognition, combined, with Reversal, will produce either pity or fear; and actions producing these effects are those which, by our definition, Tragedy represents. Moreover, it is upon such situations that the issues of good or bad fortune will depend. Recognition, then, being between persons, it may happen that one person only is recognized by the other-when the latter is already known—or it may be necessary that the recognition should be on both sides. Thus Iphigenia is revealed to Orestes by the sending of the letter; but another act of recognition is required to make Orestes known to Iphigenia.

Two parts, then, of the Plot—Reversal of the Situation and Recognition—turn upon surprises. A third part is the Scene of Suffering. The Scene of Suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds and the like.

XII

[The parts of Tragedy which must be treated as elements of the whole have been already mentioned. We now come to the quantitative parts, and the separate parts into which Tragedy is divided, namely, Prologue, Episode, Exode, Choric song; this last being divided into Parode and Stasimon. These are common to all plays: peculiar to some are the songs of actors from the stage and the Commoi.

The Prologue is that entire part of a tragedy which precedes the Parode of the Chorus. The Episode is that entire part of a tragedy which is between complete choric songs. The Exode is that entire part of a tragedy which has no choric song after it. Of the Choric part the Parode is the first undivided utterance of the Chorus: the Stasimon is a Choric ode without anapaests or trochaic tetrameters: the Commos is a joint lamentation of Chorus and actors. The parts of Tragedy which must be treated as elements of the whole have been already mentioned. The quantitative parts the separate parts into which it is divided—are here enumerated.]

XIII

As the sequel to what has already been said, we must proceed to consider what the poet should aim at, and what he should avoid, in constructing his plots; and by what means the specific effect of Tragedy will be produced.

A perfect tragedy should, as we have seen, be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan. It should, moreover, imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation. It follows plainly, in the first place, that the change, of fortune presented must not be the spectacle of a virtuous man brought from prosperity to adversity: for this moves neither pity nor fear; it merely shocks us. Nor, again, that of a bad man passing from adversity to prosperity: for nothing can be more alien to the spirit of Tragedy; it possesses no single tragic quality; it neither satisfies the moral sense nor calls forth pity or fear. Nor, again, should the downfall of the utter villain be exhibited. A plot of this kind would, doubtless, satisfy the moral sense, but it would inspire neither pity nor fear; for pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves. Such an event, therefore, will be neither pitiful nor terrible. There remains, then, the character between these two extremes,—that of a man who is not eminently good and just,-yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty (called ***hamartia***). He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous,—a personage like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families.

A well-constructed plot should, therefore, be single in its issue, rather than double as some maintain. The change of fortune should be not from bad to good, but, reversely, from good to bad. It should come about as the result not of vice, but of some great error or frailty (***hamartia***), in a character either such as we have described, or better rather than worse. The practice of the stage bears out our view. At first the poets recounted any legend that came in their way. Now, the best tragedies are founded on the story of a few houses, on the fortunes of Alcmaeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and those others who have done or suffered something terrible. A tragedy, then, to be perfect according to the rules of art should be of this construction. Hence they are in error who censure Euripides just because he follows this principle in his plays, many of which end unhappily. It is, as we have said, the right ending. The best proof is that on the stage and in dramatic competition, such plays, if well worked out, are the most tragic in effect; and Euripides, faulty though he may be in the general management of his subject, yet is felt to be the most tragic of the poets.

In the second rank comes the kind of tragedy which some place first. Like the Odyssey, it has a double thread of plot, and also an opposite catastrophe for the good and for the bad. It is accounted the best because of the weakness of the spectators; for the poet is guided in what he writes by the wishes of his audience. The pleasure, however, thence derived is not the true

tragic pleasure. It is proper rather to Comedy, where those who, in the piece, are the deadliest enemies—like Orestes and Aegisthus—quit the stage as friends at the close, and no one slays or is slain.

XIV

Fear and pity may be aroused by spectacular means; but they may also result from the inner structure of the piece, which is the better way, and indicates a superior poet. For the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place. This is the impression we should receive from hearing the story of the Oedipus. But to produce this effect by the mere spectacle is a less artistic method, and dependent on extraneous aids. Those who employ spectacular means to create a sense not of the terrible but only of the monstrous, are strangers to the purpose of Tragedy; for we must not demand of Tragedy any and every kind of pleasure, but only that which is proper to it. And since the pleasure which the poet should afford is that which comes from pity and fear through imitation, it is evident that this quality must be impressed upon the incidents.

Let us then determine what are the circumstances which strike us as terrible or pitiful.

Actions capable of this effect must happen between persons who are either friends or enemies or indifferent to one another. If an enemy kills an enemy, there is nothing to excite pity either in the act or the intention,—except so far as the suffering in itself is pitiful. So again with indifferent persons. But when the tragic incident occurs between those who are near or dear to one another—if, for example, a brother kills, or intends to kill, a brother, a son his father, a mother her son, a son his mother, or any other deed of the kind is done—these are the situations to be looked for by the poet. He may not indeed destroy the framework of the received legends—the fact, for instance, that Clytemnestra was slain by Orestes and Eriphyle by Alcmaeon but he ought to show invention of his own, and skilfully handle the traditional material. Let us explain more clearly what is meant by skilful handling.

The action may be done consciously and with knowledge of the persons, in the manner of the older poets. It is thus too that Euripides makes Medea slay her children. Or, again, the deed of horror may be done, but done in ignorance, and the tie of kinship or friendship be discovered afterwards. The Oedipus of Sophocles is an example. Here, indeed, the incident is outside the drama proper; but cases occur where it falls within the action of the play: one may cite the Alcmaeon of Astydamas, or Telegonus in the Wounded Odysseus. Again, there is a third case,— (to be about to act with knowledge of the persons and then not to act. The fourth case is) when some one is about to do an irreparable deed through ignorance, and makes the discovery before it is done. These are the only possible ways. For the deed must either be done or not done,—and that wittingly or unwittingly. But of all these ways, to be about to act knowing the persons, and then not to act, is the worst. It is shocking without being tragic, for no disaster follows. It is, therefore, never, or very rarely, found in poetry. One instance, however, is in the Antigone, where Haemon threatens to kill Creon. The next and better way is that the deed should be perpetrated. Still better, that it should be perpetrated in ignorance, and the discovery made afterwards. There is then nothing to shock us, while the discovery produces a startling effect. The last case is the best, as when in the Cresphontes Merope is about to slay her son, but, recognising who he is, spares his life. So in the Iphigenia, the sister recognises the brother just in time. Again in the Helle, the son recognises the mother when on the point of giving her up. This, then, is why a few families only, as has been already observed, furnish the subjects of tragedy. It was not art, but happy chance, that led the poets in search of subjects to impress the tragic quality upon their plots. They are compelled, therefore, to have recourse to those houses whose history contains moving incidents like these.

Enough has now been said concerning the structure of the incidents, and the right kind of plot.

XV

In respect of Character there are four things to be aimed at. First, and most important, it must be good. Now any speech or action that manifests moral purpose of any kind will be expressive of character: the character will be good if the purpose is good. This rule is relative to each class. Even a woman may be good, and also a slave; though the woman may be said to be an inferior being, and the slave quite worthless. The second thing to aim at is propriety. There is a type of manly valour; but valour in a woman, or unscrupulous cleverness, is inappropriate. Thirdly, character must be true to life: for this is a distinct thing from goodness and propriety, as here described. The fourth point is consistency: for though the subject of the imitation, who suggested the type, be inconsistent, still he must be consistently inconsistent. As an example of motiveless degradation of character, we have Menelaus in the Orestes: of character indecorous and inappropriate, the lament of Odysseus in the Scylla, and the speech of Melanippe: of inconsistency, the Iphigenia at Aulis,—for Iphigenia the suppliant in no way resembles her later self.

As in the structure of the plot, so too in the portraiture of character, the poet should always aim either at the necessary or the probable. Thus a person of a given character should speak or act in a given way, by the rule either of necessity or of

probability; just as this event should follow that by necessary or probable sequence. It is therefore evident that the unravelling of the plot, no less than the complication, must arise out of the plot itself, it must not be brought about by the 'Deus ex Machina'—as in the Medea, or in the Return of the Greeks in the Iliad. The "Deus ex Machina" should be employed only for events external to the drama,—for antecedent or subsequent events, which lie beyond the range of human knowledge, and which require to be reported or foretold; for to the gods we ascribe the power of seeing all things. Within the action there must be nothing irrational. If the irrational cannot be excluded, it should be outside the scope of the tragedy. Such is the irrational element in the Oedipus of Sophocles.

Again, since Tragedy is an imitation of persons who are above the common level, the example of good portrait-painters should be followed. They, while reproducing the distinctive form of the original, make a likeness which is true to life and yet more beautiful. So too the poet, in representing men who are irascible or indolent, or have other defects of character, should preserve the type and yet ennoble it. In this way Achilles is portrayed by Agathon and Homer.

These then are rules the poet should observe. Nor should he neglect those appeals to the senses, which, though not among the essentials, are the concomitants of poetry; for here too there is much room for error. But of this enough has been said in our published treatises.

XVI

What Recognition (***anagnorisis***) is has been already explained. We will now enumerate its kinds.

First, the least artistic form, which, from poverty of wit, is most commonly employed recognition by signs. Of these some are congenital,—such as "the spear which the earth-born race bear on their bodies," or the stars introduced by Carcinus in his Thyestes. Others are acquired after birth; and of these some are bodily marks, as scars; some external tokens, as necklaces, or the little ark in the Tyro by which the discovery is effected. Even these admit of more or less skilful treatment. Thus in the recognition of Odysseus by his scar, the discovery is made in one way by the nurse, in another by the swineherds. The use of tokens for the express purpose of proof—and, indeed, any formal proof with or without tokens—is a less artistic mode of recognition. A better kind is that which comes about by a turn of incident, as in the Bath Scene in the Odyssey.

Next come the recognitions invented at will by the poet, and on that account wanting in art. For example, Orestes in the Iphigenia reveals the fact that he is Orestes. She, indeed, makes herself known by the letter; but he, by speaking himself, and saying what the poet, not what the plot requires. This, therefore, is nearly allied to the fault above mentioned:—for Orestes might as well have brought tokens with him. Another similar instance is the "voice of the shuttle" in the Tereus of Sophocles.

The third kind depends on memory when the sight of some object awakens a feeling: as in the Cyprians of Dicaeogenes, where the hero breaks into tears on seeing the picture; or again in the "Lay of Alcinous," where Odysseus, hearing the minstrel play the lyre, recalls the past and weeps; and hence the recognition.

The fourth kind is by process of reasoning. Thus in the Choephori: "Some one resembling me has come: no one resembles me but Orestes: therefore Orestes has come." Such too is the discovery made by Iphigenia in the play of Polyidus the Sophist. It was a natural reflection for Orestes to make, "So I too must die at the altar like my sister." So, again, in the Tydeus of Theodectes, the father says, "I came to find my son, and I lose my own life." So too in the Phineidae: the women, on seeing the place, inferred their fate:—"Here we are doomed to die, for here we were cast forth." Again, there is a composite kind of recognition involving false inference on the part of one of the characters, as in the Odysseus Disguised as a Messenger. A said (that no one else was able to bend the bow;... hence B (the disguised Odysseus) imagined that A would) recognise the bow which, in fact, he had not seen; and to bring about a recognition by this means that the expectation A would recognise the bow is false inference.

But, of all recognitions, the best is that which arises from the incidents themselves, where the startling discovery is made by natural means. Such is that in the Oedipus of Sophocles, and in the Iphigenia; for it was natural that Iphigenia should wish to dispatch a letter. These recognitions alone dispense with the artificial aid of tokens or amulets. Next come the recognitions by process of reasoning.

XVII

In constructing the plot and working it out with the proper diction, the poet should place the scene, as far as possible, before his eyes. In this way, seeing everything with the utmost vividness, as if he were a spectator of the action, he will discover what is in keeping with it, and be most unlikely to overlook inconsistencies. The need of such a rule is shown by the fault found in Carcinus. Amphiaraus was on his way from the temple. This fact escaped the observation of one who did not see the situation. On the stage, however, the piece failed, the audience being offended at the oversight.

Again, the poet should work out his play, to the best of his power, with appropriate gestures; for those who feel emotion are

most convincing through natural sympathy with the characters they represent; and one who is agitated storms, one who is angry rages, with the most life-like reality. Hence poetry implies either a happy gift of nature or a strain of madness. In the one case a man can take the mould of any character; in the other, he is lifted out of his proper self.

As for the story, whether the poet takes it ready made or constructs it for himself, he should first sketch its general outline, and then fill in the episodes and amplify in detail. The general plan may be illustrated by the Iphigenia. A young girl is sacrificed; she disappears mysteriously from the eyes of those who sacrificed her; she is transported to another country, where the custom is to offer up all strangers to the goddess. To this ministry she is appointed. Some time later her own brother chances to arrive. The fact that the oracle for some reason ordered him to go there, is outside the general plan of the play. The purpose, again, of his coming is outside the action proper. However, he comes, he is seized, and, when on the point of being sacrificed, reveals who he is. The mode of recognition may be either that of Euripides or of Polyidus, in whose play he exclaims very naturally:—"So it was not my sister only, but I too, who was doomed to be sacrificed"; and by that remark he is saved.

After this, the names being once given, it remains to fill in the episodes. We must see that they are relevant to the action. In the case of Orestes, for example, there is the madness which led to his capture, and his deliverance by means of the purificatory rite. In the drama, the episodes are short, but it is these that give extension to Epic poetry. Thus the story of the Odyssey can be stated briefly. A certain man is absent from home for many years; he is jealously watched by Poseidon, and left desolate. Meanwhile his home is in a wretched plight—suitors are wasting his substance and plotting against his son. At length, tempest-tost, he himself arrives; he makes certain persons acquainted with him; he attacks the suitors with his own hand, and is himself preserved while he destroys them. This is the essence of the plot; the rest is episode.

XVIII

Every tragedy falls into two parts,—Complication and Unravelling or Denouement. Incidents extraneous to the action are frequently combined with a portion of the action proper, to form the Complication; the rest is the Unravelling. By the Complication I mean all that extends from the beginning of the action to the part which marks the turning-point to good or bad fortune. The Unravelling is that which extends from the beginning of the change to the end. Thus, in the Lynceus of Theodectes, the Complication consists of the incidents presupposed in the drama, the seizure of the child, and then again, The Unravelling extends from the accusation of murder to the end.

There are four kinds of Tragedy, the Complex, depending entirely on Reversal of the Situation and Recognition; the Pathetic (where the motive is passion),—such as the tragedies on Ajax and Ixion; the Ethical (where the motives are ethical),—such as the Phthiotides and the Peleus. The fourth kind is the Simple (We here exclude the purely spectacular element), exemplified by the Phorcides, the Prometheus, and scenes laid in Hades. The poet should endeavour, if possible, to combine all poetic elements; or failing that, the greatest number and those the most important; the more so, in face of the cavilling criticism of the day. For whereas there have hitherto been good poets, each in his own branch, the critics now expect one man to surpass all others in their several lines of excellence.

In speaking of a tragedy as the same or different, the best test to take is the plot. Identity exists where the Complication and Unravelling are the same. Many poets tie the knot well, but unravel it ill. Both arts, however, should always be mastered.

Again, the poet should remember what has been often said, and not make an Epic structure into a Tragedy—by an Epic structure I mean one with a multiplicity of plots—as if, for instance, you were to make a tragedy out of the entire story of the Iliad. In the Epic poem, owing to its length, each part assumes its proper magnitude. In the drama the result is far from answering to the poet's expectation. The proof is that the poets who have dramatised the whole story of the Fall of Troy, instead of selecting portions, like Euripides; or who have taken the whole tale of Niobe, and not a part of her story, like Aeschylus, either fail utterly or meet with poor success on the stage. Even Agathon has been known to fail from this one defect. In his Reversals of the Situation, however, he shows a marvellous skill in the effort to hit the popular taste,—to produce a tragic effect that satisfies the moral sense. This effect is produced when the clever rogue, like Sisyphus, is outwitted, or the brave villain defeated. Such an event is probable in Agathon's sense of the word: "it is probable," he says, "that many things should happen contrary to probability."

The Chorus too should be regarded as one of the actors; it should be an integral part of the whole, and share in the action, in the manner not of Euripides but of Sophocles. As for the later poets, their choral songs pertain as little to the subject of the piece as to that of any other tragedy. They are, therefore, sung as mere interludes, a practice first begun by Agathon. Yet what difference is there between introducing such choral interludes, and transferring a speech, or even a whole act, from one play to another?

XIX

It remains to speak of Diction and Thought, the other parts of Tragedy having been already discussed. Concerning Thought, we may assume what is said in the Rhetoric, to which inquiry the subject more strictly belongs. Under Thought is included every effect which has to be produced by speech, the subdivisions being,—proof and refutation; the excitation of the feelings, such as pity, fear, anger, and the like; the suggestion of importance or its opposite. Now, it is evident that the dramatic incidents must be treated from the same points of view as the dramatic speeches, when the object is to evoke the sense of pity, fear, importance, or probability. The only difference is, that the incidents should speak for themselves without verbal exposition; while the effects aimed at in speech should be produced by the speaker, and as a result of the speech. For what were the business of a speaker, if the Thought were revealed quite apart from what he says?

Next, as regards Diction. One branch of the inquiry treats of the Modes of Utterance. But this province of knowledge belongs to the art of Delivery and to the masters of that science. It includes, for instance,—what is a command, a prayer, a statement, a threat, a question, an answer, and so forth. To know or not to know these things involves no serious censure upon the poet's art. For who can admit the fault imputed to Homer by Protagoras,—that in the words, "Sing, goddess, of the wrath," he gives a command under the idea that he utters a prayer? For to tell some one to do a thing or not to do it is, he says, a command. We may, therefore, pass this over as an inquiry that belongs to another art, not to poetry.

XX

[Language in general includes the following parts:—Letter, Syllable, Connecting word, Noun, Verb, Inflexion or Case, Sentence or Phrase.

A Letter is an indivisible sound, yet not every such sound, but only one which can form part of a group of sounds. For even brutes utter indivisible sounds, none of which I call a letter. The sound I mean may be either a vowel, a semi-vowel, or a mute. A vowel is that which without impact of tongue or lip has an audible sound. A semi-vowel, that which with such impact has an audible sound, as S and R. A mute, that which with such impact has by itself no sound, but joined to a vowel sound becomes audible, as G and D. These are distinguished according to the form assumed by the mouth and the place where they are produced; according as they are aspirated or smooth, long or short; as they are acute, grave, or of an intermediate tone; which inquiry belongs in detail to the writers on metre.

A Syllable is a non-significant sound, composed of a mute and a vowel: for GR without A is a syllable, as also with A,—GRA. But the investigation of these differences belongs also to metrical science.

A Connecting word is a non-significant sound, which neither causes nor hinders the union of many sounds into one significant sound; it may be placed at either end or in the middle of a sentence. Or, a non-significant sound, which out of several sounds, each of them significant, is capable of forming one significant sound,—as {alpha mu theta iota}, {pi epsilon rho iota}, and the like. Or, a non-significant sound, which marks the beginning, end, or division of a sentence; such, however, that it cannot correctly stand by itself at the beginning of a sentence, as {mu epsilon nu}, {eta tau omicron iota}, {delta epsilon}.

A Noun is a composite significant sound, not marking time, of which no part is in itself significant: for in double or compound words we do not employ the separate parts as if each were in itself significant. Thus in Theodorus, "god-given," the {delta omega rho omicron nu} or "gift" is not in itself significant.

A Verb is a composite significant sound, marking time, in which, as in the noun, no part is in itself significant. For "man," or "white" does not express the idea of "when"; but "he walks," or "he has walked" does connote time, present or past.

Inflexion belongs both to the noun and verb, and expresses either the relation "of," "to," or the like; or that of number, whether one or many, as "man" or "men"; or the modes or tones in actual delivery, e.g. a question or a command. "Did he go?" and "go" are verbal inflexions of this kind.

A Sentence or Phrase is a composite significant sound, some at least of whose parts are in themselves significant; for not every such group of words consists of verbs and nouns—"the definition of man," for example—but it may dispense even with the verb. Still it will always have some significant part, as "in walking," or "Cleon son of Cleon." A sentence or phrase may form a unity in two ways,—either as signifying one thing, or as consisting of several parts linked together. Thus the Iliad is one by the linking together of parts, the definition of man by the unity of the thing signified.]

XXI

Words are of two kinds, simple and double. By simple I mean those composed of non-significant elements, such as {gamma eta}. By double or compound, those composed either of a significant and non-significant element (though within the whole word no element is significant), or of elements that are both significant. A word may likewise be triple, quadruple, or multiple in form, like so many Massilian expressions, e.g. "Hermo-caico-xanthus who prayed to Father Zeus."

Every word is either current, or strange, or metaphorical, or ornamental, or newly-coined, or lengthened, or contracted, or

altered.

By a current or proper word I mean one which is in general use among a people; by a strange word, one which is in use in another country. Plainly, therefore, the same word may be at once strange and current, but not in relation to the same people. The word {sigma iota gamma upsilon nu omicron nu}, "lance," is to the Cyprians a current term but to us a strange one.

Metaphor is the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion. Thus from genus to species, as: "There lies my ship"; for lying at anchor is a species of lying. From species to genus, as: "Verily ten thousand noble deeds hath Odysseus wrought"; for ten thousand is a species of large number, and is here used for a large number generally. From species to species, as: "With blade of bronze drew away the life," and "Cleft the water with the vessel of unyielding bronze." Here {alpha rho upsilon rho alpha iota}, "to draw away," is used for {tau alpha mu epsilon iota nu}, "to cleave," and {tau alpha mu epsilon iota nu} again for {alpha rho upsilon alpha iota},—each being a species of taking away. Analogy or proportion is when the second term is to the first as the fourth to the third. We may then use the fourth for the second, or the second for the fourth. Sometimes too we qualify the metaphor by adding the term to which the proper word is relative. Thus the cup is to Dionysus as the shield to Ares. The cup may, therefore, be called "the shield of Dionysus," and the shield "the cup of Ares." Or, again, as old age is to life, so is evening to day. Evening may therefore be called "the old age of the day," and old age, "the evening of life," or, in the phrase of Empedocles, "life's setting sun." For some of the terms of the proportion there is at times no word in existence; still the metaphor may be used. For instance, to scatter seed is called sowing: but the action of the sun in scattering his rays is nameless. Still this process bears to the sun the same relation as sowing to the seed. Hence the expression of the poet "sowing the god-created light." There is another way in which this kind of metaphor may be employed. We may apply an alien term, and then deny of that term one of its proper attributes; as if we were to call the shield, not "the cup of Ares," but "the wineless cup."

{An ornamental word...}

A newly-coined word is one which has never been even in local use, but is adopted by the poet himself. Some such words there appear to be: as {epsilon rho nu upsilon gamma epsilon sigma}, "sprouters," for {kappa epsilon rho alpha tau alpha}, "horns," and {alpha rho eta tau eta rho}, "supplicator," for {iota epsilon rho epsilon upsilon sigma}, "priest."

A word is lengthened when its own vowel is exchanged for a longer one, or when a syllable is inserted. A word is contracted when some part of it is removed. Instances of lengthening are, —{pi omicron lambda eta omicron sigma} for {pi omicron lambda epsilon omega sigma}, and {Pi eta lambda eta iota alpha delta epsilon omega} for {Pi eta lambda epsilon iota delta omicron upsilon}: of contraction,—{kappa rho iota}, {delta omega}, and {omicron psi}, as in {mu iota alpha / gamma iota nu epsilon tau alpha iota / alpha mu phi omicron tau episilon rho omega nu / omicron psi}.

An altered word is one in which part of the ordinary form is left unchanged, and part is re-cast; as in {delta epsilon xi iota-tau epsilon rho omicron nu / kappa alpha tau alpha / mu alpha zeta omicron nu}, {delta epsilon xi iota tau epsilon rho omicron nu} is for {delta epsilon xi iota omicron nu}.

[Nouns in themselves are either masculine, feminine, or neuter. Masculine are such as end in {nu}, {rho}, {sigma}, or in some letter compounded with {sigma},—these being two, and {xi}. Feminine, such as end in vowels that are always long, namely {eta} and {omega}, and—of vowels that admit of lengthening —those in {alpha}. Thus the number of letters in which nouns masculine and feminine end is the same; for {psi} and {xi} are equivalent to endings in {sigma}. No noun ends in a mute or a vowel short by nature. Three only end in {iota},—{mu eta lambda iota}, {kappa omicron mu mu iota}, {pi epsilon pi epsilon rho iota}: five end in {upsilon}. Neuter nouns end in these two latter vowels; also in {nu} and {sigma}.]

XXII

The perfection of style is to be clear without being mean. The clearest style is that which uses only current or proper words; at the same time it is mean:—witness the poetry of Cleophon and of Sthenelus. That diction, on the other hand, is lofty and raised above the commonplace which employs unusual words. By unusual, I mean strange (or rare) words, metaphorical, lengthened,—anything, in short, that differs from the normal idiom. Yet a style wholly composed of such words is either a riddle or a jargon; a riddle, if it consists of metaphors; a jargon, if it consists of strange (or rare) words. For the essence of a riddle is to express true facts under impossible combinations. Now this cannot be done by any arrangement of ordinary words, but by the use of metaphor it can. Such is the riddle:—"A man I saw who on another man had glued the bronze by aid of fire," and others of the same kind. A diction that is made up of strange (or rare) terms is a jargon. A certain infusion, therefore, of these elements is necessary to style; for the strange (or rare) word, the metaphorical, the ornamental, and the other kinds above mentioned, will raise it above the commonplace and mean, while the use of proper words will make it perspicuous. But nothing contributes more to produce a clearness of diction that is remote from commonness than the lengthening, contraction,

and alteration of words. For by deviating in exceptional cases from the normal idiom, the language will gain distinction; while, at the same time, the partial conformity with usage will give perspicuity. The critics, therefore, are in error who censure these licenses of speech, and hold the author up to ridicule. Thus Eucleides, the elder, declared that it would be an easy matter to be a poet if you might lengthen syllables at will. He caricatured the practice in the very form of his diction, as in the verse: "{Epsilon pi iota chi alpha rho eta nu / epsilon iota delta omicron nu / Mu alpha rho alpha theta omega nu alpha delta epsilon / Beta alpha delta iota zeta omicron nu tau alpha}, or, {omicron upsilon kappa / alpha nu / gamma / epsilon rho alpha mu epsilon nu omicron sigma / tau omicron nu / epsilon kappa epsilon iota nu omicron upsilon /epsilon lambda lambda epsilon beta omicron rho omicron nu}. To employ such license at all obtrusively is, no doubt, grotesque; but in any mode of poetic diction there must be moderation. Even metaphors, strange (or rare) words, or any similar forms of speech, would produce the like effect if used without propriety and with the express purpose of being ludicrous. How great a difference is made by the appropriate use of lengthening, may be seen in Epic poetry by the insertion of ordinary forms in the verse. So, again, if we take a strange (or rare) word, a metaphor, or any similar mode of expression, and replace it by the current or proper term, the truth of our observation will be manifest. For example Aeschylus and Euripides each composed the same iambic line. But the alteration of a single word by Euripides, who employed the rarer term instead of the ordinary one, makes one verse appear beautiful and the other trivial. Aeschylus in his Philoctetes says: {Phi alpha gamma epsilon delta alpha iota nu alpha / delta / eta / mu omicron upsilon / sigma alpha rho kappa alpha sigma / epsilon rho theta iota epsilon iota / pi omicron delta omicron sigma}.

Euripides substitutes {Theta omicron iota nu alpha tau alpha iota} "feasts on" for {epsilon sigma theta iota epsilon iota} "feeds on." Again, in the line, {nu upsilon nu / delta epsilon / mu /epsilon omega nu / omicron lambda iota gamma iota gamma upsilon sigma / tau epsilon / kappa alpha iota / omicron upsilon tau iota delta alpha nu omicron sigma / kappa alpha iota / alpha epsilon iota kappa eta sigma), the difference will be felt if we substitute the common words, {nu upsilon nu / delta epsilon / mu / epsilon omega nu / mu iota kappa rho omicron sigma / tau epsilon / kappa alpha iota / alpha rho theta epsilon nu iota kappa omicron sigma / kappa alpha iota / alpha epsilon iota delta gamma sigma}. Or, if for the line, {delta iota phi rho omicron nu / alpha epsilon iota kappa epsilon lambda iota omicron nu / kappa alpha tau alpha theta epsilon iota sigma / omicron lambda iota gamma eta nu / tau epsilon / tau rho alpha pi epsilon iota sigma / omicron lambda iota gamma eta nu / tau epsilon / tau rho alpha pi epsilon zeta alpha nu,} We read, {delta iota phi rho omicron nu / mu omicron chi theta eta rho omicron nu / kappa alpha tau alpha theta epsilon iota sigma / mu iota kappa rho alpha nu / tau epsilon / tau rho alpha pi epsilon zeta alpha nu}.

Or, for {eta iota omicron nu epsilon sigma / beta omicron omicron omega rho iota nu, eta iota omicron nu epsilon sigma kappa rho alpha zeta omicron upsilon rho iota nu}

Again, Ariphrades ridiculed the tragedians for using phrases which no one would employ in ordinary speech: for example, {delta omega mu alpha tau omega nu / alpha pi omicron} instead of {alpha pi omicron / delta omega mu alpha tau omega nu}, {rho epsilon theta epsilon nu}, {epsilon gamma omega / delta epsilon / nu iota nu}, {Alpha chi iota lambda lambda epsilon omega sigma / pi epsilon rho iota} instead of {pi epsilon rho iota / "Alpha chi iota lambda lambda epsilon omega sigma}, and the like. It is precisely because such phrases are not part of the current idiom that they give distinction to the style. This, however, he failed to see.

It is a great matter to observe propriety in these several modes of expression, as also in compound words, strange (or rare) words, and so forth. But the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances.

Of the various kinds of words, the compound are best adapted to Dithyrambs, rare words to heroic poetry, metaphors to iambic. In heroic poetry, indeed, all these varieties are serviceable. But in iambic verse, which reproduces, as far as may be, familiar speech, the most appropriate words are those which are found even in prose. These are,—the current or proper, the metaphorical, the ornamental.

Concerning Tragedy and imitation by means of action this may suffice.

XXIII

As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form and employs a single metre, the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it. It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be. For as the sea-fight at Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily took place at the same time, but did not tend to any one result, so in

the sequence of events, one thing sometimes follows another, and yet no single result is thereby produced. Such is the practice, we may say, of most poets. Here again, then, as has been already observed, the transcendent excellence of Homer is manifest. He never attempts to make the whole war of Troy the subject of his poem, though that war had a beginning and an end. It would have been too vast a theme, and not easily embraced in a single view. If, again, he had kept it within moderate limits, it must have been over-complicated by the variety of the incidents. As it is, he detaches a single portion, and admits as episodes many events from the general story of the war—such as the Catalogue of the ships and others—thus diversifying the poem. All other poets take a single hero, a single period, or an action single indeed, but with a multiplicity of parts. Thus did the author of the Cypria and of the Little Iliad. For this reason the Iliad and the Odyssey each furnish the subject of one tragedy, or, at most, of two; while the Cypria supplies materials for many, and the Little Iliad for eight—the Award of the Arms, the Philoctetes, the Neoptolemus, the Eurypylus, the Mendicant Odysseus, the Laconian Women, the Fall of Ilium, the Departure of the Fleet.

XXIV

Again, Epic poetry must have as many kinds as Tragedy: it must be simple, or complex, or "ethical," or "pathetic." The parts also, with the exception of song and spectacle, are the same; for it requires Reversals of the Situation, Recognitions, and Scenes of Suffering. Moreover, the thoughts and the diction must be artistic. In all these respects Homer is our earliest and sufficient model. Indeed each of his poems has a twofold character. The Iliad is at once simple and "pathetic," and the Odyssey complex (for Recognition scenes run through it), and at the same time "ethical." Moreover, in diction and thought they are supreme.

Epic poetry differs from Tragedy in the scale on which it is constructed, and in its metre. As regards scale or length, we have already laid down an adequate limit:—the beginning and the end must be capable of being brought within a single view. This condition will be satisfied by poems on a smaller scale than the old epics, and answering in length to the group of tragedies presented at a single sitting.

Epic poetry has, however, a great—a special—capacity for enlarging its dimensions, and we can see the reason. In Tragedy we cannot imitate several lines of actions carried on at one and the same time; we must confine ourselves to the action on the stage and the part taken by the players. But in Epic poetry, owing to the narrative form, many events simultaneously transacted can be presented; and these, if relevant to the subject, add mass and dignity to the poem. The Epic has here an advantage, and one that conduces to grandeur of effect, to diverting the mind of the hearer, and relieving the story with varying episodes. For sameness of incident soon produces satiety, and makes tragedies fail on the stage.

As for the meter, the heroic measure has proved its fitness by the test of experience. If a narrative poem in any other metre or in many metres were now composed, it would be found incongruous. For of all measures the heroic is the stateliest and the most massive; and hence it most readily admits rare words and metaphors, which is another point in which the narrative form of imitation stands alone. On the other hand, the iambic and the trochaic tetrameter are stirring measures, the latter being akin to dancing, the former expressive of action. Still more absurd would it be to mix together different metres, as was done by Chaeremon. Hence no one has ever composed a poem on a great scale in any other than heroic verse. Nature herself, as we have said, teaches the choice of the proper measure.

Homer, admirable in all respects, has the special merit of being the only poet who rightly appreciates the part he should take himself. The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person, for it is not this that makes him an imitator. Other poets appear themselves upon the scene throughout, and imitate but little and rarely. Homer, after a few prefatory words, at once brings in a man, or woman, or other personage; none of them wanting in characteristic qualities, but each with a character of his own.

The element of the wonderful is required in Tragedy. The irrational, on which the wonderful depends for its chief effects, has wider scope in Epic poetry, because there the person acting is not seen. Thus, the pursuit of Hector would be ludicrous if placed upon the stage—the Greeks standing still and not joining in the pursuit, and Achilles waving them back. But in the Epic poem the absurdity passes unnoticed. Now the wonderful is pleasing: as may be inferred from the fact that every one tells a story with some addition of his own, knowing that his hearers like it. It is Homer who has chiefly taught other poets the art of telling lies skillfully. The secret of it lies in a fallacy, for, assuming that if one thing is or becomes, a second is or becomes, men imagine that, if the second is, the first likewise is or becomes. But this is a false inference. Hence, where the first thing is untrue, it is quite unnecessary, provided the second be true, to add that the first is or has become. For the mind, knowing the second to be true, falsely infers the truth of the first. There is an example of this in the Bath Scene of the Odyssey.

Accordingly, the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities. The tragic plot must not be composed of irrational parts. Everything irrational should, if possible, be excluded; or, at all events, it should lie outside the action of the

play (as, in the Oedipus, the hero's ignorance as to the manner of Laius' death); not within the drama,—as in the Electra, the messenger's account of the Pythian games; or, as in the Mysians, the man who has come from Tegea to Mysia and is still speechless. The plea that otherwise the plot would have been ruined, is ridiculous; such a plot should not in the first instance be constructed. But once the irrational has been introduced and an air of likelihood imparted to it, we must accept it in spite of the absurdity. Take even the irrational incidents in the Odyssey, where Odysseus is left upon the shore of Ithaca. How intolerable even these might have been would be apparent if an inferior poet were to treat the subject. As it is, the absurdity is veiled by the poetic charm with which the poet invests it.

The diction should be elaborated in the pauses of the action, where there is no expression of character or thought. For, conversely, character and thought are merely obscured by a diction that is over brilliant.

XXV

With respect to critical difficulties and their solutions, the number and nature of the sources from which they may be drawn may be thus exhibited.

The poet being an imitator, like a painter or any other artist, must of necessity imitate one of three objects,—things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be. The vehicle of expression is language,—either current terms or, it may be, rare words or metaphors. There are also many modifications of language, which we concede to the poets. Add to this, that the standard of correctness is not the same in poetry and politics, any more than in poetry and any other art. Within the art of poetry itself there are two kinds of faults, those which touch its essence, and those which are accidental. If a poet has chosen to imitate something, (but has imitated it incorrectly) through want of capacity, the error is inherent in the poetry. But if the failure is due to a wrong choice if he has represented a horse as throwing out both his off legs at once, or introduced technical inaccuracies in medicine, for example, or in any other art the error is not essential to the poetry. These are the points of view from which we should consider and answer the objections raised by the critics.

First as to matters which concern the poet's own art. If he describes the impossible, he is guilty of an error; but the error may be justified, if the end of the art be thereby attained (the end being that already mentioned), if, that is, the effect of this or any other part of the poem is thus rendered more striking. A case in point is the pursuit of Hector. If, however, the end might have been as well, or better, attained without violating the special rules of the poetic art, the error is not justified: for every kind of error should, if possible, be avoided.

Again, does the error touch the essentials of the poetic art, or some accident of it? For example,—not to know that a hind has no horns is a less serious matter than to paint it inartistically.

Further, if it be objected that the description is not true to fact, the poet may perhaps reply,—"But the objects are as they ought to be": just as Sophocles said that he drew men as they ought to be; Euripides, as they are. In this way the objection may be met. If, however, the representation be of neither kind, the poet may answer,—This is how men say the thing is." This applies to tales about the gods. It may well be that these stories are not higher than fact nor yet true to fact: they are, very possibly, what Xenophanes says of them. But anyhow, "this is what is said." Again, a description may be no better than the fact: "still, it was the fact"; as in the passage about the arms: "Upright upon their butt-ends stood the spears." This was the custom then, as it now is among the Illyrians.

Again, in examining whether what has been said or done by some one is poetically right or not, we must not look merely to the particular act or saying, and ask whether it is poetically good or bad. We must also consider by whom it is said or done, to whom, when, by what means, or for what end; whether, for instance, it be to secure a greater good, or avert a greater evil.

Other difficulties may be resolved by due regard to the usage of language. We may note a rare word, as in {omicron upsilon rho eta alpha sigma / mu epsilon nu / pi rho omega tau omicron nu}, where the poet perhaps employs {omicron upsilon rho eta alpha sigma} not in the sense of mules, but of sentinels. So, again, of Dolon: "ill-favoured indeed he was to look upon." It is not meant that his body was ill-shaped, but that his face was ugly; for the Cretans use the word {epsilon upsilon epsilon iota delta epsilon sigma}, "well-favoured," to denote a fair face. Again, {zeta omega rho omicron tau epsilon rho omicron nu / delta epsilon / kappa epsilon rho alpha iota epsilon}, "mix the drink livelier," does not mean "mix it stronger" as for hard drinkers, but "mix it quicker."

Sometimes an expression is metaphorical, as "Now all gods and men were sleeping through the night,"—while at the same time the poet says: "Often indeed as he turned his gaze to the Trojan plain, he marvelled at the sound of flutes and pipes." "All" is here used metaphorically for "many," all being a species of many. So in the verse,—"alone she hath no part...," {omicron iota eta}, "alone," is metaphorical; for the best known may be called the only one.

Again, the solution may depend upon accent or breathing. Thus Hippias of Thasos solved the difficulties in the lines,—{delta iota delta omicron mu epsilon nu (delta iota delta omicron mu epsilon nu) delta epsilon / omicron iota,} and { tau omicron / mu epsilon nu / omicron upsilon (omicron upsilon) kappa alpha

tau alpha pi upsilon theta epsilon tau alpha iota / omicron mu beta rho omega}.

Or again, the question may be solved by punctuation, as in Empedocles,—"Of a sudden things became mortal that before had learnt to be immortal, and things unmixed before mixed."

Or again, by ambiguity of meaning,—as {pi alpha rho omega chi eta kappa epsilon nu / delta epsilon / pi lambda epsilon omega / nu upsilon xi}, where the word {pi lambda epsilon omega} is ambiguous.

Or by the usage of language. Thus any mixed drink is called {omicron iota nu omicron sigma}, "wine." Hence Ganymede is said "to pour the wine to Zeus," though the gods do not drink wine. So too workers in iron are called {chi alpha lambda kappa epsilon alpha sigma}, or workers in bronze. This, however, may also be taken as a metaphor.

Again, when a word seems to involve some inconsistency of meaning, we should consider how many senses it may bear in the particular passage. For example: "there was stayed the spear of bronze"—we should ask in how many ways we may take "being checked there." The true mode of interpretation is the precise opposite of what Glaucon mentions. Critics, he says, jump at certain groundless conclusions; they pass adverse judgment and then proceed to reason on it; and, assuming that the poet has said whatever they happen to think, find fault if a thing is inconsistent with their own fancy. The question about Icarius has been treated in this fashion. The critics imagine he was a Lacedaemonian. They think it strange, therefore, that Telemachus should not have met him when he went to Lacedaemon. But the Cephallenian story may perhaps be the true one. They allege that Odysseus took a wife from among themselves, and that her father was Icadius not Icarius. It is merely a mistake, then, that gives plausibility to the objection.

In general, the impossible must be justified by reference to artistic requirements, or to the higher reality, or to received opinion. With respect to the requirements of art, a probable impossibility is to be preferred to a thing improbable and yet possible. Again, it may be impossible that there should be men such as Zeuxis painted. "Yes," we say, "but the impossible is the higher thing; for the ideal type must surpass the reality." To justify the irrational, we appeal to what is commonly said to be. In addition to which, we urge that the irrational sometimes does not violate reason; just as "it is probable that a thing may happen contrary to probability."

Things that sound contradictory should be examined by the same rules as in dialectical refutation whether the same thing is meant, in the same relation, and in the same sense. We should therefore solve the question by reference to what the poet says himself, or to what is tacitly assumed by a person of intelligence.

The element of the irrational, and, similarly, depravity of character, are justly censured when there is no inner necessity for introducing them. Such is the irrational element in the introduction of Aegeus by Euripides and the badness of Menelaus in the Orestes.

Thus, there are five sources from which critical objections are drawn. Things are censured either as impossible, or irrational, or morally hurtful, or contradictory, or contrary to artistic correctness. The answers should be sought under the twelve heads above mentioned.

XXVI

The question may be raised whether the Epic or Tragic mode of imitation is the higher. If the more refined art is the higher, and the more refined in every case is that which appeals to the better sort of audience, the art which imitates anything and everything is manifestly most unrefined. The audience is supposed to be too dull to comprehend unless something of their own is thrown in by the performers, who therefore indulge in restless movements. Bad flute-players twist and twirl, if they have to represent "the quoit-throw," or hustle the coryphaeus when they perform the "Scylla." Tragedy, it is said, has this same defect. We may compare the opinion that the older actors entertained of their successors. Mynniscus used to call Callippides "ape" on account of the extravagance of his action, and the same view was held of Pindarus. Tragic art, then, as a whole, stands to Epic in the same relation as the younger to the elder actors. So we are told that Epic poetry is addressed to a cultivated audience, who do not need gesture; Tragedy, to an inferior public. Being then unrefined, it is evidently the lower of the two.

Now, in the first place, this censure attaches not to the poetic but to the histrionic art; for gesticulation may be equally overdone in epic recitation, as by Sosi-stratus, or in lyrical competition, as by Mnasitheus the Opuntian. Next, all action is not to be condemned any more than all dancing—but only that of bad performers. Such was the fault found in Callippides, as also in others of our own day, who are censured for representing degraded women. Again, Tragedy like Epic poetry produces its effect even without action; it reveals its power by mere reading. If, then, in all other respects it is superior, this fault, we say, is not inherent in it.

And superior it is, because it has all the epic elements—it may even use the epic metre—with the music and spectacular effects as important accessories; and these produce the most vivid of pleasures. Further, it has vividness of impression in reading as well as in representation. Moreover, the art attains its end within

narrower limits; for the concentrated effect is more pleasurable than one which is spread over a long time and so diluted. What, for example, would be the effect of the Oedipus of Sophocles, if it were cast into a form as long as the Iliad? Once more, the Epic imitation has less unity; as is shown by this, that any Epic poem will furnish subjects for several tragedies. Thus if the story adopted by the poet has a strict unity, it must either be concisely told and appear truncated; or, if it conform to the Epic canon of length, it must seem weak and watery. (Such length implies some loss of unity,) if, I mean, the poem is constructed out of several actions, like the Iliad and the Odyssey, which have many such parts, each with a certain magnitude of its own. Yet these poems are as perfect as possible in structure; each is, in the highest degree attainable, an imitation of a single action.

If, then, Tragedy is superior to Epic poetry in all these respects, and, moreover, fulfils its specific function better as an art for each art ought to produce, not any chance pleasure, but the pleasure proper to it, as already stated it plainly follows that Tragedy is the higher art, as attaining its end more perfectly.

Thus much may suffice concerning Tragic and Epic poetry in general; their several kinds and parts, with the number of each and their differences; the causes that make a poem good or bad; the objections of the critics and the answers to these objections.

Reading Questions

1. According to Aristotle, what is the difference between comedy and tragedy?
2. What are the six essential elements of tragedy?
3. What is the definition of tragedy (hint: section VII)?
4. Define the following terms: hamartia, peripeteia, anagnorisis, and catharsis.
5. What are the four main requirements of a tragic hero, according to Aristotle?

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways might Aristotle's theory of tragedy be influenced or representative of his time period? (This might require some research about ancient Greece!)
2. Are there any parts of this literary criticism you disagree with? Why?
3. Consider one or both of the following TV shows/films: *Sons of Anarchy* and/or *The Lion King*. In what ways do each of these texts fulfill or resist Aristotle's conception of tragedy?

Essay Questions

1. Apply Aristotle's theory of tragedy to either *Antigone* or *Hamlet*. In what ways does your chosen work embody Aristotle's tragic ideals? In what ways does it undermine them?
2. Research the gender roles of ancient Greece. In what ways might Antigone's fulfillment or resistance of Aristotle's concept of tragedy reflect the prescribed gender roles in ancient Greece?

Supplemental Videos

- "Tragedy Lessons from Aristotle: Crash Course Theather #3" by PBS, hosted by Mike Rugnetta



Contributors and Attributions

- Main Text Source: *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art: With a Critical Text and Translation of the Poetics*, by S. H. Butcher. London: Macmillan and Co., 1911, 4th Ed.
- Reading/discussion/essay questions formulated by Heather Ringo

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11.2: Eliot, T.S. "Hamlet and His Problems" from The Sacred Wood (1919)

Hamlet and His Problems

by T.S. Eliot

Few critics have even admitted that *Hamlet* the play is the primary problem, and Hamlet the character only secondary. And Hamlet the character has had an especial temptation for that most dangerous type of critic: the critic with a mind which is naturally of the creative order, but which through some weakness in creative power exercises itself in criticism instead. These minds often find in Hamlet a vicarious existence for their own artistic realization. Such a mind had Goethe, who made of Hamlet a Werther; and such had Coleridge, who made of Hamlet a Coleridge; and probably neither of these men in writing about Hamlet remembered that his first business was to study a work of art. The kind of criticism that Goethe and Coleridge produced, in writing of Hamlet, is the most misleading kind possible. For they both possessed unquestionable critical insight, and both make their critical aberrations the more plausible by the substitution—of their own Hamlet for Shakespeare's—which their creative gift effects. We should be thankful that Walter Pater did not fix his attention on this play.

Two recent writers, Mr. J. M. Robertson and Professor Stoll of the University of Minnesota, have issued small books that can be praised for moving in the other direction. Mr. Stoll performs a service in recalling to our attention the labours of the critics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, observing that they knew less about psychology than more recent Hamlet critics, but they were nearer in spirit to Shakespeare's art; and as they insisted on the importance of the effect of the whole rather than on the importance of the leading character, they were nearer, in their old-fashioned way, to the secret of dramatic art in general.

Qua work of art, the work of art cannot be interpreted; there is nothing to interpret; we can only criticize it according to standards, in comparison to other works of art; and for "interpretation" the chief task is the presentation of relevant historical facts which the reader is not assumed to know. Mr. Robertson points out, very pertinently, how critics have failed in their "interpretation" of *Hamlet* by ignoring what ought to be very obvious: that *Hamlet* is a stratification, that it represents the efforts of a series of men, each making what he could out of the work of his predecessors. The *Hamlet* of Shakespeare will appear to us very differently if, instead of treating the whole action of the play as due to Shakespeare's design, we perceive his *Hamlet* to be superposed upon much cruder material which persists even in the final form.

We know that there was an older play by Thomas Kyd, that extraordinary dramatic (if not poetic) genius who was in all probability the author of two plays so dissimilar as the *Spanish Tragedy* and *Arden of Feversham*; and what this play was like we can guess from three clues: from the *Spanish Tragedy* itself, from the tale of Belleforest upon which Kyd's *Hamlet* must have been based, and from a version acted in Germany in Shakespeare's lifetime which bears strong evidence of having been adapted from the earlier, not from the later, play. From these three sources it is clear that in the earlier play the motive was a revenge-motive simply; that the action or delay is caused, as in the *Spanish Tragedy*, solely by the difficulty of assassinating a monarch surrounded by guards; and that the "madness" of Hamlet was feigned in order to escape suspicion, and successfully. In the final play of Shakespeare, on the other hand, there is a motive which is more important than that of revenge, and which explicitly "blunts" the latter; the delay in revenge is unexplained on grounds of necessity or expediency; and the effect of the "madness" is not to lull but to arouse the king's suspicion. The alteration is not complete enough, however, to be convincing. Furthermore, there are verbal parallels so close to the *Spanish Tragedy* as to leave no doubt that in places Shakespeare was merely *revising* the text of Kyd. And finally there are unexplained scenes—the Polonius-Laertes and the Polonius-Reynaldo scenes—for which there is little excuse; these scenes are not in the verse style of Kyd, and not beyond doubt in the style of Shakespeare. These Mr. Robertson believes to be scenes in the original play of Kyd reworked by a third hand, perhaps Chapman, before Shakespeare touched the play. And he concludes, with very strong show of reason, that the original play of Kyd was, like certain other revenge plays, in two parts of five acts each. The upshot of Mr. Robertson's examination is, we believe, irrefragable: that Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, so far as it is Shakespeare's, is a play dealing with the effect of a mother's guilt upon her son, and that Shakespeare was unable to impose this motive successfully upon the "intractable" material of the old play.

Of the intractability there can be no doubt. So far from being Shakespeare's masterpiece, the play is most certainly an artistic failure. In several ways the play is puzzling, and disquieting as is none of the others. Of all the plays it is the longest and is possibly the one on which Shakespeare spent most pains; and yet he has left in it superfluous and inconsistent scenes which even hasty revision should have noticed. The versification is variable. Lines like

> Look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
>
> Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill,

are of the Shakespeare of *Romeo and Juliet*. The lines in Act V. sc. ii.,

> Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting
>
> That would not let me sleep ...
>
> Up from my cabin,
>
> My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark
>
> Grop'd I to find out them: had my desire;
>
> Finger'd their packet;

are of his quite mature. Both workmanship and thought are in an unstable condition. We are surely justified in attributing the play, with that other profoundly interesting play of "intractable" material and astonishing versification, *Measure for Measure*, to a period of crisis, after which follow the tragic successes which culminate in *Coriolanus*. *Coriolanus* may be not as "interesting" as *Hamlet*, but it is, with *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare's most assured artistic success. And probably more people have thought *Hamlet* a work of art because they found it interesting, than have found it interesting because it is a work of art. It is the "Mona Lisa" of literature.

The grounds of *Hamlet's* failure are not immediately obvious. Mr. Robertson is undoubtedly correct in concluding that the essential emotion of the play is the feeling of a son towards a guilty mother:

[Hamlet's] tone is that of one who has suffered tortures on the score of his mother's degradation.... The guilt of a mother is an almost intolerable motive for drama, but it had to be maintained and emphasized to supply a psychological solution, or rather a hint of one.

This, however, is by no means the whole story. It is not merely the "guilt of a mother" that cannot be handled as Shakespeare handled the suspicion of Othello, the infatuation of Antony, or the pride of Coriolanus. The subject might conceivably have expanded into a tragedy like these, intelligible, self-complete, in the sunlight. *Hamlet*, like the sonnets, is full of some stuff that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate, or manipulate into art. And when we search for this feeling, we find it, as in the sonnets, very difficult to localize. You cannot point to it in the speeches; indeed, if you examine the two famous soliloquies you see the versification of Shakespeare, but a content which might be claimed by another, perhaps by the author of the *Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*, Act V. sc. i. We find Shakespeare's *Hamlet* not in the action, not in any quotations that we might select, so much as in an unmistakable tone which is unmistakably not in the earlier play.

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. If you examine any of Shakespeare's more successful tragedies, you will find this exact equivalence; you will find that the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep has been communicated to you by a skilful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions; the words of Macbeth on hearing of his wife's death strike us as if, given the sequence of events, these words were automatically released by the last event in the series. The artistic "inevitability" lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*. Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear. And the supposed identity of Hamlet with his author is genuine to this point: that Hamlet's bafflement at the absence of objective equivalent to his feelings is a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of his artistic problem. Hamlet is up against the difficulty that his disgust is occasioned by his mother, but that his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it; his disgust envelops and exceeds her. It is thus a feeling which he cannot understand; he cannot objectify it, and it therefore remains to poison life and obstruct action. None of the possible actions can satisfy it; and nothing that Shakespeare can do with the plot can express Hamlet for him. And it must be noticed that the very nature of the *données* of the problem precludes objective equivalence. To have heightened the criminality of Gertrude would have been to provide the formula for a totally different emotion in Hamlet; it is just *because* her character is so negative and insignificant that she arouses in Hamlet the feeling which she is incapable of representing.

The "madness" of Hamlet lay to Shakespeare's hand; in the earlier play a simple ruse, and to the end, we may presume, understood as a ruse by the audience. For Shakespeare it is less than madness and more than feigned. The levity of Hamlet, his repetition of phrase, his puns, are not part of a deliberate plan of dissimulation, but a form of emotional relief. In the character Hamlet it is the buffoonery of an emotion which can find no outlet in action; in the dramatist it is the buffoonery of an emotion which he cannot express in art. The intense feeling, ecstatic or terrible, without an object or exceeding its object, is something which every person of sensibility has known; it is doubtless a study to pathologists. It often occurs in adolescence: the ordinary person puts these feelings to sleep, or trims down his feeling to fit the business world; the artist keeps it alive by his ability to intensify the world to his emotions. The Hamlet of Laforgue is an adolescent; the Hamlet of Shakespeare is not, he has not that explanation and excuse. We must simply admit that

here Shakespeare tackled a problem which proved too much for him. Why he attempted it at all is an insoluble puzzle; under compulsion of what experience he attempted to express the inexpressibly horrible, we cannot ever know. We need a great many facts in his biography; and we should like to know whether, and when, and after or at the same time as what personal experience, he read Montaigne, II. xii., *Apologie de Raimond Sebond*. We should have, finally, to know something which is by hypothesis unknowable, for we assume it to be an experience which, in the manner indicated, exceeded the facts. We should have to understand things which Shakespeare did not understand himself.

Discussion Questions

1. What does T.S. Eliot feel is the problem with the way previous critics have addressed Hamlet?
2. Why does T.S. Eliot feel *Hamlet* is a "failure"? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
3. What is the "objective correlative," as defined by T.S. Eliot?
4. Find an example of the **objective correlative** from another work of literature. Explain why you think it is an example of the objective correlative.
5. According to T.S. Eliot, is Hamlet really mad (insane), or just pretending to be mad? Do you agree or disagree with this position? Justify your answer with evidence from the play.

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11.3: Showalter, Elaine. "Ophelia, Gender, and Madness" (2016)

The character of Ophelia has fascinated directors, actresses, writers, and painters since she first appeared on stage. Here Elaine Showalter discusses Ophelia's madness as a particularly female malady, showing how from Shakespeare's day to our own, Ophelia has been used both to reflect and to challenge evolving ideas about female psychology and sexuality.



"Ophelia" by John Everett Millais (1851-2) is in the **public domain**, but is located at Tate London

Ophelia, gender, and madness

Shakespeare gives us very little information from which to imagine a past for Ophelia. She appears in only five of the play's 20 scenes, and her tragedy is subordinated to that of Hamlet. It is impossible to reconstruct Ophelia's biography from the text. According to the critic Lee Edwards, "we can imagine Hamlet's story without Ophelia, but Ophelia literally has no story without Hamlet" (36). Yet Ophelia is the most represented of Shakespeare's heroines in painting, literature, and popular culture. Over the past 400 years, she has moved from the margins to the centre of post-Shakespearean discourse, increasingly becoming a female counterpart to Hamlet as a portrait of conflict and stress. In recent years, she has become a strong feminist heroine, even surviving Hamlet in some fictional versions of the story, to lead a life of her own.

On the stage, theatrical representations of Ophelia have shifted according to the dominant theories and images of female insanity, while historically the images of Ophelia have played a major role in the construction of medical theories of insanity in young women. Always, these theories contrast masculine and feminine experience. For the Elizabethans, Hamlet was the prototype of melancholy male madness, associated with intellectual and imaginative genius; but Ophelia's affliction was erotomania, or love-madness. Biological and emotional in origins, it was caused by her unrequited love and repressed sexual desire – an idea that is explored in both Edward Jorden's treatise on hysteria, *The Suffocation of the Mother* (1603), and Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). On the stage, Ophelia was costumed in virginal white to contrast with Hamlet's scholarly black, and in her mad scene she entered with dishevelled hair, singing bawdy songs, and giving away her flowers, symbolically deflowering herself. Drowning, too, was a symbolically feminine death.

On the 18th-century stage, however, the violent possibilities of the mad scene were nearly eliminated, and any images of female sexuality were subdued. Mrs. Siddons in 1785 played the mad scene with stately and classical dignity. For much of the period, in fact, Augustan objections to the levity and indecency of Ophelia's language and behaviour led to censorship of the part. Her role was sentimentalized, and often assigned to a singer rather than an actress.

But the 19th-century Romantics, especially in France, embraced the madness and sexuality of Ophelia that the Augustans denied. When Charles Kemble made his Paris debut as Hamlet with an English troupe in 1827, his Ophelia was a young Irish ingénue named Harriet Smithson. In the mad scene, she entered in a long black veil, suggesting the standard imagery of female sexual mystery in the Gothic novel, with scattered bedlamish wisps of straw in her hair. Spreading the veil on the ground as she sang, she arranged flowers upon it in the shape of a cross, as if to make her father's grave, and mimed a burial, a piece of stage business which remained in vogue for the rest of the century. Her performance was captured in a series of pictures by Delacroix, which shows a strong romantic interest in the relation of female sexuality and insanity. The most innovative and influential of Delacroix's lithographs is *La Mort d'Ophélie* (1843), showing Ophelia half-suspended in the stream as her dress slips from her body. Ophelia's drowning, which is only described in the play, was also obsessively painted by the English Pre-Raphaelites, including John Everett Millais and Arthur Hughes. The Romantic Ophelia feels too much, as Hamlet thinks too much; she drowns in a surfeit of feeling.

19th-century psychiatrists used Ophelia as a case study in hysteria and mental breakdown in sexually turbulent adolescence. As Dr. John Charles Bucknill, president of the Medico-Psychological Association wrote in 1859, "Every mental physician of moderately extensive experience must have seen many Ophelias." Images and staged photographs of Ophelia-like mad women, taken in asylums and hospitals, anticipated the fascination with the erotic trance of the hysteric which would be studied by the Parisian neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot and his student Sigmund Freud. The Victorian Ophelia–a young girl passionately and visibly driven to picturesque madness–became the dominant international acting style for the next 150 years, from Helena Modjeska in Poland in 1871, to the 18-year-old Jean Simmons in the Laurence Olivier film of 1948.

But a few Victorian actresses and women writers were revising Ophelia in feminist terms. Ellen Terry played her as a victim of sexual intimidation. 20th-century Freudian interpretations emphasized Ophelia's own neurotic sexual desires, and hinted at her unconscious incestuous attractions to Polonius or Laertes. Around the 1970s, Ophelia on stage became a graphic dramatic study of mental pathology, even schizophrenia, sucking her thumb, headbanging, even drooling.

But at the same time, feminism offered a new perspective on Ophelia's madness as protest and rebellion. For many feminist theorists, the madwoman was a heroine who rebels against gender stereotypes and the social order, at enormous cost. The most radical application of these ideas on stage may have been Melissa Murray's agitprop play *Ophelia* (1979). In this blank verse retelling of the Hamlet story, Ophelia runs off with a woman servant to join a feminist guerrilla commune. In the 21st century, there have been even more extreme political versions and adaptations of the play – for example, *The Al-Hamlet Summit* (2002), by Sulayman Al-Bassain, which imagines Shakespeare's characters from a modern Islamic perspective and resets the play in an unnamed Arab kingdom. Hamlet becomes an Islamist militant, while Ophelia becomes a suicide bomber. In popular psychology books such as *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Souls of Adolescent Girls* (1994) by Mary Pipher, Ophelia has also become a negative model of the self-destructive teenager in contemporary society. Pipher encourages girls to become independent, assertive, and confident. In young-adult romance novels, such as *Dating Hamlet* (2002), *Ophelia: A Novel* (2006), and *Falling for Hamlet* (2011), Ophelia has become a heroine. Plot devices of pretended madness, feigned death, and amazing rescue have allowed her to survive the trauma of dating Hamlet, and to choose her own path. Ophelia may have no usable past, but she has an infinite future.

Works Cited

Lee Edwards, "The Labors of Psyche," *Critical Inquiry*, 6 (1979), 36.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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12.1: What Does My Professor Want?

In your English literature courses, you'll be asked to write a **formal analysis** (sometimes called a "literary analysis," "close reading paper," "rhetorical analysis," or "term paper.") This paper should present an original argument about an aspect or aspects of literature and, depending on the assignment, might engage with **critical sources**. It is important to keep in mind that **this assignment is not a report**. It should not merely rehearse the plot of the literature or the critical arguments that have already been made about your topic. Rather, the argument should be based on your own **close reading** of your chosen text(s) and, at the same time, if the prompt requires it, demonstrate the scholarly maturity that comes with situating this argument in relation to the work of other scholars. Material from these sources should be carefully documented using the **MLA style of documentation**.

Here are some tips:

- All professors will want to see a strong **argument**, cogently advanced and well-supported by **evidence from the literature**.
- **Organization** counts. Make sure you have a focused, detailed **thesis** within your **introductory paragraph**. **Succeeding paragraphs** should state a topic and supply evidence and argument to support that topic. Don't forget the **conclusion**. A strong conclusion leaves your reader with a clear sense of your perspective and helps the reader to recall the most important aspects of your argument.
- If engaging with scholarly articles or literary theory, don't let the critics run away with your paper. **Subordinate their views to your own**, and make sure that the preponderance of the paper is yours. Never cite a critical view that you do not understand.
- Remember to **revise** your work and proof-read carefully. Some professors care more about one aspect of paper writing than others. Some particularly hate to see documentation errors; for others sloppy writing (lots of spelling, punctuation and other mechanical errors) spells doom. Always do your best work, and don't assume that you can neglect any aspect of your essay.
- Your professor will give you specific guidelines for topic selection, but general topics often include: **poetry explication**, analysis of **theme(s)**, exploration of one or more characteristic(s) of an **author's style and approach**, placement of a work or works in **literary historical context**, the **comparison/contrast of works** sharing similarities but written by different authors and/or in different literary periods.
- You may find the **MLA Bibliography tutorial** particularly useful.



Appropriate General Topics

Analysis of theme(s)

A theme is a recurring idea or concept in a text. It is not explicit; therefore, the writer must to look for repeated imagery or symbols, examine the relationships between plot, setting, characters, and structure, and think about the feelings evoked throughout the text. Common themes in literature include love, jealousy, and friendship. If assigned to analyze a theme in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, you could analyze the theme of friendship between Huck and Jim.

Exploration of one or more characteristic(s) of an author's style and approach

Consider analyzing the author's use of imagery or setting:

Analyzing Setting

"Setting refers to the natural or artificial scenery or environment in which characters in literature live and move. Seeing also includes what in the theater would be called props or properties—the implements employed by the characters in various activities. Such things as the time of day and the consequent amount of light at which an event occurs, the flora and fauna, the sounds described, the smells, and the weather are also part of the setting. Paintbrushes, apples, pitchforks, rafts, six-shooters, watches, automobiles, horses and buggies, and innumerable other items belong to the setting. References to clothing, descriptions of

physical appearance, and spatial relationships among the characters are also part of setting." (Edgar V. Roberts, Writing Themes about Literature)

In order to create an argument about the function of the setting in a particular work, you need to identify the principal settings and to see how they work. Here are some steps you can take:

1) Read the story and mark references to setting. Start with the place and time of the action and then focus upon recurrent details and objects.

2) Think about what the story is about. What happens? What is its point? Is it a story about love, jealousy, gain, or loss? What is the main experience here?

3) Look through your setting notes and see if they fall into any pattern. What are the interesting shifts and contrasts?

4) Determine how the setting relates to either the main point of the story (step 2) or to some part of it. In other words what does the setting have to do with character or action? What are its effects? Whatever you decide here will be your thesis statement.

5) Make an outline, indicating what aspects of setting you will discuss and what you intend to say about them. Discard notes that are not central to your plan (you don't have to discuss everything). Focus on the four or five key passages in the story that you wish to examine. List them in your outline in the order in which they occur.

Analyzing Imagery

As distinct from character, theme, and plot, imagery occurs primarily in language, in the metaphors (i.e. comparisons), similes (comparisons with "like" or "as"), or other forms of figurative (pictorial) language in a literary work. Sometimes setting, i.e., the locality or placing of scenes, or stage props (like swords, flowers, blood, winecups) can also be considered under the rubric of imagery. But whatever the expression, images primarily are visual and concrete, i.e., things which the reader sees or can imagine seeing. Some examples are flowers, tears, animals, the moon, sun, stars, diseases, floods, metals, darkness and light.

In order to create an argument about the significance of an image in a particular work, identify a principal image or image cluster and to see how it works by following these steps:

1) Read the work and mark recurrent images or image clusters. If you are seeing references to roses, e.g., references to other thorns or to other flowers might also be pertinent parts of a cluster. Look at notes to the images carefully. Take out your microscope. You may also track down occurrences of related words with the help of a concordance (See Marvin Spevack's Concordance to Shakespeare in the library) or electronic word searches. You can use secondary sources for this assignment as well.

2) Think about what the play is about. What happens? What is its point? Is it a play about love, jealousy, gain, or loss? What is the main experience here? Look through your images and image clusters and see if they fall into any pattern. What are the interesting shifts? Do they generally appear in the speeches of certain characters? in certain scenes? Do we have a progression or development? Significant contrasts?

3) Determine how the images or image clusters (step 3) relate to either the main point of the play (step 2) or to some part of it. In other words what do the images have to do with character or action? What are their effects? Whatever you decide here will be your thesis statement.

4) Make an outline, indicating what your image pattern is and what you intend to say about it. Discard images that are not central to your plan (you don't have to discuss everything). Focus on the four or five key passages in the play that you wish to examine. List them in your outline in the order in which they occur.

5) Read criticism and watch films to deepen understanding and refine your thesis. Compile a bibliography. Adjust outline as necessary.

Placement of a work or works in literary historical context

By placing a work in its literary historical context, one can trace the influences a historical period had on an author and/or the creation of his/her work(s). In doing this, a literary historical critic gains insights about the nature of a particular historical period. Using the historical context as a lens through which to read literature allows one to gain an understanding of both larger social issues, as well as the personal struggles that everyday people endured. As Janet E. Gardner explains in *Writing about Literature*,

"We may be able to learn from parish burial records, for example, how common childhood mortality was at a particular time in English history, but only when we read Ben Johnson's poem 'On My First Son' do we begin to understand how this mortality may have affected the parents who lost their children. Likewise, the few pages of James Joyce's story 'Araby' may tell us more about how adolescent boys lived and thought in turn-of-the-century Dublin than several volumes of social history" (Gardner 147-8).

Comparison/contrast of works sharing similarities but written by different authors and/or in different literary periods

While there are many forms of compare-and-contrast essays, the best ones use the points of comparison and contrast that they identify between the works in order to make a claim about how one text illuminates the other or how they illuminate each other. Rather than a simple delineation of differences and similarities, your essay should use those differences and similarities to make a larger argument about how comparing the two texts reveals some unexpected or non-obvious about one or both of the works.

Most often, such claims work to show how texts do similar things differently. Therefore, often the best structure for this kind of argument is to detail enough similarities between the works (especially works written by vastly different authors and/or in different literary periods) to justify your comparison and to narrow the scope of your discussion. In other words, first show how your two vastly different texts are attempting similar things. Then, focus the remainder of your essay on the nuanced differences between each text's approach to those similar things and the way in which juxtaposing them illuminates our understanding of one or both.

Poetry Explication

Explication, from *explicare* meaning "to unfold," is an exercise in analysis. In it, the writer shows that he or she can read a poem and explain how it the various choices a poet makes shape its message and affect the reader. One writes an explication by paying close attention to the meaning of words, to their sounds, to their placement in lines and sentences. One then explains how the parts contribute to the whole. This exercise trains the ear, eye, and mind. It develops critical faculties and discipline.

1) Read the poem out loud several times. Look up in a dictionary at least 10 words in it for meanings, alternate meanings, and for shades of meaning. Take notes. Jot down some general observations about the poem and your initial reactions.

2) Ask yourself who is the speaker? What is the situation and what is the poem about? Be as precise and as specific as possible. What about tone, diction [level of word choice—high, medium, low, or slang], mood? Jot down your answers.

3) Underline all repetitions or devices of sound that you notice. Pay attention to any surprising shifts of sound or meaning. Ask yourself what effects they have? Jot down your answers.

4) Type the poem out (double-spaced) on a separate sheet of paper. Number the lines and mark all stressed and unstressed syllables. Mark also significant devices of sound: caesuras [breaks within a line, usually signalled by punctuation], alliteration, or assonance ("significant" means important enough for you to discuss later). This does not count in the four pages and must be handed in with the poem.

5) Write in your first paragraph a brief summary of the poem, i.e. a notice of its central statement and constituent parts. Show some emotion or interest here; don't be flat or effusive (avoid general and meaningless praise: "this is a wonderful or incredible or brilliant poem").

6) Quote the first few lines of the poem (1-4, or whatever you're comfortable with). Talk about the speaker and situation, about what is said, how, and why. Note connotations and overtones, how sound creates or enhances sense. Don't ever notice a poetic device without explaining its effect. Pay attention to sound and sense, to music and meaning.

7) Repeat step 3 for the rest of the poem, working your way through slowly and carefully. Note instances of repetition and their effects; note development of phrases or ideas. Note images and be account for shifts in tone, sound, rhythm, diction, or subject. Discuss the ending of the poem separately.

8) For a conclusion write a brief, specific statement about the effect or meaning or artistry of the poem, about structures or patterns or insights that your analysis has revealed. Look through your opening paragraph for hints that you can now develop in closing. Or revise opening in light of what you have discovered.

Argumentative Thesis

Your thesis must make an argument, not an observation.

An "observation" suggests something that is generally true about the text, like an objective element of the plot or an image used by the author. For example, if we are writing about the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf* we might make an observation about the way animal imagery seems to function for the Geat warriors. We might observe that while the Geats feature an image of a boar on their battle helmets (thus seemingly identifying with this ferocious animal), there are other moments in the text when the Geats shun vicious monsters (when they are reluctant to fight the dragon, for example.) Someone who has read the work carefully probably wouldn't disagree with this observation; it refers to an image used by the narrator and a specific plot point. This observation does, however, pose a question or "problem" for the careful reader: what do we as readers make of this apparent contradiction? Why is this juxtaposition important for the narrative more broadly? What are the consequences of this juxtaposition on plot, theme, or character? *So what*?

An "argument"—your thesis statement—is your solution to this problem. The thesis answers the "so what" question by explaining the significance of the observation and explaining why an invested reader should care about this detail. For example, one might argue that the juxtaposition of the Geats ferocious helmets and their subsequent unwillingness to approach the dragon suggests an inherent difference between the warriors' appearance (outward show) and their actions. This seems to be a theme in the work. The Danish coastguard who greets the Geats when they arrive in Denmark remarks that there is often a difference between "what is said" and "what is done," and at the end of the epic, Wiglaf says that this discrepancy between word and action will ultimately impair the Geats' ability to protect their kingdom. A thesis statement could read: "The difference between the Geats ferocious appearance and their later unwillingness to fight fearful monsters like the dragon suggests a devastating discrepancy between their appearance and their actions—a discrepancy that is responsible for the deterioration of the warrior culture in the epic."

It is important to keep in mind that your thesis statement should argue something with which a reader can disagree. If I argued the thesis above, the body of my essay would not only need to prove that there is, in fact, a contradiction between the Geats' appearance and action, but would also necessarily provide additional textual examples of how this discrepancy contributes to the deterioration of the warrior kingdoms in the epic. And, I'd need to be aware that other readers might not see the same contradiction. For example, another viable thesis statement could read: "As clear from biblical references in the text, humans identify with animals over monsters because animals are more like humans. Both humans and animals were created by God and thereby remind men of Divinity; whereas, monsters are perversions of God's nature and thereby indicate a diabolic presence." Rather than suggesting a contradiction, the imagery on the helmet suggests a righteous identification with God's creation and an equally righteous aversion to things that are not "of God." These two thesis statements offer opposite solutions to the problem posed above; both are viable and could be supported with textual evidence; and both make points with which a careful reader could disagree.

Close Reading

Before a literary scholar can begin writing about a piece of literature, one must engage in the exercise of close reading. As the term suggests, "close reading" means closely examining the words on a page in order to come up with a reading or an interpretation about the greater meaning of a work.

How does one "read closely"?

- The first task involves dissecting a passage or phrase by analyzing literary elements that stick out. For instance, is the tone, diction, syntax, style, imagery, figurative language, theme(s), cultural/historical/religious references, rhyme, rhythm and meter, etc. significant in the passage or stanza? Take notes on whatever seems significant by writing in the margins of your text or keeping a reading journal.
- After taking notes, the second task in close reading is looking for patterns or interruptions of patterns. Gather the evidence collected and think about how each one works together to create the work as a whole or how these elements contribute to or complicate larger issues such as theme, setting, characterization.
- Finally, think about the purpose and the effect of these significant elements/patterns in the work as a whole. This means asking *why* and *how*: Why is an author using a particular metaphor, tone, diction, etc. and how does it affect one's understanding of the passage? How are they all related to one another? How do they help us understand the larger work?

The steps listed above are a pre-writing exercise, designed to help you identify a potential thesis. Once you have formulated a thesis about how to read a larger work, you can use the smaller significant elements as evidence. This evidence will then need to be analyzed in order to support that thesis.

Critical Sources

Defining Literary Criticism

Literary criticism is a disciplined attempt to analyze some aspect or aspects of one or more works of art — for our purposes, mostly literary art (plays, novels, short stories, essays, poems). Serious literary critics study their primary materials very closely and repeatedly, examine the contexts in which the works they are studying were produced, and read widely in the work of other literary critics on their subject before producing their own original analysis of a work or works of literature. Generally, literary criticism is published in one of three forms: in a book; in an article published in a professional journal, whether print-based or online; or in an article published in a book as part of a collection. These formats insure that experts in the appropriate field(s) have reviewed the literary criticism and judged its accuracy in points of fact, its attention to scholarship in the field, etc. These formats are **peer-reviewed sources** (also known as "refereed sources"). Peer-reviewed means that a source has been rigorously scrutinized by other experts before publication.

Why consult and cite literary criticism?

• Reading a variety of views increases your knowledge of your subject and helps you to demonstrate to your reader that you have considered views other than your own.
• Reading literary criticism enables you to weigh your conclusions against others' to check your logic and to see whether you have covered all significant aspects of your argument.
• Citing others' views makes you appear a more knowledgeable writer to your readers.
• Citing literary critics whose views agree with yours can strengthen your case (although you must still supply the appropriate evidence).
• Taking issue with a critic with whom you disagree can also strengthen your case if you present your counterargument effectively.
• Literary criticism can enable you and your readers to see how evaluations and analyses of literature have changed over time.

Where do I find literary criticism?

Encyclopedia articles do not offer true literary criticism, nor do Cliff's Notes, SparkNotes, or "overviews" of authors, works, or literary topics available online. Some websites post serious scholarship, but many are run by fans or students who may or may not know more than you do (!). Wikipedia, for example, is not a peer-reviewed source; anyone can post and update information on this site and, as a result, it is not a reliable resource. If you find your sources either through the SHARC catalogue or the MLA Bibliography database online (the bibliographical resource of the Modern Language Association), you are unlikely to go wrong:

• Use books and articles from the Loyola/Notre Dame Library or other libraries and articles located via the library databases. Internet material must have been published in a book or journal before being placed online. (Recall your library workshop.)
• Good sources can be found through Project Muse and the MLA Bibliography database, but avoid the "Biographies" and "Overview" tabs in the Literature Resource Center. This information can be useful to provide background for your research, but you should not use it in your paper as one of the documented sources.
• The MLA Bibliography database is the primary research database for researchers in literature. If a this database doesn’t supply a .pdf of an article you want to look at, write down the full publication information, and search for the journal in the ejournals section of our library's homepage.

Formal Analysis

Formal analysis involves a close reading of the literary elements of a text. A formal analysis examines elements such as setting, imagery, characters, tone, form/structure, and language. The goal of a formal analysis is to create meaning by exploring how these elements work together in any given text. You can compare parts of a text or you can analyze how parts of a text relate to the whole text.

MLA Style of Documentation

Follow the MLA style of documentation, which is a parenthetical style. Remember that you need a "Works Cited" page and a "Bibliography" page, and these should follow MLA format, not one you create on the spur of the moment or borrow from some other discipline. The "Works Cited" page lists all works you cite in the essay, the "Bibliography" lists all the works you consulted, including all of those cited. You should always note your professor's requirements as to minimum number of sources.

The Department's handbook (*A Writer's Reference* by Diana Hacker) provides information under the MLA tab about how to provide parenthetical documentation and prepare a bibliography and list of works cited. A quick look at the sample MLA paper in Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* will give you a general sense of how MLA documentation works.

Organization

Every paper must contain an **introduction** (which states the argumentative thesis), **subsequent argument paragraphs**, and a **conclusion**.

Introductory Paragraph

As Janet E. Gardner writes in *Writing About Literature*, "Essentially, an introduction accomplishes two things. First, it gives a sense of both your topic and your approach to that topic, which is why it is common to make your thesis statement a part of the introduction. Second, an introduction compels your readers' interest and makes them want to read on and find out what your paper has to say. Some common strategies used in effective introductions are to begin with a probing rhetorical question, a vivid description, or an intriguing quotation. Weak introductions tend to speak in generalities or in philosophical ideas that are only tangentially related to the real topic of your paper. Don't spin your wheels: get specific and get to the point right away."

Your introduction is your opportunity to catch your reader's attention and involve that person in the ideas you put forth in your paper. Imagine riding in an elevator with someone you'd like to strike up a conversation with about a specific topic. How do you do it? How do you catch that person's attention before the ride is up? You can't just immediately throw your claims and evidence at that person, yet at the same time, he or she is unlikely to be compelled by vague general statements about "the history of time" or where and when a certain person was born. And you can't stand there all day getting to the point. Instead, you look for compelling point of interest that is both related to where you'd like to go with your discussion, and is of shared interest between you and that person. After raising the topic through this point of common ground, you can then put forth what you will claim about it.

Succeeding Paragraphs

A complete argument paragraph consists of the following components:

1. **Topic Sentence**: Suggests generally what the paragraph is talking about; often includes a transition from previous paragraphs.

2. **Claim**: Makes a very specific claim that the paragraph will argue is true; you'll likely derive this claim from your thesis statement (together,
all your paragraph claims will work to prove your thesis).

3. **Evidence**: Provides the textual support for the claim.

4. **Analysis**: Explains how the evidence actually relates to the argument. This is typically the most challenging part of composing your
paragraph, and it is often forgotten (much to the peril of both reader and writer!). Here, you must articulate how the passage you've just cited supports
the paragraph claim/argument premise. You must explain how the textual evidence means what you think it means. Never rely on the reader to be able to
interpret the evidence on his or her own. That is, if your argument is a statement with which the careful reader can disagree, this means that the evidence
you provide can likely be interpreted in many different ways. You need to guide your reader in interpreting the evidence so as to argue why your claim is
true.

5. **Conclusion**: Offers implications of the argument and evidence, often transitions to the next paragraph. This often answers the "so what?" question. It
articulates why what you've just proven matters and usually articulates how your argument claims relates to/proves the thesis statement.

After the explanation of evidence, a well-developed paragraph might also include:

Additional Evidence/Explanation: What other evidence is there to support your claim?

Concession/ Nonclusion (these are an inseparable pair!): What evidence might contradict your claim? (The concession acknowledges the perceived
opposition (perhaps in the form of another critic) or the skeptical reader). And, why, despite this evidence, is your argument still more effective than the
concession? (The nonclusion is essential — never end a paragraph with a concession; take the concession into account while further proving your argument!)

Conclusion

As Janet E. Gardner points out in *Writing About Literature*, "Your conclusion should give your reader something new to think about, a reason not to just forget your essay. Some writers like to use the conclusion to return to an idea, a quotation, or an image first raised in the introduction, creating a satisfying feeling of completeness and self-containment…. Some writers use the conclusion to show the implications of their claims or the connections between literature and real life. This is your chance to make a good final impression, so don't waste it with a simple summary and restatement."

This doesn't mean that your conclusion should not restate your thesis. Your conclusion is the place in which you draw together all the threads of your argument and neatly tie them up. When Gardner says not to "waste" your conclusion with "simple summary and restatement," she means don't ONLY summarize and restate. Your should absolutely recap your main points, but a good conclusion ALSO does more. Additionally, treading the path between not giving your reader anything new in the conclusion and introducing more unsupported claims can be tricky. The conclusion is a good place to SUGGEST the further implications of your argument, for life, for literature, for an author's body of work, etc., but be careful that you don't find yourself making new claims your reader is unlikely to agree with. These implications should follow naturally from the structure of your argument and often are best expressed with less-definitive phrasing (i.e. "perhaps," "implies," "suggests," "hints," "may," etc.).

Post-Writing

1) Revise again and again. All good writing is rewriting. Clarify, define, smooth-out rough spots. Work to develop ideas, and round out paragraphs. Try to be more accurate and graceful, to clean up mistakes, and to correct embarrassing errors. Look hard at your evidence. Be tough and cut out the nonsense.

2) Proofread carefully, by means of spell-check and by your own reading. Make sure you have supplied a title, page numbers for the paper. (No decorative bindings; use 12-point type, double spaced, with standard page margins.)

3) Make sure you have provided accurate documentation for every quotation and outside source cited or consulted.

Quoting Critics

• It is a good idea to include a full quotation when the critic says something particularly well. Paraphrase when the idea is important, but the wording is nothing special. (Document both.)

• Don't let the critics run away with your paper. Instead, keep their ideas subordinated to your own and use them to support your own claims. Typically, your paragraphs should begin with your topic sentence, then provide your evidence from the text, and then (perhaps) include a comment or comments from critics. A rare exception might be when you are disagreeing with a critic. In this instance, you may wish to state the opposing idea first, and then follow up by expressing your disagreement and presenting the evidence for your point of view.

• Cited passages should be integrated into your text and be attributed to their originators. For example, "Elgin Slapworthy has observed that 'Dickens remembered this period in his boyhood as both painful and humiliating'" (237). Don't just pop in a quotation without making the context and source of the quotation clear. Attribution in the text makes the essay read more smoothly and cuts down on the amount of parenthetical documentation that must be provided.

• Quotations of more than three lines should be indented and set off in the text. Setting off indicates quotation, so quotation marks are not needed, unless you have a quotation within a quotation.

As Prof. Bladderstock argues:
Austen's prose has often been imitated but never matched. Even my own brilliant Austen parody, Sense and Susceptibility, fell short in regard to dialogue.

Austen's uncanny ability to combine sense and wit, while suiting words and phrasing to character, is difficult, perhaps impossible to reproduce. (132)

• A quotation within a quotation—say you quote a critic who quotes a passage from Dorothy Sayers—should be indicated by using single quotation marks: According to Evangeline Pink, "Sayers' use of the line, 'So, you're one of them,' echoes a statement in the trial of the infamous Madeline Smith" (299).

Evidence from Literature

Just as scientists provide data to support their results, literary critics must use evidence from literature in order to convince their audience that they have a cogent argument. Evidence must be provided in every body paragraph in order to support your claims. Where will you find evidence? First, you must do a close reading of the text. It is much easier to first analyze and think about how the smaller literary elements work together to create the whole work, rather than randomly thumbing through a work to find support for your thesis. When you provide evidence, you are providing proof from the text that shows your audience that your thesis is valid. Critics most commonly provide evidence by quoting a line or a passage from a work. When you provide evidence, it is imperative not to take it out of context. For example, if a character is joking with another character that he will kill himself if he fails his chemistry test and there's no other mention of death in the work, it would be unfair to represent this character as suicidal by eliminating the context of him joking. Accurately quoting and fairly representing events/characters/etc. adds to your credibility as a writer. If you find evidence that counters your thesis, you should still engage with it. Think about what your critics would say and come up with a response to show how that particular piece of evidence might still support your stance. Once you're done gathering evidence, you can move on to the analysis portion in which you explain how the evidence supports your claims.

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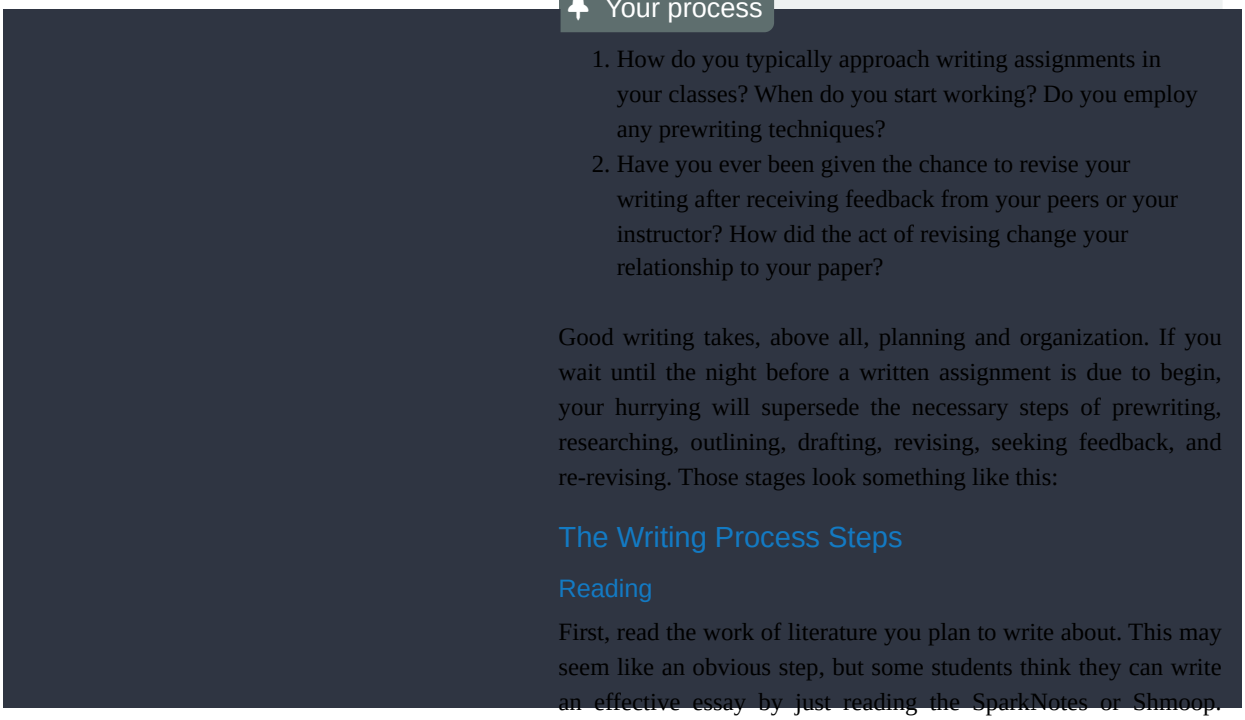
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12.2: The Writing Process for Literary Essays

Why Follow the Writing Process?

Even the most talented writers rarely get a piece right in their first draft. What's more, few writers create a first draft through a single, sustained effort. Instead, the best writers understand that writing is a process: it takes time; sustained attention; and a willingness to change, expand, and even delete words as one writes. Good writing also takes a willingness to seek feedback from peers and mentors and to accept and use the advice they give. In this book, we will refer to and model the **writing process**, showing how student writers like yourself worked toward compelling papers about literary works. Watch the video below where author Salman Rushdie talks about some misconceptions new writers sometimes have about what it takes to write effectively. Though he is discussing novels specifically, the same concepts apply to literary essays.



The following are a few famous writers' pieces of advice when it comes to following the writing process:

- "For me and most of the other writers I know, writing is not rapturous. In fact, the only way I can get anything written at all is to write really, really shitty first drafts"—Anne Lamott
- "The key to writing is concentration, not inspiration"—Salman Rushdie
- "By the time I am nearing the end of a story, the first part will have been reread and altered and corrected at least one hundred and fifty times. I am suspicious of both facility and speed. Good writing is essentially rewriting. I am positive of this." —Roald Dahl (Vander Hook)
- "I don't write easily or rapidly. My first draft usually has only a few elements worth keeping. I have to find what those are and build from them and throw out what doesn't work, or what simply is not alive." —Susan Sontag (Lee)

Take it from the writing experts: following the writing process is the key to writing success. Following this process can be liberatory in the sense that you don't have to feel an immense pressure to write brilliantly. The best writing takes time, incremental effort, and resilience.

As I often tell my students:

"There is no such thing as bad writers, only writers who give up too soon. There is no such thing as bad writing, just writing in need of revision." This means anyone can write a strong essay if they follow the writing process!

Your process

1. How do you typically approach writing assignments in your classes? When do you start working? Do you employ any prewriting techniques?
2. Have you ever been given the chance to revise your writing after receiving feedback from your peers or your instructor? How did the act of revising change your relationship to your paper?

Good writing takes, above all, planning and organization. If you wait until the night before a written assignment is due to begin, your hurrying will supersede the necessary steps of prewriting, researching, outlining, drafting, revising, seeking feedback, and re-revising. Those stages look something like this:

The Writing Process Steps

Reading

First, read the work of literature you plan to write about. This may seem like an obvious step, but some students think they can write an effective essay by just reading the SparkNotes or Shmoop. While some students may be able to get away with writing a passing essay this way, most cannot. Besides, by completing the readings, you actually learn!

Prewriting

Many of the questions and activities peppered throughout sections of this book will be **prewriting** activities. We'll ask you to reflect on your reading, to make connections between your experiences and our text, and to jot down ideas spurred by your engagement with the theories presented here. It's from activities like these that writers often get their ideas for writing. The more engaged you are as a reader, the more engaged you'll be when the time comes to write.

Researching

This book will also help you start the research process, in which you hone in on those aspects of a given literary text that interest you and seek out a deeper understanding of those aspects. Literary researchers read not only literary texts but also the work of other literary scholars and even sources that are indirectly related to literature, such as primary historical documents and biographies. In other words, they seek a wide range of texts that can supplement their understanding of the story, poem, play, or other text they want to write about. As you research, you should keep prewriting, keeping a record of what you agree with, what you disagree with, and what you feel needs further exploration in the texts you read.

Outlining

To write well, you should have a plan. As you write, that plan may change while you learn more about your topic and begin to fully understand your own ideas. However, papers are easier to tackle when you first sketch out the broad outline of your ideas, a general arc or path you want your paper to follow. Committing those ideas to paper will help you see how different ideas relate to one another (or don't relate to one another). Don't be afraid to revise your outline — play around with the sequence of your ideas and evidence until you find the most logical progression.

Drafting

The most important way to improve your writing is to start writing! Because you're treating writing as a process, it's not important that every word you type be perfectly chosen, or that every sentence be exquisitely crafted. When you're drafting, the most important thing is that you get words on paper. Follow your outline and write. If ideas come to you as you're writing, but do not quite fit in that section of the paper, make note of it! You don't have to use it, but few things are more frustrating than forgetting an idea that might work perfectly for your paper.

Revising

After you've committed words to paper (or, more accurately, to your computer screen), you can go back and shape them more deliberately through **revision**. Cognitive research has shown that a significant portion of reading is actually remembering. As a result, if you read your work immediately after writing it, you probably won't notice any of the potential problems with it. Your brain will "fill in the gaps" of poor grammar, misspelling, or faulty reasoning. Because of this, you should give yourself some time in between drafting and revising—the more time the better. As you revise, try to approach your text as your readers will. Ask yourself skeptical questions (e.g., Are there clear connections between the different claims I'm making in this paper? Do I provide enough evidence to convince someone to believe my claims?). Revisions can often be substantial: you may need to rearrange your points, delete significant portions of what you've written, or rewrite sentences and paragraphs to better reflect the ideas you have developed while writing. Don't be afraid to cut the parts of your paper that aren't working, even if you like a particular fact or anecdote. Don't be afraid to, as they say, "Kill your darlings." Everything in your paper should, on some level, work towards the purpose of your claim. Most importantly, you should revise your introduction several times. Writers often work into their strongest ideas, which then appear in their conclusions but not (if they do not revise) their introductions. Make sure that your introduction reflects the more nuanced claims that appear in the body and conclusion of your paper.

Seeking Feedback

Even after years of practice revising your writing, you'll never be able to see it in an entirely objective light. To really improve your writing, you need feedback from others who can identify where your ideas are not as clear as they should be. You can seek feedback in a number of ways: you can make an appointment in your college's writing center, you can participate in class peer-review workshops, or you can talk to your instructor during his or her office hours. If you will have a chance to revise your paper after your instructor grades it, his or her comments on that graded draft should be considered essential feedback as you revise.

Re-revising

Once you've garnered feedback on your writing, you should use that feedback to revise your paper yet again. You should not, however, simply make every change that your colleagues or instructor recommended. You should think about the suggestions they've made and ensure that their suggestions will help you make the argument you want to make. You may decide to incorporate some suggestions and not others. Not all feedback is helpful or applicable. It takes some critical thinking to determine whether the feedback will improve the essay. When you treat writing as a process, it should become a genuine dialogue between you and your readers.

Publishing

Finally, you will submit your paper to an audience for review. As college students, this primarily means the paper you turn in to your instructor for evaluation.

Writing Process Not Linear, But a Cycle

The preceding categories suggest that writing is a linear process — that is, that you will follow these steps in the following order:

prewriting → researching → outlining → drafting → revising → feedback → re-revising → publishing.

The reality of the writing process, however, is that as you write you shuttle back and forth in these stages. For example, as you begin writing your thesis paragraph, the beginning of your essay, you will write and revise many times before you are satisfied with

your opening; once you have a complete draft, you will more than likely return to the introduction to revise it again to better match the contents of the completed essay. This shuttling highlights the recursive nature of the writing process and can be diagrammed as follows:

prewriting ↔ researching ↔ outlining ↔ drafting ↔ revising ↔ feedback ↔ re-revising ↔ publishing.

This is a good thing. If you are too rigid in your process, it's easier to get stuck on insisting an idea or claim that might not be working, rather than discovering one or coming to an informed, well-reasoned conclusion. Furthermore, you should be aware that each writer has a unique writing process: some will be diligent outliners, while others may discover ideas as they write. There is no right way to write (so to speak), but the key is the notion of process — all strong writers engage in the writing process and recognize the importance of feedback and revision in the process.

Your process

1. Describe your current writing process.
2. Do you normally engage in the stages listed previously?
3. If not, why? If so, what part of the process do you find most helpful?

Share your process with the class to discover the variety of approaches writers take. Always be willing to try new methods of approaching the writing process. You might find a new tool or habit that works well for you!

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12.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays

Reading

The first step in writing a literary analysis essay is actually completing the reading. Sometimes the professor will give you a prompt before you read. If this is the case, look for material which relates to the prompt as you read. If the professor did not give you a prompt, look for any material in the assigned reading that piques your interest or relates to class discussions. Highlight or underline any moments in the reading which stick out to you: something you don't understand, something that relates to a topic you care about, or something weird or surprising. Keeping track of patterns, themes, or literary devices is a great way to engage with a work of literature and prepare for a future discussion or essay.

Completing the Reading

One time, I was talking with my sister-in-law about her experience in nursing school. Whereas her brother had barely achieved Cs in college, she somehow maintained a 4.0, even though she was simultaneously working and caring for her two young daughters.

"What is your secret to success?" I asked.

"Actually doing the assigned readings," she laughed, "most of my peers didn't. And it showed."

As a college professor who teaches reading-heavy classes, this is not a shock to me. After all, most students taking the required writing and literature courses do not wish to become English majors. They sometimes see their literature class as a means to an end: at best, a stepping stone towards their future career; at worst, a time-suck of hoops to jump through. Also, because of today's gig economy, many students are juggling multiple jobs in addition to multiple college classes. This makes it tempting for students to want to skip the readings and just read SparkNotes or have ChatGPT summarize the literature for them. Truth be told, students who pursue this method, depending on their BSing skills, might be able to pass a literature class. But for the vast majority of students, this popular high school tactic will not work at the college level. More importantly, it means students miss out on many of the exciting benefits of diving deep into analysis, discussion, and engaging with the text. Plus, there might be consequences when SparkNotes or ChatGPT gives you incorrect answers, your instructor asks you not to use these sources, or you plagiarize by using ideas from these sources without credit.

Of course, I want my students to fall in love with the written word. I want my passion for literature to be contagious, to light students' hearts and minds on fire with a hunger for the beauty of syntax and diction and literary devices. But I also completely understand that students have limited time. Therefore, I recommend prioritizing the writing process *by reading attentively* so writers can make the most efficient use of their time. In the long run, while it might seem like skipping the readings saves time, completing the readings is actually the best way for students to optimize their time. This is because a strong essay depends on a deep understanding of the literature. If the class features examinations, these almost always test students on whether they completed and understand the readings. Finally, class will be more fun for students if they understand what their peers are talking about in class discussion, and what their professor is talking about during lectures.

Students who complete the readings and annotate as they go will find it much easier to flip back through their notes to find relevant quotations and information. Successful students often break the readings into small, manageable chunks of twenty to thirty minutes at a time. This helps their brains absorb the information better and retain information for writing and tests.

Students skipping reading often end up performing more work when it comes to writing an essay because they will spend so much time looking up text summaries on the internet (which may or may not be accurate or align with the intricacies of the assignment directions). They will also have to go back and re-read the text to find quotations that fit their prompt. Their essays may not succeed because they do not fulfill the in-depth analysis required by the assignments.

So, long story short: even the most practically-minded, time-crunched students would do well to perform the readings. And, while in pursuit of success, a previously literature-averse student might find themselves liking reading more than they thought they would. Just like watching a favorite movie or show, reading a good book can be fun and relaxing!

Active versus Passive Reading

Many students, when first reading academic material, read it like they would a timeline of Facebook or Instagram posts: not fully attentive, skimming over the material in search of something interesting or for what they think are "answers" on a test. Or they might read literature with full attention, but read without questioning or engaging with the material. The difference between a student who is successful in a literature class and a student who is not successful is often that the successful student participates in **active reading.**

Actions	Passive Reading	Active Reading
Engagement Level	Skimming or not giving the reading undivided attention; reading for "gist" rather than substance	Reading closely, annotating, analyzing, and reflecting as you read; reading deeply for understanding
Tools	Just the book	Book, writing utensils, highlighters, sticky notes, reading journal
Number of Times Read	Once (or *gasp* not at all!)	Read three or more times: • Once without expectation • Once for comprehension • Once for closely analyzing and annotating

Annotating

In a literature class, students encounter a lot of literature, written by many different authors. Annotating, or taking notes on the assigned literature as you read, is a way to have a conversation with the reading. This helps you better absorb the material and engage with the text on a deeper level. There are several annotation methods. These are like tools in a student's learning utility belt. Try them all out to discover which tools or combinations of tools help you learn best!

Margin Notes & Highlighting

One of the best ways to interact with a text is to write notes as you read. Underlining and/or highlighting relevant passages, yes, but also responding to the text in the margins. For instance, if a character I love makes a bad choice (like Sydney Carton in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*), I will write, "Nooooo, Sydney Carton, don't sacrifice yourself for Lucie's sake!" This helps me remember the events of the plot. Many students also find it helpful to summarize each chapter or section of the literature as they read it. For example, a student said it was helpful for them to draw a picture representing every stanza of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by William Wordsworth to help them understand what was being said. Other ideas include:

- Circling unfamiliar words
- Writing questions in the margins
- Color-coded highlighting to track various literary devices (i.e., blue for metaphors, pink for symbolism, and so forth)

Sticky Notes

For students who would like to sell their textbooks back to the bookstore, writing notes in the margins might not be a practical choice, as it may devalue the textbook or the bookstore may refuse to take it back. For these students, I recommend using sticky notes instead. If sticky notes are cost-prohibitive, most colleges have plenty of scrap paper students can use as bookmarks to stick between pages. This is also an eco-friendly way to re-use paper!

Reading Journal

Another option many students find helpful is keeping a reading journal. Students can write notes in their journals as they read. This helps students keep track of readings and materials in a chronological fashion. Just like when annotating the text directly or upon sticky notes, the most effective use of a reading journal, for learning purposes, is going to be active engagement with the text rather than passive absorption. That is, try to summarize the plot of what you read every time you read. Also, ask questions about the text. If you can record quotes and paraphrase along with in-text parenthetical citations (i.e., the page number where you found the material), this will optimize your time because you already have quotes ready to go when you write an essay!

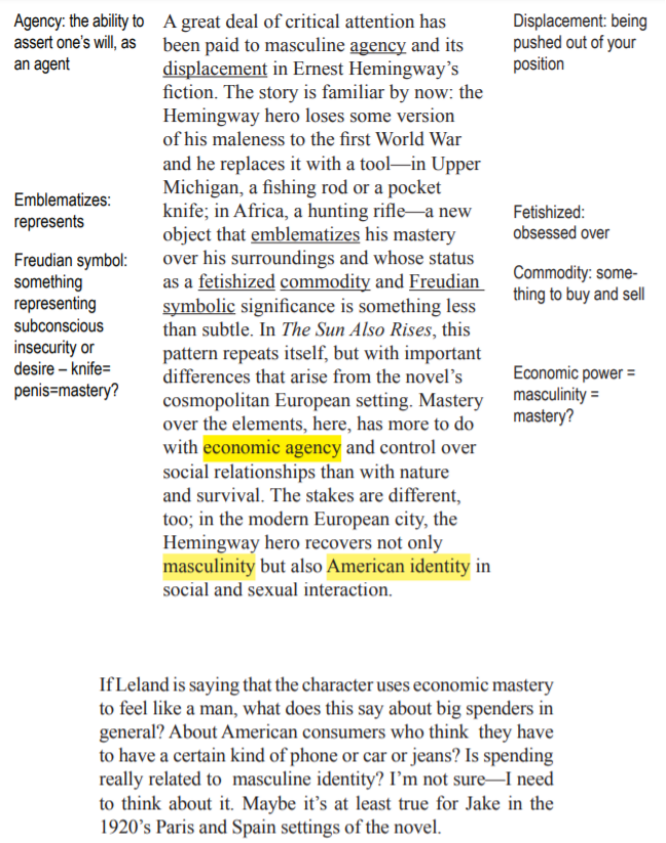
Example of an Annotated Passage

Using the guidelines above, let's consider this excerpt from a scholarly article by Jacob Michael Leland, "'Yes, That is a Roll of Bills in My Pocket': The Economy of Masculinity in The Sun Also Rises."

> *A great deal of critical attention has been paid to masculine agency and its displacement in Ernest Hemingway's fiction. The story is familiar by now: the Hemingway hero loses some version of his maleness to the first World War and he replaces it with a tool—in Upper Michigan, a fishing rod or a pocket knife; in Africa, a hunting rifle—a new object that emblematizes his mastery over his surroundings and whose status as a fetishized commodity and Freudian*

> *symbolic significance is something less than subtle. In The Sun Also Rises, this pattern repeats itself, but with important differences that arise from the novel's cosmopolitan European setting. Mastery over the elements, here, has more to do with economic agency and control over social relationships than with nature and survival. The stakes are different, too; in the modern European city, the Hemingway hero recovers not only masculinity but also American identity in social and sexual interaction. (37)*

In researching The Sun Also Rises for a project, Ling Ti found Leland's article. What follows is her annotated copy of the above excerpt:



As you can see, this writer highlighted words that seemed important to understanding the text. She included questions in the margins to help her understand the reading. She also provided definitions for terms she did not know, presumably looking them up as she read. Finally, she wrote a brief summary of her reading, also known as a reflection.

Reflecting on Assigned Literature

Studies show reflecting on reading is one of the best ways to learn. This is called metacognition, or thinking about thinking. It is a way to keep track of the knowledge you have learned as you go. Students who reflect on their reading and learning tend to, as a whole, perform better on essays and examinations. So how can you take advantage of this skill?

If you have a prompt, choose a prompt and read through the assigned literature again, noting any quotes which may relate to the assigned topic. It is recommended at this point that you keep track of your observations in a document: either on a computer (Word, Google Docs) or on a physical piece of paper. Write down any quotations along with page numbers (fiction, nonfiction), line numbers (poem), or act, scene, line numbers (drama). This way, you have all potential evidence in one place, and it makes for easy in-text citations when it comes to knitting the evidence together to form an essay. In fact, it is highly recommended that students start an informal Works Cited page to keep track of every source consulted. This makes it much easier to avoid plagiarism by practicing ethical citation habits. For more information about citations, please see the Citations and Formatting Chapter.

Start with a hypothesis or focus but be willing to refine, adjust, or completely discard it if new evidence refutes it. An essay is not a stagnant piece, but a living, breathing thought experiment. Many students feel reluctant to change their thesis or major parts of their essays because they are afraid it means the previous writing was wasted. As a professional writer, editor, and scholar, I want to clue students in on a secret:

There is no such thing as wasted writing.

Even writing that does not end up in the final draft is worthwhile because it is a chance to experiment with ideas. It helps students find a path toward stronger ideas. Just like a gardener might allow branches of a tree to grow to see which ones bear flowers and fruit and then prune the weak, unproductive branches to make the plant stronger and more beautiful, so too must a writer be willing to cut out branches of reasoning which no longer serve the essay. But before you know which ideas or thoughts are worth pursuing, you first have to give them space to grow. You never know what idea branches might prove fruitful!

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12.4: Writing About Fiction and Creative Nonfiction

Demystifying the Process

Writing an analysis of a piece of fiction can be a mystifying process. First, literary analyses (or papers that offer an interpretation of a story) rely on the assumption that stories must mean something. How does a story mean something? Isn't a story just an arrangement of characters and events? And if the author wanted to convey a meaning, wouldn't he or she be much better off writing an essay just telling us what he or she meant?

It's pretty easy to see how at least some stories convey clear meanings or morals. Just think about a parable like the prodigal son or a nursery tale about "crying wolf." Stories like these are reduced down to the bare elements, giving us just enough detail to lead us to their main points, and because they are relatively easy to understand and tend to stick in our memories, they're often used in some kinds of education.

But if the meanings were always as clear as they are in parables, who would really need to write a paper analyzing them? Interpretations of fiction would not be interesting if the meanings of the stories were clear to everyone who reads them. Thankfully (or perhaps regrettably, depending on your perspective) the stories we're asked to interpret in our classes are a good bit more complicated than most parables. They use characters, settings, and actions to illustrate issues that have no easy resolution. They show different sides of a problem, and they can raise new questions. In short, the stories we read in class have meanings that are arguable and complicated, and it's our job to sort them out.

It might seem that the stories do have specific meanings, and the instructor has already decided what those meanings are. Not true. Instructors can be pretty dazzling (or mystifying) with their interpretations, but that's because they have a lot of practice with stories and have developed a sense of the kinds of things to look for. Even so, the most well-informed professor rarely arrives at conclusions that someone else wouldn't disagree with. In fact, most professors are aware that their interpretations are debatable and actually love a good argument. But let's not go to the other extreme. To say that there is no one answer is not to say that anything we decide to say about a novel or short story is valid, interesting, or valuable. Interpretations of fiction are often opinions, but not all opinions are equal.

So what makes a valid and interesting opinion? A good interpretation of fiction will:

- avoid the obvious (in other words, it won't argue a conclusion that most readers could reach on their own from a general knowledge of the story)
- support its main points with strong evidence from the story
- use careful reasoning to explain how that evidence relates to the main points of the interpretation.

The following steps are intended as a guide through the difficult process of writing an interpretive paper that meets these criteria. Writing tends to be a highly individual task, so adapt these suggestions to fit your own habits and inclinations.

Writing an Essay on Fiction in 9 Steps

1. Become familiar with the text

There's no substitute for a good general knowledge of your story. A good paper inevitably begins with the writer having a solid understanding of the work that they interpret. Being able to have the whole book, short story, or play in your head—at least in a general way—when you begin thinking through ideas will be a great help and will actually allow you to write the paper more quickly in the long run. It's even a good idea to spend some time just thinking about the story. Flip back through the book and consider what interests you about this piece of writing—what seemed strange, new, or important?

2. Explore potential topics

Perhaps your instructor has given you a list of topics to choose, or perhaps you have been asked to create your own. Either way, you'll need to generate ideas to use in the paper—even with an assigned topic, you'll have to develop your own interpretation. Let's assume for now that you are choosing your own topic.

After reading your story, a topic may just jump out at you, or you may have recognized a pattern or identified a problem that you'd like to think about in more detail. What is a pattern or a problem?

A pattern can be the recurrence of certain kinds of imagery or events. Usually, repetition of particular aspects of a story (similar events in the plot, similar descriptions, even repetition of particular words) tends to render those elements more conspicuous. Let's say I'm writing a paper on Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. In the course of reading that book, I keep noticing the author's use of biblical imagery: Victor Frankenstein anticipates that "a new species would bless me as its creator and source" (52) while the monster is not sure whether to consider himself as an Adam or a Satan. These details might help me interpret the way characters think about themselves and about each other, as well as allow me to infer what the author might have wanted her reader to think by using the Bible as a frame of reference. On another subject, I also notice that the book repeatedly refers to types of education. The

story mentions books that its characters read and the different contexts in which learning takes place.

A problem, on the other hand, is something in the story that bugs you or that doesn't seem to add up. A character might act in some way that's unaccountable, a narrator may leave out what we think is important information (or may focus on something that seems trivial), or a narrator or character may offer an explanation that doesn't seem to make sense to us. Not all problems lead in interesting directions, but some definitely do and even seem to be important parts of the story. In *Frankenstein*, Victor works day and night to achieve his goal of bringing life to the dead, but once he realizes his goal, he is immediately repulsed by his creation and runs away. Why? Is there something wrong with his creation, something wrong with his goal in the first place, or something wrong with Victor himself? The book doesn't give us a clear answer but seems to invite us to interpret this problem.

If nothing immediately strikes you as interesting or no patterns or problems jump out at you, don't worry. Just start making a list of whatever you remember from your reading, regardless of how insignificant it may seem to you now. Consider a character's peculiar behavior or comments, the unusual way the narrator describes an event, or the author's placement of an action in an odd context. (Step 5 will cover some further elements of fiction that you might find useful at this stage as well.)

There's a good chance that some of these intriguing moments and oddities will relate to other points in the story, eventually revealing some kind of pattern and giving you potential topics for your paper. Also keep in mind that if you found something peculiar in the story you're writing about, chances are good that other people will have been perplexed by these moments in the story as well and will be interested to see how you make sense of it all. It's even a good idea to test your ideas out on a friend, a classmate, or an instructor since talking about your ideas will help you develop them and push them beyond obvious interpretations of the story. And it's only by pushing those ideas that you can write a paper that raises interesting issues or problems and that offers creative interpretations related to those issues.

3. Select a topic with a lot of evidence

If you're selecting from a number of possible topics, narrow down your list by identifying how much evidence or how many specific details you could use to investigate each potential issue. Do this step just off the top of your head. Keep in mind that persuasive papers rely on ample evidence and that having a lot of details to choose from can also make your paper easier to write.

It might be helpful at this point to jot down all the events or elements of the story that have some bearing on the two or three topics that seem most promising. This can give you a more visual sense of how much evidence you will have to work with on each potential topic. It's during this activity that having a good knowledge of your story will come in handy and save you a lot of time. Don't launch into a topic without considering all the options first because you may end up with a topic that seemed promising initially but that only leads to a dead end.

4. Write out a working thesis

Based on the evidence that relates to your topic—and what you anticipate you might say about those pieces of evidence—come up with a working thesis. Don't spend a lot of time composing this statement at this stage since it will probably change (and a changing thesis statement is a good sign that you're starting to say more interesting and complex things on your subject). At this point in my *Frankenstein* project, I've become interested in ideas on education that seem to appear pretty regularly, and I have a general sense that aspects of Victor's education lead to tragedy. Without considering things too deeply, I'll just write something like, "Victor Frankenstein’s tragic ambition was fueled by a faulty education."

5. Make an extended list of evidence

Once you have a working topic in mind, skim back over the story and make a more comprehensive list of the details that relate to your point. For my paper about education in *Frankenstein*, I'll want to take notes on what Victor Frankenstein reads at home, where he goes to school and why, what he studies at school, what others think about those studies, etc. And even though I'm primarily interested in Victor's education, at this stage in the writing, I'm also interested in moments of education in the novel that don't directly involve this character. These other examples might provide a context or some useful contrasts that could illuminate my evidence relating to Victor. With this goal in mind, I'll also take notes on how the monster educates himself, what he reads, and what he learns from those he watches. As you make your notes keep track of page numbers so you can quickly find the passages in your book again and so you can easily document quoted passages when you write without having to fish back through the book.

At this point, you want to include anything, anything, that might be useful, and you also want to avoid the temptation to arrive at definite conclusions about your topic. Remember that one of the qualities that makes for a good interpretation is that it avoids the obvious. You want to develop complex ideas, and the best way to do that is to keep your ideas flexible until you’ve considered the evidence carefully. A good gauge of complexity is whether you feel you understand more about your topic than you did

when you began (and even just reaching a higher state of confusion is a good indicator that you're treating your topic in a complex way).

When you jot down ideas, you can focus on the observations from the narrator or things that certain characters say or do. These elements are certainly important. It might help you come up with more evidence if you also take into account some of the broader components that go into making fiction, things like plot, point of view, character, setting, and symbols.

Plot is the string of events that go into the narrative. Think of this as the "who did what to whom" part of the story. Plots can be significant in themselves since chances are pretty good that some action in the story will relate to your main idea. For my paper on education in *Frankenstein*, I'm interested in Victor's going to the University of Ingolstadt to realize his father's wish that Victor attend school where he could learn about a another culture. Plots can also allow you to make connections between the story you're interpreting and some other stories, and those connections might be useful in your interpretation. For example, the plot of *Frankenstein*, which involves a man who desires to bring life to the dead and creates a monster in the process, bears some similarity to the ancient Greek story of Icarus who flew too close to the sun on his wax wings. Both tell the story of a character who reaches too ambitiously after knowledge and suffers dire consequences.

Your plot could also have similarities to whole groups of other stories, all having conventional or easily recognizable plots. These types of stories are often called genres. Some popular genres include the gothic, the romance, the detective story, the bildungsroman (this is just a German term for a novel that is centered around the development of its main characters), and the novel of manners (a novel that focuses on the behavior and foibles of a particular class or social group). These categories are often helpful in characterizing a piece of writing, but this approach has its limitations. Many novels don't fit nicely into one genre, and others seem to borrow a bit from a variety of different categories. For example, given my working thesis on education, I am more interested in Victor's development than in relating *Frankenstein* to the gothic genre, so I might decide to treat the novel as a bildungsroman.

And just to complicate matters that much more, genre can sometimes take into account not only the type of plot but the form the novelist uses to convey that plot. A story might be told in a series of letters (this is called an epistolary form), in a sequence of journal entries, or in a combination of forms (*Frankenstein* is actually told as a journal included within a letter).

These matters of form also introduce questions of point of view, that is, who is telling the story and what do they or don't they know. Is the tale told by an omniscient or all-knowing narrator who doesn't interact in the events, or is it presented by one of the characters within the story? Can the reader trust that person to give an objective account, or does that narrator color the story with his or her own biases and interests?

Character refers to the qualities assigned to the individual figures in the plot. Consider why the author assigns certain qualities to a character or characters and how any such qualities might relate to your topic. For example, a discussion of Victor Frankenstein's education might take into account aspects of his character that appear to be developed (or underdeveloped) by the particular kind of education he undertakes. Victor tends to be ambitious, even compulsive about his studies, and I might be able to argue that his tendency to be extravagant leads him to devote his own education to writers who asserted grand, if questionable, conclusions.

Setting is the environment in which all of the actions take place. What is the time period, the location, the time of day, the season, the weather, the type of room or building? What is the general mood, and who is present? All of these elements can reflect on the story's events, and though the setting of a story tends to be less conspicuous than plot and character, setting still colors everything that's said and done within its context. If Victor Frankenstein does all of his experiments in "a solitary chamber, or rather a cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a staircase" (53) we might conclude that there is something anti-social, isolated, and stale, maybe even unnatural about his project and his way of learning.

Obviously, if you consider all of these elements, you'll probably have too much evidence to fit effectively into one paper. Your goal is merely to consider each of these aspects of fiction and include only those that are most relevant to your topic and most interesting to your reader. A good interpretive paper does not need to cover all elements of the story — plot, genre, narrative form, character, and setting. In fact, a paper that did try to say something about all of these elements would be unfocused. You might find that most of your topic could be supported by a consideration of character alone. That's fine. For my *Frankenstein* paper, I'm finding that my evidence largely has to do with the setting, evidence that could lead to some interesting conclusions that my reader probably hasn't recognized on his or her own.

6. Select your evidence

Once you've made your expanded list of evidence, decide which supporting details are the strongest. First, select the facts which bear the closest relation to your thesis statement. Second,

choose the pieces of evidence you'll be able to say the most about. Readers tend to be more dazzled with your interpretations of evidence than with a lot of quotes from the book. It would be useful to refer to Victor Frankenstein's youthful reading in alchemy, but my reader will be more impressed by some analysis of how the writings of the alchemists—who pursued magical principles of chemistry and physics—reflect the ambition of his own goals. Select the details that will allow you to show off your own reasoning skills and allow you to help the reader see the story in a way he or she may not have seen it before.

7. Refine your thesis

Now it's time to go back to your working thesis and refine it so that it reflects your new understanding of your topic. This step and the previous step (selecting evidence) are actually best done at the same time, since selecting your evidence and defining the focus of your paper depend upon each other. Don't forget to consider the scope of your project: how long is the paper supposed to be, and what can you reasonably cover in a paper of that length? In rethinking the issue of education in *Frankenstein*, I realize that I can narrow my topic in a number of ways: I could focus on education and culture (Victor's education abroad), education in the sciences as opposed to the humanities (the monster reads Milton, Goethe, and Plutarch), or differences in learning environments (e.g. independent study, university study, family reading). Since I think I found some interesting evidence in the settings that I can interpret in a way that will get my reader's attention, I'll take this last option and refine my working thesis about Victor's faulty education to something like this: "Victor Frankenstein's education in unnaturally isolated environments fosters his tragic ambition."

8. Organize your evidence

Once you have a clear thesis you can go back to your list of selected evidence and group all the similar details together. The ideas that tie these clusters of evidence together can then become the claims that you'll make in your paper. As you begin thinking about what claims you can make (i.e. what kinds of conclusion you can come to) keep in mind that they should not only relate to all the evidence but also clearly support your thesis. Once you're satisfied with the way you've grouped your evidence and with the way that your claims relate to your thesis, you can begin to consider the most logical way to organize each of those claims. To support my thesis about *Frankenstein*, I've decided to group my evidence chronologically. I'll start with Victor's education at home, then discuss his learning at the University, and finally address his own experiments. This arrangement will let me show that Victor was always prone to isolation in his education and that this tendency gets stronger as he becomes more ambitious.

There are certainly other organizational options that might work better depending on the type of points I want to stress. I could organize a discussion of education by the various forms of education found in the novel (for example, education through reading, through classrooms, and through observation), by specific characters (education for Victor, the monster, and Victor's bride, Elizabeth), or by the effects of various types of education (those with harmful, beneficial, or neutral effects).

9. Interpret your evidence

Avoid the temptation to load your paper with evidence from your story. Each time you use a specific reference to your story, be sure to explain the significance of that evidence in your own words. To get your readers' interest, you need to draw their attention to elements of the story that they wouldn't necessarily notice or understand on their own. If you're quoting passages without interpreting them, you're not demonstrating your reasoning skills or helping the reader. In most cases, interpreting your evidence merely involves putting into your paper what is already in your head. Remember that we, as readers, are lazy — all of us. We don't want to have to figure out a writer's reasoning for ourselves; we want all the thinking to be done for us in the paper.

General Hints

The previous nine steps are intended to give you a sense of the tasks usually involved in writing a good interpretive paper. What follows are just some additional hints that might help you find an interesting topic and maybe even make the process a little more enjoyable.

1. Make your thesis relevant to your readers

You'll be able to keep your readers' attention more easily if you pick a topic that relates to daily experience. Avoid writing a paper that identifies a pattern in a story but doesn't quite explain why that pattern leads to an interesting interpretation. Identifying the biblical references in *Frankenstein* might provide a good start to a paper—Mary Shelley does use a lot of biblical allusions—but a good paper must also tell the reader why those references are meaningful. So what makes an interesting paper topic? Simply put, it has to address issues that we can use in our own lives. Your thesis should be able to answer the brutal question "So what?" Does your paper tell your reader something relevant about the context of the story you're interpreting or about the human condition?

Some categories, like race, gender, and social class, are dependable sources of interest. This is not to say that all good

papers necessarily deal with one of these issues. My thesis on education in *Frankenstein* does not. But a lot of readers would probably be less interested in reading a paper that traces the instances of water imagery than in reading a paper that compares male or female stereotypes used in a story or that takes a close look at relationships between characters of different races. Again, don't feel compelled to write on race, gender, or class. The main idea is that you ask yourself whether the topic you've selected connects with a major human concern, and there are a lot of options here (for example, issues that relate to economics, family dynamics, education, religion, law, politics, sexuality, history, and psychology, among others).

Also, don't assume that as long as you address one of these issues, your paper will be interesting. As mentioned in step 2, you need to address these big topics in a complex way. Doing this requires that you don’t go into a topic with a preconceived notion of what you’ll find. Be prepared to challenge your own ideas about what gender, race, or class mean in a particular text.

2. Select a topic of interest to you

Though you may feel like you have to select a topic that sounds like something your instructor would be interested in, don't overlook the fact that you'll be more invested in your paper and probably get more out of it if you make the topic something pertinent to yourself. Pick a topic that might allow you to learn about yourself and what you find important.

Of course, your topic can't entirely be of your choosing. We're always at the mercy of the evidence that's available to us. For example, your interest may really be in political issues, but if you're reading *Frankenstein*, you might face some difficulties in finding enough evidence to make a good paper on that kind of topic. If, on the other hand, you're interested in ethics, philosophy, science, psychology, religion, or even geography, you'll probably have more than enough to write about and find yourself in the good position of having to select only the best pieces of evidence.

3. Make your thesis specific

The effort to be more specific almost always leads to a thesis that will get your reader's attention, and it also separates you from the crowd as someone who challenges ideas and looks into topics more deeply. A paper about education in general in *Frankenstein* will probably not get my reader's attention as much as a more specific topic about the impact of the learning environment on the main character. My readers may have already thought to some extent about ideas of education in the novel, if they have read it, but the chance that they have thought through something more specific like the educational environment is slim.

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12.5: Outlining for Literary Essays

Outlining Basics

The purpose of an outline is twofold: first, to help you organize your ideas. Second, to help readers follow along with your ideas. Think of an outline as a map for your essay. An essay without some kind of structure often flounders because readers get lost. The following are basic principles of essay organization that should help you craft logically organized papers that keep readers (and you!) on track.

- **Always include a clear thesis**. Think of this as the essay's destination. It essentially tells readers where the essay is going. Without a clear destination, readers might wonder why they are there, reading the essay in the first place!
- **Keep one main idea per paragraph.** Including a topic sentence—a one-sentence summary of the paragraph's main idea—is an effective way to keep the paragraph focused. Think of each topic sentence as a mini-thesis in support of the essay's overall thesis.
- **Include evidence to support all claims.** Usually, one quote or paraphrase per paragraph is an effective use of evidence. Spend at least 2-3 sentences analyzing and explaining each quote.
- **Be flexible.** An essay changes over time. Be willing to adapt and adjust the outline to fit the needs of the essay. If it doesn't serve your essay, let it go.

General Essay Template

This essay template is not meant to be prescriptive (the end all, be all), but to provide a commonly used essay structure students can adapt to write their own essays. As with any learning resource, students should choose organizational methods to enhance their learning and writing process.

Paragraph 1: Introduction

Sentence 1: **Hook**

Captures readers' attention and interest through a quote from the literary work, startling contextual information, or a question.

Sentence 2-3: **Context/Background**

Helps readers understand where the essay fits into the scholarly discourse by providing background information on the essay topic. For example, you might briefly summarize the literary work (for a close reading essay), or research on your topic (what other people/scholars have said about your topic) or you might give historical background on your topic, depending on the essay prompt.

Sentence 4: (The) Thesis statement

Articulates the main argument of the essay. It should be short, specific, debatable, and clear.

Sentence 5: **Essay map/sign post**

Uses the last sentence(s) of the introduction to transition into body paragraphs. This may look like a "map" where you state the main arguments you will make in your essay. For example, this argument is true because of reason X, reason Y, and reason Z. Basically, you give readers an idea of where the essay is going.

Paragraphs 2-10+: Body Paragraphs

Sentence 1: **Topic sentence**

Summarizes the main argument or point of the paragraph.

Sentence 2: Present e**vidence**

Present evidence in the form of quotes or paraphrasing from authoritative primary or secondary sources, which supports the paragraph main idea, as well as the thesis main idea. The more scholarly the source, the better; check with your librarian if you are unfamiliar with in-text citations.

Sentence 3: **Analyze, interpret, and e**xplain evidence

Use your own words to do so. While what the information means may be clear to you, the writer, you should not assume that readers will understand the information. Explain everything within reason.

Sentence 4: Contextualize **evidence**

Show how evidence relates to and supports your thesis statement

Sentence 5: Transition

Introduce the next paragraph topic by using a linking word, phrase, or idea. This will improve your essay's organization and "flow."

Final Paragraph: Conclusion

Sentence 1: **Restate thesis statement**

State the thesis using new words. This helps readers remember the focus of the essay.

Sentence 2-3: **Briefly summarize main arguments**

Present a summary of the essay's main arguments. Again, this reminds readers of your main points in case they have forgotten.

Sentence 4-5: **Explain the significance**

Indicate the significance of your analysis and/or research to other scholars in your field/scholars of the subject or topic/society in general. This is also called the "takeaway." Your readers should feel like they learned something new or are seeing the literature in a new light.

General Essay Advice

1. Be as specific as possible.
2. Stay on topic. All information in the essay should work towards proving your argument. (Use it or lose it.)
3. Use the known-new contract. Every sentence should "flow" into the next sentence, unless intentionally breaking the flow to make a point. This is achieved by using repeated words, ideas, or phrases from one sentence to the next.
4. **Practice ethical attribution. Do not plagiarize.** Plagiarism can result in an F for the essay and the course, and can even result in expulsion. When in doubt, ask your professor or librarian. Using ethical attribution is the best way to avoid plagiarism, as it also helps you build credibility as a writer and literary scholar.
5. For more information on essay writing—specifically works cited/references, citation, and formatting (MLA)—please visit the chapter on Ethical Attribution.

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12.6: Literary Thesis Statements

The Literary Thesis Statement

Literary essays are argumentative or persuasive essays. Their purpose is primarily analysis, but analysis for the purposes of showing readers your interpretation of a literary text. So the thesis statement is a one to two sentence summary of your essay's main argument, or interpretation.

Just like in other argumentative essays, the thesis statement should be a kind of opinion based on observable fact about the literary work.

Thesis Statements Should Be

- **Debatable**
  - Ex: "While most people reading *Hamlet* think he is the **tragic hero**, Ophelia is the real **hero** of the play as demonstrated through her critique of Elsinore's court through the language of flowers."
    - This thesis takes a position. There are clearly those who could argue against this idea.
- **Rooted in observations about literary devices, genres, or forms**
  - Ex: "Hawthorne's use of **symbolism** in *The Scarlet Letter* falters and ultimately breaks down with the introduction of the **character** Pearl, which shows the perceived danger of female sexuality in a puritanical society."
    - Look at the text in bold. See the strong emphasis on how form (literary devices like symbolism and character) acts as a foundation for the interpretation (perceived danger of female sexuality).
- **Specific**
  - Ex: "Through its **contrasting river and shore scene**s, Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* suggests that to find the true expression of American ideals, one must leave 'civilized' society and go back to nature" ("Thesis Statements")
    - Through this specific yet concise sentence, readers can anticipate the text to be examined (*Huckleberry Finn)*, the author (Mark Twain), the literary device that will be focused upon (river and shore scenes) and what these scenes will show (true expression of American ideals can be found in nature).

Thesis Statements Should NOT Be

- **Overly broad or generalized**
  - Ex: "I am going to be writing about "The Raven" by Edgar Allen Poe."
    - While we know what text and author will be the focus of the essay, we know nothing about what aspect of the essay the author will be focusing upon, nor is there an argument here.
- **More about society than the work of literature**
  - Ex: "Gender roles are bad and should be abolished."
    - This may be well and true, but this thesis does not appear to be about a work of literature. This could be turned into a thesis statement if the writer is able to show how this is the theme of a literary work (like "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid) and root that interpretation in observable data from the story in the form of literary devices.
- **A summary or obvious statement about the text**
  - Ex: "Hamlet is about a prince whose father dies."
    - Yes, this is true. But it is not debatable. You would be hard-pressed to find someone who could argue with this statement. Yawn, boring.
- **A judgment about the quality of the work**
  - Ex: "'La Migra' by Pat Mora is a really good/powerful poem"
    - This may very well be true. But the purpose of a literary critic is not to judge the quality of a literary work, but to make analyses and interpretations of the work based on observable structural aspects of that work.
- **About the author (biographical) rather than literature**
  - Ex: "Edgar Allan Poe and Washington Irving were both creepy towards women in their personal lives but in different ways"

- Again, this might be true, and might make an interesting essay topic, but unless it is rooted in textual analysis, it is not within the scope of a literary analysis essay. **Be careful not to conflate author and speaker! Author, speaker, and narrator are all different entities! See: intentional fallacy.**

Thesis Statement Formula

One way I find helpful to explain literary thesis statements is through a "formula":

Thesis statement = Observation + Analysis + Significance

- Observation: usually regarding the form or structure of the literature. This can be a pattern, like recurring literary devices. For example, "I noticed the poems of Rumi, Hafiz, and Kabir all use **symbols** such as **the lover's longing and Tavern of Ruin**"
- Analysis: You could also call this an opinion. This explains what you think your observations show or mean. "I think these recurring symbols all **represent the human soul's desire."** This is where your debatable argument appears.
- Significance: this explains what the significance or relevance of the interpretation might be. Human soul's desire to do what? Why should readers care that they represent the human soul's desire? "I think these recurring symbols all show the human soul's desire **to connect with God.**" This is where your argument gets more specific.

Thesis statement: The works of ecstatic love poets Rumi, Hafiz, and Kabir use **symbols** such as a lover's longing and the Tavern of Ruin **to illustrate** the **human soul's desire to connect with God**.

Thesis Examples

SAMPLE THESIS STATEMENTS

These sample thesis statements are provided as guides, not as required forms or prescriptions.

The Literary Device Thesis Statement

The thesis may focus on an analysis of one of the elements of fiction, drama, poetry or nonfiction as expressed in the work: character, plot, structure, idea, theme, symbol, style, imagery, tone, etc.

Example 1:

In "A Worn Path," Eudora Welty creates a fictional character in Phoenix Jackson whose determination, faith, and cunning illustrate the indomitable human spirit.

Note that the work, author, and character to be analyzed are identified in this thesis statement. The thesis relies on a strong verb (creates). It also identifies the element of fiction that the writer will explore (character) and the characteristics the writer will analyze and discuss (determination, faith, cunning).

Example 2:

The character of the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet serves as a foil to young Juliet, delights us with her warmth and earthy wit, and helps realize the tragic catastrophe.

The Genre / Theory Thesis Statement

The thesis may focus on illustrating how a work reflects the particular genre's forms, the characteristics of a philosophy of literature, or the ideas of a particular school of thought.

Example 1:

Samuel Beckett's Endgame reflects characteristics of Theatre of the Absurd in its minimalist stage setting, its seemingly meaningless dialogue, and its apocalyptic or nihilist vision.

Example 2:

A close look at dialogue, characterization, and paragraph structure in “The Story of an Hour” reveals how language, institutions, and expected demeanor suppress the natural desires and aspirations of women.

Generative Questions

One way to come up with a riveting thesis statement is to start with a generative question. The question should be open-ended and, hopefully, prompt some kind of debate.

- What is the effect of [choose a literary device that features prominently in the chosen text] in this work of literature, and how does it relate to a theme?
- How does this work of literature conform or resist its genre, and to what effect?
- How does this work of literature portray the environment, and to what effect?
- How does this work of literature portray race, and to what effect?
- How does this work of literature portray gender, and to what effect?
- What historical context is this work of literature engaging with, and how might it function as a commentary on this context?

These are just a few common of the common kinds of questions literary scholars engage with. As you write, you will want to refine your question to be even more specific. Eventually, you can turn your generative question into a statement. And, in the essay body paragraphs, you will provide evidence in support of your thesis statement in the form of quotations, paraphrase, and/or summary from the text.

Expert Examples

While nobody expects you to write professional-quality thesis statements in an undergraduate literature class, it can be helpful to examine some examples. As you view these examples, consider the structure of the thesis statement. You might also think about what kinds of questions the scholar wondered that led to this statement!

- *"Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (Achebe 3).
- "...I argue that the approach to time and causality in Boethius' sixth-century *Consolation of Philosophy* can support abolitionist objectives to dismantle modern American policing and carceral systems" (Chaganti 144).
- "I seek to expand our sense of the musico-poetic compositional practices available to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, focusing on the metapoetric dimensions of *Much Ado About Nothing*. In so doing, I work against the tendency to isolate writing as an independent or autonomous feature the work of early modern poets and dramatists who integrated bibliographic texts with other, complementary media" (Trudell 371).

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12.7: Essay as Argument

Argument

What is an argument, and why do you need one in your essays on literary analysis?

Arguments are everywhere

You may be surprised to hear that the word “argument” does not have to be written anywhere in your assignment for it to be an important part of your task. In fact, making an argument—expressing a point of view on a subject and supporting it with evidence—is often the aim of academic writing. Your instructors may assume that you know this and thus may not explain the importance of arguments in class.

Most material you learn in college is or has been debated by someone, somewhere, at some time. Even when the material you read or hear is presented as a simple fact, it may actually be one person’s interpretation of a set of information. Instructors may call on you to examine that interpretation and defend it, refute it, or offer some new view of your own. In writing assignments, you will almost always need to do more than just summarize information that you have gathered or regurgitate facts that have been discussed in class. You will need to develop a point of view on or interpretation of that material and provide evidence for your position.

Consider an example. For nearly 2000 years, educated people in many Western cultures believed that bloodletting—deliberately causing a sick person to lose blood—was the most effective treatment for a variety of illnesses. The claim that bloodletting is beneficial to human health was not widely questioned until the 1800s, and some physicians continued to recommend bloodletting as late as the 1920s. Medical practices have now changed because some people began to doubt the effectiveness of bloodletting; these people argued against it and provided convincing evidence. Human knowledge grows out of such differences of opinion, and scholars like your instructors spend their lives engaged in debates over what claims may be counted as accurate in their fields. In their courses, they want you to engage in similar kinds of critical thinking and debate.

Writing on literary texts is no different. You take a stance and make an argument in your essay with the needed support to back up your points.

Argumentation is not just what your instructors do. We all use argumentation on a daily basis, and you probably already have some skill at crafting an argument. The more you improve your skills in this area, the better you will be at thinking critically, reasoning, making choices, and weighing evidence. These are leadership skills that hone the mind and are highly sought after abilities, regardless of what field you choose to enter.

Making a claim

What is an argument? In academic writing, an argument is usually a main idea, often called a “claim” or “thesis statement,” backed up with evidence that supports the idea. In a majority of college papers, you will need to make some sort of claim and use evidence to support it, and your ability to do this well will separate your papers from those of students who see assignments as mere accumulations of fact and detail. In other words, gone are the happy days of being given a “topic” about which you can write anything. It is time to stake out a position and prove why it is a good position for a thinking person to hold. See our handout on thesis statements.

Claims can be as simple as, “Protons are positively charged, and electrons are negatively charged,” with evidence such as, “In this experiment, protons and electrons acted in such and such a way.” Claims can also be as complex as “The end of the South African system of apartheid was inevitable,” using reasoning and evidence such as, “Every successful revolution in the modern era has come about after the government in power has given and then removed small concessions to the uprising group.” In either case, the rest of your paper will detail the reasoning and evidence that have led you to believe that your position is best.

When beginning to write a paper, ask yourself, “What is my point?” For example, the point of this handout is to help you become a better writer, and we are arguing that an important step in the process of writing effective arguments is understanding the concept of argumentation. If your papers do not have a main point, they cannot be arguing for anything. Asking yourself what your point is can help avoid a mere “information dump.” Consider this: your instructors probably know a lot more than you do about your

subject matter. Why, then, would you want to provide them with material they already know? **Instructors are usually looking for two things:**

1. Proof that you understand the material
2. A demonstration of your ability to use or apply materials in ways that go beyond what you have read or heard

This second part can be done in many ways: you can critique the material, apply it to something else, or even just explain it in a different way. In order to succeed at this second step, though, you must have a particular point to argue.

Arguments in academic writing are usually complex and take time to develop. Your argument will need to be more than a simple or obvious statement, such as "Frank Lloyd Wright was a great architect." Such a statement might capture your initial impressions of Wright as you have studied him in class; however, you need to look deeper and express specifically what caused that "greatness." Your instructor will probably expect something more complicated, such as "Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture combines elements of European modernism, Asian aesthetic form, and locally found materials to create a unique new style," or "There are many strong similarities between Wright's building designs and those of his mother, which suggests that he may have borrowed some of her ideas." To develop your argument, you would then define your terms and prove your claim with evidence from Wright's drawings and buildings and those of the other architects you mention.

Evidence

Do not stop with having a point. You have to back up your point with evidence. The strength of your evidence, and your use of it, can make or break your argument. See our handout on evidence. You already have the natural inclination for this type of thinking, if not in an academic setting. Think about how you talked your parents into letting you borrow the family car. Did you present them with lots of instances of your past trustworthiness? Did you make them feel guilty because your friends' parents all let them drive? Did you whine until they just wanted you to shut up? Did you look up statistics on teen driving and use them to show how you didn't fit the dangerous-driver profile? These are all types of argumentation, and they exist in academia in similar forms.

Every field has slightly different requirements for acceptable evidence, so familiarize yourself with some arguments from within that field instead of just applying whatever evidence you like best. Pay attention to your textbooks and your instructor's lectures. What types of arguments and evidence are they using? The type of evidence that sways an English instructor may not work to convince a sociology instructor. Find out what counts as proof that something is true in that field. Is it statistics, a logical development of points, something from the object being discussed (artwork, text, culture, or atom), the way something works, or some combination of more than one of these things?

Be consistent with your evidence. Unlike negotiating for the use of your parents' car, a college paper is not the place for an all-out blitz of every type of argument. You can often use more than one type of evidence within a paper, but make sure that within each section, you are providing the reader with evidence appropriate to each claim. So, if you start a paragraph or section with a statement like, "Putting the student seating area closer to the basketball court will raise player performance," do not follow with your evidence on how much more money the university could raise by letting more students attend games for free. Information about how fan support raises player morale, which then results in better play, would be a better follow-up. Your next section could offer clear reasons why undergraduates have as much or more right to attend an undergraduate event as wealthy alumni—but this information would not go in the same section as the fan support stuff. You cannot convince a confused person, so keep things tidy and ordered.

Counterargument

One way to strengthen your argument and show that you have a deep understanding of the issue you are discussing is to anticipate and address counterarguments or objections. By considering what someone who disagrees with your position might have to say about your argument, you show that you have thought things through, and you dispose of some of the reasons your audience might have for not accepting your argument. Recall our discussion of student seating in the Dean Dome. To make the most effective argument possible, you should consider not only what students would say about seating but also what alumni who have paid a lot to get good seats might say.

You can generate counterarguments by asking yourself how someone who disagrees with you might respond to each of the points you've made or your position as a whole. **If you can't immediately imagine another position, here are some strategies to try:**

- Do some research. It may seem to you that no one could possibly disagree with the position you are arguing, but someone probably has. For example, some people argue that the American Civil War never ended. If you are making an argument concerning, for example, the outcomes of the Civil War, you might wish to see what some of these people have to say.
- Talk with a friend or with your teacher. Another person may be able to imagine counterarguments that haven't occurred to you.
- Consider your conclusion or claim and the premises of your argument and imagine someone who denies each of them. For example, if you argued, "Cats make the best pets. This is because they are clean and independent," you might imagine someone saying, "Cats do not make the best pets. They are dirty and needy."

Once you have thought up some counterarguments, consider how you will respond to them—will you concede that your opponent has a point but explain why your audience should nonetheless accept your argument? Will you reject the counterargument and explain why it is mistaken? Either way, you will want to leave your reader with a sense that your argument is stronger than opposing arguments.

When you are summarizing opposing arguments, be charitable. Present each argument fairly and objectively, rather than trying to make it look foolish. You want to show that you have considered the many sides of the issue. If you simply attack or caricature your opponent (also referred to as presenting a "straw man"), you suggest that your argument is only capable of defeating an extremely weak adversary, which may undermine your argument rather than enhance it.

It is usually better to consider one or two serious counterarguments in some depth, rather than to give a long but superficial list of many different counterarguments and replies.

Be sure that your reply is consistent with your original argument. If considering a counterargument changes your position, you will need to go back and revise your original argument accordingly.

Audience

Audience is a very important consideration in argument. Take a look at our handout on audience. A lifetime of dealing with your family members has helped you figure out which arguments work best to persuade each of them. Maybe whining works with one parent, but the other will only accept cold, hard statistics. Your kid brother may listen only to the sound of money in his palm. It's usually wise to think of your audience in an academic setting as someone who is perfectly smart but who doesn't necessarily agree with you. You are not just expressing your opinion in an argument ("It's true because I said so"), and in most cases, your audience will know something about the subject at hand—so you will need sturdy proof. At the same time, do not think of your audience as capable of reading your mind. You have to come out and state both your claim and your evidence clearly. Do not assume that because the instructor knows the material, he or she understands what part of it you are using, what you think about it, and why you have taken the position you've chosen.

Critical reading

Critical reading is a big part of understanding argument. Although some of the material you read will be very persuasive, do not fall under the spell of the printed word as authority. Very few of your instructors think of the texts they assign as the last word on the subject. Remember that the author of every text has an agenda, something that he or she wants you to believe. This is OK—everything is written from someone's perspective—but it's a good thing to be aware of. For more information on objectivity and bias and on reading sources carefully, read our handouts on evaluating print sources and reading to write.

Take notes either in the margins of your source (if you are using a photocopy or your own book) or on a separate sheet as you read. Put away that highlighter! Simply highlighting a text is good for memorizing the main ideas in that text—it does not encourage critical reading. Part of your goal as a reader should be to put the author's ideas in your own words. Then you can stop thinking of these ideas as facts and start thinking of them as arguments.

When you read, ask yourself questions like, "What is the author trying to prove?" and, "What is the author assuming I will agree with?" Do you agree with the author? Does the author adequately defend her argument? What kind of proof does she use? Is there something she leaves out that you would put in? Does putting it in hurt her argument? As you get used to reading critically, you will start to see the sometimes hidden agendas of other writers, and you can use this skill to improve your own ability to craft effective arguments.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

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12.8: Summarizing

Summary: Using it Wisely

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Knowing how to summarize something you have read, seen, or heard is a valuable skill, one you have probably used in many writing assignments. It is important, though, to recognize when you must go beyond describing, explaining, and restating texts and offer a more complex analysis. This handout will help you distinguish between summary and analysis and avoid inappropriate summary in your academic writing.

Is summary a bad thing?

Not necessarily. But it's important that your keep your assignment and your audience in mind as you write. If your assignment requires an argument with a thesis statement and supporting evidence—as many academic writing assignments do—then you should limit the amount of summary in your paper. You might use summary to provide background, set the stage, or illustrate supporting evidence, but keep it very brief: a few sentences should do the trick. Most of your paper should focus on your argument. (Our handout on argument will help you construct a good one.)

Writing a summary of what you know about your topic before you start drafting your actual paper can sometimes be helpful. If you are unfamiliar with the material you're analyzing, you may need to summarize what you've read in order to understand your reading and get your thoughts in order. Once you figure out what you know about a subject, it's easier to decide what you want to argue.

You may also want to try some other pre-writing activities that can help you develop your own analysis. Outlining, freewriting, and mapping make it easier to get your thoughts on the page. (Check out our handout on brainstorming for some suggested techniques.)

Why is it so tempting to stick with summary and skip analysis?

Many writers rely too heavily on summary because it is what they can most easily write. If you're stalled by a difficult writing prompt, summarizing the plot of The Great Gatsby may be more appealing than staring at the computer for three hours and wondering what to say about F. Scott Fitzgerald's use of color symbolism. After all, the plot is usually the easiest part of a work to understand. Something similar can happen even when what you are writing about has no plot: if you don't really understand an author's argument, it might seem easiest to just repeat what he or she said.

To write a more analytical paper, you may need to review the text or film you are writing about, with a focus on the elements that are relevant to your thesis. If possible, carefully consider your writing assignment before reading, viewing, or listening to the material about which you'll be writing so that your encounter with the material will be more purposeful. (We offer a handout on reading towards writing.)

How do I know if I'm summarizing?

As you read through your essay, ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I stating something that would be obvious to a reader or viewer?
- Does my essay move through the plot, history, or author's argument in chronological order, or in the exact same order the author used?
- Am I simply describing what happens, where it happens, or to whom it happens?

A "yes" to any of these questions may be a sign that you are summarizing. **If you answer yes to the questions below, though, it is a sign that your paper may have more analysis (which is usually a good thing):**

- Am I making an original argument about the text?
- Have I arranged my evidence around my own points, rather than just following the author's or plot's order?
- Am I explaining why or how an aspect of the text is significant?

Certain phrases are warning signs of summary. **Keep an eye out for these:**

- "[This essay] is about…"
- "[This book] is the story of…"
- "[This author] writes about…"

- "[This movie] is set in…"

Here's an example of an introductory paragraph containing unnecessary summary. **Sentences that summarize are in italics:**

- The Great Gatsby *is the story of a mysterious millionaire, Jay Gatsby, who lives alone on an island in New York. F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote the book, but the narrator is Nick Carraway. Nick is Gatsby's neighbor, and he chronicles the story of Gatsby and his circle of friends, beginning with his introduction to the strange man and ending with Gatsby's tragic death. In the story, Nick describes his environment through various colors, including green, white, and grey. Whereas white and grey symbolize false purity and decay, respectively, the color green offers a symbol of hope.*

Here's how you might change the paragraph to make it a more effective introduction:

- In The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald provides readers with detailed descriptions of the area surrounding East Egg, New York. In fact, Nick Carraway's narration describes the setting with as much detail as the characters in the book. Nick's description of the colors in his environment presents the book's themes, symbolizing significant aspects of the post-World War I era. Whereas white and grey symbolize the false purity and decay of the 1920s, the color green offers a symbol of hope.

This version of the paragraph mentions the book's title, author, setting, and narrator so that the reader is reminded of the text. And that sounds a lot like summary—but the paragraph quickly moves on to the writer's own main topic: the setting and its relationship to the main themes of the book. The paragraph then closes with the writer's specific thesis about the symbolism of white, grey, and green.

How do I write more analytically?

Analysis requires breaking something—like a story, poem, play, theory, or argument—into parts so you can understand how those parts work together to make the whole. Ideally, you should begin to analyze a work as you read or view it instead of waiting until after you're done—it may help you to jot down some notes as you read. Your notes can be about major themes or ideas you notice, as well as anything that intrigues, puzzles, excites, or irritates you. Remember, analytic writing goes beyond the obvious to discuss questions of how and why—so ask yourself those questions as you read.

The St. Martin's Handbook encourages readers to take the following steps in order to analyze a text:

- Identify evidence that supports or illustrates the main point or theme as well as anything that seems to contradict it.
- Consider the relationship between the words and the visuals in the work. Are they well integrated, or are they sometimes at odds with one another? What functions do the visuals serve? To capture attention? To provide more detailed information or illustration? To appeal to readers' emotions?
- Decide whether the sources used are trustworthy.
- Identify the work's underlying assumptions about the subject, as well as any biases it reveals. (Lunsford 38)

Once you have written a draft, some questions you might want to ask yourself about your writing are, "What's my point?" or, "What am I arguing in this paper?" If you can't answer these questions, then you haven't gone beyond summarizing. You may also want to think about how much of your writing comes from your own ideas or arguments. If you're only reporting someone else's ideas, you probably aren't offering an analysis.

What strategies can help me avoid excessive summary?

- Read the assignment (the prompt) as soon as you get it. Make sure to reread it before you start writing. Go back to your assignment often while you write. (Check out our handout on reading assignments).
- Formulate an argument (including a good thesis) and be sure that your final draft is structured around it, including aspects of the plot, story, history, background, etc. only as evidence for your argument. (You can refer to our handout on constructing thesis statements).
- Read critically—imagine having a dialogue with the work you are discussing. What parts do you agree with? What parts do you disagree with? What questions do you have about the work? Does it remind you of other works you've seen?
- Make sure you have clear topic sentences that make arguments in support of your thesis statement. (Read our handout on paragraph development if you want to work on writing strong paragraphs).
- Use two different highlighters to mark your paper. With one color, highlight areas of summary or description. With the other, highlight areas of analysis. For many college papers, it's a good idea to have lots of analysis and minimal summary/description.

- Ask yourself: What part of the essay would be obvious to a reader/viewer of the work being discussed? What parts (words, sentences, paragraphs) of the essay could be deleted without loss? In most cases, your paper should focus on points that are essential, and will be interesting to people who have already read or seen the work you are writing about.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial.

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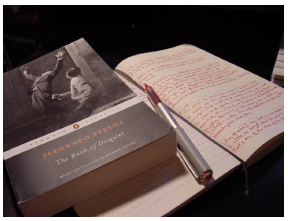
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12.9: Essay Type- Literary Response

The Response Essay

The **response essay** is likely the most informal type of literary analysis essay students will encounter in a literature course. This essay simply asks the student to read the assigned text(s) and respond to said text(s). There are several purposes in writing such an essay. This kind of essay:

1. helps students better understand the reading through informal analysis
2. enables students to practice close-reading in a low-stakes, informal, and more comfortable way
3. prepares students for writing a more formal essay by recording their initial impressions of a text



"Fernando Pessoa" by Jennifer Fred Merchán, 2006. CC BY-SA 2.0

Usually, the requirements for such an essay are more open-ended than what is expected on more formal essay assignments. For example, students are often allowed to use first-person "I" and **colloquial** (that is, spoken rather than academic) language. A **thesis statement** and formal organization are also usually not required.

What is always required is a willingness to ask questions and engage with the text. The following are some questions students might respond to when writing a response essay:

- **First impressions:** When reading the title and first lines, what impression did you get from the text? How did this impression change as you read the rest of the story or poem? What might the title indicate about the story or poem?
- **Characters:** What kind of character is the main character of the story or poem? Are they likable? Trustworthy? Why? Which character do you like or relate to the most, and why? Which character do you dislike the most, and why? What kinds of characters (**dynamic, round, flat, static**) are featured in this story?
- **Tone:** How would you describe the tone of the story? What words, phrases, images, or snippets of dialogue indicate this tone?
- **Figurative language:** What figurative language or literary devices do you notice? Why do you think certain images appear? What kinds of patterns of language do you notice, and what significance might these patterns or literary devices have on the story or poem?

In addition to these basic literary analysis questions, some helpful tips for writing this kind of essay:

- **Take notes as you read.** Use highlighters to mark quotations or passages that jump out at you, along with post-it notes or page clips to mark those pages so you can find them again when writing the essay. Don't be afraid to write notes in the margins of the book. If you must sell back the book to the bookstore, or don't want to mark the book for other reasons, you can use post-it notes to write your responses. Essentially, effective note-taking is like having a conversation with the text.
- **Keep a document or journal open to record your ideas as you read.** For example, refer to the image at the top of this page. This way, you can begin responding to the text as you read it, making efficient use of your time. You can then simply develop your reading notes in the essay.
- **Cite passages to support your analyses.** Like in an argumentative or persuasive essay, be ready to drop quotations or paraphrase into the essay to support your analysis and show those reading your essay examples of what you are talking about. Be ready to provide page or line numbers to cite the source. For example, if you say Hamlet (the main character of *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare) comes across as whiny and egotistical, be prepared to quote or paraphrase the play and point readers to the act, scene, and line numbers which show your point.

Example Student Response Essay Prompt

Length requirement:	750 words minimum (no maximum, but please keep it unc
Essay type:	Response
Number of sources required:	One: the primary text you are analyzing. Use MLA citatio

Objective

By the end of this assignment, students will be able to engage with a work of literature through analysis and response. They will be able to define and locate examples of at least three basic literary devices within a single literary text.

> **Audience:** instructor & classmates
>
> **Purpose:** practice analyzing literature in a less formal environment
>
> **Content:** literary analysis & response, practice for the upcoming literary analysis essay

Directions

Students will choose one work of literature to analyze (that is, pick apart, zooming in, and looking closely at the literary devices and narrative elements of the story). Students may choose any of the stories we have read so far in class. As you read the story, respond to anything interesting in the text you notice.

- Focus on one story
- Identify & analyze at least three **literary devices** such as character, plot, setting, metaphor, and so forth
- Use either objective third-person or first-person "I"
- Present tense verbs, informal tone
- Quote & paraphrase the text using MLA Works Cited + In-Text citation
- Do not to bring in any secondary sources yet: this should be your personal observations and analysis of the text. Avoid using Shmoop, Cliffnotes, or any other plot summary websites. These will tarnish your reading process. I am interested in YOUR thoughts, not Shmoop's
- Avoid plot summary, unless used briefly to contextualize analysis. I know what happens in the stories. This is NOT a "summarize the story in your own words" exercise, but a "what patterns or interesting devices did you notice? What stuck out to you? Why do you think the author made the choices they did? In what ways does the story's form reflect its content?" exercise.

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12.10: Essay Type- Literary Analysis

The Literary Analysis Essay

The literary analysis essay is the study of literature's meat and potatoes. Like the response essay, a literary analysis essay prompt asks students to examine one or more works of literature closely. The difference is that while a response essay is informal, a literary analysis essay is more formal. By more formal, I mean it abides by the following structural requirements:

- Clear, debatable thesis statement
- Clear introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion
- Quotations as evidence from the text to support the thesis

Let's take a deeper look into the literary analysis process, which focuses on the form of the text, also called **New Criticism.**

New Criticism Practice

John Donne (1572–1631), the great metaphysical poet, provides a metaphor that is useful for close reading. In "The Canonization" (1633) he writes:

We'll build sonnets pretty rooms;

As well a well-wrought urn becomes

The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,

And by these hymns, all shall approve

Us canonized for Love.

John Donne, "The Canonization," Poetry Foundation, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173353.

Another poet returns to the same metaphor 118 years later. Thomas Gray, in "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), writes:

Can storied urn or animated bust

Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?

Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Courtyard," Poetry Foundation, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173564.

Both Donne and Gray use the image of the urn in their poetry. An *urn*, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), is "an earthenware or metal vessel or vase of a rounded or ovaloid form and with a circular base, used by various peoples especially in former times… to preserve the ashes of the dead. Hence vaguely used (esp. *poet.*) for 'a tomb or sepulchre, the grave.'"*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "urn." Donne and Gray use the urn poetically, or metaphorically, for the urn is an image, a container to hold poetic meaning. To Donne, the poet can "build sonnets pretty rooms; / As well a well-wrought urn becomes"; to Gray, the urn becomes "storied" or an "animated bust" capable of containing stories and meaning. As an image, then, the urn becomes symbolic: poets argue that a poem is like an urn, a container for artistic meaning.

Let's add one final component to our *urn* image. Jump ahead another sixty-nine years from Gray's poem and read John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820). At the end of this poem, Keats writes:

When old age shall this generation waste,

Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, ed. Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1919; Bartleby.com, 1999), http://www.bartleby.com/101/625.html.

Donne's "**well-wrought urn**" became the title of a book by Cleanth Brooks—*The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1947) Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1956)—a central manifesto of the New Criticism. New Criticism is synonymous with close reading, so the urn becomes an important symbol for the New Critics: the urn as artistic container of beauty and meaning represents the New Critical enterprise. A poem, a play, a novel, a short story is like a "storied urn" or "well-wrought urn," capable of conveying poetic beauty and truth. Even if the poem is "Jabberwocky"!

In all likelihood, you have already practiced **New Criticism**, the close reading of a poem, short story, or longer narrative that focuses on the unity of that work (or even in your daily lives through text messages, tweets, song lyrics, etc.). When you examine a short story for its character development, a drama for its plot construction, or a poem for its imagery, you are reading as a New Critic, looking at the literary work through the lens of close reading. In a sense, New Critical close reading is at the heart of every form of literary analysis you do, regardless of the theoretical approach taken. Thus it becomes essential that you become proficient in close readings of texts, for this skill is the foundation of all forms of literary criticism. If you cannot read a text closely and analyze it, you will have difficulty reading from any critical perspective. But fear not! If you have ever read and reread emails/text messages/tweets/instagram posts from a friend or family member or whomever (trying to decipher the underlying meaning), if you've ever explored song lyrics and

discovered a deeper meaning or interpretation, you have these skills. And these skills are like any other, you need to practice and hone them.

Your Process

1. List the papers, if any, you have written in high school or college using the close reading approach.
2. Describe your experience writing such papers.
3. What challenges or questions do you remember having as you were working on these papers?
4. On which literary work have you decided to write your paper?
5. What are the fundamental questions you have about this work?

Focus on New Critical Strategies

The New Critics, as we discussed, regard a literary work as an *urn*—a well-wrought, storied urn, or a Grecian urn. As Keats writes, this urn contains not only beauty but also truth: a work of literature has some objective meaning that is integral to its artistic design. In other words, literature is the art of conveying truth about the world. Thus the New Critics view the study of literature as an inherently valuable enterprise; literary criticism, it follows, is fruitful because it clarifies art by assigning a truth value to this art. To quote the nineteenth-century poet and critic Matthew Arnold, as he writes in *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1865), literature reflects "the best that is known and thought in the world" (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2010). To the New Critics, as you can see, literature—in particular, the analysis of it—is a profound activity.

A central concern of the New Critics is to understand how meaning and form interweave into a total artistic effect, the well-wrought urn. A New Critical reading assumes that the literary work has an organic structure that leads to unity or harmony in the work. An important concern for New Critics, consequently, is to show how meaning is achieved or dependent on the organic structure—the form—of the work. A New Critical reading, then, focuses on the various elements of literature that complement and create the theme. Consider the way you might pick apart, almost unconsciously, the elements of a song to determine its themes: beat, melody, tone, lyrics, rhythm, speed, key, etc. All these elements help a listener determine the themes of a song and there are countless varieties of combinations to express any number of ideas/feelings/stories (love song, breakup song, celebratory song, sad song, etc.). Have you ever wondered why a song might sound happy, but when you listen to the words, you realize it's a sad song? Why did the artist choose to create this dichotomy? What is accomplished by creating this tension between happy and sad? How does this add to the experience of the piece? These are the things New Critics explore. These are some of the tools used in literary analysis.

Basic Philosophy of Close Reading

A New Critic's toolbox will hold those elements of literature that allow for the discussion of form and technique as it applies to meaning. Since New Critics perform a close reading of the text to illustrate how structure (form/organization/etc.) and theme (idea/subject/etc.) are inseparable, they are eager to tell us both how to read and how *not* to read. They identify various fallacies of reading that must be avoided:

The Intentional Fallacy

The **intentional fallacy** occurs when readers claim to understand an author's intended meaning for a work of literature. The New Critics believed that a literary work belongs to the readers, to the public, which suggests that we should read the work isolated from what the author may have said about the work. In other words, the critic never knows specifically what the author intended. Indeed, an author may have conveyed meanings he or she did not intend at all, but those meanings are still present in their work (what the author intended doesn't really matter). The literary critic, then, must concentrate solely on the extrinsic formal qualities of the poem, play, short story, or novel.

The Biographical Fallacy

Related to the intentional fallacy is the **biographical fallacy**, which, as you might suspect, is committed when you use an author's life as a frame of reference to interpret a work of art. The New Critics took painstaking measures to keep the focus on the work of art itself (separate the art from the artist).

The Affective Fallacy

The **affective fallacy** is produced when the critic brings in his or her personal feelings about how a literary work moves them. While New Critics were aware that many readers found meaning in the emotional impact of literature, they were careful to distinguish between subjective emotional responses ("I hate this!") and objective, critical statements ("This isn't effective because of reasons X, Y, and Z") about a literary work. Critics, then, should stick closely to the work of art, eliminating the author's intention from consideration, and they should also eliminate their emotional involvement in the reading experience. We discover later in our study that many critical theories—psychoanalytic and reader-response theories, in particular—are diametrically opposed to New Criticism: both psychoanalytic and reader-response theories highlight the way a

literary work affects a reader's emotional and intellectual responses.

The Heresy of Paraphrase

Finally, the New Critics warned against the **heresy of paraphrase**, which happens when readers artificially separate meaning from structure or form. You have probably fallen into this trap once or twice when you concentrated on summarizing a work's plot rather than analyzing its meaning. New Criticism teaches us not to assign a meaning to a literary work *unless* that meaning can be supported by a close examination of the artistic elements of the text. To say that Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is about the death of a migrant worker fails to acknowledge that the poem does not support such a reading. Humpty Dumpty, in fact, could be accused of the heresy of paraphrase, as Amy Chisnell explores in her student paper later in the chapter.

In review, a close reading, as defined by the New Critics, focuses narrowly on the literary work as a well-wrought urn. All we need for our interpretation is the literary work itself, where we examine how the artistry of the work leads to a larger theme that reflects the true value of the work. Easy to state, more difficult to do! So let's now turn to see how a close reading can be connected to the writing process itself.

Your Process

add here

1. How do you react to such rules that define the philosophy of New Critical close reading?
2. What do you see as the strengths of such an approach?
3. What do you see as some of the limits to this approach?

The Writing Process and the Protocols of Close Reading

If New Critics provide us with so many strategies on how *not* to read a text, they should present us with strategies *for* reading texts. And they do. They suggest protocols of reading that are the heart of traditional close readings of texts. In a nutshell, a close reading exposes a problem or issue that needs further examination to bring unity to the work; a close reading demonstrates how a literary work's meaning is unified, balanced, and harmonized by its aesthetic—or literary—structure. Your close reading, then, often identifies a **tension** or **ambiguity**—the issue or problem—that can be resolved by showing that the literary work achieves unity even in the apparent tension or ambiguity. Consequently, the critic can often examine how language creates tension through **paradox** or **irony**. Paradox (when something appears contradictory or discordant, but finally proves to be actually true) and irony (when a perceived meaning or intention is eventually found not to be accurate) are a result of a writer's use of language in a *metaphorical* way.

Your Process

add here

1. Read Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (http://www.bartleby.com/101/625.html).
2. Examine the last two lines of the poem (49–50).
3. Do you think the urn is speaking the lines at the end? Does it matter?
4. Read Cleanth Brooks's interpretation of the ending lines (www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html).
5. Then read the following overview.

There is no more famous example of a professional critical reading than Cleanth Brooks's "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes." Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. You can access the essay at www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html.

Brooks's reading of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" begins by disagreeing with T. S. Eliot, who believed the concluding lines of the poem—"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—constituted a major flaw in the poem, for, as Brooks relates, "the troubling assertion is apparently an intrusion upon the poem—does not grow out of it—is not dramatically accommodated to it." Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. Eliot feels the urn's speech doesn't make much sense—and that the statement simply isn't true. Brooks sets out to counter Eliot and prove that the poem is unified around the central paradox of the poem: "What is the relation of the beauty (the goodness, the perfection) of a poem to the truth or falsity of what it seems to assert?"

Brooks contends that the poem is "a parable on the nature of poetry, and of art in general," and that the concluding lines must be taken in the "total context of the poem." Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. When read in this manner, the urn's speech was "'in character,' was dramatically appropriate, [and] was properly prepared for." Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. To support his contention, Brooks provides a stanza-by-stanza close reading in which he suggests that the paradox of the speaking urn is naturally part of each stanza and related to a key thematic concept: the poem

highlights the tension between bustling life depicted on the urn and the frozen vignettes of the "Cold Pastoral." Brooks concludes, "If the urn has been properly dramatized, if we have followed the development of the metaphors, if we have been alive to the paradoxes which work throughout the poem, perhaps then, we shall be prepared for the enigmatic, final paradox which the 'silent form' utters." Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. In concluding his essay, Brooks warns readers not to fall into the trap of paraphrase, for we must ultimately focus on "the world-view, or 'philosophy,' or 'truth' of the *poem as a whole* in terms of its dramatic wholeness" (Brooks's emphasis). Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html.

Brooks's reading of Keats's ode is an exemplar of New Critical reading. Remember, a close reading will examine a literary work and find some objective meaning (a theme) that is harmonized with structure, thus balancing theme and form.

Implementing the Reading Protocols: A Strategy

To perform a close reading, use the following strategy:

1. Identify a tension or ambiguity in the literary work, the "problem" that needs to be solved by a close reading. In other words, your interpretation will highlight a theme or meaning that resides in the work.
2. Demonstrate how the work sustains or achieves this meaning through its artistic "principle of composition," which might include an examination of the following:
    - imagery
    - character
    - plot
    - symbol
    - setting
    - point of view
    - language use (i.e., denotation, connotation, metaphor, simile, personification, rhythm)

    Of course, the principle of composition is determined by the literary genre you are analyzing (i.e., short story, poetry, drama, novel). By showing that #1 is dependent on #2, you present a New Critical interpretation reflecting how meaning is integral to theme.

Example Literary Analysis Assignment

Contributors: Adapted from material in "The Foundations of New Criticism: An Overview" by Ryan Cordell and John Pennington.

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12.11: Essay Type- Comparing and Contrasting Literature

Compare and Contrast Essay Basics

The Compare and Contrast Essay is a literary analysis essay, but, instead of examining one work, it examines two or more works. These works must be united by a common theme or thesis statement. For example, while a literary analysis essay might explore the significance of ghosts in William Shakespeare's Hamlet, a compare/contrast essay might explore the significance of the supernatural in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.

Literary Analysis Thesis Statement:

While Horatio seems to think the ghost of Old Hamlet is a demon trying to lead Hamlet to death, and Gertrude and Claudius think it is a figment of Hamlet's insanity, Hamlet's status as an unreliable narrator and the ghost actually symbolizes the oppression of Catholics during Shakespeare's time period.

Compare and Contrast Thesis Statement:

The unreliable narrators paired with the ghosts in both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* symbolize the oppression of Catholics in Shakespeare's time period.

Essay Genre Expectations

- **Tone:** formal, scholarly
  - Use first-person pronouns sparingly (you, me, we, our)
  - Avoid colloquialisms
  - Spell out contractions
  - Use subject-specific terminology, such as naming literary devices
- **Texts:** two or more
- **Avoid summary.** Aim for analysis and interpretation
- **MLA formatting and citations**

Organization

While the literary analysis essay follows a fairly simple argumentative essay structure, the compare and contrast essay is slightly more complicated. It might be arranged by:

- Literary Work
- Alternating literary works
- Topic/subtopics

In general, ensure each paragraph works to support the thesis statement, and that both works receive equal attention.

One Option for Organization

1. Introduction
   1. Background of topic
   2. Background of works related to topic
   3. Thesis Statement
2. Body paragraph 1
   1. Topic sentence
   2. Summary of Text 1
   3. Summary of Text 2
   4. Explanation of unifying theme for both texts
3. Body paragraphs
   1. Topic sentence
   2. Introduction of evidence
   3. Evidence
   4. Explanation of evidence
   5. Analysis of evidence
4. Conclusion
   1. Restatement of thesis in new words
   2. Summary of essay arguments
   3. Take-away

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12.12: Essay Type- Literary Research

The Research Essay

The research essay is basically a literary analysis essay supported by research. Usually, this research takes the form of literary criticism. For more on literary criticism, check out the literary criticism chapter.

Finding a Topic

Often times, instructors will assign a research topic. Be sure to consult with your instructor and/or the assignment prompt given by the instructor. If, however, the assignment is open-ended, then that is exciting news! You can write an essay about your interests in literature. It is like an adventure! However, too much choice can be debilitating. You want an essay that is large enough in scope that you can write an entire essay about it, but you don't want too large of a topic as you may not be able to feasibly cover it in the short amount of time you have. Therefore, a good way to find a "Goldilocks" topic—not too big and not too small—is to start with a simple formula and adjust as you go.

1. Find the literary text you want to write about. For example, "Bajadas" by Francisco Cantu or *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare.
2. Find an aspect or angle about that text which interests you. For example, when writing about "Bajadas," you might want to write about the ecology of the border desert, the use of animal symbolism, or the history of border politics and how it may have informed the story. When writing about *Hamlet*, you might be interested in the way female characters like Ophelia and Gertrude are treated, about the symbolism behind Ophelia's flowers, or about espionage on the part of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Finding a topic formula

Topic = angle + text

Example:

Topic = Espionage + *Hamlet*

Working thesis statement: In this essay, I will be exploring espionage in *Hamlet*

Brainstorming

Once you come up with a topic, start brainstorming. Yes, brainstorm before you perform research. The reason for this is because your instructor is interested in your original ideas about the text, not the ideas of scholars. **Secondary sources should only be used to support your own original ideas.** If you start with research, it is much more difficult to come up with your own ideas, because all of your ideas are going to sound a lot like the articles you read. So start with your initial impressions of your topic.

Brainstorming Example:

Espionage in Hamlet is interesting to me because it seems like everyone in Elsinore is spying on each other. For example, Claudius sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Ophelia to spy on Hamlet. Polonius dies because he is spying on Hamlet. In turn, Hamlet spies on Claudius during the play within the play. Spying seems to play a huge part in the play, and I wonder why. Was there espionage in Shakespeare's London? Might it have influenced or inspired his writing?

Outlining

Once you get some of your basic ideas down, you might start outlining the "big ideas" of your essay. This will help when it comes to writing the essay and organizing your ideas. It will also help you when it comes time to research.

Outlining Example

1. Background of espionage in Hamlet
2. Espionage in Shakespeare's Time
3. Analysis of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Spying scene
4. Analysis of Ophelia spying scene
5. Analysis of Polonius spying scene
6. Analysis of Claudius/Hamlet spying scene
7. Analysis of Hamlet conducting counter-espionage against Claudius
8. How might these scenes have been influenced by espionage in Shakespeare's time?
9. Conclusion

Writing

Before you begin researching, write what you can on your own. For example, write a literary analysis essay where you simply examine and analyze the literature without input from outside sources. This will allow you to solidify your ideas. It will also make it easier to find search terms when you are ready to research.

Researching

Once you have a solid topic and writing, it's time to research your essay topic. Starting with some questions about your topic is a great way to start. See the chapter on navigating scholarly sources for a more detailed look at how to find research material.

Annotated Bibliography

As you read, keep track of your sources using an Annotated Bibliography or Research Log. Basically, an Annotated Bibliography is just like a regular Works Cited page, except every source is summarized after the bibliographical entry. Because you will be reading a lot of different sources, some 20+ pages in length, it can be difficult to keep track of the ideas of each source. An Annotated Bibliography is a tool to help you keep track of your research. This also can help you avoid plagiarism! When taking notes on your sources, be sure to clearly mark summary, paraphrase, and quotation so that you ethically attribute words and ideas to their author.

Annotated Bibliography Example

Lastname 1

Student first name Last name

Professor Soandso

English 2

30 March 2019

Annotated Bibliography: Espionage in Hamlet

Working title: Elizabethan Spy Culture Reflected in Hamlet

Working thesis: for this essay I will explore how Elizabethan spy culture might have influenced Hamlet. For example, I will look at how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are used to spy on Hamlet, and how it seems like everyone is watching everyone in Elsinore: perhaps Claudius is a stand-in for the English monarchy, a critique of its corruption?

Honan, Park. *Christopher Marlowe : Poet & Spy.* OUP Oxford, 2005. EBSCOhost, ezproxy.solano.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.as...&site=eds-live.

Christopher Marlowe was a contemporary of Shakespeare. He was also his competitor as a fellow playwright and poet. This text is a scholarly biography of Marlowe's life as a spy and poet. This source gives a picture of the cultural context of Shakespeare: of particular relevance to my research is the chapter describing Marlowe and Shakespeare's relationship (187-196). Though this gives interesting background information, it might solely be useful to note that Shakespeare regularly rubbed elbows with a spy, Marlowe, so he was at least somewhat familiar with Elizabethan spy culture, though how much he knew is a mystery. Otherwise, this text may not be very useful because it only briefly mentions Shakespeare.

Sample Student Research Essay

Text: "The Hunting of the Hare" by Margaret Cavendish

Topic: Symbol & Theme: Humanity's Attraction to Destruction and Violence

Rebekah's research essay on Margaret Cavendish's poem "The Hunting of the Hare" illustrates several of the principles discussed in this chapter:

- How to integrate scholarly secondary sources without relinquishing control of the argument
- How to make it clear whose ideas are whose through use of tag words and phrases
- How to employ parenthetical in-text citations according to MLA guidelines
- How to construct a Works Cited page according to MLA guidelines

The parts where the author engages with scholarly criticism are **in bold.** Pay close attention to how and where student Rebekah Fish incorporates primary and secondary sources.

Rebekah Fish

English 3460

Human Nature in Margaret Cavendish's "The Hunting of the Hare"

Margaret Cavendish's 1653 poem "The Hunting of the Hare" relates the cruel fate of a hare that has fallen prey to a group of hunters. A study of this poem suggests that Cavendish can be viewed as one of the first supporters for animal rights as she criticizes the cruelty of men who kill animals for sport. On a more personal level, Cavendish could have closely identified with the hare, which is ostensibly humanlike, and also with its fear. She might have even intended to parallel her critics to the dogs and the hunters within the poem. On a grander scale, Cavendish might be making the critical judgment that humankind seeks enjoyment through violent competition with others. Through a study of the many different thematic levels of the poem, Margaret Cavendish's "The Hunting of the Hare" seems to have an overarching theme of humanity's destructive attraction to violence in order to achieve supremacy.

It is evident through the poet's portrayal of the hare that it is meant to be seen as a significant and even a symbolic figure, beginning in the first line of the poem where the hare is granted the name "Wat." He is humanlike, "glaring" across the landscape as his "Haires blew up behind" him in the wind instead of his fur (4 and 6). The hare is also described as "wise" instead of merely being a sentient creature, and Cavendish makes its humanlike features even more evident as the hare "walks about" rather than hopping or crawling (Cavendish 7 and 11). Another way the rabbit is seemingly anthropomorphized is through the continual use of the personal pronoun "him" in the poem, which is used instead of "it." To indicate her disapproval

of the unethical treatment of all animals, near the very end of the poem Cavendish grants all creatures the same humanlike quality as the hare by saying that creatures are being "murdered" (100) by men instead of "killed." The word "murder" connotes unlawfulness and makes a connection between that illicitness and the killing of animals, indicating that all sentient life, that of humans and animals, is important and worthy of being preserved. Some may even argue that Cavendish was trying to make a point that humankind should not express dominant authority over other creatures through the use of violence, because, within the last lines of the poem, man is portrayed not only as murderous but also as an oppressive tyrant that rules over all other living creatures.

Cavendish's humanlike portrayal of the hare might raise concerns for some readers. **Bruce Thomas Boehrer discusses some critics' objection to an author's anthropomorphizing nonhuman characters. To anthropomorphize is to project one's own tendencies and traits onto another species. Some critics argue that this act ignores a nonhuman species' real behaviors and traits and illustrates humans' feeling of dominance over nature. However, as Boehrer explains, many animal characters in literature "challenge the human-animal divide" (5) and force people to examine their values, especially those related to nature. Donna Landry supports the view that "The Hunting of the Hare" raises these issues. She argues that in Cavendish's work, she promotes the "democratizing of relations between humans and other species" (471). Rather than emphasizing the superiority of human emotions by anthropomorphizing the hare, Cavendish humanizes him in order to bridge the gap between the reader and the hare. Paul Salzman states that Cavendish's main goal as a writer was "to enter into an empathetic relationship with the world around her" (142). In "The Hunting of the Hare," Cavendish portrays the hare with empathy in order to persuade the reader that committing unnecessary violence on animals is cruel and terrible.**

In addition, the description of the hare is used to form and emphasize the strong connection between the hare and Cavendish, who was similarly being pursued by her critics as a female writer. **This criticism is clearly shown through the description of Cavendish by Mary Evelyn, who portrayed her as extravagant and vain and said that her discourse was "as airy, empty, whimsical, and rambling as her books" (Qtd. in Damrosch and Dettmar 2058-9).** Many people of Cavendish's time viewed her as outrageous, partly because publicly recognized women writers were rare during the seventeenth century. **Although scholars seriously study Cavendish's work now, Emma L.E. Rees says that because of the harsh critics of her time, "The impression which lasted for many years was of an eccentric, disturbed and arrogant woman" (11). "The Hunting of the Hare" could be interpreted as a response to this criticism.** Her critics, paralleled by both the "cruel dogs" (16) and the men in the poem, are often referred to as merciless. The critics are described as nosy through common references to the dogs and how they always "thrust [their] snuffling nose[s]" into things (64). They are also described as loudmouths through the image of dogs who cry out with their "wide mouths" (19). While at times, Cavendish seems to be uncaring as to what the critics say about her, at other times, she seems terrified of the public's opinion of her life and writing, much like the hare's terror of being pursued. She suggests that, in public, she hides her fear of the critics, similarly to the hare when, "Licking his feet, he wiped his ears so clean / That none could tell that Wat had hunted been" (41-2). Although critics continued to pursue her, Cavendish emphasizes through the poem that she will continue to maintain her composure until the very end, like the hare does until his death. Yet, this continual pursuing and killing of hares, which parallels Cavendish's experience, critiques human nature's desire for supremacy over all living things—even each other.

Not only can Cavendish's poem be seen as a response to animal cruelty and the cruelty of critics, but it can also be seen as an assessment of how humankind treats its brethren. In the poem, the men are portrayed as bloodthirsty monsters that thrive off cruelty to others. The men in Cavendish's poem, who "destroy those lives that God did make" (98) solely for "sport or recreation's sake" (97), seek to kill the rabbit, the symbol, through heavy personification, of a fellow human (Cavendish 2062).

Margaret Cavendish's "The Hunting of the Hare" is a comment on human nature and the desire for obtaining dominion over others by any means necessary. Through her extensive use of pathos throughout the poem, her audience at the time was meant to feel a sense of culpability and a desire to change. Despite her portrayal of human nature as inherently evil, the guilt the audience is supposed to feel offers a sense of hope, as it indicates that human nature is capable of being altered and even changed.

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12.13: How to Perform Literary Research (Navigating Secondary Sources and Library Databases)

Finding Literary Criticism

Have you ever looked up the lyrics of a song you loved? Perhaps you went to Genius or azlyrics.com or another lyrics website. Perhaps you went on Reddit to see what other people have said about the meaning of the song lyrics. In each of these cases, you performed an informal version of literary research! That is, you tried to find out more about a work of literature (song lyrics) by researching what other listeners have said about the topic. When performing research for formal literature essays, the concept is the same, but there expectations are higher in the sense that you are tasked with finding what *experts* have said about a work of literature. In the field of literary studies, these experts are called **literary critics.** The articles they write are called **literary criticism.**

Finding Literary Criticism is similar to doing a Google search. The difference is that, instead of Google, you use your school's library databases specific to the study of literature. Just as you would not go to McDonald's to buy sushi, so too must you consider the places you go to find criticism specific to your research needs. To that end, there are several resources geared towards the study of literature where students can find literary criticism. Each database presents its own benefits and challenges.

Physical Books



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Campus Library

If you are a student with access to a college campus library, ask the librarian for help finding literary criticism. Generally, college libraries will have access to these kinds of materials. If the material you are looking for is not available at your campus, your librarian may be able to request it through a process called Inter-library Loan (ILL). Talk to your librarian about your options. Be sure to block out enough time to access and read these articles, which often takes longer than students anticipate.

City Library or Library for the General Public

While city libraries or libraries for the general public may not have as much literary criticism as a college library, they do usually have some of the more famous examples. For example, Harold Bloom's *Hamlet: Poem Unlimited* (2003) is available at most libraries. Again, librarians are your friends in the research process: ask your librarian for help finding materials to support your individual research needs. Increasingly, libraries have access to massive amounts of digital material even if they don't have physical copies.

Online Databases



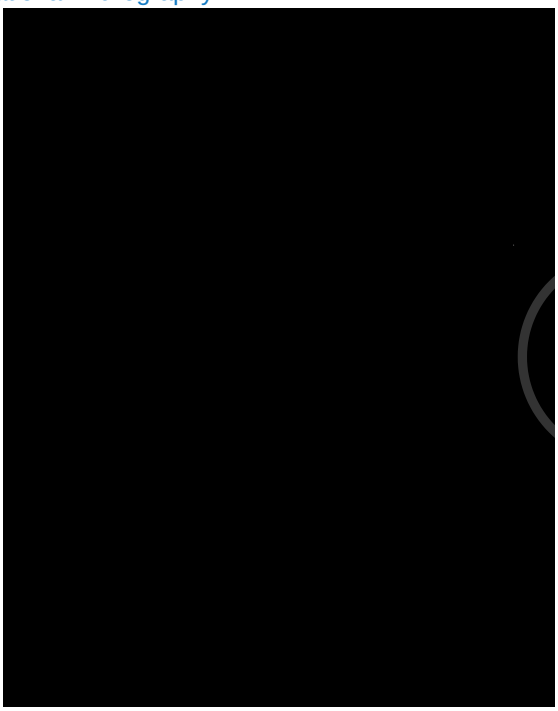
"JSTOR Icon" by Gwillhickers (2018) is licensed CC BY-SA 4.0

If your campus or local library subscribes to databases, the following databases are the most relevant to the study of literature.

Literary Reference Center Plus

This database is probably the most easily accessible and user-friendly database for literary research. It contains primary sources (classic texts), and secondary sources (biographies and literary criticism). It is completely focused on literature, so this database means you do not have to worry about finding material from other disciplines. However, this database is also not as comprehensive as other databases.

MLA International Bibliography



The MLA International Bibliography is an online database containing over 2.8 million articles in over 60 languages from all over the world (MLA). New articles are added every year. This is probably the best place to find the most relevant and current literary criticism. Warning: be careful to avoid Book Reviews which are not considered literary criticism! If you have the ability to filter your search, click "Scholarly" or "Peer Reviewed" to increase likelihood you will find relevant articles.

JSTOR

JSTOR is another large database but is less literature and language-specific as it also contains articles in subjects such as history and psychology. It can be an effective tool for finding older literary criticism and primary source documents. It also provides a free research course to aid students in using databases. However, watch out, because it is such a massive database it also contains a lot of book reviews (which are not literary criticism) and a lot of really, really old literary criticism that may no longer be relevant to the discipline.

Oxford English Dictionary

This is the go-to dictionary for literary critics. It is better for the study of literature than Google or Merriam-Webster because it provides the historical context (etymology) of terms in addition to their current usage, an important consideration for older works such as *Hamlet*, where word meanings have changed significantly over time. When reading a work of literature, have the Oxford English Dictionary open in a separate window so that you can look up words as you read.

General Tips for Using Databases

On Navigating Databases

Search Terms

Before jumping into the databases, be sure to have, at least, a topic you are interested in researching. A topic should include a work of literature and an aspect of that work of literature. For example:

- Work of Literature: Hamlet
- Aspect: Prison/Incarceration

So my research topic might be: "Prison in Hamlet" or "Incarceration in Hamlet"

Once you have this main topic, brainstorm a list of search terms that might generate results. Because the searching mechanism is an algorithm, you may need to experiment with different search terms, as computers have a difficult time recognizing synonyms.

Example of Terms Related to Topic

- Hamlet prison
- Incarceration Hamlet
- Panopticon Hamlet
- Jail Hamlet
- All of Denmark is a prison
- Elsinore prison
- Elsinore incarceration
- Elsinore jail

Now that I have some search terms, I will try using them in each database.

After performing my searches, the following results popped up, each in a different database:

Ahnert, Ruth. “The Prison in Early Modern Drama.” *Literature Compass*, vol. 9, no. 1, Jan. 2012, pp. 34–47. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1111/j.1741-4113.2011.00860.x.

Hopkins, Lisa. “‘Denmark’s a Prison’: Hamlet and the Earl of Bothwell.” *Hamlet Studies: An International Journal of Research on The Tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke*,

> vol. 19, no. 1–2, 1997, pp. 93–96. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cpid,uid&custid=s4302453&db=mlf&AN=1997065700&site=ehost-live.

Kozusko, Matt. “Monstrous!: Actors, Audiences, Inmates, and the Politics of Reading Shakespeare.” *Shakespeare Bulletin: A Journal of Performance Criticism and Scholarship*,

> vol. 28, no. 2, 2010, pp. 235–251. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cpid,uid&custid=s4302453&db=mlf&AN=2010582294&site=ehost-live.

Steggle, Matthew. “CRITICAL READINGS: What Kinds of Prison Are in Hamlet?” *Critical Insights: Hamlet*, Jan. 2019, pp. 134–148. *EBSCOhost*,

> search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lkh&AN=137041969&site=lrc-plus.

I can now begin to read my sources and learn more about my research topic.

Research Log

While researching, you will likely encounter many, many, many different sources. Because there are so many sources, it is easy to lose track of them unless you organize your search process. Otherwise, at best, you might miss out on including a source that is helpful. At worst, you might unintentionally plagiarize and receive a 0 on the assignment.

Thus, to help combat the potential for disorganization during the research process, keep a research log. A research log—or, more formally, an Annotated Bibliography—is basically a document where you keep track of information, such as:

- Search terms used
- Databases explored
- Citations for articles/resources found

- Annotations of these sources

Keeping a research log may seem like extra work, but, in the long run, it is actually more efficient. It helps you keep track of the sources you have already explored so that you do not waste time re-reading articles and performing research steps you already completed. It also makes it easier to pull information when writing the essay and aids you in avoiding plagiarism. Depending on your class, you may be asked to perform a more formal research log called an **Annotated Bibliography.** More on that in the next section.

So what are you waiting for? Enjoy the process of research!

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12.14: Sample Student Literary Analysis Essays

The following examples are essays where student writers focused on close-reading a literary work.

While reading these examples, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is the essay's thesis statement, and how do you know it is the thesis statement?
2. What is the main idea or topic sentence of each body paragraph, and how does it relate back to the thesis statement?
3. Where and how does each essay use evidence (quotes or paraphrase from the literature)?
4. What are some of the literary devices or structures the essays analyze or discuss?
5. How does each author structure their conclusion, and how does their conclusion differ from their introduction?

Example 1: Poetry

Victoria Morillo

Instructor Heather Ringo

ENGL 002

3 August 2022

How Nguyen’s Structure Solidifies the Impact of Sexual Violence in “The Study”

Stripped of innocence, your body taken from you. No matter how much you try to block out the instance in which these two things occurred, memories surface and come back to haunt you. How does a person, *a young boy*, cope with an event that forever changes his life? Hieu Minh Nguyen deconstructs this very way in which an act of sexual violence affects a survivor. In his poem, “The Study,” the poem's speaker recounts the year in which his molestation took place, describing how his memory filters in and out. Throughout the poem, Nguyen writes in free verse, permitting a structural liberation to become the foundation for his message to shine through. While he moves the readers with this poignant narrative, Nguyen effectively conveys the resulting internal struggles of feeling alone and unseen.

The speaker recalls his experience with such painful memory through the use of specific punctuation choices. Just by looking at the poem, we see that the first period doesn’t appear until line 14. It finally comes after the speaker reveals to his readers the possible, central purpose for writing this poem: the speaker's molestation. In the first half, the poem makes use of commas, em dashes, and colons, which lends itself to the idea of the speaker stringing along all of these details to make sense of this time in his life. If reading the poem following the conventions of punctuation, a sense of urgency is present here, as well. This is exemplified by the lack of periods to finalize a thought; and instead, Nguyen uses other punctuation marks to connect them. Serving as another connector of thoughts, the two em dashes give emphasis to the role memory plays when the speaker discusses how “no one [had] a face” during that time (Nguyen 9-11). He speaks in this urgent manner until the 14th line, and when he finally gets it off his chest, the pace of the poem changes, as does the more frequent use of the period. This stream-of-consciousness-like section when juxtaposed with the latter half of the poem, causes readers to slow down and pay attention to the details. It also splits the poem in two: a section that talks of the fogginess of memory then transitions into one that remembers it all.

In tandem with the fluctuating nature of memory, the utilization of line breaks and word choice help reflect the damage the molestation has had. Within the first couple of lines of the poem, the poem demands the readers’ attention when the line breaks from “floating” to “dead” as the speaker describes his memory of Little Billy (Nguyen 1-4). This line break averts the readers’ expectation of the direction of the narrative and immediately shifts the tone of the poem. The break also speaks to the effect his trauma has ingrained in him and how “[f]or the longest time,” his only memory of that year revolves around an image of a boy’s death. In a way, the speaker sees himself in Little Billy; or perhaps, he’s representative of the tragic death of his boyhood, how the speaker felt so “dead” after enduring such a traumatic experience, even referring to himself as a “ghost” that he tries to evict from his conscience (Nguyen 24). The feeling that a part of him has died is solidified at the very end of the poem when the speaker describes himself as a nine-year-old boy who’s been “fossilized,” forever changed by this act (Nguyen 29). By choosing words associated with permanence and death, the speaker tries to recreate the atmosphere (for which he felt trapped in) in order for readers to understand the loneliness that came as a result of his trauma. With the assistance of line breaks, more attention is drawn to the speaker's words, intensifying their importance, and demanding to be felt by the readers.

Most importantly, the speaker expresses eloquently, and so heartbreakingly, about the effect sexual violence has on a person. Perhaps what seems to be the most frustrating are the people who fail to believe survivors of these types of crimes. This is evident when he describes "how angry" the tenants were when they filled the pool with cement (Nguyen 4). They seem to represent how people in the speaker's life were dismissive of his assault and who viewed his tragedy as a nuisance of some sorts. This sentiment is bookended when he says, "They say, *give us details*, so I give them my body. / They say, *give us proof*, so I give them my body," (Nguyen 25-26). The repetition of these two lines reinforces the feeling many feel in these scenarios, as they're often left to deal with trying to make people believe them, or to even *see* them.

It's important to recognize how the structure of this poem gives the speaker space to express the pain he's had to carry for so long. As a characteristic of free verse, the poem doesn't follow any structured rhyme scheme or meter; which in turn, allows him to not have any constraints in telling his story the way he wants to. The speaker has the freedom to display his experience in a way that evades predictability and engenders authenticity of a story very personal to him. As readers, we abandon anticipating the next rhyme, and instead focus our attention to the other ways, like his punctuation or word choice, in which he effectively tells his story. The speaker recognizes that some part of him no longer belongs to himself, but by writing "The Study," he shows other survivors that they're not alone and encourages hope that eventually, they will be freed from the shackles of sexual violence.

Works Cited

Nguyen, Hieu Minh. "The Study" *Poets.Org*. Academy of American Poets, Coffee House Press, 2018, https://poets.org/poem/study-0.

Example 2: Fiction

Todd Goodwin

Professor Stan Matyshak

Advanced Expository Writing

Sept. 17, 20—

Poe's "Usher": A Mirror of the Fall of the House of Humanity

Right from the outset of the grim story, "The Fall of the House of Usher," Edgar Allan Poe enmeshes us in a dark, gloomy, hopeless world, alienating his characters and the reader from any sort of physical or psychological norm where such values as hope and happiness could possibly exist. He fatalistically tells the story of how a man (the narrator) comes from the outside world of hope, religion, and everyday society and tries to bring some kind of redeeming happiness to his boyhood friend, Roderick Usher, who not only has physically and psychologically wasted away but is entrapped in a dilapidated house of ever-looming terror with an emaciated and deranged twin sister. Roderick Usher embodies the wasting away of what once was vibrant and alive, and his house of "insufferable gloom" (273), which contains his morbid sister, seems to mirror or reflect this fear of death and annihilation that he most horribly endures. A close reading of the story reveals that Poe uses mirror images, or reflections, to contribute to the fatalistic theme of "Usher": each reflection serves to intensify an already prevalent tone of hopelessness, darkness, and fatalism.

It could be argued that the house of Roderick Usher is a "house of mirrors," whose unpleasant and grim reflections create a dark and hopeless setting. For example, the narrator first approaches "the melancholy house of Usher on a dark and soundless day," and finds a building which causes him a "sense of insufferable gloom," which "pervades his spirit and causes an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart, an undiscerned dreariness of thought" (273). The narrator then optimistically states: "I reflected that a mere different arrangement of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression" (274). But the narrator then sees the reflection of the house in the tarn and experiences a "shudder even more thrilling than before" (274). Thus the reader begins to realize that the narrator cannot change or stop the impending doom that will befall the house of Usher, and maybe humanity. The story cleverly plays with the word *reflection*: the narrator sees a physical reflection that leads him to a mental reflection about Usher's surroundings.

The narrator's disillusionment by such grim reflection continues in the story. For example, he describes Roderick Usher's face as distinct with signs of old strength but lost vigor: the remains of what used to be. He describes the house as a once happy and vibrant place, which, like Roderick, lost its vitality. Also, the narrator describes Usher's hair as growing wild on his rather obtrusive head, which directly mirrors the eerie moss and straw covering the outside of the house. The narrator continually longs to see these

bleak reflections as a dream, for he states: “Shaking off from my spirit what *must* have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building” (276). He does not want to face the reality that Usher and his home are doomed to fall, regardless of what he does.

Although there are almost countless examples of these mirror images, two others stand out as important. First, Roderick and his sister, Madeline, are twins. The narrator aptly states just as he and Roderick are entombing Madeline that there is “a striking similitude between brother and sister” (288). Indeed, they are mirror images of each other. Madeline is fading away psychologically and physically, and Roderick is not too far behind! The reflection of “doom” that these two share helps intensify and symbolize the hopelessness of the entire situation; thus, they further develop the fatalistic theme. Second, in the climactic scene where Madeline has been mistakenly entombed alive, there is a pairing of images and sounds as the narrator tries to calm Roderick by reading him a romance story. Events in the story simultaneously unfold with events of the sister escaping her tomb. In the story, the hero breaks out of the coffin. Then, in the story, the dragon’s shriek as he is slain parallels Madeline’s shriek. Finally, the story tells of the clangor of a shield, matched by the sister’s clanging along a metal passageway. As the suspense reaches its climax, Roderick shrieks his last words to his “friend,” the narrator: “Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door” (296).

Roderick, who slowly falls into insanity, ironically calls the narrator the “Madman.” We are left to reflect on what Poe means by this ironic twist. Poe’s bleak and dark imagery, and his use of mirror reflections, seem only to intensify the hopelessness of “Usher.” We can plausibly conclude that, indeed, the narrator is the “Madman,” for he comes from everyday society, which is a place where hope and faith exist. Poe would probably argue that such a place is opposite to the world of Usher because a world where death is inevitable could not possibly hold such positive values. Therefore, just as Roderick mirrors his sister, the reflection in the tarn mirrors the dilapidation of the house, and the story mirrors the final actions before the death of Usher. “The Fall of the House of Usher” reflects Poe’s view that humanity is hopelessly doomed.

Work Cited

Poe, Edgar Allan. “The Fall of the House of Usher.” 1839. *Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library*. 1995. Web. 1 July 2012. <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PoeFall.html>.

Example 3: Poetry

Amy Chisnell

Professor Laura Neary

Writing and Literature

April 17, 20—

Don’t Listen to the Egg!: A Close Reading of Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky”

“You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir,” said Alice. “Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called ‘Jabberwocky’?”

“Let’s hear it,” said Humpty Dumpty. “I can explain all the poems that ever were invented—and a good many that haven’t been invented just yet.” (Carroll 164)

In Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*, Humpty Dumpty confidently translates (to a not so confident Alice) the complicated language of the poem “Jabberwocky.” The words of the poem, though nonsense, aptly tell the story of the slaying of the Jabberwock. Upon finding “Jabberwocky” on a table in the looking-glass room, Alice is confused by the strange words. She is quite certain that “*somebody* killed *something*,” but she does not understand much more than that. When later she encounters Humpty Dumpty, she seizes the opportunity at having the knowledgeable egg interpret—or translate—the poem. Since Humpty Dumpty professes to be able to “make a word work” for him, he is quick to agree. Thus he acts like a New Critic who interprets the poem by performing a close reading of it. Through Humpty’s interpretation of the first stanza, however, we see the poem’s deeper comment concerning the practice of interpreting poetry and literature in general—that strict analytical translation destroys the beauty of a poem. In fact, Humpty Dumpty commits the “heresy of paraphrase,” for he fails to understand that meaning cannot be separated from the form or structure of the literary work.

Of the 71 words found in “Jabberwocky,” 43 have no known meaning. They are simply nonsense. Yet through this nonsensical language, the poem manages not only to tell a story but also gives the reader a sense of setting and characterization. One feels, rather than concretely knows, that the setting is dark, wooded, and frightening. The characters, such as the Jubjub bird, the Bandersnatch, and the doomed Jabberwock, also appear in the reader’s head, even though they will not be found in the local zoo. Even though most of the words are not real, the reader is able to understand what goes on because he or she is given free license to imagine what the words denote and connote. Simply, the poem’s nonsense words *are* the meaning.

Therefore, when Humpty interprets “Jabberwocky” for Alice, he is not doing her any favors, for he actually misreads the poem. Although the poem in its original is constructed from nonsense words, by the time Humpty is done interpreting it, it truly does not make any sense. The first stanza of the original poem is as follows:

’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

All mimsy were the borogroves,

An the mome raths outgrabe. (Carroll 164)

If we replace, however, the nonsense words of “Jabberwocky” with Humpty’s translated words, the effect would be something like this:

’Twas four o’clock in the afternoon, and the lithe and slimy badger-lizard-corkscrew creatures

Did go round and round and make holes in the grass-plot round the sun-dial:

All flimsy and miserable were the shabby-looking birds

with mop feathers,

And the lost green pigs bellowed-sneezed-whistled.

By translating the poem in such a way, Humpty removes the charm or essence—and the beauty, grace, and rhythm—from the poem. The poetry is sacrificed for meaning. Humpty Dumpty commits the heresy of paraphrase. As Cleanth Brooks argues, “The structure of a poem resembles that of a ballet or musical composition. It is a pattern of resolutions and balances and harmonizations” (203). When the poem is left as nonsense, the reader can easily imagine what a “slithy tove” might be, but when Humpty tells us what it is, he takes that imaginative license away from the reader. The beauty (if that is the proper word) of “Jabberwocky” is in *not* knowing what the words mean, and yet understanding. By translating the poem, Humpty takes that privilege from the reader. In addition, Humpty fails to recognize that meaning cannot be separated from the structure itself: the nonsense poem reflects this literally—it means “nothing” and achieves this meaning by using “nonsense” words.

Furthermore, the nonsense words Carroll chooses to use in “Jabberwocky” have a magical effect upon the reader; the shadowy sound of the words create the atmosphere, which may be described as a trance-like mood. When Alice first reads the poem, she says it seems to fill her head “with ideas.” The strange-sounding words in the original poem *do* give one ideas. Why is this? Even though the reader has never heard these words before, he or she is instantly aware of the murky, mysterious mood they set. In other words, diction operates not on the denotative level (the dictionary meaning) but on the connotative level (the emotion(s) they evoke). Thus “Jabberwocky” creates a shadowy mood, and the nonsense words are instrumental in creating this mood. Carroll could not have simply used *any* nonsense words.

For example, let us change the “dark,” “ominous” words of the first stanza to “lighter,” more “comic” words:

’Twas mearly, and the churly pells

Did bimble and ringle in the tink;

All timpy were the brimbledimps,

And the bip plips outlink.

Shifting the sounds of the words from dark to light merely takes a shift in thought. To create a specific mood using nonsense words, one must create new words from old words that convey the desired mood. In “Jabberwocky,” Carroll mixes “slimy,” a grim idea, “lithe,” a pliable image, to get a new adjective: “slithy” (a portmanteau word). In this translation, brighter words were used to get a

lighter effect. “Mearly” is a combination of “morning” and “early,” and “ringle” is a blend of “ring” and "dingle.” The point is that “Jabberwocky’s” nonsense words are created specifically to convey this shadowy or mysterious mood and are integral to the “meaning.”

Consequently, Humpty’s rendering of the poem leaves the reader with a completely different feeling than does the original poem, which provided us with a sense of ethereal mystery, of a dark and foreign land with exotic creatures and fantastic settings. The mysteriousness is destroyed by Humpty’s literal paraphrase of the creatures and the setting; by doing so, he has taken the beauty away from the poem in his attempt to understand it. He has committed the heresy of paraphrase: “If we allow ourselves to be misled by it [this heresy], we distort the relation of the poem to its ‘truth’… we split the poem between its ‘form’ and its ‘content’” (Brooks 201). Humpty Dumpty’s ultimate demise might be seen to symbolize the heretical split between form and content: as a literary creation, Humpty Dumpty is an egg, a well-wrought urn of nonsense. His fall from the wall cracks him and separates the contents from the container, and not even all the King’s men can put the scrambled egg back together again!

Through the odd characters of a little girl and a foolish egg, “Jabberwocky” suggests a bit of sage advice about reading poetry, advice that the New Critics built their theories on. The importance lies not solely within strict analytical translation or interpretation, but in the overall effect of the imagery and word choice that evokes a meaning inseparable from those literary devices. As Archibald MacLeish so aptly writes: “A poem should not mean / But be.” Sometimes it takes a little nonsense to show us the sense in something.

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MacLeish, Archibald. “Ars Poetica.” *The Oxford Book of American Poetry*. Ed. David Lehman. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. 385–86. Print.

Example 4: Poetry

Firstname Lastname

Instructor Heather Ringo

English 2

21 March 2019

"golden daffodils" as Economics of Personification in Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud"

A **lyric poem** about an isolated **speaker** wandering lonely among flowers starts out sad but becomes joyful by the end. The **title** of this poem by William Wordsworth immediately gave me the sense it would be a sad poem since it included the word “lonely.” This word usually has negative connotations. The first two **lines** of the **stanza** confirmed my initial impressions in that it used **imagery** of a cloud floating “high” over an empty landscape (1-2). The **tone** is sad and moody. However, this loneliness is disrupted when the cloudlike **speaker** is joined by his new friends: **personified** daffodils (4). In this essay, I argue that through wealth **metaphor** and **anthropomorphism**, **the speaker** rejects the money economy to embrace an economy of plants, where daffodils are valuable friends in an otherwise lonely landscape.

Some might say describing flowers with human anatomy is creepy. The idea of flowers “tossing their heads” seems like a nightmare or bad drug trip at first (12). But on closer inspection, it's not just the daffodils. The entire landscape is alive. There is apparently a dance-off going on between the lake waves and the flowers (14). What started off as a lonely poem quickly grew into a kind of party. Through transforming what seems at first like an empty landscape into one that is populated, the narrator presents an unconventional approach to loneliness, where perhaps companionship includes nonhuman beings.

While being lonely often has negative **connotations,** there is a lot of **diction** choices that make it seem as if loneliness is valued by the speaker. The reason I say that is because the daffodils aren’t just **personified,** but they are also described as “golden” (4). They could have been described as yellow, lemon-colored, any number of **adjectives**. The association with a valuable metal seems

intentional, especially considering the speaker describes the “show” of the daffodil dance as “wealth” near the end of the poem (18). Most people would not immediately associate loneliness or common flowers with wealth.

Perhaps the true value of the daffodils is indicated in this final **stanza** emphasizing the value of daffodils in memory. Here the moment of observing the dancing daffodils again seems to be represented as a renewable gift that nature gave to the **speaker.** The **speaker sits** at home alone on his couch in a “pensive mood” (20). According to Webster's dictionary, "pensive" means a thoughtful state, with negative connotations of “thoughtful sadness” (“Pensive”). So the speaker is afflicted with sadness, and then the memory of the daffodils acts as a kind of cure, so the speaker’s “heart with pleasure fills” (23). While traditional gifts can be exhausted or used up, this source is renewable: he can think of the daffodils again and again to refill any emptiness he may feel. His heart functions as a kind of bank or wallet. This emptiness of his thoughts filled by the golden daffodil memory mirrors the original empty, lonely landscape at the beginning of the poem which was then populated by the daffodils.

Looking back, the poem tells a story about finding value in surprising **settings.** It might even be described as having a **plot l**ike a work of short fiction, perhaps classifying it as **narrative poetry**. While the “lonely” beginning of the poem and the “pensive” mood indicate loneliness as negative, the speaker in the poem traces a journey where he finds “the bliss of solitude” (22). This phrase is somewhat of an **oxymoron**: bliss and solitude are not usually used together. Many find that walks in nature help them feel better. Perhaps the speaker of the poem is speaking to a universal truth about the value of nature? Or about how we aren’t really ever alone? Or that maybe we should reconsider what we truly value, and what nature is worth? Certainly the poem makes an argument for relationship with the nonhuman world.

Through transforming daffodils into golden companions, and turning loneliness into blissful solitude, the poem exchanges one economy for another. The speaker gains a hoard of memories that they are able to look back upon and reconsider. This form of wealth is renewable. Perhaps this exploration of the botanical economy and its revaluation of loneliness can be applied to Wordsworth's other poems.

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Wordsworth, William. *“I wandered lonely as a cloud.” 1807. Poetry Foundation.* https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45521/i-wandered-lonely-as-a-cloud Accessed 21 October 2019.

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12.15: Writing About Poetry

Overview

When your teachers or professors ask you to analyze a literary text, they often look for something frequently called close reading. Close reading is a deep analysis of how a literary text works; it is both a reading process and something you include in a literary analysis paper, though in a refined form.

Fiction writers and poets build texts out of many central components, including subject, form, and specific word choices. Literary analysis involves examining these components, which allows us to find, in small parts of the text, clues to help us understand the whole. For example, if an author writes a novel in the form of a personal journal about a character's daily life, but that journal reads like a series of lab reports, what do we learn about that character? What is the effect of picking a word like "tome" instead of "book"? In effect, you are putting the author's choices under a microscope.

The process of close reading should produce a lot of questions. It is when you begin to answer these questions that you are ready to participate thoughtfully in class discussion or write a literary analysis paper that makes the most of your close reading work.

Close reading sometimes feels like over-analyzing, but don't worry. Close reading is a process of finding as much information as you can in order to form as many questions as you can. When it is time to write your paper and formalize your close reading, you will sort through your work to figure out what is most convincing and helpful to the argument you hope to make and, conversely, what seems like a stretch. This guide imagines you are sitting down to read a text for the first time on your way to developing an argument about a text and writing a paper. To give one example of how to do this, we will read the poem, "Design," by famous American poet Robert Frost and attend to four major components of literary texts: subject, form, word choice (diction), and theme.

If you want even more information about approaching poems specifically, take a look at our guide: How to Read a Poem.

The Poem

As our guide to reading poetry suggests, have a pencil out when you read a text. Make notes in the margins, underline important words, place question marks where you are confused by something. Of course, if you are reading in a library book, you should keep all your notes on a separate piece of paper. If you are not making marks directly on, in, and beside the text, be sure to note line numbers or even quote portions of the text, so you have enough context to remember what you found interesting.



Robert Frost, 1941. Library of Congress.

Design
I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth—
Assorted characters of death and blight
Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
Like the ingredients of a witches' broth—
A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth,
And dead wings carried like a paper kite.
What had that flower to do with being white,
The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?
What brought the kindred spider to that height,
Then steered the white moth thither in the night?
What but design of darkness to appall?—
If design govern in a thing so small.

Subject

The subject of a literary text is simply what the text is about. What is its plot? What is its most important topic? What image does it describe? It's easy to think of novels and stories as having plots, but sometimes it helps to think of poetry as having a kind of plot as well. When you examine the subject of a text, you want to develop some preliminary ideas about the text and make sure you understand its major concerns before you dig deeper.

Observations

In "Design," the speaker describes a scene: a white spider holding a moth on a white flower. The flower is a heal-all, the blooms of which are usually violet-blue. This heal-all is unusual. The speaker then poses a series of questions, asking why this heal-all is white instead of blue and how the spider and moth found this particular flower. How did this situation arise?

Questions

The speaker's questions seem simple, but they are actually fairly nuanced. We can use them as a guide for our own as we go forward with our close reading.

- Furthering the speaker's simple "how did this happen," we might ask, is the scene in this poem a manufactured situation?
- The white moth and white spider each use the atypical white flower as camouflage in search of sanctuary and supper, respectively. Did these flora and fauna come together for a purpose?
- Does the speaker have a stance about whether there is a purpose behind the scene? If so, what is it?
- How will other elements of the text relate to the unpleasantness and uncertainty in our first look at the poem's subject?

After thinking about local questions, we have to zoom out. Ultimately, what is this text about?

Form

Form is how a text is put together. When you look at a text, observe how the author has arranged it. If it is a novel, is it written in the first person? How is the novel divided? If it is a short story, why did the author choose to write short-form fiction instead of a novel or novella? How does the chosen form impact the story (how does the form inform the piece)? How would the piece be different if it were in a different form? Examining the form of a text can help you develop a starting set of questions in your reading, which may then guide further questions stemming from even closer attention to the specific words the author chooses. A little background research on form and what different forms can mean makes it easier to figure out why and how the author's choices are important.

Observations

Most poems follow rules or principles of form; even free verse poems are marked by the author's choices in line breaks, rhythm, and rhyme—even if none of these exists, which is a notable choice in itself. Here's an example of thinking through these elements in "Design."

In "Design," Frost chooses an Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnet form: fourteen lines in iambic pentameter consisting of an octave (a stanza of eight lines) and a sestet (a stanza of six lines). We will focus on rhyme scheme and stanza structure rather than meter (a pattern of syllabic emphasis) for the purposes of this guide. A typical Italian sonnet has a specific rhyme scheme for the octave:

a b b a a b b a

There's more variation in the sestet rhymes, but one of the more common schemes is

c d e c d e

Conventionally, the octave introduces a problem or question which the sestet then resolves. The point at which the sonnet goes from the problem/question to the resolution is called the volta, or turn. (Note that we are speaking only in generalities here; there is a great deal of variation.)

Frost uses the usual octave scheme with "-ite"/"-ight" (a) and "oth" (b) sounds: "white," "moth," "cloth," "blight," "right," "broth," "froth," "kite." However, his sestet follows an unusual scheme with "-ite"/"-ight" and "all" sounds:

a c a a c c

Questions

Now, we have a few questions with which we can start:

- Why use an Italian sonnet?
- Why use an unusual scheme in the sestet?
- What problem/question and resolution (if any) does Frost offer?
- What is the volta in this poem?
- In other words, what is the point?

Italian sonnets have a long tradition; many careful readers recognize the form and know what to expect from his octave, volta, and sestet. Frost seems to do something fairly standard in the octave in presenting a situation; however, the turn Frost makes is not to resolution, but to questions and uncertainty. A white spider sitting on a white flower has killed a white moth.

- How did these elements come together?
- Was the moth's death random or by design?
- Is one worse than the other?

We can guess right away that Frost's disruption of the usual purpose of the sestet has something to do with his disruption of its rhyme scheme. Looking even more closely at the text will help us refine our observations and guesses.

Word Choice, Or Diction

Looking at the word choice of a text helps us "dig in" ever more deeply. If you are reading something longer, are there certain words that come up again and again? Are there words that stand out? While you are going through this process, it is best for you to assume that every word is important—again, you can decide whether something is really important later.

Even when you read prose, our guide for reading poetry offers good advice: read with a pencil and make notes. Mark the words that stand out, and perhaps write the questions you have in the

margins or on a separate piece of paper. If you have ideas that may possibly answer your questions, write those down, too.

Observations

Let's take a look at the first line of "Design":

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white

The poem starts with something unpleasant: a spider. Then, as we look more closely at the adjectives describing the spider, we may see connotations of something that sounds unhealthy or unnatural. When we imagine spiders, we do not generally picture them dimpled and white; it is an uncommon and decidedly creepy image. There is dissonance between the spider and its descriptors, i.e., what is wrong with this picture? Already we have a question: what is going on with this spider?

We should look for additional clues further on in the text. The next two lines develop the image of the unusual, unpleasant-sounding spider:

On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth—

Now we have a white flower (a heal-all, which usually has a violet-blue flower) and a white moth in addition to our white spider. Heal-alls have medicinal properties, as their name suggests, but this one seems to have a genetic mutation—perhaps like the spider? Does the mutation that changes the heal-all's color also change its beneficial properties—could it be poisonous rather than curative? A white moth doesn't seem remarkable, but it is "Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth," or like manmade fabric that is artificially "rigid" rather than smooth and flowing like we imagine satin to be. We might think for a moment of a shroud or the lining of a coffin, but even that is awry, for neither should be stiff with death.

Questions

The first three lines of the poem's octave introduce unpleasant natural images "of death and blight" (as the speaker puts it in line four). The flower and moth disrupt expectations: the heal-all is white instead of "blue and innocent," and the moth is reduced to "rigid satin cloth" or "dead wings carried like a paper kite." We might expect a spider to be unpleasant and deadly; the poem's spider also has an unusual and unhealthy appearance.

- The focus on whiteness in these lines has more to do with death than purity—can we understand that whiteness as being corpse-like rather than virtuous?
- Will whiteness play a role in the rest of the poem?
- How does "design"—an arrangement of these circumstances—fit with a scene of death?
- What other juxtapositions might we encounter?

These disruptions and dissonances recollect Frost's alteration to the standard Italian sonnet form: finding the ways and places in which form and word choice go together will help us begin to unravel some larger concepts the poem itself addresses.

Theme

Put simply, themes are major ideas in a text. Many texts, especially longer forms like novels and plays, have multiple themes. That's good news when you are close reading because it means there are many different ways you can think through the questions you develop.

Observations

So far, in our reading of "Design," our questions revolve around disruption: disruption of form, disruption of expectations in the description of certain images. Discovering a concept or idea that links multiple questions or observations you have made is the beginning of discovering theme.

Questions

What is happening with disruption in "Design"? What point is Frost making? Observations about other elements in the text help you address the idea of disruption in more depth. Here is where we look back at the work we have already done: What is the text about? What is notable about the form, and how does it support or undermine what the words say? Does the specific language of the text highlight, or redirect, certain ideas?

In this example, we are looking to determine what kind(s) of disruption the poem contains or describes. We want to see what kind of disruption, or whether indeed Frost uses disruptions in form and language to communicate something opposite: design.

Sample Analysis

After you make notes, formulate questions, and set tentative hypotheses, you must analyze the subject of your close reading. Literary analysis is another process of reading (and writing!) that allows you to make a claim about the text. It is also the point at which you turn a critical eye to your earlier questions and observations to find the most compelling points and discard the ones that are a "stretch" or are fascinating but have no clear connection to the text as a whole. (We recommend a separate document for recording the brilliant ideas that don't quite fit this time around.)

Here follows an excerpt from a brief analysis of "Design" based on the close reading above. This example focuses on some lines

in great detail in order to unpack the meaning and significance of the poem's language. By commenting on the different elements of close reading we have discussed, it takes the results of our close reading and offers one particular way into the text. (In case you were thinking about using this sample as your own, be warned: it has no thesis and it is easily discoverable on the web. Plus, it doesn't have a title.)

Excerpt

Frost's speaker brews unlikely associations in the first stanza of the poem. The "Assorted characters of death and blight / Mixed ready to begin the morning right" make of the grotesque scene an equally grotesque mockery of a breakfast cereal (4 – 5). These lines are almost singsong in meter, and it is easy to imagine them set to a radio jingle. A pun on "right"/"rite" slides the "characters of death and blight" into their expected concoction: a "witches' broth" (6). These juxtapositions—a healthy breakfast that is also a potion for dark magic—are borne out when our "fat and white" spider becomes "a snow-drop"—an early spring flower associated with renewal—and the moth as "dead wings carried like a paper kite" (1, 7, 8). Like the mutant heal-all that hosts the moth's death, the spider becomes a deadly flower; the harmless moth becomes a child's toy, but as "dead wings," more like a puppet made of a skull.

The volta offers no resolution for our unsettled expectations. Having observed the scene and detailed its elements in all their unpleasantness, the speaker turns to questions rather than answers. How did "The wayside blue and innocent heal-all" end up white and bleached like a bone (10)? How did its "kindred spider" find the white flower, which was its perfect hiding place (11)? Was the moth, then, also searching for camouflage, only to meet its end?

Using another question as a disguise, the speaker offers a hypothesis: "What but design of darkness to appall?" (13). This question sounds rhetorical, as though the only reason for such an unlikely combination of flora and fauna is some "design of darkness." Some force, the speaker suggests, assembled the white spider, flower, and moth to snuff out the moth's life. Such a design appalls, or horrifies. We might also consider the speaker asking what other force but dark design could use something as simple as appalling in its other sense (making pale or white) to effect death.

However, the poem does not close with a question, but with a statement. The speaker's "If design govern in a thing so small" establishes a condition for the octave's questions after the fact (14). There is no point in considering the dark design that brought together "assorted characters of death and blight" if such an event is too minor, too physically small to be the work of some force unknown. Ending on an "if" clause has the effect of rendering the poem still more uncertain in its conclusions: not only are we faced with unanswered questions, we are now not even sure those questions are valid in the first place.

Behind the speaker and the disturbing scene, we have Frost and his defiance of our expectations for a Petrarchan sonnet. Like whatever designer may have altered the flower and attracted the spider to kill the moth, the poet built his poem "wrong" with a purpose in mind. Design surely governs in a poem, however small; does Frost also have a dark design? Can we compare a scene in nature to a carefully constructed sonnet?

A Note on Organization

Your goal in a paper about literature is to communicate your best and most interesting ideas to your reader. Depending on the type of paper you have been assigned, your ideas may need to be organized in service of a thesis to which everything should link back. It is best to ask your instructor about the expectations for your paper.

Knowing how to organize these papers can be tricky, in part because there is no single right answer—only more and less effective answers. You may decide to organize your paper thematically, or by tackling each idea sequentially; you may choose to order your ideas by their importance to your argument or to the poem. If you are comparing and contrasting two texts, you might work thematically or by first addressing one text and then the other. One way to approach a text may be to start with the beginning of the novel, story, play, or poem, and work your way toward its end. For example, here is the rough structure of the example above: The author of the sample decided to use the poem itself as an organizational guide, at least for this part of the analysis.

- A paragraph about the octave.
- A paragraph about the volta.
- A paragraph about the penultimate line (13).
- A paragraph about the final line (14).
- A paragraph addressing form that suggests a transition to the next section of the paper.

You will have to decide for yourself the best way to communicate your ideas to your reader. Is it easier to follow your points when you write about each part of the text in detail before moving on? Or is your work clearer when you work through each big idea—the significance of whiteness, the effect of an altered sonnet form, and so on—sequentially?

We suggest you write your paper however is easiest for you, then move things around during revision if you need to.

Contributors:

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12.16: Analyzing Poetry

Poetry is a form of expression. The poet uses his/her own personal and private language, which leaves poetry open to different interpretations. Although the poet may have had one specific idea or purpose in mind, the reader's response may be completely different. All readers bring with them their various backgrounds and experiences. What might be interpreted one way by one person, may be be interpreted entirely differently by another. Nevertheless, this does not mean that you may interpret poetry any way you wish. All interpretations must be supported by direct reference to the text. As with any type of literary analysis, you need a basic knowledge of the elements of poetry. The following guide and questions will help you.

- Read the poem in its entirety three times.
  - Read it aloud once, so you can hear and feel the sounds of the words. Don't stop to try and understand it, just read.
  - Read it a second time to get a general impression.
    - What's happening in the poem?
    - What is the title of the poem?
    - Who is the speaker or narrative voice of the poem?
    - To whom is the speaker speaking?
    - What is the tone of the poem? Sad, happy, melancholy, bitter?
  - Read the poem a third time to dig deeper into its potential meanings.
    - What is the poem about?
    - What is the poem trying to convey (a mood, a feeling, an event, an idea, etc.)?
    - What is the purpose of the poem: to describe, amuse, entertain, criticize, narrate, inform, express grief, celebrate, or commemorate?
    - How does the poem convey what you think it's trying to convey?
    - How does the poem function? What makes it work? Not work?

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12.17: Compare and Contrast Poetry Assignments

Comparing and Contrasting

Frequently, you will find that an assignment asks you to ‘compare and contrast’ poems. There’s a very good reason for this, for, often, it is only by considering different treatments of similar subjects that we become aware of a range of possibilities, and begin to understand why particular choices have been made. You may have noticed that, in the previous discussions, I’ve used a similar strategy. When I showed, for example, how we can describe the rhyme scheme of ‘Love From the North’ as simple, once we have looked at the more intricate patterning of Keats’s, ‘The Eve of St Agnes,’ or Tennyson’s, ‘Mariana.’ Anne Brontë’s, ‘Home,’ and Grace Nichols’s, ‘Wherever I Hang,’ treat the subject of exile in quite different ways—and looking at one, can sharpen our understanding of what the other does.

Consider examples in everyday life, whether it's sports, music, etc. If you take, for example, football or basketball (or almost any sport, really), an offensive-minded team and a defensive-minded team will, despite playing the same sport under the same rules and principles, have completely different philosophical approaches. These different approaches are made even clearer when we compare and contrast them from each other, allowing us to learn more about both types of teams and the sport as a whole. Looking at music, it's the same thing. Think about the similarities and differences—and how these similarities and differences highlight respective traits—between jazz and rock, metal and classical, hip hop and punk.

1) Read the opening lines from these two poems given below about death. How might you explain why they sound so very different?

Lycidas by John Milton (1637)

Yet once more, O ye Laurels, and once more
Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy never-sear,
I com to pluck your Berries harsh and crude,
And with forc'd fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. [5]
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due:
For *Lycidas* is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young *Lycidas*, and hath not left his peer:

Felix Randal by Gerard Manley Hopkins (written between 1876-1889)

Felix Randal the farrier, O is he dead then? my duty all ended,

Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome

Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it, and some

Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Discussion

If I had to identify one thing, I would say that the first begins more elaborately and with a more formal tone than the second. ‘Felix Randal’ tends to use language in an unusual way, but you would probably agree that the first sentence is quite straightforward and sounds colloquial (or informal), as if the speaker has just overheard someone talking about Randal’s death and wants to confirm his impression. ‘Lycidas’ opens quite differently. It is not immediately apparent what evergreens have to do with anything (in fact, they work to establish an appropriately melancholy atmosphere or tone), and it isn’t until line 8 that we learn of a death. The word ‘dead’ is repeated, and the following line tells us that Lycidas was a young man. While ‘Felix Randal’ has an immediacy, the speaker of ‘Lycidas’ seems to find it hard to get going.

Both poems are elegies—poems written to commemorate/mourn a death—and both poets are aware of writing within this convention, although they treat it differently.

2) What do the titles of the poems tell us about each poem, and how might they help us understand the different uses of the elegiac convention?

I think it would be apparent to most readers that ‘Felix Randall’ is simply a man’s name, while ‘Lycidas’ is more mysterious. In fact, Lycidas is a traditional pastoral



name, but unless you know something about the classical pastoral tradition, it might mean very little to you. The young man whose death Milton was commemorating was actually called Edward King. However, at the time he was writing, elegies were formal, public, and impersonal poems, rather than private expressions of grief. ‘Lycidas’ commemorates a member of a prominent family rather than a close friend of the poet’s. Over two hundred years later, Hopkins, while working loosely within the same elegiac convention, adapts it. Felix Randal is an ordinary working man, not a public figure. In the seventeenth century, it would have been unlikely that he would have been considered worthy of a poem like this.

If you were making a special study of elegies, there would be a great deal more to say. That’s not the idea here, though. By comparing and contrasting the tone of the opening lines and titles, and considering when the poems were written, we have come up with several significant differences. These differences help offer insight into each poem.

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12.18: Robert Browning's Memorablia

Memorabilia

BY ROBERT BROWNING

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,

And did he stop and speak to you?

And did you speak to him again?

How strange it seems, and new!

But you were living before that,

And you are living after,

And the memory I started at—

My starting moves your laughter!

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own

And a certain use in the world no doubt,

Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone

'Mid the blank miles round about:

For there I picked up on the heather

And there I put inside my breast

A moulted feather, an eagle-feather—

Well, I forget the rest.

1) Read the poem given above. Who is speaking, and who is being addressed?

From the evidence of the poem, we know that the speaker once walked across a moor, found an eagle's feather, and has high regard for the poet Shelley (1792–1822). The person being addressed is not named, but we discover that he (or she) once met Shelley, and this alone confers status by association. The word 'you' ('your' in one instance) is repeated in 6 out of the first 8 lines. 'You' becomes a rhyming word at the end of the second line, so when we reach the word 'new' in line four—one of the two lines in the first stanzas that doesn't contain 'you'—the echo supplies the deficiency. 'You' clearly represents an important focus in the first half of the poem, but who exactly is 'you'?

Thinking about this apparently straightforward question of who is being addressed takes us into an important area of critical debate: for each one of us who has just read the poem has, in one sense, become a person who not only knows who Shelley is (which may not necessarily be the case) but lived when he did, met him, listened to him, and indeed exchanged at least a couple of words with him. Each of us reads the poem as an individual, but the poem itself constructs a reader who is not identical to any of us. We are so used to adopting 'reading' roles dictated by texts like this that, often, we don't even notice the way in which the text has manipulated us.

2) Now read the poem again, this time asking yourself if the speaking voice changes in the last two stanzas, and if the person who is being addressed remains the same.

If the first half of the poem is characterized by the repetition of 'you' and the sense of an audience that pronoun creates, then the second half seems quite different in content and tone. The speaker is trying to find a parallel in his experience to make sense of and explain his feeling of awe; the change of tone is subtle. Whereas someone is undoubtedly being addressed directly in the first stanza, in the third and fourth, readers overhear—as if the speaker is talking to himself.

At first, the connection between the man who met Shelley and the memory of finding an eagle's feather may not be obvious, but there is a point of comparison. As stanza 2 explains, part of the speaker's sense of wonder stems from the fact that time did not

stand still: ‘you were living before that, / And also you are living after.’ The moor in stanza 3, like the listener, is anonymous—it has ‘a name of its own… no doubt’—but where it is or what it is called is unimportant: only one ‘hand’s-breadth’ is memorable, the spot that ‘shines alone’ where the feather was found. The poem is about moments that stand out in our memories while the ordinary daily stuff of life fades. It also acknowledges that we don’t all value the same things.

3) Taking another look at the poem, how would you describe its form, and what does this say about the poem's meaning?

The structure of the poem is perfectly balanced: of the four quatrains, two deal with each memory, so, although the nature of each seems quite different, implicitly, the form invites us to compare them. Think about the way in which Browning introduces the eagle feather. How does he convince us that this is a rare find?

To begin with, the third and fourth stanzas make up one complete sentence, with a colon at the end of the third announcing the fourth; this helps achieve a sense of building up towards something important. Then, we move from the visual image of a large spacious moor to the very circumscribed or restricted place where the feather is found, but the reason why this ‘hand’s-breadth’ shines out is delayed for the next two lines. ‘For there I picked up on the heather’—Okay, what did you pick up?—‘And there I put inside my breast’—still don't know what you picked up—‘A moulted feather’—ah, I see! Notice the internal rhyme of ‘feather’ with ‘heather,’ which draws attention to, and emphasizes the harmony of, the moment. Also, the word ‘feather’ is repeated and expanded: ‘an eagle-feather.’ Clearly, the feather of no other bird would do, for, ultimately, the comparison is of the eagle to the poet; Browning knows Shelley through his poetry as he knows the eagle through its feather, and that feather presents a striking visual image.

There is an immediacy to the conversational opening of the poem, which, I have suggested, deliberately moves into a more contemplative tone, possibly in the second stanza (What do you think?), but certainly by the third. We have considered some of the poetic techniques that Browning employs to convince us of the rarity of his find in the third and fourth stanzas. You might like to think more analytically about the word sounds, not just the rhyme but, for example, the repeated ‘ae’ sound in ‘breadth,’ ‘heather,’ ‘breast,’ and ‘feather,’ What, however, do you make of the tone of the last line? Try saying the last lines of each stanza out loud. Whether you can identify the meter with technical language or not is beside the point. The important thing is that ‘Well, I forget the rest,’ sounds deliberately lame. After the intensity of two extraordinary memories, everything else pales into insignificance, and, to reiterate this, the rhythm tails off. While the tone throughout is informal, the last remark is deliberately casual.

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12.19: Writing About Drama

HOW TO REVIEW A PLAY

PREPARING TO WRITE A PLAY REVIEW

Below are some tips to help you prepare to write a play review:

THE NATURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Because the performance of any play is such an ephemeral experience, writing a play review can be an exciting, though difficult, task. You have to be both spectator taking in and enjoying the performance and critical analyst of the production itself. You have to be able to provide a very brief summary of the play, a close objective analysis of the performance you attend, and an interpretation and evaluation of the entire ensemble of staging, acting, directing, and so on.

The review assignment asks you to analyze in an objective manner the relative success or failure of a given production. Note that you are not asked simply to summarize the plot or give an opinion regarding the text of the play being mounted; your review must be grounded in the production itself. Your job is to describe the production accurately, and then to render a value judgment of it based upon what you have seen and what you expected. The assignment will test your skill as a reader of the play and as an observer and critic of the production.

In addition to grounding your review on the production you witness, you must be careful to limit your review to a few essential observations in support of your thesis (which will be discussed below). You must concentrate on a few important ideas and aspects of the production and focus your attention on only what you consider the most significant parts of the production itself. Unlike a newspaper review, which can be loosely structured and superficial, your assignment is quite definite. You are not asked to cover a wide variety of production elements (i.e. performance of every actor, every costume change, every set change, every directorial decision, and so on); instead, the assignment demands that you develop a few key ideas in thoughtful detail.

Remember, too, that your stance is to be objective and critical, not impressionistic and merely nasty. A critic is not someone who simply “criticizes,” but a person who studies, analyzes, and then renders a rational judgment of what he/she has seen. Your tone will be very important in making your review reliable and intelligent.

BEFORE YOU ATTEND THE PRODUCTION

Read the play before going to the production. (It is important to be prepared for the production you plan to attend; otherwise, you run the risk of having to see it several times.)

- In your mind, have a good sense of how a “standard” production might look, complete with a sense of what the characters might look like, the type of costuming that might be used, a suitable set design, and an appropriate rendering of the theme and tone of the work.
- Pick out, as you read, several critical or problematic points within the play that may be of particular interest to watch for in the production you are about to attend. If your instructor has asked you to pay particular attention to certain elements, make sure that you are prepared to recognize them in performance.

ATTENDING THE PRODUCTION

Attend the play with an open mind, a willingness to accept the play as the director has presented it in production.

- Note any deviations from your concept of a “standard” production and try to find a good explanation for that deviation. (Is the director trying to “say” something new or different? Was your sense of the play somehow inaccurate, or were you shown new insights by the director’s production?)
- You may want to consider some of the following:
  - Why the choice of costumes, and why the set design?
  - How did the actors deliver their lines (seriously, comically, realistically, formally)? Were there any significant actions or gestures that contributed to the play’s meaning?
  - Were any “special effects” utilized (consider lighting, sound, audience participation, machinery)?
  - Were any significant cuts made in the script?

After the performance, jot down the details you recall and talk about the performance with friends. You'll need these details for your paper in order to substantiate your argument.

Evaluate the performance.

- Did the director miss any important opportunities to convey something you were able to see in your reading of the play?
- Would you have liked to have seen more attention paid to what you perceived as critical passages, passages the director seemed less interested in?
- Why would you have preferred this attention, and why do you think the director avoided giving the passage such attention?

Consider the following practical aspects:

- What kind of stage does the director have at his disposal? What kinds of restrictions does the stage impose on the director concerning movement and set design?
- Are the actors professionals, amateurs, or students? What restrictions does this impose on the director? Are the actors capable of dealing with the script's requirements? (Be fair to the actors in your assessment of their talents and the level of their "craftsmanship.")

WRITING THE REVIEW

Below are some tips for writing play reviews:

WRITING THE INTRODUCTION

The introduction should include the following:

- The title of the play, the name of the playwright, and any pertinent historical information regarding them (other similar works from this period? by this writer?).
- The name of the director, the place and date of the production you attended, and the name of the production company (again, do you know of any previous work by this company? this director?).
- The thesis of your review, which should include (possibly in more than a single statement) the following:
  - A general impression of the relative success or failure of the production, based on what you actually saw and on your initial impression of how the play should have been performed.
    - (Note that even if the production did not exactly coincide with your own conception of the play, you should not feel obliged to condemn the performance outright. Be open-minded and willing to weigh pros and cons.)
  - Examples: Papp's production of Lear captured all the horror of a world where love can't be counted on and where life is nasty, brutish, and appallingly short.
    - (Note that this thesis asserts that Papp captured the essence of what is in the text itself — the expectations set up by the thesis are that the reviewer will then analyze the methods by which the director achieved this effect.)
  - Examples: Smith's You Can't Take It With You made me sympathize with the notion that freedom must permit eccentricity and even, to a point, endorse it. Without that sympathy, the play would have been reduced to pure chaos and would have failed to portray an American ideal of freedom.
    - (This thesis suggests that "sympathy" was the director's intention. Note also that the reviewer gives a strong indication of what he/she expected to find in the production.)
  - Since you will not be expected to discuss all aspects of the production, focus your thesis on one or two major concerns that the performance has or has not addressed. Read your assignment carefully to find out which aspects of the performance are to be emphasized in your review.
    - Example: In You Can't Take It With You, the acting by the family members on the open, exposed stage displayed an innocent and vigorous freedom, as well as a proud independence in their confrontation with accepted norms of behavior.

WRITING THE STATEMENT AND SUMMARY

Include a brief thematic summary (but not a plot summary) of the play, and support that summary with concrete evidence from the text.

You can include this summary in the introduction; or, if you wish to expand the summary, include it in a separate paragraph following the introduction.

WRITING THE BODY OF THE PAPER: THE REVIEW

Remember that in the body of the paper you are obliged to deal specifically with each element of the production that you mentioned in the introduction and thesis.

In order to give your review a tight internal logic and cohesiveness, you should also discuss these elements in the order that you outlined in the introduction. Such points of discussion might include the non-technical (acting, directing) and/or the technical (lighting, scenery, costumes) aspects of the production.

For each element that you discuss:

- **Describe:** In as brief and precise a manner as possible, describe in detail the physical aspects of what you saw performed. Keep in mind at all times that whatever you include must in some way contribute to the assertion you made in your introduction and thesis. Focus on particular scenes or performances that will provide the evidence for your final evaluation of the play.
  - Example: The tempest scene in Lear utilized a particularly hostile set in order to universalize the suffering depicted throughout the play. The lights were dimmed and the backdrop was flat black. Against this backdrop were propped, in no particular order, seven skulls that looked out over the events to come.
    - (Note the vivid description of what was seen, and the use of detail to convey that vividness. The passage will work nicely as evidence for an overall, positive evaluation of the production.)
- **Interpret, Analyze, Evaluate**: This part of the paper requires the most thought and organization and consequently receives the most attention from your reader. After you have finished describing important elements of the production, proceed to evaluate them.

For example, you would need to answer the following questions regarding the last description of *Lear*:

- Why were the lights dimmed at the beginning of the scene? (shock effect? slow unfolding of horror?)
- Why was the backdrop painted black? (contrast? mood?)
- Why was there no order to the skulls? Why seven? (emblem of disorder or chaos? significance in number?)

In other words, assume that everything used in production has significance, but don't panic if you cannot find "answers" for all the questions raised by what you see in the production.

In the evaluation, you are given the opportunity to attack as well as commend the performance; if the production fails to answer questions that you feel need answers, then say so. If the question or problems are relatively minor, ignore them. Don't quibble at the expense of missing the more important concerns.

WRITING THE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Your conclusion should not merely recapitulate your thesis in a mechanical way.

Rather, you should try to show why your response to the play is valid and significant, based on what you have described in the body of the paper.

Do not add any significant new material, but don't be afraid to leave your reader with something to think about.



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Citations and Formatting Guide for Literature (MLA)

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13.2: What is MLA?

13.3: Formatting a Literature Essay (MLA)

13.4: MLA Works Cited page

13.5: MLA In-Text Citations

13.6: Quotation, Paraphrase, and Summary

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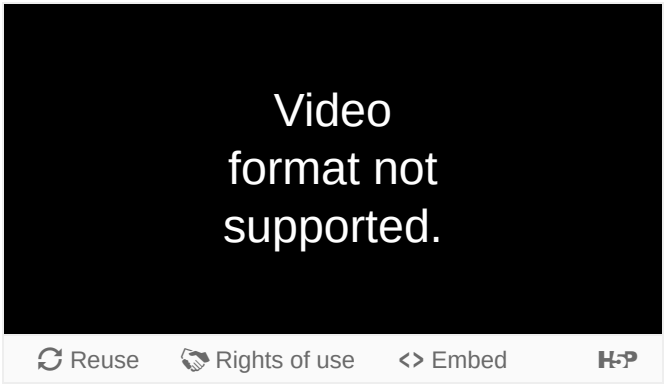
13.1: Avoiding Plagiarism Through Ethical Attribution

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is using another thinker's words or ideas without giving them credit. In most essays, this means you use someone else's words or ideas without citing them. Other examples of plagiarism include:

- Submitting an essay written by someone else, in whole or in part
- Copying and pasting from another source without citing them
- Attempting to cite sources, but doing so incorrectly or in a way where it is unclear which ideas came from your mind and which came from other sources
- Correctly citing all sources, but most of your essay is made up of the words and ideas of others with very little of your own original ideas
- Re-using an essay you wrote in a previous class without instructor permission

Video: What is Plagiarism? by Excelsior OWL



Video Transcript

What are the Consequences of Plagiarism?

Most academics consider plagiarism a serious violation of academic honesty. Basically, by plagiarizing, you are betraying the trust of your instructor, peers, and institution. Consequences for plagiarism can include:

- Having to rewrite an assignment
- Receiving an F on the assignment
- Receiving an F in the class
- Being kicked out of the class
- Being kicked out of school
- Having a permanent mark on your transcript
- Being stripped of your degree
- Public admonishment
- Being sued for copyright infringement, which, in extreme cases, can cost millions of dollars (!!!). For example, Marvin Gaye's family was able to win over 5 million dollars when singers Pharrell Williams and Robin Thicke plagiarized one of Marvin Gaye's songs!

In most cases, copyright holders will not go after students because students tend not to have a lot of money laying around. That being said, plagiarism can still have serious consequences. Students should avoid plagiarism at all costs.

The consequences of plagiarism depend on many factors, including:

- The severity of the plagiarism
- Repeated plagiarism behavior
- Your instructor
- The course syllabus, which often describes the class policies and consequences for plagiarism
- Your college
- Your college's student handbook, which often describes the campus policies and consequences for plagiarism

Be sure to consult with your instructor and college about their policies on plagiarism.

How Can Students Avoid Plagiarism?

There are many different tactics for avoiding plagiarism.

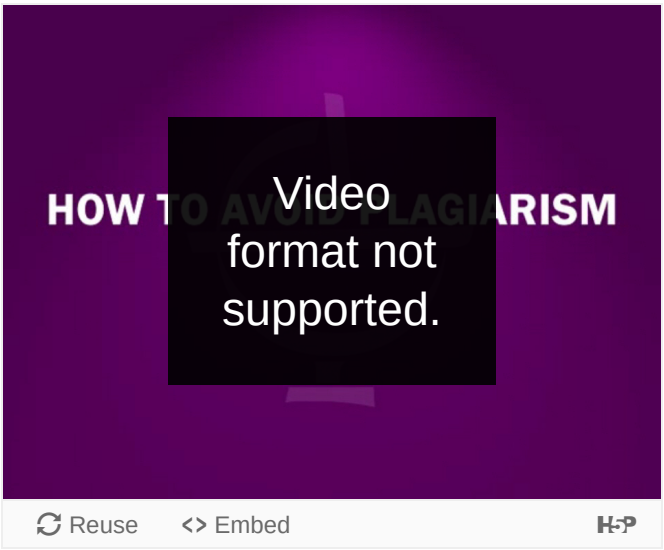
1. **Do your own work specifically for the class or context you're writing for.** Your instructor wants to read your ideas. They want to see you engaging with the course materials. The writing you produce for a given class should reflect your learning in that class.
2. **Ask for help and use your resources.** A lot of times students plagiarize because they are stressed/running short

on time/have a legitimate extenuating life circumstance that got in the way of their writing process/left an assignment to the last minute due to procrastination. They might plagiarize out of desperation. In situations like these, it is better to email your professor and explain the situation and/or ask for an extension than to plagiarize. If you're struggling on an assignment, visit your instructor's office hours or your campus writing center to get support.

3. **Use secondary sources to support your argument, not comprise it.** A lot of students new to a given writing context feel imposter syndrome. They do not feel confident in themselves or their knowledge, so they defer to experts like scholars who wrote on the topic. Unfortunately, this often means the student's smart ideas and writing voice can get smothered by secondary sources! Your instructor doesn't want to read what Famous Scholar X wrote on a topic. If they wanted to read that, they could go read that scholar's work themselves. Rather, they want to read how YOU engaged with the topic! While the expected ratio of your words to other sources will vary depending on the context of your writing situation, usually aim for 80-90% your original ideas, arguments, analysis, and explanation and 10-20% summary, quotation, and paraphrase from sources.
4. **Use Summary, Quotation, and Paraphrase with intention.** Summary generally works to show engagement with main ideas in a given discourse. Quotation is usually used to show specific wording or concepts for deeper analysis. Paraphrase works to convey basic facts or data that you put into your own words. For all three types of engagement with secondary sources, be sure to include in-text citations! It should always be clear which ideas are yours and which belong to your sources.
    1. See Summary, Quotation, and Paraphrase resource for more on this topic!
5. **Practice Ethical Attribution** by citing all sources both in-text AND on the Works Cited page
    1. **Caveat:** You don't have to cite common knowledge. Common knowledge is usually comprised of obvious or general information that your audience is likely to know already. For example, you probably wouldn't need to cite that the President of the United States is Joe Biden [or whoever the current President is as you are reading this], since most people in your audience (depending on the context) probably know this information. But you would likely have to cite statistics about his approval rating, since most of your audience probably doesn't know this information off the top of their heads. What an audience knows or doesn't know depends on the audience and context, so you'll have to think critically about your audience.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

Video by Excelsior OWL



Video Transcript

What is Ethical Attribution?

Ethical attribution is giving credit to those whose words and ideas you use in your essays. In most MLA-style essays, ethical attribution has three parts: attributive tags, in-text parenthetical citations, and a Works Cited page to give credit. (In other disciplines' citations and formatting styles, the Works Cited page might be called a References page or Bibliography).

Attributive Tags

Attributive Tags signal to the reader that material from a source is about to appear in the essay.

Example: According to literary critic Harold Bloom....

In-Text Citations

In-Text Parenthetical Citations tell the reader that the words or ideas from the source have ended. It also tells the reader where to find the original source information on the Works Cited page so they can see the original source themselves

Example: According to the literary critic Harold Bloom, "we are certain from the start that he is indeed King Hamlet's spirit," and not a demon as Horatio seems to suggest (Bloom 4).

Works Cited page

The Works Cited page gives more in-depth bibliographical information so that readers can find the original source. It appears at the end of the essay, on the last page. It should include all sources referenced in the essay.

Example:

Works Cited

Bloom, Harold. *Hamlet: Poem Unlimited.* New York: Riverhead, 2003.

Why Use Ethical Attribution?

There are several reasons to use ethical attribution

- **Builds Ethos.** By citing sources, you build credibility and trust with your audience. Readers are able to find the sources you cite. You also improve your essay's scholarly tone by using the formal conventions used by literary scholars, which include in-text and Works Cited citations.
- **Helps You Refine Your Own Ideas.** By clearly defining which ideas are your original ideas and which belong to other authors, you are better able to refine your ideas.
- **Helps You Avoid Plagiarism.** By citing sources correctly, you avoid plagiarism and its consequences.

Activity: Check Your Understanding of Plagiarism

Quiz from *Excelsior OWL*

Attribution

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13.2: What is MLA?

Formatting and Citation Conventions for Literature Essays

Every academic discipline abides by a certain set of norms for essay format and citation. Why are there such norms for writing? It might help to think of formatting and citation guides like work uniforms. Just like a member of the United States Marine Corps, a McDonald's Employee, or a Cheerleading Team might wear a uniform to convey a belonging to a professional group, so too do formatting and citation guidelines help writers convey their belonging in a given discipline. But the purpose is not simply aesthetic: using the appropriate citation and formatting style ensures that other writers and readers in your field will better understand your message, make finding and keeping track of sources more efficient, and your essay will appear more polished and professional. Along these lines, each discipline or profession abides by its own expectations for formatting and citations.

Citation Styles and Academic Disciplines

Discipline	Formatting & Style Guide
Science	APA (American Psychological Association)
History, Law	Chicago / Turabian
Humanities	MLA (Modern Language Association)
Journalism	AP (Associated Press)
Medicine	AMA (American Medical Association)

Since Literature falls under the Humanities umbrella, when writing about literature, scholars usually abide by the MLA (Modern Language Association) guidelines. The Modern Language Association was founded in 1883 "to strengthen the study and teaching of languages and literatures" ("About The MLA"). It is an international professional organization with over 25,000 members and it produces some of the most cutting-edge scholarship in the Humanities ("About the MLA"). They also publish the MLA Style Guide to help writers of all skill levels produce high-quality writing.

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13.3: Formatting a Literature Essay (MLA)

Formatting Your Essay

The first step towards starting your essay, or putting on the finishing touch, is formatting. This helps give your essay a professional appearance. It also serves a practical purpose: instructors are better able to keep track of student essays with clear identifying information.

There are several ways to achieve the MLA essay format.

1. The simplest way is to use an MLA template provided by your Word processor. For example, Google docs, Pages, and Microsoft Word all have preset templates for MLA Essays. Use the search bar in the program to find "MLA" templates.
2. If your Word processor does not have an MLA template, or the MLA template is out of date, or you already wrote your essay, use the following parameters to manually format your essay.

Formatting Requirements

- 8 1/2 x 11" white paper (standard printer paper)
- 1-inch margins (most word processors do this automatically)
- 12 font Times New Roman (or any legible font -- no comic sans or symbols!)
- Left-aligned header including, on four separate lines, your
  - First name and last name
  - Professor name (i.e. Professor Juanita Robledo)
  - Class name (i.e. ENGL 1)
  - Date of writing (i.e. 22 September 2019)
  - Centered title

Formatting Your Essay Slideshow

MLA Essay Formatting Template

Studentfirstname Studentlastname

Professor Firstname Lastname

Class Title (i.e. English 110)

Day Month Year

Title of Essay

This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the essay.This is the body of the

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Works Cited

Authorlastname, Firstname. "Title of Poem or Short Work." *Container Title.* Date published.

Authorlastname, Firstname. *Book Title. C*ity of publication: Publisher, Date published.

Sample MLA Formatted Essay

Goodwin 1

Todd Goodwin

Professor Stan Matyshak

English 110

17 September 2019

Poe's "Usher": A Mirror of the Fall of the House of Humanity

Right from the outset of the grim story "The Fall of the House of Usher," Edgar Allan Poe enmeshes us in a dark, gloomy, hopeless world, alienating his characters and the reader from any sort of physical or psychological norm where such values as hope and happiness could possibly exist. He fatalistically tells the story of how a man (the narrator) comes from the outside world of hope, religion, and everyday society and tries to bring some kind of redeeming happiness to his boyhood friend, Roderick Usher, who not only has physically and psychologically wasted away, but is entrapped in a dilapidated house of ever-looming terror with an emaciated and deranged twin sister. Roderick Usher embodies the wasting away of what once was vibrant and alive, and his house of "insufferable gloom" (273), which contains his morbid sister, seems to mirror or reflect this fear of death and annihilation that he most horribly endures. A close reading of the story reveals that Poe uses mirror images, or reflections, to contribute to the fatalistic theme of "Usher": each reflection serves to intensify an already prevalent tone of hopelessness, darkness, and fatalism. It could be argued that the house of Roderick Usher is a "house of mirrors," whose unpleasant and grim reflections create a dark and hopeless setting. For example, the narrator first approaches "the melancholy house of Usher on a dark and soundless day," and finds a building which causes him a "sense of insufferable gloom" which "pervades his spirit and causes an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart, an undiscerned dreariness of thought" (273). The narrator then optimistically states: "I reflected that a mere different arrangement of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression" (274). But the narrator then sees the reflection of the house in the tarn and experiences a "shudder even more thrilling than before" (274). Thus the reader begins to realize that the narrator cannot change or stop the impending doom that will befall the house of Usher, and maybe humanity. The story cleverly plays with the word *reflection*: the narrator sees a physical reflection that leads him to a mental reflection about Usher's surroundings.

The narrator's disillusionment by such grim reflection continues in the story. For example, he describes Roderick Usher's face as distinct with signs of old strength but lost vigor: the remains of what used to be. He describes the house as a once happy and vibrant place which, like Roderick, lost its vitality. Also, the narrator describes Usher's hair as growing wild on his rather obtrusive head, which directly mirrors the eerie moss and straw which cover the outside of the house. The narrator continually longs to see these bleak reflections as a dream, for he states: "Shaking off from my spirit what *must* have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building" (276, emphasis in original). He does not want to face the reality that Usher and his home are doomed to fall, regardless of what he does.

Although there are almost countless examples of these mirror images, two others stand out as important. First, Roderick and his sister, Madeline, are twins. The narrator aptly states just as he and Roderick are entombing Madeline that there is "a striking similitude between brother and sister" (288). Indeed, they are mirror images of each other. Madeline is fading away psychologically and physically, and Roderick is not too far behind! The reflection of "doom" that these two share helps intensify and symbolize the hopelessness of the entire situation; thus, they further develop the fatalistic theme. Second, in the climactic scene where Madeline has been mistakenly entombed alive, there is a pairing of images and sounds as the narrator tries to calm Roderick by reading him a romance story. Events in the story simultaneously unfold with events of the sister escaping her tomb. In the story, the hero breaks out of the coffin. Then in the story, the dragon's shriek as he is slain parallels Madeline's shriek. Finally, the story tells of the clangor of a shield, matched by the sister's clanging along a metal passageway. As the suspense reaches its climax, Roderick shrieks his last words to his "friend" the narrator: "Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door" (296).

Roderick, who slowly falls into insanity, ironically calls the narrator the “Madman.” We are left to reflect on what Poe means by this ironic twist. Poe’s bleak and dark imagery, and his use of mirror reflections, seem only to intensify the hopelessness of “Usher.” We can plausibly conclude that indeed the narrator is the “Madman,” for he comes from everyday society, which is a place where hope and faith exist. Poe would probably argue that such a place is opposite to the world of Usher because a world where death is inevitable could not possibly hold such positive values. Therefore, just as Roderick mirrors his sister, the reflection in the tarn mirrors the dilapidation of the house, and the story mirrors the final actions before the death of Usher. “The Fall of the House of Usher” reflects Poe’s view that humanity is hopelessly doomed.

Work Cited

Poe, Edgar Allan. “The Fall of the House of Usher.” 1839. *Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library*. 1995. Web. 1 July 2012. <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PoeFall.html>.

Contributors and Attributions

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13.4: MLA Works Cited page

Works Cited for Literature Essays

Every literature essay must have a Works Cited page as the last page(s) of the essay. On this page should appear any sources used during the writing process. If you are examining a work of literature, the citation for that work of literature should appear on the Works Cited page (primary source). There are not really any meaningful differences between Works Cited pages for regular MLA-style essays and literature essays. The one aspect slightly unique in literature essays is the difference between primary and secondary sources. The primary source in literature is going to be the work of literature itself which the essay focuses upon: for example, if a student is writing about "Bajadas" by Francisco Cantu, they will need to cite that as a primary source.

Example Works Cited entry for a Primary Source:

> Cantú, Francisco. "Bajadas." *Ploughshares*, 2015. Reprinted in *Writing and Critical Thinking Through Literature*, eds. Heather Ringo and Athena Kashyap. *Libretexts*, 2019.

A secondary source is any literary criticism written about the primary source. So, for example, the following would be an example of a secondary source (literary criticism) about "Sonny's Blues."

Example Citation for a Secondary Source:

> Bloom, Harold. *Hamlet: Poem Unlimited.* New York: Riverhead, 2003.

How to create a Works Cited entry for a text which appears in this anthology

For students using the online version of this textbook:

> Authorlastname, Authorfirstname. "Title." Original date of publication. *Writing and Critical Thinking Through Literature*, edited by Heather Ringo & Athena Kashyap, 2019. <URL of specific text> Accessed (Date Accessed).

For students using the print version of this textbook:

> Authorlastname, Authorfirstname. "Title." Original date of publication. *Writing and Critical Thinking Through Literature* edited by Heather Ringo & Athena Kashyap, 2019.

Basic Format for Works Cited Entries -- Shorter Works

> Author Last Name, Author First Name. "Title of Short Work Such as Poem or Short Story." *Publication (Anthology or Longer Work)*. Publisher Name, Publication Date.

Basic Format for Works Cited Entries -- Longer Works

> Author Last Name, Author First Name. *Title of Long Work (Novel, Play, Book-length manuscript)*. Publisher Name, Publication Date.

Pro-tip: if retrieving Literary Criticism from an online archive, look for the "Cite" button, which should automatically generate a citation which students can copy and paste into their Works Cited page. There are also online citation tools available like Easybib, Noodletools, or CiteKnight. Whatever citation tool students use, they should make sure to double-check the citations against the information above, as often times the citations generated have errors. It is the student's responsibility to ensure citations adhere to MLA requirements and specific to their reference work. Students may wish to consult the MLA official style guide.

Example of a Works Cited Page for a Literature Essay

Works Cited

Boehrer, Bruce Thomas. *Animal Characters: Nonhuman Beings in Early Modern Literature*, U of Pennsylvania P, 2010.

Cavendish, Margaret. "The Hunting of the Hare." 1653. UC Press E-books Collection, publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=kt7q2nc9xn&chunk.id=ss1.55&toc.depth=100&toc.id=ch09&brand=eschol. Accessed 3 October 2013.

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13.5: MLA In-Text Citations

In-Text Citations for Literature Essays

In order to effectively use in-text citations in essays, it is important to understand the purpose of in-text citations. In-text citations are a required part of ethical citation and attribution in MLA-style essays. Ideally, the in-text citation should, as briefly and unobtrusively as possible, point essay readers to the more detailed citation information listed on the Works Cited page (hence we described the Works Cited page first: it arguably easier and more efficient to create the Works Cited page first). In-text citations should appear at the end of the quoted or paraphrased material. What goes in the in-text citation? The first listed information in the Works Cited entry, which is usually the author's last name (Lastname). If there is no listed author, then an abbreviated version of the work's title goes in the parentheses in quotation marks ("Abbreviated Title"). After the author's last name should appear the paragraph, page, or line number where this material appeared in the original source (Smith 21) or ("Abbreivated Title" 21). This should enable readers to find and review the original source material. It also gives credit to the original author, which is not only ethical, but also legally required as a means to avoid copyright infringement. Basically, Works Cited and in-text citations combined function as a map to help readers

1. differentiate between the writer's words and ideas and their sources' words and ideas
2. find original source material.

Pro-tip: every in-text, parenthetical citation should point readers towards a more detailed Works Cited page entry. Inversely, every Works Cited page entry should match at least one in-text, parenthetical citation. Otherwise, if one or the other is missing, this is a form of plagiarism. Why? Because if a student is missing a Works Cited entry, there is no way for readers to find the original information. It is like a broken link on the internet. And everyone knows broken links are super sketch.

Inversely, if a student is missing an in-text citation, readers are unable to differentiate the student's words and ideas from the words and ideas of their sources.

Either way, there is ambiguity about source material. Ambiguity in essays should be avoided at all costs for the sake of academic integrity. To put it simply: readers should be able to

1. clearly recognize which words and ideas belong to the student and which words and ideas belong to other sources
2. locate those other sources

In-Text Citation Quick Reference Guide by Genre

Genre	Parenthetical	In-Text Citation
Poem	(Line#) or (Author Last Name Line #)	In Wordsworth's daffodils tossed ' in sprightly dar The daffodils ar example anthropomorph described as tos heads in sprigh (Wordswor
Short Story	(page#) or (par. #) Or (Author Last Name Page #)	Baldwin free emphasizes c descriptor, such describes Sonn "copper" Descriptions of are frequently e in the story, such skin as "coppe unnamed heroi lurking outside th "dark brown" (E 18).
Creative Nonfiction	(page#) or (par. #)	The story fre switches betwe and English, suc Cantu tells de L *te invito*"
Novel	(page#) or (paragraph #)	(231) (Wilde 2
Drama (Play)	(Act.Scene.Line#) Or (Author Last Name Act.Scene.Line#)	(1.2.42-(
Literary Criticism	(page#) Or (Author Last Name Page#)	(54) Or (Bloom
Internet Source (from a web page without page numbers)	("Abbreviated Title" paragraph #) OR (Author Last Name) OR (“Abbreviated Title”)	("The History" p OR (Smith par. 6) OR ("The History")

Titles

In general, titles of long works are italicized while shorter works are placed in quotation marks.

Page, paragraph, or line numbers

In general, prose uses either paragraph numbers (par. 3) or page numbers (245). Drama uses act.scene.line (2.3.4). Poetry uses just line numbers (3). Try to use whatever measurement makes the most sense for the work referenced, keeping in mind the purpose is to help the reader find the information. For example, for a page on a website that does not otherwise have page numbers, including paragraph number would help readers find the information.

That being said, because of the CTRL + F feature, really the minimum requirement for internet web pages and websites is to place an in-text, parenthetical citation with either the author's last name (if available) or an abbreviated title of the work (if no author information is available).

For example:

Author Name Available

If there is an author name available, use that.

Example: Some scholars argue Hamlet's hamartia, or fatal flaw, is his indecisiveness (Greene).

Author Name Not Available

If there is not an author name available, use a condensed version of the text title in quotation marks.

Example: Other scholars argue Hamlet's caution is justifiable, as a potentially demonic ghost of one's dead father is arguably not a reliable source upon which to base the decision to murder ("Hamlet Criticism Summary").

While both of the above examples may be acceptable for some professors, students should consult with their professors. It is almost always better to include paragraph or page numbers if possible. And, if the source is an online scholarly article, check for page numbers, as most reputable scholarly articles will have page numbers.

Length of Quotation

Students often want to cut and paste entire passages from literature. While this method, called a block quotation, can be useful in certain contexts, it is almost always better to only take the necessary quotes and phrasing necessary to support the thesis or main idea of the paragraph.

Block Quotation

Block quotations should be used sparingly: only when you plan to quote three or more lines or sentences, and only when you plan to spend an extended amount of space in your essay examining the details of a literary excerpt. There isn't necessarily a rule of thumb, but probably for an essay that is less than eight pages you wouldn't want to use more than two. To format a block quotation, you can justify the text and indent 1/2". You do not need to use quotations because it will be clear it is a block quotation in that it is set aside from the rest of the text. After the block quotation, include an in-text citation. Example below

> In my imagination, Abuelito's version of history wrestles Didion's. The white literary establishment handed her California but I propose we wrest it away from her. The Mexican presence haunting her work could do so if those of us living outside Didion's prose lend a hand to the diaspora trapped inside of it. (Gurba par. 7)

In the example above, I am quoting from an online article called "It's Time to Take California Back From Joan Didion" by scholar and critic Myriam Gurba. If I were writing an essay, I would probably spend a great deal of this paragraph analyzing the language choices here; that is, performing a close reading.

Laser-Focused Quotation

In literary studies, we really want to focus upon and emphasize language choices. While sometimes this can be done with a block quotation, most of the time the quotations you choose should be laser-focused to support the claim you are making in the paragraph. For example, let's say I want to emphasize the extended metaphor of the hand in the above block quotation through the lens of post-colonial criticism. I might examine how Abuelito's version of history is personified as in opposition to Joan Didion's, which was "handed" to her by the "white literacy establishment," and how the literary landscape of California becomes a property over which to "wrestle" (Gurba par. 7).

Integrating Evidence & Avoiding Floating Quotations

Example Paragraph 1:

Students first learning how to effectively quote source material often simply plop a quotation into their body paragraphs. "I wandered lonely as a cloud" (Wordsworth 1). The previous sentence is an example of a floating quotation. A floating quotation is when a quotation is plopped into a paragraph without being smoothly integrated into the surrounding text. What effect does this have? It can be disorienting to the reader, who has no idea how to interpret the information. Compare this random plopping of a quotation above to the integrated version below.

Example of Effective Quotation Integration

Example Paragraph 2:

While most people value humans over plants and other inanimate objects in nature, in "I wandered lonely as a cloud," Wordsworth frequently gives nature human characteristics (anthropomorphism) and gives human characteristics of the natural world (chremamorphism). When the speaker of the poem describes themselves as wandering "lonely as a cloud," this gives the sense he is dehumanized, more cloud than person (1). Conversely, the natural environment is made more human when daffodils are personified as "[t]ossing their heads in sprightly dance," and even the waves are also described as dancing (12-13). Even the verb choice for each indicates the speaker may be less human, in that an animal or human can wander, but, generally, plants and animals lack the consciousness or intentionality implicit in dancing. By blurring the line between human and nature, and imbuing the daffodils and waves with seemingly more agency than the human speaker, the poem implies nature is just as valuable as humans, if not more so.

What do you notice about the difference between the way quotations are integrated in the first and second paragraph examples?

In the second example, the quotations are smoothly integrated with the

author’s words while maintaining the grammatical structure of each sentence. Rather than plopping an entire sentence or line, the writer chose the most important quotations which illustrate the point they are attempting to make. Finally, it is clear where the writer’s words end and Wordsworth's begin, and where Wordsworth's words begin and the writer's end.

Works Cited

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13.6: Quotation, Paraphrase, and Summary

Using Information From Sources

There are several ways to effectively incorporate information from sources in essays. Which type of source integration you use will depend on the purpose of the material. Every literary essay should strike a balance between quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing—and articulating your own perspective. Whether summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting, you need to include both in-text and Works Cited citations for every source. It is also very important to not pass off quotation as paraphrase: this could be considered plagiarism.

Summary

Summarizing refers to the action of boiling down an author's ideas into a shorter version in your own words. Summary demonstrates your understanding of a text, but it also can be useful in giving background information or making a complex idea more accessible. In a literature essay, you might briefly summarize the plot of a text through the perspective of your topic before diving deeply into the analysis portion of the essay.

Paraphrase

When we paraphrase, we are processing information or ideas from another person's text and putting it in our own words. The main difference between paraphrase and summary is scope: if summarizing means rewording and condensing, then paraphrasing means rewording without drastically altering length. However, paraphrasing is also generally more faithful to the spirit of the original; whereas a summary requires you to boil down a large piece of text into a sentence or two, thereby losing some nuance, a paraphrase ought to mirror back the original idea using your own language. Paraphrasing is helpful for establishing background knowledge or general consensus, simplifying a complicated idea, or reminding your reader of a certain part of another text. It is also valuable when relaying statistics or historical information, both of which are usually more fluidly woven into your writing when spoken with your own voice.

Quotation

A direct quote uses quotation marks (“ ”) to indicate where you're borrowing an author's words verbatim in your own writing. Use a direct quote if someone else wrote or said something in a distinctive or particular way and you want to capture their words exactly. Direct quotes are good for establishing ethos and providing evidence. In a research essay, you will be expected to use some direct quotes; however, too many direct quotes can overwhelm your thesis and actually undermine your sense of ethos.

For literature, quotation is most effective when attempting to analyze literary devices such as tone, character, metaphor, and so forth.

Examples

Below, you can see three examples of these tools. Consider how the direct quote, the paraphrase, and the summary each could be used to achieve different purposes.

Original Passage

> *It has been suggested (again rather anecdotally) that giraffes do communicate using infrasonic vocalizations (the signals are verbally described to be similar—in structure and function—to the low-frequency, infrasonic “rumbles” of elephants). It was further speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production. Moreover, particular neck movements (e.g. the neck stretch) are suggested to be associated with the production of infrasonic vocalizations.*

Summary

Baotic et al. conducted a study on giraffe hums in response to speculation that these noises are used deliberately for communication.

Paraphrase

Giraffes emit a low-pitch noise; some scientists believe that this hum can be used for communication with other members of the social group, but others are skeptical because of the dearth of research on giraffe noises. According to Baotic et al., the anatomy of the animal suggests that they may be making deliberate and specific noises (3).

Quotation

Some zoological experts have pointed out that the evidence for giraffe hums has been “rather anecdotally” reported (Baotic et

al. 3). However, some scientists have “speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production” (Ibid. 3).

Important Reminder!

Whether summary, paraphrase, or quotation, you need to use an in-text citation! For every in-text citation, ensure there is a matching entry on the Works Cited page! Also, remember to use information from sources only to support your own argument. For a research essay, a healthy ratio is generally no more than 10% to 20% material from sources to 80% your own original ideas, argument, interpretation, analysis, and explanation. This is not a rule as much as a reminder to think critically about how much your writing relies on the ideas of others: unless the assignment is a summary or literature review, the emphasis should be on your ideas!

Contributors and Attributions

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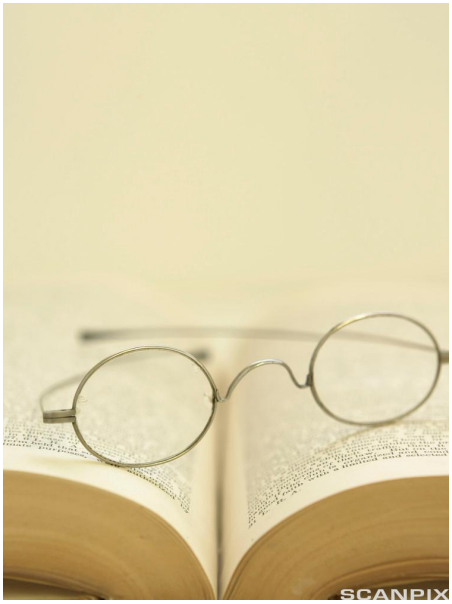
Given the fact that reading is a very private experience, it may seem like a mission impossible to instruct other people what to read and how to understand a literary text. To some degree, there is a bit of truth in that; for one person (the teacher) to pick a certain literary work and impose it on other people (the students) may seem like violating some private sphere. Firstly, one should be careful to advise other people what to read at all, and secondly, the understanding of a text will most likely vary from person to person.

On the Surface



Traditionally, literature teaching will be dominated by two major elements: text analysis and cultural history. They are both somewhat overestimated as a classroom activity, and often become dead boring after some lessons. The basic analysis (plot, characters, setting and so on) merely provides the tools for an instrumental understanding of a text. And if tools are not used carefully, they may, in fact, ruin the material. It is not hard to kill a text by analysing it to smithereens. Usually, the teaching of literature will also include some basic factual information about the cultural trends and major writers from different periods in literary history, which is quite legitimate and even important from a general educational viewpoint. But understanding the dialectics of cultural history is interesting only if one wants to get the full overview of what writers were preoccupied with in their time. The appreciation of a text, however, does not depend on information about when and why it was written or how it is put together – these elements just drift on the surface, so to speak. So the ambition must be to go beyond the technical work and look for a more profound, and perhaps even existential, comprehension of a literary text. The essential issues are: what makes this text work; how does it work; does it work differently on us; where does this leave me as the reader?

Learning for Life



All activity in school is (or should be) aimed at enhancing the students' competence. Students are supposed to learn and gain knowledge they hopefully will profit from later in life. Real competence is when we see that what we learn actually has a relevant meaning in our own lives. However, for most students the primary ambition in a hectic school day is simply to get by; it is all about testing and assessment, grades and a diploma that will open doors to moving on in the educational system so they may one day have a job with a decent income. For the students, this may be "learning for life" – but somehow that phrase usually has a slightly different connotation. It may sound ambitious, but literature in the classroom can introduce the students to how literature enhances our social understanding, and in that way really become learning for life. A literary text may open up for an understanding of human relations, interaction, instincts, ambitions, emotions – all these familiar elements of what it is to be human. Most any text will objectively be of use if one can see its universal reflection of reality. It can provide knowledge of people and their surroundings, challenges and responses – which in turn may

work upon how we see our own lives in relation to the same issues.

Communicating literature is more than presenting factual knowledge about literature as such; it is to convey knowledge about people and human interaction. For example, a discussion about literature in relation to reality is something different from cramming a text book definition of “realism” as a socio-critical approach. This means that one must establish some sort of distance to the actual text, and ask the right questions. Then one may find an understanding of the textual universe which, in turn, may provide a new insight. The text is always some reflection of reality; it does not give the answers, but it may open for a chain of responses that will ultimately challenge your own moral standards and view of reality. In this respect, reading virtually can become learning for life.

Method and Practice

There are several ways to go about this. A usual approach is to use the text as a starting point and take it from there. However, it is quite possible to go the other way round and start with a general dialogue, in groups or in class, that will raise some of the issues that will be brought up in the text. Or one may even do both – a brief introductive thematic approach, e.g. a slightly provocative statement which the students may discuss and reflect upon - then do the text and end up with a more extensive analysis of the issue raised initially, only this time related to the text.

Some examples:

- Cloning and genetic manipulation in connection to *Frankenstein*. How far is it possible, or ethically right, to go in medical research?
- Connected to *Jekyll and Hyde*. What is schizophrenia, or how can certain drugs affect your personality? Is there such a thing as a duality of man? Do we all have a darker side that can be brought out under certain circumstances?
- Youth depression connected to *The Catcher in the Rye*. What is it like, and how common is the condition? Why do some young people just give up and even turn suicidal? (Here one is advised to go in with caution...)
- In connection to *Popular Mechanics* (Raymond Carver). What can a break-up or a divorce bring about in a person? Different custody arrangements. (Here many of the students most likely will have personal experiences; one should step lightly here as well…)
- Moral and ethics in connection to *Huckleberry Finn*. How far can you go to justify crime? Are our moral standards flexible? Is it OK to commit a crime because the overall intention is good? Will that depend on the gravity of the situation, or do we have a barrier of consistency somewhere?
- In connection to Dickens (e.g. *Oliver Twist*, *Little Dorrit*, or *Bleak House*), an idea is to focus on the development of the legal system over the last century or so. What changes do we find, and why have these changes come about? Is there abuse of power in the court-rooms today around the world? How does the legal system work in a democracy? Was Victorian England a democracy? What do we do to prevent the abuse of power in the political system?
- Love and jealousy are strong emotions. In connection to *Wuthering Heights*, a relevant starting point could be to focus on love as a destructive force. Is it possible to love and hate someone at the same time? How far would we be willing to go to pursue love? Is love an obsession that, if it is strong enough, eventually turns against itself?

Questions

There are, in fact, loads of real-life issues that can be brought up in connection to nearly any literary text, classic or contemporary. The ambition is to create a dialectic correlation between literature and life. How does the protagonist(s) reflect and act to get out of his predicament? Or – how did he end up in one in the first place? Could it have been prevented by a different turn of the plot? Would it turn out differently in real life? Why? Hypothetically – what would you have done in the same situation? Have you experienced how your human ideals are challenged once reality kicks in? These and similar questions may incite a fruitful dialogue, in class or in groups, that will challenge the students to see the relevance of a literary text and to reflect upon the human capacity to handle real-life situations.

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