CREATING LITERARY ANALYSIS



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Detailed Licensing

Licensing

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About the Authors

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Ryan Cordell is an assistant professor of English and the director of the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum program at St. Norbert College. He is a core contributor to the *ProfHacker* blog at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. He is currently building a comparative digital edition of Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Celestial Railroad" at http://celestialrailroad.org. He is also the web editor for the Harriet Beecher Stowe Society and has published on Stowe, Hawthorne, James Fenimore Cooper, and technology in higher education. Cordell's full CV can be found on his website at ryan.cordells.us/cv.





Carroll, John Ruskin, Charles Dickens, J. M. Barrie, Richard Adams, Ursula K. LeGuin, Philip Pullman, and J. K. Rowling. Pennington's full CV can be downloaded at dl.dropbox.com/u/492930/Pennington_vita_2010-11.docx.

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Dedications

John Pennington

John Pennington would like to dedicate *Writing about Literature through Theory* to Karlyn Crowley and their daughter Ada Mae Crowley Pennington, who at the ripe old age of two will have the joy of encountering for the first time *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. They are uncertain whether she will enjoy *Writing about Literature through Theory* as much.

Ryan Cordell

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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1.1: Literary Snapshot- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

In the final chapter of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Alice attends the trial of the Knave of Hearts, who has been accused of stealing the Queen of Hearts's tarts. You can read *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* by accessing them at http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html and etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html.

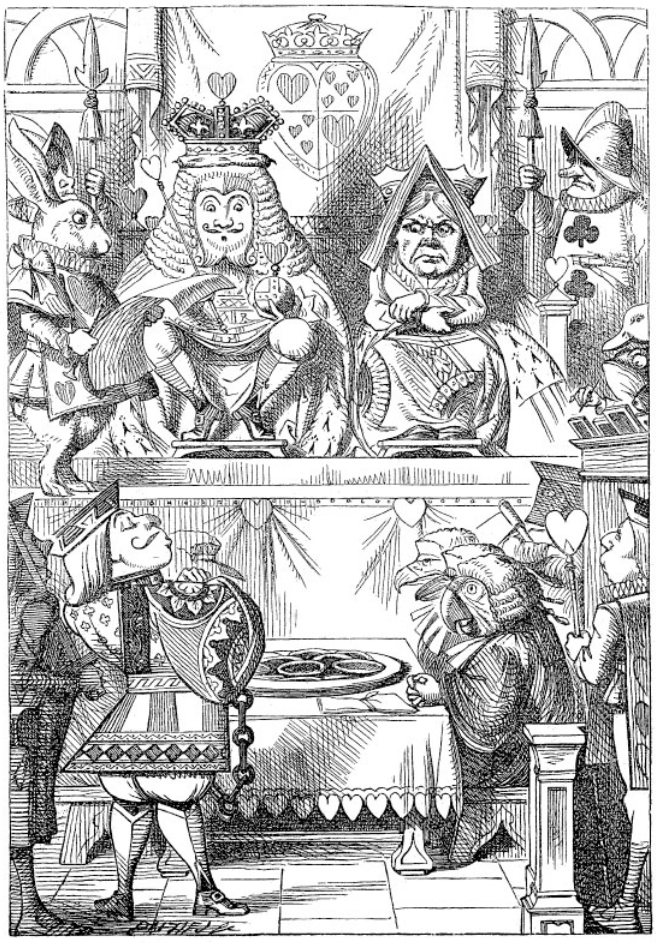


Figure **1.1.1**: Illustration by Sir John Tenniel for Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865).

Read the following exchange, which takes place in the midst of that trial:

The White Rabbit put on his spectacles. "Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?" he asked.

"Begin at the beginning," the King said gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop."

These were the verses the White Rabbit read:—

"They told me you had been to her,

And mentioned me to him:

She gave me a good character,

But said I could not swim.

He sent them word I had not gone

(We know it to be true):

If she should push the matter on,

What would become of you?

I gave her one, they gave him two,

You gave us three or more;

They all returned from him to you,

Though they were mine before.

If I or she should chance to be

Involved in this affair,

He trusts to you to set them free,

Exactly as we were.

My notion was that you had been

(Before she had this fit)

An obstacle that came between

Him, and ourselves, and it.

Don't let him know she liked them best,

For this must ever be

A secret, kept from all the rest,

Between yourself and me."

"That's the most important piece of evidence we've heard yet," said the King, rubbing his hands; "so now let the jury—"

"If any one of them can explain it," said Alice, (she had grown so large in the last few minutes that she wasn't a bit afraid of interrupting him), "I'll give him sixpence. I don't believe there's an atom of meaning in it."

The jury all wrote down on their slates, "She doesn't believe there's an atom of meaning in it," but none of them attempted to explain the paper.

"If there's no meaning in it," said the King, "that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any. And yet I don't know," he went on, spreading out the verses on his knee, and looking at them with one eye; "I seem to see some meaning in them, after all. '—said I could not swim—' you can't swim, can you?" he added, turning to the Knave.Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), chap. 12, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html.

Perhaps you've been in a literature classroom where you felt just like Alice: where it seemed like your teacher or your classmates could find meaning in stories, poems, and plays that you just couldn't find. Perhaps you have even decided that you "don't like English" because of such experiences. We hope with this book to help you rethink your approach to literary works so that you will find meaning in a wide range of texts.

This textbook aims to give you practical tools for approaching literary works that will ease some common anxieties that student readers feel in literature classrooms. This text will also show you how to apply those tools when you are asked to write literary analyses. We call those tools "literary theories."

Your Process

1. Have you ever wondered how your teachers or your classmates develop their ideas about literary works? Have you felt confused when reading stories, poems, plays, or essays, and unsure of how to begin interpreting them? Write a bit about your previous experiences in English classes.
2. What does the word "theory" mean to you? Write your definition of the word.

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1.2: What Is Literary Theory?

When you hear the word “theory,” you 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. Thus we hear about the theory of evolution or the search for the unified theory of the universe.

Theory doesn’t mean exactly the same thing in 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.Wolfgang Iser, *How to Do Theory*(Maiden, MA: Blackwell, 2006). Simply put, hard-core theories lead to problem solving and are governed by general laws and rules; they predict and rely on objective fact. 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 deemphasizing 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.

This book will walk you through many of the primary schools that have shaped literary theory over the past century. Each chapter aims not to simply define a given theory but to show what it looks like in practice. In order to teach you how to employ literary theories, in each chapter we walk you through a sample student paper that demonstrates how other undergraduates have used a given theory to better understand a particular story, poem, play, or other literary work.

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1.3: 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.”Gerald Graff, “Disliking Books at an Early Age,” *Lingua Franca: The Review of Academic Life* 2, no. 6 (September–October 1992): 45–51, *JSTOR*. Even in college, Graff says, he “continued to find ‘serious’ reading painfully difficult and alien.”Gerald Graff, “Disliking Books at an Early Age,” *Lingua Franca: The Review of Academic Life* 2, no. 6 (September–October 1992): 45–51, *JSTOR*. 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.Gerald Graff, “Disliking Books at an Early Age,” *Lingua Franca: The Review of Academic Life* 2, no. 6 (September–October 1992): 45–51, *JSTOR*.

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.

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1.4: What Is 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.

In this video (bigthink.com/ideas/25140), the decorated modern novelist Salman Rushdie, the author of such books as *Midnight's Children* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, talks about his own writing process.Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (New York: Penguin, 1991); Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Random House, 2008). Writing, Rushdie insists, "is not inspiration; it's concentration."Salman Rushdie, "Inspiration Is Nonsense," interview by Max Miller, directed by Jonathan Fowler, *Big Think*, video, November 29, 2010, bigthink.com/ideas/25140. Rushdie even calls the idea of pure inspiration "nonsense," saying that writing is "exploratory" and "more a process of discovery."Salman Rushdie, "Inspiration Is Nonsense," interview by Max Miller, directed by Jonathan Fowler, *Big Think*, video, November 29, 2010, bigthink.com/ideas/25140. Rushdie is talking about writing fiction, but his insight applies just as well to writing critical papers for a college class: good academic writing requires that you devote time and energy to exploring and discovering new ideas. Fortunately, this means you should not panic if a brilliant paper idea doesn't appear when you first start thinking about a paper topic. If you commit to the writing process the ideas will come.

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:

Prewriting

Many of the activities we'll ask you to do in the "Your Process" 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 as 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. 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.

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. 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 your writing 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.

A key notion that drives this textbook is peer review: we believe that you should share your writing with your peers, your classmates. For each chapter in this book, we suggest that you conduct peer review with one or two classmates. We provide peer-review guides for each chapter that can be accessed in Chapter 10.

Re-Revising

One 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. 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 that you turn in to your instructor for evaluation.

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.

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 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?
4. Share your process with the class to discover the variety in approaches writers take when writing.

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1.5: Why Commit to the Writing Process?

In short, you should commit to the writing process because it's the best known method for helping unconfident writers become confident writers. If there's one thing that over fifty years of writing research has shown, it's that students improve their writing skills through practice, practice, and more practice. The more you write in college, the more comfortable you will be with the conventions of academic and professional prose. When you commit to the process of writing, you will begin to understand that writing isn't a rarefied talent available to a privileged few. You'll begin to see that writing is a skill and can be developed through practice. What's more, the writing process does not include the terrifying idea that you produce perfect prose on demand. Instead, you will learn to produce the best prose you can now and to improve it as you develop your ideas. This frees you up to concentrate on developing your skills of argument—skills that will be useful in whatever professional field you eventually work—rather than living in terror that you will make a mistake.

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1.6: What Is Academic Argument?

Your Process

1. When you hear the word “argument,” what other words come immediately to mind? Jot down as many related words as you can think of.

While scientists test their theories through experiments, literary scholars most often engage with their theories through **academic argument**. When you think of the word “argument,” you probably think of conflict. Arguments are loud disagreements; arguments may involve yelling, cursing, or even, in extreme cases, physical violence. That’s not what we mean by academic argument, though. When scholars disagree, they don’t start throwing punches. Instead, academic argument looks more like a conversation. One scholar makes a **claim** about a given text and cites **evidence** to support that claim. Another scholar might dispute that claim by making a **counterclaim** and citing evidence that either challenges the original claim or supports the counterclaim. In an extended academic argument, more points of view emerge: the original scholar might respond or other scholars might intervene, offering claims of their own that support, modify, or challenge the original claims in the argument.

Let’s sketch out an example of an academic argument. First, review William Shakespeare’s famous “Sonnet 130”:

My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun;

Coral is far more red than her lips’ red;

If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;

If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damasked red and white,

But no such roses see I in her cheeks;

And in some perfumes is there more delight

Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know

That music hath a far more pleasing sound;

I grant I never saw a goddess go:

My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare

As any she, belied with false compare.William Shakespeare, “CXXX,” in *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*(1609; Project Gutenberg, 2010), http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1041.

We can imagine a critical argument centered on the speaker’s description of his lover. One scholar might claim that the poem is forward-thinking in its attitudes toward gender, refusing to employ the idealized rhetoric of most Renaissance love poetry, which characterized women purely by their adherence to physical standards of beauty. By insisting that his love can be “rare”—meaning here “valuable” or “unique”—even though her lips, hair, breasts, cheeks, breath, and voice do not match society’s expectations for exceptional beauty, this speaker implies that women are complex individuals, not static figures meant to satisfy men’s erotic desires.

Another scholar might disagree with this reading, pointing out that even though the poem refuses certain idealized comparisons (“Coral is far more red than her lips’ red”), it nonetheless dwells only on this woman’s physical features. This scholar might claim that the speaker’s refusal to employ common metaphors to describe his mistress only demonstrates his desire to show his superiority over other poets. The poem’s final line, which ends on “false compare,” says nothing about the woman, but instead insults the metaphors and similes of other poets whom this speaker sees as less talented than himself. The woman is given no name, no voice, and no personality—she is only described through what she is not.

These two critics disagree, but they express that disagreement through careful, reasoned prose. Indeed, they find some common ground: as the second scholar begins to respond, he or she admits that the poem does refuse idealized comparisons. Good academic argument is a give-and-take process, as each participant acknowledges the best points made by his or her interlocutors. The goal of academic argument is (usually) not to prove another scholar wrong, but instead to show how his or her argument could be expanded, supplemented, redirected, modified, or amended.

In this book, we will teach you how to engage in these conversations. Each chapter helps you develop your skills of engagement and will ask you to practice responding to the ideas of other scholars. Through repeated practice, you will learn how to bring these skills of academic argument into your class papers—to move beyond simply summarizing literary works and toward interpreting them. Each chapter also includes a sample paper from student writers so that you can see how your peers have applied both theoretical and rhetorical principles to craft effective academic arguments about a range of literary works and cultural topics.

Note

Our discussions of argument in this textbook largely follow the Toulmin method, which you can read more about in this writing guide provided by Colorado State University (http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/reading/toulmin).“Writing Guide: The Toulmin Method,” Colorado State University, http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/reading/toulmin. Our approach is also influenced by the refinements to Toulmin in the Little Red Schoolhouse (LRS) curriculum taught at the University of Chicago, the University of Virginia, and other institutions (http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/welcome#3).“Little Red Schoolhouse Online,” University of Virginia Writing Program, http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/welcome. We have found Toulmin and LRS to be effective methods for beginning academic writers in a range of fields, including English literature.

In addition, we also follow the principles of nonthreatening argument that are presented by Carl Rogers. For more on Rogerian argument, review this article from Colorado State University (http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/co300man/com5e1.cfm) or Joseph M. Moxley’s article on the topic at *Writing Commons* (http://writingcommons.org/genres/aca...erian-argument).Kate Kiefer, “What Is Rogerian Argument?,” Colorado State University, http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/co300man/com5e1.cfm; “Rogerian Argument: Solving Problems by Negotiating Differences,” *Writing Commons* (blog), 2012, http://writingcommons.org/genres/aca...erian-argument.

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1.7: Introducing an Academic Argument

In order to better understand the broad strokes of academic argument, we will read and analyze an undergraduate paper about Washington Irving's short story "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."Washington Irving, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, and the Spectre Bridegroom: From the "Sketch Book"* (London: J. B. Lippincott, 1875; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 2000), etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin...&division=div1.

Your Process

As you work through this text, these process descriptions will make more sense if you've read the literary work under discussion. For this section, you should read Washington Irving's short story "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Our discussion of student research and writing will reveal important plot details that you may want to discover on your own first. You can read this as an e-text provided by the University of Virginia (etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin...&division=div1).

You can also listen to a free audiobook of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" at Librivox (http://librivox.org/the-legend-of-sleepy-hollow-by-washington-irving).

Monica submitted this paper for an introductory literature class after the students read Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" during their unit on short fiction. Let's look at her introduction first:

When one hears the title "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," a reader might shiver a little and think of the infamous spectre, "the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head … known, at all the country firesides, by the name of The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow" (Irving 966). It is this legendary phantom that grants Washington Irving's tale the label of ghost story. As such, readers would expect the legend to be overflowing with superstition and opposing forces—good vs. evil, known vs. unknown, supernatural vs. reality. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is in fact meant to be a tale of opposing forces, but not in the same way as ghost story. It is a legend of rivalry, a rivalry between the characters Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt. Readers must understand that the opposing forces presented here are these two characters, the victim and the victor, the underdog and the front-runner—not those of supernatural and reality—in order to understand the true significance of Irving's tale. Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt are meant to be more than just two characters with a rivalry—they are actually representations of the young American nation and its "motherland," Great Britain. When these allegories are understood, and the true opposing forces are revealed, readers will finally be able to understand the ultimate message behind Irving's tale—it is an allegory for the goals, the problems, and the livelihood of an adolescent America.

Your Process

After you finish Monica's introduction, jot down the answer to these questions:

1. How does this introduction entice you to read on? What lines grab your attention? Can you articulate why they do?
2. Are any of the statements overly strong? "Must" we read the story in this particular way to understand it? Are there ways to tone down the language?
3. What do you think will come next in this paper? You have just read "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"—are there details from the story that you think Monica will cite in the longer paper?

What makes Monica's introduction so effective? Note first the way she summarizes one way that many readers interpret the story: "readers would expect the legend to be overflowing with superstition and opposing forces—good vs. evil, known vs. unknown, supernatural vs. reality." In her argument, Monica will challenge this reading, but she does so subtly. "'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' is in fact meant to be a tale of opposing forces," she writes, "but not in the same way as ghost story." Monica establishes common ground with those who read the tale as a ghost story, noting that it "*is…a tale of opposing forces*." By working from common ground toward a new understanding of the story, Monica follows the principles of argument laid out by Carl Rogers, a psychologist who insisted that effective argument is based not on conflict, but on compromise and negotiation between reader and writer.

However, a reader may sense that Monica is presenting her reading as the most authoritative or the best interpretation of the story, which can make a reader a bit defensive, especially if he or she does not necessarily agree with Monica's claim. Notice the subtle revision (highlighted in bold) that makes the opening even more persuasive because it is less totalizing:

When one hears the title "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," a reader might shiver a little and think of the infamous spectre, "the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head … known, at all the country firesides, by the name of The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow" (Irving 966). It is this legendary phantom that grants Washington Irving's tale the label of ghost story. As such, readers would expect the legend to be overflowing with superstition and opposing forces—good vs. evil, known vs. unknown, supernatural vs. reality. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" **can be read as a** tale of opposing forces, but not in the same way as ghost story. It is a legend of rivalry, a rivalry between the characters Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt. Readers **may benefit by** understand**ing** that the opposing forces presented here are these two characters, the victim and the victor, the underdog and the front-runner—not those of supernatural and reality—in order to understand **a major** significance of Irving's tale. Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt are meant to be more than just two characters with a rivalry—they are actually representations of the young American nation and its "motherland," Great Britain. When these allegories are understood, and **these** opposing forces are revealed, readers will finally be able to understand **a central** message behind Irving's tale—it is an allegory for the goals, the problems, and the livelihood of an adolescent America.

After establishing the common ground more subtly using the principles of **nonthreatening argument**, Monica then turns to her own ideas about the story: the tale, she insists, does focus on opposing forces, "*but not in the same way* as a ghost story" (our emphasis). Monica prepares the reader for her new claims about "Sleepy Hollow" by shifting her focus from the broad theme of opposition to the specific, nonsupernatural opposition of two characters' rivalry. She writes, "It is a legend of rivalry, a rivalry between the characters Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt." Monica introduces a fact from the story—a small piece of textual evidence—that doesn't quite fit with the common view. Readers who have interpreted "Sleepy Hollow" through the lens of the ghost story want to read on and see how Monica's focus on rivalry will change their view of Irving's tale.



Illustration by John Quidor, The Headless Horseman Pursuing Ichabod Crane (1858).

Of course, most readers are skeptical: for each claim a writer makes, readers ask "So what?" Monica answers that "So what?" question by demonstrating a potential problem with her readers' interpretations of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." In the next sentence of her introduction, Monica shows her readers why her interpretation of the story is significant. "Readers must understand," she writes, "that the opposing forces presented here are these two characters, the victim and the victor, the underdog and the front-runner—not those of supernatural and reality—in order to understand the true significance of Irving's tale." Effective introductions to literary interpretations focus on interpretive problems—not for the writer, but for the readers of the paper. Keep in mind that a literary interpretation may not seem significant to every person who reads it. Monica assumes, as you should assume when you write papers for your literature classes, that her readers care about literary works and want to understand them fully and

well. For readers who do care about literature, however, the stakes Monica proposes are significant: readers who insist on interpreting “Sleepy Hollow” as a ghost story will miss the tale’s “true significance.”

Your Process

The University of Virginia provides a number of free modules to help college writers understand the parts of argument we discuss here. To better understand the parts of an effective introduction, you might work through the following modules:

1. “Problem Frames Start Here”: http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/?q=...e/LRSintheWild.
2. “Problem Frame Elements”: http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/?q=...e/LRSintheWild.
3. “State the Consequences of a Conceptual Problem by Answering ‘So What?’”: http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/?q=...s/LRSintheWild.

Once a writer introduces a problem, however, readers expect him or her to also propose a solution to that problem. The first big question readers are likely to ask a writer is, “What do you think?” In the final lines of her introduction, Monica tells her readers what she thinks about this story by making the central claim of her argument. Her claim explains what she believes to be the central opposition in Washington Irving’s “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”: “Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt are meant to be more than just two characters with a rivalry—they are actually representations of the young American nation and its ‘motherland,’ Great Britain. When these allegories are understood, and the true opposing forces are revealed, readers will finally be able to understand the ultimate message behind Irving’s tale—it is an allegory for the goals, the problems, and the livelihood of an adolescent America.” Monica offers a historicized reading of Irving’s tale (for more on historical theories about literature, see Chapter 7), arguing that the story’s true significance can be found by looking more closely at the time of the story’s composition, when America was an “adolescent” nation still at odds with Great Britain. Monica’s claim is specific, debatable, and significant (at least to readers who care about this story). In the body of her paper, Monica will unpack her claim, using subclaims and reasons to demonstrate to her readers why they should follow her interpretation of the story.

Your Process

1. You can practice developing an effective subclaim using the module “Build Your Argument around a Significant Claim” (http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/?q=...t/LRSintheWild).
2. Choose a literary work to analyze, preferably a short story or short lyric poem.
3. Develop a working thesis that makes a claim about the work, knowing that this thesis claim may be revised.
4. Create an informal outline that highlights the major stages of your argument—the evidence that you will use to support your thesis claim.

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1.8: Student Writer at Work- Monica Platten's "'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'- An Allegory for a Young America"

Now that we've reviewed Monica's introduction in detail, you should read her entire paper. As you read, keep in mind the principles of argument we have already discussed.

Monica Platten

Professor Ryan Cordell

Introduction to Literature

December 17, 20–

"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow": An Allegory for a Young America

When one hears the title "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," they might shiver a little and think of the infamous spectre, "the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head … known, at all the country firesides, by the name of The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow" (Irving 966). It is this legendary phantom that grants Washington Irving's tale the label of ghost story. As such, readers would expect the legend to be overflowing with superstition and opposing forces—good vs. evil, known vs. unknown, supernatural vs. reality. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" can be read as a tale of opposing forces, but not in the same way as ghost story. It is a legend of rivalry, a rivalry between the characters Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt. Readers may benefit by understanding that the opposing forces presented here are these two characters, the victim and the victor, the underdog and the front-runner—not those of supernatural and reality—in order to understand a major significance of Irving's tale. Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt are meant to be more than just two characters with a rivalry—they are actually representations of the young American nation and its "motherland," Great Britain. When these allegories are understood, and these opposing forces are revealed, readers will finally be able to understand a central message behind Irving's tale—it is an allegory for the goals, the problems, and the livelihood of an adolescent America.

The glen of Sleepy Hollow itself embodies the characteristics of the fresh, new land of America. It is a little valley in which "a small brook glides through [it], with just murmur enough to lull you to repose, and the occasional whistle of a quail, or the tapping of a woodpecker, is almost the only sound that ever breaks in upon the uniform tranquility" (956). This place is tranquil and beautiful, just as the new land of America was perceived by all who settled there. Not only is the beauty ample, but the natural resources are overflowing: there are "fat meadow lands, the rich fields of wheat, of rye, of buckwheat, and Indian corn, and the orchard burthened with ruddy fruit" (971); in this place "nature wore that rich and golden livery which we always associate with the idea of abundance" (976). Sleepy Hollow is a valley of bounty, a land of plenty. But like any other wild and largely uncharted territory, this land possesses an air of mystery. "A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land, and pervade the very atmosphere" (965), and any who dally long enough while passing through or decide to call the place home "begin to grow imaginative—to dream dreams, and see apparitions" (966). Likewise, the first settlers in America came as dreamers, searching for a new world, a new life, riches, and freedom.

Ichabod Crane is essential to this allegory of the new nation, because he is the representation of the American nation itself. The description of this character does not conform to one of a strong favorite, but to that of an underdog: "He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and leg, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole fame most loosely hung together" (967). He is not a well-built man but an awkward one. As a schoolteacher he is intelligent, but does not hold a prestigious position in society; this reflects the rank of the new nation in a world order of countries. Nonetheless, he is optimistic and determined: "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" (973). The personality of Ichabod Crane reflects the same qualities of the newly independent states of America—he is, like they are, an optimistic underdog.

The personality of Ichabod Crane also reflects the status of the American nation in his want for maturity. Crane, although a grown man, displays certain qualities of youth in his superstitious beliefs and his "his appetite for the marvelous, and his powers of digesting it, [which] were equally extraordinary" (969). These traits imply that he is still young and childish, not yet mature like an

adult: “No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow” (969). Nothing pleases him more than to “listen to marvellous tales of ghosts and goblins, and haunted fields and haunted brooks, and haunted bridges and haunted house, and particularly of the headless horseman” (969). Terence Martin breaks these ideas down: “By fitting the notion of gullibility into the dominant metaphor of Ichabod’s oral preoccupation, Irving emphasizes the childlike quality of his protagonist. Ichabod can swallow and digest anything; therefore he is always and increasingly gullible.… Irving couples the oral stage and imaginative indulgence; both signify childhood” (143). The young colonies of America are certainly lacking the wisdom and maturity of their relative, Great Britain; “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” published in 1820, just over 40 years after the Declaration of Independence, is set in “a remote period of American history, that is to say, some thirty year since” (Irving 967).

Martin agrees that “America … was a new nation which saw itself … [as] fresh and innocent” (137), but explains that it wanted to become an “adult” as quickly as possible, and therefore needed to stay away from child-like obsessions of fancy and the imagination. “A childish (primitive) society might legitimately take an interest in things imaginative; such a society, however, was precisely what America wanted not to be” (Martin 139). Washington Irving obviously shared this belief, because in the end of his tale, Crane’s excessive imagination leads to embarrassment and failure. This is, in a way, a warning for adolescent America. Martin concurs: “It would appear that for Irving there is no place, or a very limited place, for the hero of the imagination in the culture of early America. A nation of [Rips and] Ichabods, Americans might reason, would soon be no nation at all” (144).

Crane and the American nation have in common one more imperative attribute: ambition. This ambition is demonstrated in many ways. Just as the colonists of this new nation hungered for a better life, Ichabod Crane hungers: “In his devouring mind’s eye, he pictured to himself every roasting pig running about with a pudding in its belly, and an apple in its 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” (Irving 971). Delicious food is not the only luxury Crane hungers for; he longs for material possessions, too, such as land and the many animals that provide his scrumptious meals: “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.… He beheld himself bestriding a pacing mare, with a colt at her heel, setting out for Kentucky, Tennessee, or the Lord knows where”! (971).

This desire and ambition to possess and expand reflects the American initiative of Manifest Destiny. Crane is ambitious and confident that he is meant to fulfill these big plans: “He could not help, too, rolling his large eyes round him as he eat, and chuckling with the possibility that he might one day be lord of all this scene of almost unimaginable luxury and splendor” (977). Lloyd Daigrepont states that “Ichabod [also] represents the modern debasement of imagination by materialism, a pious utilitarianism, and the idea of progress, particularly as these were supported in early 19th-century America” (72) and goes so far as to call Crane himself “a representative of progress” (73). However, this ambition and desire for progress borders on greed. Crane is overly confident that he will one day acquire for himself the beautiful daughter and land of Baltus Van Tassel, a wealthy Dutch farmer. His motives for this possession are not supported by any reasons but personal desire. This same kind of greed and personal desire was demonstrated by the American states, as their motives for Manifest Destiny (although the particular term had not been coined quite yet) transformed from those of exploration and expansion to dominance and control over the native people and their land.

Brom Van Brunt, nicknamed appropriately Brom Bones, represents the strength of America’s motherland, Great Britain. He is a formidable man, “a burley, roaring, roystering blade … the hero of the country round, which rung with his feats of strength and hardihood” (Irving 972). He is powerful and skilled, always coming out on top: “He was famed for great knowledge and skill [in horsemanship] … he was foremost at all races and cockfights, and with the ascendancy which bodily strength always acquires in rustic life, was the umpire of all disputes” (972). This strength, knowledge, and skill—along with his competing interest in Katrina Van Tassel, the “apple” of Crane’s eye—makes him “the formidable rival with whom Ichabod Crane had to contend” (973). And although he is respected and admired—“The neighbours looked upon him with a mixture of awe, admiration, and good-will” (973)—he can be a bit of a bully, especially in said rivalry:

Ichabod became the object of whimsical persecution to Bones, and his gang of rough riders. They harried his hitherto peaceful domain; smoked out his singing school, by stopping up the chimney; broke in to the school-house at night, in spite of its formidable fastening 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 the 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. (974)

This list of grievances against Ichabod is reminiscent of the list of grievances claimed in the Declaration of Independence. Brom Bones is the powerful, respected rival of Crane, the slightly awkward underdog. And just as Great Britain used its power and strength to worry the colonies and then later the young American states, Brom uses his to harass Crane.

Katrina Van Tassel, daughter of the aforementioned Baltus Van Tassel, completes this allegory of an adolescent America because she is the prize, the treasure coveted by each nation—she represents power, honor, respect, and abundant resources. She is described as "blooming … plump as a partridge; ripe and melting and rosy cheeked as one of her father's peaches, and universally famed" (970). The land of America is likewise copious in beauty, nature and wildlife abounding, the land is lush, fresh, and immense. People from all around the world would soon be immigrating to this new world in hopes of building a better life. "So tempting a morsel" (970) she was, yes, but also difficult to conquer: "Ichabod … 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 … keeping a watchful and angry eye upon each other" (972). Not only did many different countries and groups of people lust over the ample land, but this new world also created a struggle for power. Great Britain, the motherland, had been disowned by its young child. The American colonies decided to break away from this unfair and oppressive parent and start a life of their own, as a new nation. This budding nation, youthful and inexperienced as it was, found it necessary to work its way up in the world. This adolescent American had proved its ambition to be free, but now hoped to gain the respect of the world, power in the world order, pride in itself, and a sense of nationalism to infuse its people. Great Britain, however, was struggling to maintain its own pride and power after its defeat to the adolescent America; this once all-powerful empire wanted to uphold the respect it had earned throughout history. Which country would ultimately prove itself to be superior? This was the rivalry between the two nations. And that is the rivalry between Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones: who is the better man, who will win the girl and all her treasures, the respect, and the power?

While it appears clear that Irving's tale is an allegory for a budding America and the rivalry between this underdog and its stronger, older relative Great Britain, some would disagree. Many critics, in fact, depict the rivalry as one between the regions and cultures in New England, and label *Ichabod* as the "threat," or the bully. Donald Ringe boldly claims that "Ichabod Crane is clearly a Connecticut Yankee invading—and threatening—a New York Dutch society" (455). Following suit, Daniel Hoffman calls Brom Bones Irving's "realistic Dutch frontiersman, who meets and bests a Yankee" (427). Their idea of Irving's tale is summed up by Lloyd Daigrepont, who argues that "Brom is no musclebound bully, but rather a vigorous youth with a puckish spirit and a joyful exuberance for life" (75), who simply "wishes to rid Sleepy Hollow of the threat of Ichabod Crane" (76–77).

This claim that Brom Bones is the story's hero and Crane the threatening force, while intriguing, seems misguided, especially as Irving himself described Bones as Crane's "formidable rival" (973), as previously mentioned. In addition, Jeffrey Insko points out that Irving's "body of work includes 'serious' histories (notably, biographies of George Washington and Christopher Columbus) and fictional sketches—among them 'Rip Van Winkle' and 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'—that are themselves deeply concerned with matters historiographical" (609). Regional conflicts in an adolescent America's New England were much more recent and current for Irving's time than conflicts between America and Great Britain. Levine and Krupat note these concerns: "There was a sense during the 1790s and early 1800s … that American nationalism was provisional, vulnerable, fragile. The War of 1812, which emerged from trade disputes with England, can therefore be seen as a war that, at least in part, spoke to Americans' desires to put an end to such anxiety by in effect reenacting the American Revolution against England and winning a victory once and for all" (931). Although the rivalry between America and its overseas lineage was indeed current and ongoing, it extended a bit farther back into history. Before there could be conflict between regions of the American nation, it had to become a nation. The first major conflict was between America and Great Britain.

When readers understand that the rivalry in Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy of Hollow" is not only between the opposing forces of two characters, but also between an underdog and a powerful bully, then they can understand a central allegory of the story: an allegory of a young and developing America. Irving meant his tale to convey a warning to the budding nation: it is a reminder of its vulnerability, its problems, and the obstacles and hardships that stand in the way of its success. While Irving and other members of "the American literary nationalism of the 1820s … ultimately raised tough questions about the nation's future, about its strengths and vulnerabilities, and about its character and potential as a democratic republic" (Levine and Krupat 934), these questions and criticisms, along with "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," are not without a sense of hope or optimism. Readers should remember that

“Ichabod is not ultimately the loser in this legend. All he has lost is a farm girl’s love and a measure of self-respect; the former was no real passion, the latter can be repaired” (Hoffman 433–34). The American nation, like Ichabod, has the potential to succeed: to grow up, to learn from mistakes, and then to thrive against all odds.

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1.9: Understanding the Body of Monica's Argument

Remember that the primary question readers ask of writers is "What do you think?" Because claims are specific and debatable, however, writers cannot simply state their claim. They must anticipate their readers' new questions: "Why do you think that?" and "How do you know?" To explain why she thinks as she does about "Sleepy Hollow," Monica begins each section of her paper with a subclaim, which is a specific, debatable statement that supports the global claim from the introduction. Let's pull the subclaims out of the body of Monica's paper so we can look at them more closely:

- SC1: "The glen of Sleepy Hollow itself embodies the characteristics of the fresh, new land of America."
- SC2: "Ichabod Crane is essential to this allegory of the new nation, because he is the representation of the American nation itself. The description of this character does not conform to one of a strong favorite, but to that of an underdog."
- SC3: "Brom Van Brunt, nicknamed appropriately Brom Bones, represents the strength of America's motherland, Great Britain. He is a formidable man … powerful and skilled, always coming out on top."
- SC4: "Katrina Van Tassel, daughter of the aforementioned Baltus Van Tassel, completes this allegory of an adolescent America because she is the prize, the treasure coveted by each nation—she represents power, honor, respect, and abundant resources."

Each of these subclaims advances one aspect of the global claim, helping round out the ideas that Monica broaches in her introduction. Monica believes that Irving's story "is an allegory for the goals, the problems, and the livelihood of an adolescent America" because "the description of [Ichabod] does not conform to one of a strong favorite, but to that of an underdog." She also believes as she does because "Katrina Van Tassel…is the prize, the treasure coveted by each nation—she represents power, honor, respect, and abundant resources." We could say the same thing about Monica's other subclaims. None of these statements is self-evidently true; like the global claim in the paper's introduction, the subclaims are debatable statements.

Your Process

1. Do you sometimes struggle to move beyond your introduction and begin writing the body of an assigned paper? Do you struggle with organizing your thoughts over several pages? Jot down some thoughts about the elements of writing that you struggle with.
2. You can practice developing effective reasons using the modules "Distinguish between Reasons and Evidence" (http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/?q=...t/LRSintheWild) and "Choose a Parallel or Sequential Order for Your Reasons" (http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/?q=...g/LRSintheWild)

Now that Monica has answered her readers' questions, "What do you think?" and "Why do you think that?" she must explain how she knows her ideas are true. To answer "How do you know?" Monica supports each of her subclaims with a range of evidence, both primary evidence (quotations from "Sleepy Hollow" itself) and secondary evidence (quotations from scholars writing about the story or its historical period). To demonstrate Ichabod's "ambition," for instance, Monica quotes from Irving's story directly: "'In his devouring mind's eye, he pictured to himself every roasting pig running about with a pudding in its belly, and an apple in its 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'" (Irving 971). This textual evidence grounds Monica's claims, helping readers see why she thinks what she thinks about Irving's tale.

You should think carefully about how the evidence you quote supports the subclaims you make. While the connections between your claims and evidence may seem self-evident to you they may not be evident to your readers. Imagine, for instance, if a report came out saying students from a particular school were underperforming on their standardized tests. One person might see the report as evidence the school needs more funding. Another person might see the same report as evidence the school should be closed and its students sent elsewhere. Still another might see the report as evidence that the system of standardized testing doesn't fairly evaluate students and should be changed. Readers interpret evidence in light of their social, political, religious, and cultural values and assumptions. Writing scholars call these underlying values and assumptions **warrants**. When you use evidence, you should consider how different readers might interpret it, and if you foresee dramatic differences, you should carefully explain how you arrived at the connections you've drawn.

The following is one example that will show you how warrants provide the logical connection between claim and evidence. Most warrants are not directly stated but implied, which makes it useful for you to articulate your warrants so that you can concretely see

the logical connection between claim and evidence:

Thesis Claim: "…Ichabod Crane and Brom Van Brunt are meant to be more than just two characters with a rivalry—they are actually representations of the young American nation and its 'motherland,' Great Britain. When these allegories are understood, and these opposing forces are revealed, readers will finally be able to understand a central message behind Irving's tale—it is an allegory for the goals, the problems, and the livelihood of an adolescent America."

- SC1: "The glen of Sleepy Hollow itself embodies the characteristics of the fresh, new land of America."
- Warrant: The glen symbolizes the new America, which is central to the thesis since landscape, the geography, is essential to the allegory of Crane as representative of the new America.

In addition, Monica supplements her direct textual evidence in her paper with insights from other scholars, which also become counterclaims to her argument: "Lloyd Daigrepont states that 'Ichabod [also] represents the modern debasement of imagination by materialism, a pious utilitarianism, and the idea of progress, particularly as these were supported in early 19th-century America' and goes so far as to call Crane himself 'a representative of progress' (72, 73)." Secondary evidence grants authority to Monica's argument, demonstrating that she has studied scholarly conversations around this work and is now engaging in those conversations in her own writing.

Your Process

1. You can practice incorporating evidence into your writing using the modules "What Counts as Evidence" (http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/?q=...s/LRSintheWild) and "Explain Your Evidence" (http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/evi...explain/see-it).

The word "conversation" tells us quite a bit about why Monica's argument works so well. She maintains a tone of engagement with other scholars throughout the paper, even when she disagrees with their ideas. In short, she answers yet another question readers are likely to ask of writers: "Have you considered this other point of view?" Note the way Monica explains potential objections to her argument, anticipating her readers' skepticism about her argument.

While it appears clear that Irving's tale is an allegory for a budding America and the rivalry between this underdog and its stronger, older relative Great Britain, some would disagree. Many critics, in fact, depict the rivalry as one between the regions and cultures in New England, and label *Ichabod* as the "threat," or the bully. Donald Ringe boldly claims that "Ichabod Crane is clearly a Connecticut Yankee invading—and threatening—a New York Dutch society" (455). Following suit, Daniel Hoffman calls Brom Bones Irving's "realistic Dutch frontiersman, who meets and bests a Yankee" (427). Their idea of Irving's tale is summed up by Lloyd Daigrepont, who argues that "Brom is no musclebound bully, but rather a vigorous youth with a puckish spirit and a joyful exuberance for life," who simply "wishes to rid Sleepy Hollow of the threat of Ichabod Crane" (75, 76–77).

As in her introduction, Monica outlines an alternative argument carefully and fairly. She quotes directly from scholars she disagrees with. Doing this doesn't undermine the points Monica wants to make about "Sleepy Hollow." Instead, by demonstrating her awareness of other possibilities, Monica demonstrates that her argument comes from close consideration of the story and many potential interpretations. Because Monica demonstrates her thorough research in the paragraph just quoted, her rebuttal of those opinions in the following paragraph has more force and authority.

This claim that Brom Bones is the story's hero and Crane the threatening force, while intriguing, seems misguided, especially as Irving himself described Bones as Crane's "formidable rival" (973), as previously mentioned. In addition, Jeffrey Insko points out that Irving's "body of work includes 'serious' histories (notably, biographies of George Washington and Christopher Columbus) and fictional sketches—among them 'Rip Van Winkle' and 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'—that are themselves deeply concerned with matters historiographical" (609). Regional conflicts in an adolescent America's New England were much more recent and current for Irving's time than conflicts between America and Great Britain. Levine and Krupat note these concerns:

There was a sense during the 1790s and early 1800s … that American nationalism was provisional, vulnerable, fragile. The War of 1812, which emerged from trade disputes with England, can therefore be seen as a war that, at least in part, spoke to Americans' desires to put an end to such anxiety by in effect reenacting the American Revolution against England and winning a victory once and for all. (931)

Although the rivalry between America and its overseas lineage was indeed current and ongoing, it extended a bit farther back into history. Before there could be conflict between regions of the American nation, it had to become a nation. The first major conflict was between America and Great Britain.

An effective academic writer considers multiple points of view in his or her writing. Such writers persuade their readers to follow their opinions about literature through carefully considered, well-organized claims, subclaims, and evidence.

Your Process

1. You can practice responding to alternative points of view in your writing using the modules “Accommodate Alternative Points of View” (http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/Aan...natives/see-it) and “Respond to the Substance of Readers’ Objections” (http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/?q=...s/LRSintheWild).

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1.10: Conclusion to the Introduction

As you write papers in your literature class (and indeed, in most of your college classes), keep the following questions in mind. Imagine your readers asking you such questions:

1. What do you think about this story/poem/play/essay?
2. Why do you think that?
3. How do you know your ideas are right?
4. Have you considered this or that alternative idea?

If you consistently answer these questions in your papers, you will develop your skills of academic argument. Remember, academic argument is not a battleground, and it's not about yelling the loudest. Instead, academic argument is a conversation among people interested in the same topic.

What's more, you do not have to convince *everyone* that your opinion is correct. For instance, you may not have been convinced by Monica's argument about "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Perhaps there are essential details you noticed when reading the story that you feel Monica didn't sufficiently address. Your disagreement doesn't mean that Monica's argument is invalid; by the same token, your disagreement doesn't mean that your reading of the story is misguided. Instead of worrying about whose ideas are "correct," you should instead think of such moments of disagreement as invitations to join the scholarly conversation surrounding a literary work. In this example, you could write your own argument that presents Monica's ideas as the "common ground" that you would then respond to by making your own claims and subclaims and supporting them with the evidence you feel Monica overlooked.

There's no single, "correct" interpretation for any work of literature. Of course, there are some interpretations that readers will find more persuasive than others. By learning about the different schools of literary theory presented in this book, you will hopefully learn to construct arguments about literature that many readers are more likely to find persuasive. In short, we will teach you how to engage in the conversations of academic argument.

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1.11: End-of-Chapter Assessment

Key Takeaways

- Literary theories are intellectual tools that allow you to understand and explicate texts in a variety of ways. By learning different literary theories, you will become more confident in assessing novels, stories, poems, plays, and essays in class and beyond.
- Different schools of literary theory prioritize certain concerns for talking about literature while deemphasizing others: for example, readers' responses, gender, sexuality, or race.
- Most skilled writers compose not in fits of inspiration but through the writing process, which includes the following steps: prewriting, researching, outlining, drafting, revising, seeking feedback, and re-revising.
- Literary scholars usually engage with their theories through academic argument; they make claims, support those claims with evidence, and respond directly to the ideas of other critics.
- You learned about the importance of the writing process, including peer review and the strategies for conducting peer review.
- You should think about writing as a dialogue between you, the writer, and your readers. Try to anticipate the questions they will have about your claims and respond to those questions directly in your argument.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Freewriting exercise. You've probably heard the word "theory" before, perhaps in science classes. Spend ten minutes writing about how your understanding of literary theory developed as you read this chapter compared to your previous understanding of the word theory. What similarities do you see between literary theories and theories in other fields? What differences? Why do you think different fields all employ this word?
2. Try to outline an argument you've had at some time in your life. For this exercise we don't mean an academic argument. No, we mean an argument with a friend, sibling, parent, or maybe even a teacher! Think about that argument using the terms we introduced in this chapter. What claims did you make? What claims did your interlocutor make in response? Did either of you employ evidence? What kind of evidence? Can you create a diagram of the argument's major elements? Once you've charted the argument, discuss it with your classmates. How do the elements of that "real" argument compare with the elements of academic argument you learned about in this chapter?

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS EXERCISES

1. Students understand many of the basic principles of argument; they usually know when someone makes a persuasive case (during a conversation, say), and usually they know when someone's case is weak (to put it crudely: they know when to call "BS!" on someone). They don't usually think of these instincts as applicable to academic discourse. For this exercise, then, you will stage academic argument as a debate, which is a genre that even writing-phobic students often jump into with gusto. Divide the class into groups and then pose at least two broad, genuinely open questions about the work you're reading in class (for instance, "Is *Huckleberry Finn* a racist novel?").

   Assign pairs of groups to debate each question, with one group arguing each side of the debate. Give each group fifteen minutes to prepare their "case" for the debate. Instruct each group to nominate a speaker. At the end of their time, groups must present their case in turn. The groups working on the other question(s) will vote to determine the debate "winner." If you have time, you could also have a second round, giving each group five minutes to prepare rebuttals after each group has presented their initial arguments.

   Finally, follow up on these debates by asking students to identify the parts of academic argument within the points they made during the debate. What claims did they make? What subclaims? What kinds of evidence did they use to support their claims? Did they respond to their opponents' points or ignore them?

2. During the latter half of this chapter, we referred students to the University of Virginia's wonderful *Little Red Schoolhouse Online* (*LRSO*), a site that helps students learn the principles of effective academic argument. If you're interested in incorporating *LRSO* more fully into your class, see the site's overview of "Teaching with the Schoolhouse" (http://redschoolhouse.org/drupal/welcome#4).

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Writing about Form - Developing the Foundations of Close Reading

Learning Objectives

- Understand the theory of New Criticism as the foundation for close reading.
- Apply the New Critical methodology to works of literature.
- Engage in the writing process of a peer writer, including peer review.
- Review and evaluate a variety of New Critical papers by peer writers.
- Draft and revise a New Critical paper on a literary work.

2.1: Literary Snapshot - Through the Looking-Glass

2.2: The Foundations of New Criticism- An Overview

2.3: Close Reading Strategies - A Process Approach

2.4: Student Writer at Work- Kelly Ann Wolslegel's Close Reading of Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Love Is Not All"

2.5: Student Sample Papers- Todd Goodwin's "Poe's 'Usher'- A Mirror of the Fall of the House of Humanity" and Amy Chisnell's "Don't Listen to the Egg!- A Close Reading of Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky'"

2.6: End-of-Chapter Assessment

2.7: Suggestions for Further Reading

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2.1: Literary Snapshot - Through the Looking-Glass

Lewis Carroll is most famous for two books: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html. and *Through the Looking-Glass*(1872).Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (New York: Macmillan, 1899; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1993), etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html. These books follow the adventures of seven-year-old Alice, who tumbles down a rabbit hole (*Wonderland*) and enters a magic mirror (*Looking-Glass*), both of which lead her to a nonsensical world of the imagination. If you have not already read these classic books—or wish to reread them—you can access them at the following links:

http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html

etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html

Alice finds herself challenged to make sense of a world inhabited by odd creatures—some human, some not—who exist in a world that seems like nonsense. Throughout her adventures, Alice attempts to apply logic to her experiences; in other words, Alice tries to interpret and find meaning in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land.

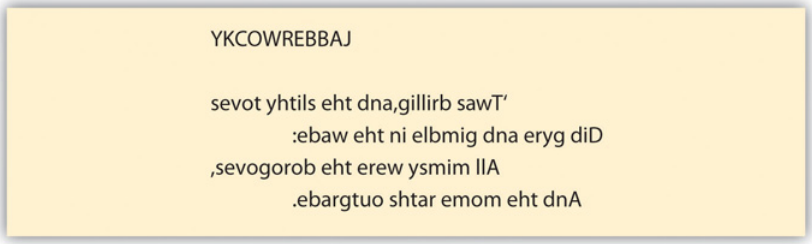
Alice acts like a literary critic.

One scene in *Through the Looking-Glass* will be the keynote of this chapter, as we see Alice encountering Humpty Dumpty, who proceeds to interpret a poem that Alice stumbled on earlier in her journey.

Carroll sets the scene:

There was a book lying near Alice on the table, and while she sat watching the White King (for she was still a little anxious about him, and had the ink all ready to throw over him, in case he fainted again), she turned over the leaves, to find some part that she could read, "—for it's all in some language I don't know," she said to herself.

It was like this.



She puzzled over this for some time, but at last a bright thought struck her. "Why, it's a Looking-glass book, of course! And if I hold it up to a glass, the words will all go the right way again."

This was the poem that Alice read.

JABBERWOCKY

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the jabberwock, my son.
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"It seems very pretty," she said when she had finished it, "but it's *rather* hard to understand!" (You see she didn't like to confess, ever to herself, that she couldn't make it out at all.) "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't exactly know what they are! However, *somebody* killed *something*: that's clear, at any rate—"Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (New York: Macmillan, 1899; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1993), chap. 1, etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html.



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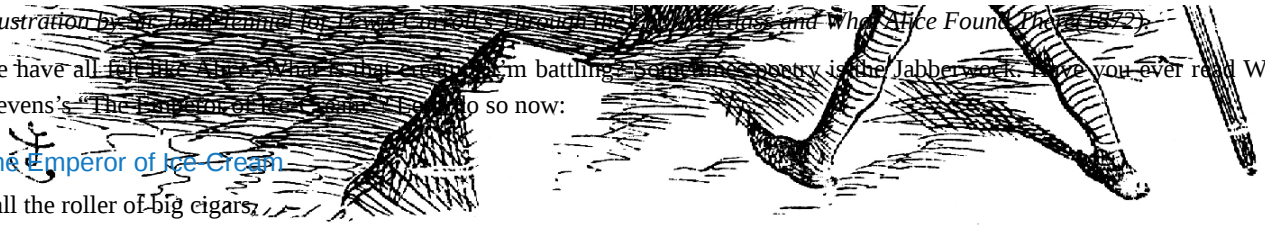


Illustration by Sir John Tenniel for Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There (1872).

We have all felt like Alice. What is that creature I'm battling? Sometimes poetry is the Jabberwock. Have you ever read Wallace Stevens's "The Emperor of Ice-Cream"? Do so now:

The Emperor of Ice-Cream

Call the roller of big cigars,

The muscular one, and bid him whip

In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.

Let the wenches dawdle in such dress

As they are used to wear, and let the boys

Bring flowers in last month's newspapers.

Let be be finale of seem.

The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Take from the dresser of deal,

Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet

On which she embroidered fantails once

And spread it so as to cover her face.

If her horny feet protrude, they come

To show how cold she is, and dumb.

Let the lamp affix its beam.

The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," Poets.org, http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15744.

Some may find Stevens's poem as confusing as "Jabberwocky." And like Alice, we desire to understand, to find meaning in order to appreciate the literary work. This is where a close reading, which focuses on form, becomes the foundation of all literary analysis.

CLASS PROCESS

1. Read "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" aloud in class at least three times.
2. Break up students into groups of three or four. If in an online class, set up a method for students to share ideas in a similar group and then a way to discuss the results with the entire class.
3. Have the students discuss the poem, eventually making a claim about what the poem means.
4. List the student-group interpretations on the blackboard, whiteboard, or other high- or low-tech medium.
5. Guide the students through potential interpretations of the poem.
6. Compare the class's interpretations with those of literary critics, which are summarized at http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/s_z/stevens/emperor.htm.
7. Discuss differences in the interpretation.

Return of the Jabberwock

See, you did feel like Alice. She states that "*somebody* killed *something*" after her initial reading, but she realizes that her interpretation is not yet adequate. She needs to dig deeper in the text to extract more meaning. And here is where she meets Humpty Dumpty, who professes to be an excellent literary critic.

Let's listen in again. If you wish, you can hear an audio recording of this encounter at http://ia600209.us.archive.org/8/items/looking-glass_librivox/lookingglass_06_carroll_64kb.mp3.

“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 were ever invented—and a good many that haven’t been invented just yet.”

This sounded very hopeful, so Alice repeated the first verse:

“’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the mome raths outgrabe.”

“That’s enough to begin with,” Humpty Dumpty interrupted: “there are plenty of hard words there. ‘*Brillig*’ means four o’clock in the afternoon—the time when you begin *broiling* things for dinner.”

“That’ll do very well,” said Alice: “and ‘*slithy*’?”

“Well, ‘*slithy*’ means ‘lithe and slimy.’ ‘Lithe’ is the same as ‘active.’ You see it’s like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word.”

“I see it now,” Alice remarked thoughtfully: “and what are ‘*toves*’?”

“Well, ‘*toves*’ are something like badgers—they’re something like lizards—and they’re something like corkscrews.”

“They must be very curious looking creatures.”

“They are that,” said Humpty Dumpty: “also they make their nests under sun-dials—also they live on cheese.”

“And what’s the ‘*gyre*’ and to ‘*gymble*’?”

“To ‘*gyre*’ is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To ‘*gimble*’ is to make holes like a gimlet.”

“And ‘*the wabe*’ is the grass-plot round a sun-dial, I suppose?” said Alice, surprised at her own ingenuity.

“Of course it is. It’s called ‘*wabe*,’ you know, because it goes a long way before it, and a long way behind it—”

“And a long way beyond it on each side,” Alice added.

“Exactly so. Well, then, ‘*mimsy*’ is ‘flimsy and miserable’ (there’s another portmanteau for you). And a ‘*borogove*’ is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round—something like a live mop.”

“And then ‘*mome raths*’?’ said Alice. “I’m afraid I’m giving you a great deal of trouble.”

“Well, a ‘*rath*’ is a sort of green pig: but ‘*mome*’ I’m not certain about. I think it’s short for ‘from home’—meaning that they’d lost their way, you know.”

“And what does ‘*outgrabe*’ mean?”

“Well, ‘*outgrabing*’ is something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle: however, you’ll hear it done, maybe—down in the wood yonder—and when you’ve once heard it you’ll be *quite* content. Who’s been repeating all that hard stuff to you?”

“I read it in a book,” said Alice.Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (New York: Macmillan, 1899; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1993), chap. 6, etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html.

Carroll, of course, is parodying the literary critic, for Humpty Dumpty’s interpretation is even more nonsensical than the poem itself! Yet we must give the egg some credit: he attempts to interpret a difficult poem—he performs as a literary critic by providing an interpretation of “Jabberwocky.”

This chapter will be your guide as you interpret a piece of literature and formulate a critical analysis around that interpretation. Let’s hope that your reading is a bit more on target than our silly friend’s!

Your Process

1. Do you remember a literary work you read that seemed difficult to understand? What was the work? Why did—or do—you have trouble interpreting the work?
2. Would you be up to a challenge—to take that work and venture a close reading of it? If not, choose a literary work that you find interesting to write a paper on.

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2.2: The Foundations of New Criticism- An Overview

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. 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.

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."Matthew Arnold, *Function of Criticism in the Present Time* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2010) . 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.

Your Process

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.

Your Process

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.

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2.3: Close Reading Strategies - A Process Approach

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.

Peer Reviewing

A central stage in the writing process is the feedback stage, in which you receive revision suggestions from classmates and your instructor. By receiving feedback on your paper, you will be able to make more intelligent revision decisions. Furthermore, by reading and responding to your peers' papers, you become a more astute reader, which will help when you revise your own papers. In Chapter 10, you will find peer-review sheets for each chapter.

Your Process

1. Have you partaken in peer review before? Describe this experience.
2. Do you regularly get feedback from others on your writing (no matter for which class)? Why or why not?

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2.4: Student Writer at Work- Kelly Ann Wolslegel's Close Reading of Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Love Is Not All"

The New Critics are particularly fond of poetry, especially poetry that is complex and ambiguous. The New Critics feel that poetry, in its reliance on all the nuances of language for effect, best reflects the concept that literature is a unified organism. Thus New Critics are able to find unity in the well-wrought poem.

Kelly's paper analyzes a love poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892–1950). Please read the poem before examining Kelly's paper.

Love Is Not All

Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink

Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain;

Nor yet a floating spar to men that sink

And rise and sink and rise and sink again;

Love can not fill the thickened lung with breath,

Nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone;

Yet many a man is making friends with death

Even as I speak, for lack of love alone.

It well may be that in a difficult hour,

Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,

Or nagged by want past resolution's power,

I might be driven to sell your love for peace,

Or trade the memory of this night for food.

It well may be. I do not think I would.Edna St. Vincent Millay, "Love Is Not All," PoemHunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/love-is-not-all.

Watch Kelly's writing process as she moves from exploring ideas informally, to outlining, and to producing a final product. Kelly wrote numerous drafts and received feedback from peers (using the peer-review sheets) to accomplish her writing task—to perform a New Critical close reading of a piece of literature.

KELLY'S PROCESS

Exploratory Journal Entry

I have chosen to write my essay on Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Love Is Not All." I read this poem the first time during my sophomore year of high school. I like it so much I put it in a Forensics reading and made it all the way to state! So I hope my luck holds!

The poem seems to set up a tension about love. It starts by pointing out the things that love cannot do. It ends with the notion that some may die from a lack of love. I think the key to this poem lies in how the reader interprets the last line. It can be read with doubt or with affirmation. I guess the poem works on ambiguity and paradox. Love cannot feed us or shelter us from the elements. However, love can break hearts and put people in a state of depression. Lack of food can kill someone, but the misery of a heart-break can have the same effect. Don't I know that!! Love cannot quench, but it has the power to fulfill one's emotional needs. Love has a power of its own, but it is not all-powerful.

The realist in me is telling me that Millay is ending this poem with a hint of questioning. However, the romantic in me is telling me that she says the last line with affirmation—indirectly stating that there is no replacement for love. I don't know yet how to say this in my paper and get my point across effectively. But then again, maybe the "title" gives it away—love is not "meat nor drink." Ok,

I guess after writing this little bit that she would not sell love for food, even though people can live physically without love, but not food. Love seems very ironic to Millay, yet she seems to say that one can have both love and basic necessities. This poem seemed so simple, but now it is so complex. I think I'll see if our library has any helpful sources.

Working Thesis

The poem "Love Is Not All" by Edna St. Vincent Millay is an ironic poem that suggests that even though love is not needed for survival, it is still necessary for human existence.

Working Outline of Ideas

Love Is Not:

- meat
- drink
- slumber
- roof (against the rain)
- mast (spar to men that sink and rise)
- breath
- blood
- bone

Irony: love is so powerful, but it is not physically essential

However:

Some would kill themselves b/c of a "lack of love"

But:

Maybe some would surpass love for food—trade it or sell it

Question:

Narrator—would I give love away for essential: food, etc.?

Affirmation:

Love is more valuable that food, etc. Love is irreplaceable because there is no other emotion like it.

Ending tension:

"I do not think I would." Seems uncertain, thus reaffirming the ambiguity and tension of the poem.

Revised Thesis

Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Love Is Not All" is centered around a paradox: love is not needed for physical survival but seems needed for emotional survival. The poem displays this by paradox and tension.

Final Draft

Kelly Ann Wolslegel

Professor John Pennington

Introduction to Literature

April 25, 20–

The Ambiguity of Love: Millay's "Love Is Not All"

Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink," sonnet xxx in the sonnet sequence *Fatal Interview* (1931), affirms the fact that love cannot fulfill our basic human needs, yet it has an undefinable power. The speaker in the poem writes to her lover, it appears, after a night of passion and contemplates the ultimate power of love. Using the sonnet form, the traditional form for love poetry, the speaker points out that because there is no other emotion quite like the many-faceted emotion

of love, it is utterly irreplaceable. However, the poem also claims that love cannot feed the hungry, provide shelter from the elements, or heal physical pain, for these basic needs must be met to maintain a happy human existence. Thus the poem is based on a tension or ambiguity about love: on the one hand, love is useless for physical survival; on the other hand, it is essential for emotional survival. Millay's poem is structured on such a paradox and provides a tentative resolution: though "Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink," the poem suggests that love is still an essential ingredient for happiness because it emotionally fulfills a need that is lacking in the physical world.

The poem can be broken into three parts or movements: the first movement (1–6) tells the reader what love is incapable of doing; the second (7–8) defines the paradoxical nature of love: "Yet many a man is making friends with death / Even as I speak, for lack of love alone." Finally, the third movement finds the speaker contemplating the necessity of love. All these parts are artistically integrated to build to the poem's climactic moment. As Allen Tate writes of Millay's sonnets, "From first to last every sonnet has it special rhythm and sharply defined imagery; they move like a smooth machine, but not machine-like, under the hand of a masterly technician" (64).

In the first movement, Millay personifies love and uses familiar images such as food and shelter to show the reader what love is incapable of doing; thus, she yokes the commonplace and abstract together. For example, she points out that love cannot "fill the thickened lung with breath" (5). Breathing is perhaps the single most important necessity for human existence; take away oxygen and we all die. Also, love cannot take the place of "meat nor drink" (1); it is unable to quench the physical desires of hunger or thirst. Furthermore, though the body may be fatigued, love cannot take the place of "slumber" or provide "a roof against the rain" (2). Obviously, love lacks the material necessities essential to survival. Our physical needs and desires cannot be quenched by love alone.

The narrator also points out that love is unable to protect or save us from physical dangers. Thus, love cannot rescue us from the powerful ocean tides by providing "a floating spar to men that sink / And rise and sink" (3–4). Love is also unable to "clean the blood" or "set the fractured bone" (6). It seems as though the hands of love are tied, preventing it from aiding us in any physical need. Throughout the first movement of the sonnet, Millay juxtaposes love with the concrete physical necessities needed for survival; love simply cannot save us from the physical dangers of the world. The poem's catalogue of images creates tension, for the poet exposes that love cannot protect or save us.

Such tension is further highlighted in the poem's second movement: "Yet many a man is making friends with death / Even as I speak, for lack of love alone" (7–8). If love cannot physically sustain us or save us from injury, then it seems absurd that the "lack of love alone" drives humans to death. The central paradox of the poem is defined: Why is love so essential for survival when it is not a physical necessity?

In the third movement, Millay's poem works toward resolution by questioning whether or not people should trade love for physical fulfillment. The speaker, addressing her lover directly, asks if "in a difficult hour" she would "sell your love for peace, / Or trade the memory of this night for food" (9, 12–13). Love's uselessness has been made concrete by negative comparisons: it cannot feed, clothe, provide shelter, or prevent physical pain from occurring. The speaker says, "I do not think I would" (14). If this line is interpreted as an affirmation, Millay's poem takes a romantic view of love, that love does conquer all. On the other hand, if the speaker presents this statement more as a question, then the speaker is indicating that she is wary of the power of love. Millay maintains this tension or hesitation throughout the third movement by repeating "It well may be" twice (in lines 9 and 14), and the speaker even admits: "I might be driven to sell your love for peace" (12). Even the trademark rhyming couplet that should bring closure to the poem is absent, for *food* and *would* are only near rhymes, thus reinforcing the tension between blind faith in love and the reality of its limited physical power. The poem ends with uncertainty: the speaker is uncertain whether she would sacrifice the memory of love for physical wholeness. However, the poem appears to use understatement to resolve this ambiguity. Though we know what love is incapable of doing, we also know that the speaker does not "think [she] would" give up on love. Thus the hesitation on the speaker's voice ironically provides the answer—yes, indeed, love is powerful enough to cherish, but a commitment to it does require sacrifice.

Many romantics would like to think that "love can move mountains" or "conquer all." In the poem "Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink," Edna St. Vincent Millay asserts that love cannot serve as a replacement for our basic physical needs, yet it is essential for a person's emotional needs. Patricia A. Klemans suggests that *Fatal Interview* "offers something new expressed in the framework and terms of the old. It presents love from a woman's point of view, yet it treats love as an ageless and natural

experience” (206). Thus, the poem plays with love’s tension, showing that a commitment to love necessarily demands sacrifice, a sacrifice, it appears, well worth it.

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This page titled 2.4: Student Writer at Work- Kelly Ann Wolslegel’s Close Reading of Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “Love Is Not All” is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Anonymous via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.5: Student Sample Papers- Todd Goodwin's "Poe's 'Usher'- A Mirror of the Fall of the House of Humanity" and Amy Chisnell's "Don't Listen to the Egg!- A Close Reading of Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky'"

The following paper by Todd Goodwin is on Edgar Allan Poe's oft-read and discussed "The Fall of the House of Usher,"Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. James A. Harrison (New York: AMS, 1979; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1995), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PoeFall.html. which you can access at http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PoeFall.html.

After reading the story, do the following:

1. List at least three topic areas that you could explore for a close reading of the story.
2. Read the following paper by Todd.
3. Compare your ideas with Todd's.
4. Discuss Todd's paper. Does he make a compelling argument? Why or why not?

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 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.

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Paper Model Two: A Return to the Looking-Glass

Read this paper in light of our discussion of close reading and Humpty Dumpty’s interpretation of “Jabberwocky” that he performs for Alice.

Amy Chisnell

Professor Laura Neary

Writing and Literature

April, 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 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 to give 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.

When Humpty interprets "Jabberwocky" for Alice, then, 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. 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 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 the new words from old words which 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 my 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 the 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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2.6: End-of-Chapter Assessment

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we examined in depth the protocols for writing a paper on literature using the close reading technique. Such a technique reflects the literary theory known as New Criticism. The basic tenets of New Criticism, we learned, are the following:

- The critic focuses solely on the literary work and is not interested in bringing outside material to the work itself.
- The close reader wants to find a harmony of unity in the literary work and solve an issue or problem that readers may have about the work.
- By striving to find such harmony and unity, the critic shows that the artistic value of the literary work leads to a larger truth value, which reflects the importance of analyzing literature.
- You were given the opportunity to see the New Critical methodology practiced in three student papers.
- You learned about the importance of the writing process, including peer review and the strategies for conducting peer review. Many of you also participated in peer review for your close reading paper.
- You wrote a close reading analysis of a work of literature—and are now off on your way to the wonderland of critical theory and writing!

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Freewriting exercise. Choose a short poem (no more than fifteen lines) you've never read before. It's OK if you've never even heard of the author. Read through it several times. As you read the poem, jot down the words that seem most significant. Draw arrows between words that seem related to one another: either because they're similar or because they're very different. Then start writing. How do these keywords relate to one another? Are there any tensions that seem important? At first, don't look back at the poem—concentrate on the words themselves and what they mean.
2. Once you've spent a little time with individual words, turn your attention back to the poem itself. Read it again, thinking about the relationships you just brainstormed. Now start applying the insights you gained looking at the words alone back to the poem itself. How does a close attention to the poem's individual words and specific phrases help you better understand the larger meaning or message of the poem?

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS PEER REVIEW

1. Have students conduct peer review on one of the sample papers using the organizational peer-review guide found in Chapter 10, Section 10.1:
    1. Place students in groups of three to four and have them reread the paper for peer review and fill out the guide sheet. Peer review works equally well for online classes; modify the following suggestion according to the electronic classroom and equipment you are using.
    2. Have students discuss their feedback responses to the sample paper.
    3. Have students list the major feedback they discussed.
    4. Put the major issues on the blackboard or whiteboard.
    5. Discuss these responses. Make certain that you let students know that any paper can be improved.
2. Plan to have your students conduct peer review on the drafts of their papers that they are writing in your class. Use the peer-review guide from Chapter 10, Section 10.1 and have them work in groups of three and do the following:
    1. Bring two hard copies of their paper so that each member can read the paper, OR work in a computer lab where students can share their papers online. You may want to use the educational software that your campus supports—for example, Blackboard or Moodle—or you can have students use Google Drive to set up their peer-review groups.
    2. Have two students focus on the first paper in the group. While these students are reading, have the other student read the other two student papers.
    3. The two students should quickly fill out the peer-review sheet and then have a brief conversation about the strengths of the paper and ways the paper could be improved.
    4. Move to the next student and follow the same process. Depending on the length of your class, you may have to reduce the peer-review groups to two students.

5. If time permits, ask the students to provide general comments—or ask questions—about the specific papers or the assignment overall.
6. You may want to use peer review for each paper in your class.

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2.7: Suggestions for Further Reading

Sources on New Criticism

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Writing about Character and Motivation - Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism

Learning Objectives

- Understand the varieties of psychoanalytic literary theories.
- Apply a psychoanalytic theory to a literary work.
- Engage in the writing process of a peer writer, including peer review.
- Review and evaluate a variety of model papers by peer writers.
- Draft and revise a psychoanalytic paper on a literary work.

3.1: Literary Snapshot- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass

3.2: Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism- An Overview

3.3: Focus on Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)- Unconscious Repressed Desire

3.4: Focus on Jacques Lacan (1901–81)- Repressed Desire and the Limits of Language

3.5: Focus on Carl Jung (1875–1961) - The Archetypal Collective Unconsciousness

3.6: Reading Keats's "Urn" through the Psychoanalytic Lens

3.7: Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism- A Process Approach

3.8: Student Writers at Work- Jenn Nemec's Jungian Psychoanalytic Reading of "The Birthmark," Susan Moore's Freudian Reading of "The Birthmark," and Sarah David's Lacanian Reading of "The Birthmark"

3.9: Student Sample Paper- Susan Moore's "The Desire for Perfection in Hawthorne's 'The Birthmark'"

3.10: Student Sample Paper- Sarah David's "A Lacanian Analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'The Birthmark'"

3.11: End-of-Chapter Assessment

3.12: Suggestions for Further Reading

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3.1: Literary Snapshot- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass

We are becoming acquainted more and more with our young hero Alice, who has had some literary theory adventures in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. Let's continue our journey with Alice in this chapter as we explore psychoanalytic literary criticism. We'll provide the links to Carroll's text again, just in case:

http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html

etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html

When Alice tumbles down the rabbit-hole in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), she enters a fantasy realm that is quite different from her world of the here-and-now:

Down, down, down. There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon began talking again. "Dinah'll miss me very much to-night, I should think!" (Dinah was the cat.) "I hope they'll remember her saucer of milk at tea-time. Dinah, my dear, I wish you were down here with me! There are no mice in the air, I'm afraid, but you might catch a bat, and that's very like a mouse, you know. But do cats eat bats, I wonder?" And here Alice began to get rather sleepy, and went on saying to herself, in a dreamy sort of way, "Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?" and sometimes, "Do bats eat cats?" for, you see, as she couldn't answer either question, it didn't much matter which way she put it. She felt that she was dozing off, and had just begun to dream that she was walking hand in hand with Dinah, and saying to her very earnestly, "Now, Dinah, tell me the truth: did you ever eat a bat?" when suddenly, thump! thump! down she came upon a heap of dry leaves, and the fall was over.Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), chap. 1, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html.

Her adventures are described as a dream, and she exclaims after the fall that it was all "Curiouser and curiouser!"

In *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872), Alice, after entering Looking-Glass Land via a magic mirror, encounters two odd brothers, Tweedledee and Tweedledum. Alice and the brothers come upon the Red King, who is snoring:

"It's only the Red King snoring," said Tweedledee.

"Come and look at him!" the brothers cried, and they each took one of Alice's hands, and led her up to where the King was sleeping.

"Isn't he a *lovely* sight?" said Tweedledum. Alice couldn't say honestly that he was. He had a tall red night-cap on, with a tassel, and he was lying crumpled up into a sort of untidy heap, and snoring loud—"fit to snore his head off!" as Tweedledum remarked.

"I'm afraid he'll catch cold with lying on the damp grass," said Alice, who was a very thoughtful little girl.

"He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee: "and what do you think he's dreaming about?"

Alice said, "Nobody can guess that."

"Why, about *you*!" Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"

"Where I am now, of course," said Alice.

"Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"

"If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out—bang!—just like a candle!"

"I shouldn't!" Alice exclaimed indignantly. "Besides, if *I'm* only a sort of thing in his dream, what are *you*, *I* should like to know?"

"Ditto," said Tweedledum.

"Ditto, ditto!" cried Tweedledee.

He shouted this so loud that Alice couldn't help saying, "Hush! You'll be waking him, I'm afraid, if you make so much noise."

"Well, it's no use *your* talking about waking him," said Tweedledum, "when you're only one of the things in his dream. You know very well you're not real."

“I *am* real!” said Alice, and began to cry.

“You won’t make yourself a bit realer by crying,” Tweedledee remarked: “there’s nothing to cry about.”Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (New York: Macmillan, 1899; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1993), chap. 4, etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html.

The dream in Looking-Glass Land seems more a nightmare for Alice, for she is scared that she is merely a figment of someone’s dream, their imagination—that’s an idea that might bring us all to tears!

We all have dreams, and we recognize that dreams often mirror the oddness and nonsense that Alice encounters in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. Dreams, in fact, are central to psychoanalytic literary criticism and have become the stuff of popular psychology, where dream interpretation continues to be a lucrative industry, as seen at Dream-Books.net (dream-books.net/popPsychology-dream-books.html).

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, famously defines dreams as the “road to the unconsciousness” in his monumental work *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899).Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

So let’s enter the wacky and wonderful world of psychoanalytic literary criticism with a few more excerpts from literature:

We are such stuff

As dreams are made on, and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep.William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Globe ed., ed. William George Clark and William Aldis Wright (1866; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/MobTemp.html.

—William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Is *all* that we see or seem

But a dream within a dream?Edgar Allan Poe, “A Dream within a Dream,” PoemHunter.org, http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-dream-within-a-dream.

—Edgar Allan Poe, “A Dream within a Dream”

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale,” in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, ed. Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1919; Bartleby.com, 1999), http://www.bartleby.com/101/624.html.

—John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale”

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3.2: Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism- An Overview

"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.

Your Process

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?

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."Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams* in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay, (New York: Norton, 1989). 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.Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams* in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay, (New York: Norton, 1989).

In this chapter, we explore three popular psychoanalytical approaches for interpreting literature—Freudian, Lacanian, and Jungian. In general, there are four ways to focus a psychoanalytical interpretation:

1. You can analyze the author's life.
2. You can analyze the thematic content of the work, especially the motivations of characters and the narrator(s).
3. You can analyze the artistic construction of a text.
4. You can analyze yourself or the reader of the literary work using reader-response theory, which we examine in detail in Chapter 6.

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).Marie Bonaparte, *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (London: Image Publishing, 1949). 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.

You can find out about Poe at the Poe Museum's website (http://www.poemuseum.org/index.php).

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).Frederick Crews, *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). 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's study is a model for psychoanalyzing characters in fiction and remains a powerful and persuasive interpretation.

You can read "The Birthmark,"Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Birthmark," in *The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, Modern Library ed., ed. Norman Holmes Pearson (New York: Random House, 1937; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1996), etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/HawBirt.html. which will become the story of choice for the three student sample papers in this chapter, at etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/HawBirt.html.

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'" (you can access the essay at http://www.lacan.com/purloined.htm), 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.Jacques Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" Lacan.com, http://www.lacan.com/purloined.htm. You can read "The Purloined Letter"Edgar Allan Poe, "The Purloined Letter," in *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*(London: J. M. Dent, 1912; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1994), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PoePurl.html. at http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PoePurl.html.

Analyze the Reader

Finally, a psychoanalytical reading can examine the reader and how a literary work is interpreted according to the psychological needs of the reader. We examine this approach in detail in Chapter 6 on reader-response criticism.

Your Process

1. Choose three authors and/or literary works that you think might be fruitful for applying the first three psychoanalytical approaches (remember, we'll learn about the fourth approach in reader-response theory).
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, which you'll be ready to write after reading the rest of this chapter.

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3.3: Focus on Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)- Unconscious Repressed Desire

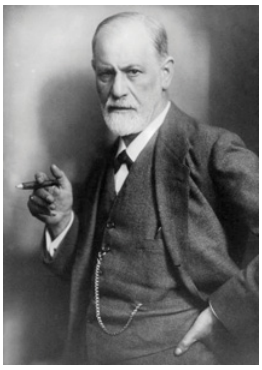


Photo by Max Halberstadt, 1922.

> "Freud is inescapable. It may be a commonplace by now that we all speak Freud whether we know it or not, but the commonplace remains both true and important. Freud's terminology and his essential ideas pervade contemporary ways of thinking about human feelings and conduct." So writes Peter Gay, a recent biographer of Freud, in his introduction to *The Freud Reader* (1989).Peter Gay, "Introduction" in *The Freud Reader*, (New York: Norton, 1989) pg. xiii.

Gay is certainly correct: Freud is part of our everyday vocabulary: the "Oedipal complex" and "slips-of-the-tongue" are two Freudian concepts with which you are probably familiar already.

Freud's legacy resides in his theory of human sexual development. He believes humans are driven by the **pleasure principle**, where sexual desires and aggressive behavior are controlled by the **reality principle**, the so-called restrictions we follow to conform to proper behavior. Consequently, our drive for unbridled pleasure is repressed by the reality principle and becomes sublimated or buried in the **unconscious**. Initially, Freud categorized the mind according to three levels: the conscious (what we remember), the preconscious (what we can easily retrieve from our memory), and the unconscious (what cannot be retrieved into consciousness). Freud's map of the mind focuses on the tension between the conscious and the unconscious.

Ultimately, much of Freudian psychoanalysis concerns itself with how the unconsciousness attempts to break through the repression barrier and enter consciousness. A popular way to view the tension between the conscious and the unconscious is to imagine an iceberg:

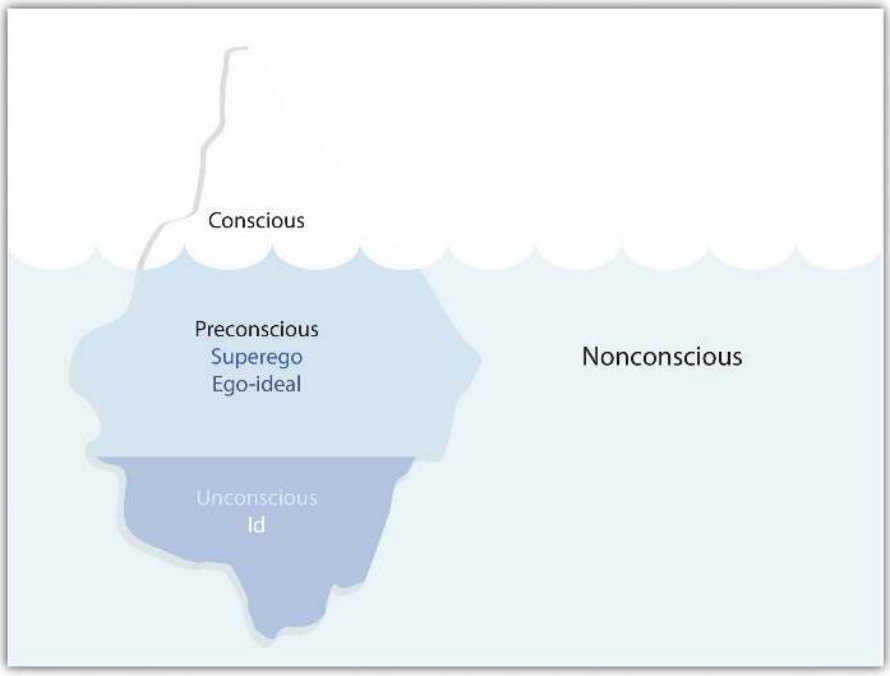


Figure **3.3.1**: Freud's Conception of the Human Psyche. *Note: Ego is free-floating in all three levels.

In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud further defines his conception of the mind. He theorizes that the mind contains the **id**, the **ego**, and the **superego** (or the **ego-ideal**).Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* in *The Freud Reader*, (New York: Norton, 1989) p. 630–638. The id (the "it") is the center of our instincts, our libido, which naturally seeks gratification, and is driven by the pleasure principle; the id is primarily sexual and aggressive in nature, purely biological. In turn, the superego (the "above me") is the moral conscience—the "law"—that tells us what is right or wrong, permissible or not permissible. The superego is constructed from parental authority, societal law, religious prohibitions, and so on; is societal; and is driven by the reality principle. It follows, then, that the ego (the "I") is the moderator of the id (pleasure) and the superego (moral conscience). In other words, the ego is the compromise of the id and the superego, a delicate balance of the mind.

Freud posits that mental illnesses result from a faulty ego, one unable to accept the id-superego push and pull. If the mind is unable to release those repressed desires through some outlet, then a person can develop a mental illness—various neuroses like psychosis, paranoia, and schizophrenia. The goal of this chapter is not to provide you with an overview of Freudian psychoanalysis as it relates to treating mental illness; instead, our goal is to show you how to apply Freud's theories to the interpretation of literature.

Central to Freud's schematic of the mind is the **Oedipal or Oedipus complex** (OC), for it is the OC that ultimately forms the ego. To Freud, all humans pass through three stages of sexual development. During the **oral stage**, a child is one with its libido, its sexual desire satisfied by oral sucking, particularly of the mother's breast. Continued thumb-sucking during childhood, for example, represents a child not completely through the oral stage of development. Next, the child passes through the **anal stage**, whereby it experiences the mastery of its own bodily functions, gaining pleasure from the ability to control bodily functions. Freud believes the anal stage is primarily aggressive and leads to the desire for mastery over others. Those who have read William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) will recognize that the stranded children are stuck in the anal stage without any authority to control them, especially after the breaking of the conch shell.William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (New York: Penguin, 1984). Finally, the child enters the **phallic stage**, where the child's sexual desire is concentrated on the genitals, which become an erogenous zone that fulfills pleasure. In effect, the oral, anal, and phallic stages reflect libidinal sexual desires central to the pleasure principle.

Enter the father. Enter the reality principle. Enter the OC. The OC comes directly from Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, a tragedy about the hero Oedipus, who learns from the Delphic oracle that he will kill his father and marry his mother; he tries to avoid the prophecy, only to fall victim to patricide and incest.Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea, 2007). Unknowingly, Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother. After learning what he has done, Oedipus blinds himself in penance of his horrific deeds. Now that's a twisted tale! Freud's OC approximates the tragedy of *Oedipus Rex*: the boy, as Freud tells us, has

a desire for the mother and begins to see the father as a threat to this desire. Thus the boy wishes to rid himself of his father and possess the mother. The father, symbolic of the law or lawgiver, steps in and, with the threat of castration or emasculation, turns the boy away from the mother. The boy then represses his desire for his mother (and his desire to be rid of the father) into the unconscious. In a sense, the father represents the superego, the authority. By successfully negotiating the OC, the boy is gendered; he learns how to direct his sexual desire to appropriate objects and usually grows into a healthy sexual human being.

What of the girl, you ask? Well, you probably shouldn't ask. Freud's OC is highly sexist. At one point in his career Freud referred to women as the "dark continent," and he is known most for his rhetorical question: "What does a woman want?" Indeed, Freud did not have an answer, and many feminists would argue that he didn't even have a clue! He does not provide an adequate explanation for the girl's journey through the process; in fact, Freud claims that the girl has an easier route through the OC since she accepts the notion of castration because she doesn't have the male appendage. In other words, the girl, already symbolically castrated, does not fear the father; instead, she turns toward the father for the missing phallus, her completion, and thus rivals the mother for the father's affection. You can probably see why nearly all of Freud's critics have recognized the limitations of his claims about women.

At this point you may be shaking your head in skeptical amazement, for Freud's theories do tax the imagination. One major critique of Freud is that we cannot verify his theories empirically. In other words, we are asked to believe Freud because he tells us to believe him. For literary critics, however, this theory—or story—that Freud creates, one that he develop from reading literature (*Oedipus Rex*), has tantalizing possibilities for literary interpretation.

There's a bit more to Freud that we'll want to examine—dreams—but let's look at another use of the Freudian OC in literary analysis. Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1975) provides a provocative—and controversial—case for a Freudian interpretation of literature, in this case fairy tales.Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Vintage, 1976). Bettelheim contends that fairy tales often depict Oedipal tensions. Let's look at one example, "Jack and the Beanstalk," which you can read at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/English_Fairy_Tales/Jack_and_the_Beanstalk."Jack and the Beanstalk," in *English Fairy Tales*, 3rd ed., ed. Joseph Jacobs (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1890), http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/English_Fairy_Tales/Jack_and_the_Beanstalk.

This tale exemplifies a child's journey through the OC. The beanstalk, symbolizing the phallus, is a metaphor for fatherly authority. Jack's stealing of the goose that lays the golden egg from the giant and subsequent cutting down of the beanstalk, which leads to the giant's demise, symbolizes Jack's freedom from the fear of the fatherly authority as he becomes his own person, his own man. By chopping down the beanstalk, then, Jack symbolically castrates the giant and is able to give up his pleasurable desire for the land of plenty on top of the beanstalk and live in the world of reality. Of course, it helps to have that goose. If fairy tales suggest Freudian designs, as Bettelheim tells us, then it seems reasonable other literature may reflect Oedipal desires. Thus a psychoanalytic reading of a text may lead to some illuminating conclusions. As with any Freudian readings, there are those who will reject Freud's very premises, and this is true with Bettelheim, for many fairy-tale scholars have looked at the limits of his claims. Yet they are still powerful.



Illustration by Herbert Cole for Ernest Rhys's Fairy Gold: A Book of Old English Fairy Tales(London: J. M. Dent, 1906).

We must add another dimension to Freud's theory to complete its frame, which will come full circle and connect us to Alice's concern that she is a dream of the Red King. To summarize Freudian theory so far, the human mind is structured around the id-ego-superego triad that represents the tension between the pleasure and the reality principle; the ego is the moderator between pleasure and reality and is formed by entering the OC. The ego balances the id and superego by repressing those id desires that are not socially acceptable—which includes the desire for the mother—into the unconscious. To remain psychologically healthy, according to Freud, the human mind must be able to let those repressed desires escape. Slips of the tongue and jokes are two outlets. Think of dirty jokes. By telling a dirty joke or laughing at one, we are able to alleviate our fears or laugh at something that is normally not permissible. Think of a slip of the tongue, where you are repressing some desire that unconsciously slips out in normal conversation. A clever definition of such a slip is as follows: *It's when you say one thing, but mean a mother.* Get it?

Yet there is one other outlet that is vital to Freud: dreams. They are the primary outlets for these repressed desires, the "royal road," as Freud expressed it, to the unconscious.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the importance of dreams to psychoanalytic literary criticism. And Freud's theory of dreams may be his most important contribution to literary analysis. Freud defines dreams as hidden ways of accessing repressed wishes or desires. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) is Freud's masterwork on dream interpretation. If dreams are fulfillments of repressed wishes and desires, then dreams provide a means for the pleasure principle—the id—to have a convenient outlet. Freud identifies the **dreamwork** as constructed of the **latent content**, the **manifest content**, and the **secondary revision**. The latent content is like a bubbling cauldron of desire, so deep and seething that it appears unintelligible. To bring some meaning to this cauldron, the dreamwork operates by allowing the manifest content to provide a structure for the latent content; the manifest content orders and arranges the dream into a story that uses images and symbols to convey meaning. To continue with our analogy, as the dreamer looks into the bubbling cauldron of the latent content, he or she takes a ladle and dips into the cauldron and pours latent content into a bowl, the bowl representing the manifest content, a smaller and more structured container. Literal food for thought!

The primary recipe for such symbolization and image making is a dash of **condensation**(compression of information) and a tablespoon of **displacement** (placing desire onto a safe/other object). Condensation operates by taking two or more images and compressing them into a composite picture (i.e., a dream where a person looks like an amalgam of other people you know). Displacement, on the other hand, operates by substituting one thing or image for another (i.e., Freud once interpreted a car to represent the autoeroticism of the dreamer). Secondary revision, finally, is the dream the dreamer remembers and attempts to interpret (or have someone else interpret); during the secondary revision, any gaps or illogicalities of the dream from the manifest content is filled in and smoothed over—the dreamer revises the story to make it more literary, to imbue it with more sense. Another way to see secondary revision is to view it as interpretation: as we interpret a dream, we interpret a piece of literature. If a dream

has a narrative structure, then it follows that it requires reading and interpreting, making a dream similar to a poem, play, short story, or novel.

In *On Dreams* (1914), Freud provides some strategies for reading dreams by discussing various symbols that work by condensation and displacement and become dramatized or put into a story form.Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams* (New York: Cosimo, 2010). A central dream symbol, one that is essential to the OC, is the **phallic symbol**—guns, knives, swords, pens, even a banana. Related to the phallic symbol is the **yonic symbol**, any round object or object of fecundity that may symbolize female fertility—symbols of the womb. Some symbols become more universal: agricultural images represent fertilization, as do spring and summer. Be forewarned: not everything in a text is a phallic or yonic symbol. Freudian symbol hunting can at times be a dangerous occupation, for every pen—say the one you are probably holding in your hand right now—is not necessarily a phallic symbol, even if as some Freudians pun: "Pen-is power"! Freud once said that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar, but that leaves open the possibility that sometimes that cigar might mean something else.

Freud also suggests that the dream symbolism of condensation and displacement also operates through various defense mechanisms or coping strategies that we use every day. **Repression**(forgetting or refusing to think about something that was unpleasant or traumatic); **sublimation**(channeling one's emotions into a socially acceptable outlet); **projection** (assigning one's own feelings to someone else); **reaction formation** (expressing the opposite of what one really feels); and **rationalization** (trying to justify something, to explain it away) are other ways for the mind to grapple with unconscious desires that haunt the psyche. And Freud contends that as the mind is split between the unconscious and the conscious, this schism is a product of the two great motivating factors—**Eros** (desire, sexual intimacy, love) and **Thanatos** (death, the fear and attraction of death). That our desire for life will ultimately be defeated by the inevitable reality of death is a central concern that leads to repression.

Freud's psychoanalytic theories have been extremely influential to literary criticism. Dreams are, after all, like literature in need of interpretation. In fact, argues Freud, literature operates like a dream. In "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (1908), Freud specifically connects psychoanalysis to literature and literary interpretation.Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," in *On Freud's "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming,"* ed. Peter Fonagy, Ethel Spector Person, and Servulo A. Figueira (London: Karnac, 1995). A writer is a dreamer, finding outlets for his or her unconscious, repressed desires. As reader and interpreter of a literary work, then, you gain pleasure from reading. We see in Chapter 6 that reader-response interpretation approximates Freud's reader "wish-fulfillment" as a textual strategy.

In general, Freudian literary criticism is a powerful critical lens to use when viewing much literature. You have at your disposal a wide array of literary tools to use: repression of the conscious mind into the unconscious, pleasure versus reality principles, the id-ego-superego connection, the Oedipal complex, dreams and dream symbolism, and the various defense mechanisms. Often, a psychoanalytical reading will open up the text dramatically. We can now examine the theories of Jacques Lacan, who makes Freud even more applicable to literary interpretation.

Your Process

1. What aspect(s) of Freud's theory most interests you?
2. How could you take that interest in Freud and apply it to a work of literature?
3. What can you envision as the benefits of such an application?
4. Are there any concerns you might have about your approach?

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3.4: Focus on Jacques Lacan (1901–81)- Repressed Desire and the Limits of Language

Jacques Lacan, in many ways, is more popular than Freud in literary analysis, though Freud is certainly more famous across disciplines. And the fact remains that Lacan is a Freudian—his theory is dependent on Freud. When Lacan writes that "the unconscious is structured like a language," he moves Freud from the biological realm into the realm of language.Dor, Joël. Introduction to the Reading of Lacan: The Unconscious Structured Like a Language. (New York: Other Press, 1998) pg. 244. Freudian literary criticism is primarily external to a work of art: we read and interpret according to Freud's theories, applying, for example, the id-ego-superego triad to Hawthorne's short story "The Birthmark," as a student example demonstrates later in the chapter. Lacanian psychoanalytic criticism, on the other hand, can be seen as internal to the work, for it focuses on the actual language of the literary work. In other words, the text becomes alive, having its own mind, its own psyche. Lacanian psychoanalysis is textual, part of the artistic, formal construction of the literary work.

As you remember, Freud posits that the mind is divided between the conscious and unconscious, the dividing line between the two states representing the repression barrier. Lacan positions language in this dichotomy by modifying the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, who argued that words (or signs) work within a system of other signs (our language). However, Saussure believes a sign is only an arbitrary marker between the **signifier** (the form the sign takes—a sound, a symbol, or a word) and its **signified** (the concept the sign represents). Lacan, who felt that the signifier (the word) dominated the signified (the actual "thing" the word represents), represents the sign system as follows:

Thus to say a cat is a *cat* is to say the following:

This "bonding" between the signifier and signified is arbitrary, argues Saussure, for we could have easily labeled the "essence of the cat" a *trilgy* and been hollering for years, "Here, trilgy…trilgy…trilgy." But Saussure contends that once an arbitrary sign is constructed, it remains bonded together and unchangeable, like two sides to a piece of paper. Language, consequently, is a system of signs, where words take on their meaning only in relationship to other words. Lacan revises Saussure by suggesting that signs are *not* stable, but in fact are continually shifting; words are a mere approximation of meaning, thus Lacan's emphasis on the word over the actual "thing" the word represents.

Lacan, then, views words, the signifiers, the marks of letters on a page, as central to the creation of meaning (or the essence of the signified). Words bring meaning *to* the object; the signified is meaningless without the signifier. Language, consequently, throws a person into a sign system that never captures meaning, the human thrust into the language of desire. Or to put it plainly, if you like cats, then having the word *cat* nicely printed in your lap is not as fulfilling as having that actual furry creature purring in your lap.

To a degree, the sign, split between the signifier and the signified, acts like a repression barrier: Freud's unconscious becomes the Lacanian signified—meaning—which can never be fulfilled since language—the signifier—approximates meaning. If Lacan is correct (and, of course, this is a pretty big "if"), then our unconscious is "structured like a language," and it follows that the human subject is divided between our name (for us, John Pennington and Ryan Cordell) and our signified (for us, the essence of "John Pennington" and "Ryan Cordell"). Lacan distinguishes the dual self by labeling the ***moi*** (the image the person has of himself or herself) and the ***je*** (the speaking subject that positions the person in language) as parts of the self:

Another way of comprehending the moi/je dichotomy is to understand how a pronoun operates in a conversation. If *you* say to a friend—"I would love to go to a movie tonight, wouldn't you?"—*I = You*and the *You = Your friend*. When your friend responds—"You have a good idea; I'd sure like to go"—the *I = Your Friend* and *You = You*. Lacan claims that language creates our identity and places us within the system of language, which, as we remember, is arbitrary and approximate. Language, as Lacan defines it, represents "the unconscious [that] is structured like a language," yet this language "is the discourse of the Other," the Other being language.Dor, Joël. Introduction to the Reading of Lacan: The Unconscious Structured Like a Language. (New York: Other Press, 1998) pg. 244.

Central to Freud's psychoanalytic theory is the Oedipal complex, and Lacan modifies the complex by making it a product of language acquisition. He argues that a child passes through the **Imaginary**and the **Symbolic** and strives to attain the **Real**, roughly equivalent to the anal, oral, and phallic stages. The Imaginary stage is prelinguistic, similar to the id with its chaotic collection of desire. During the Imaginary stage, the child has no clearly defined sense of self; instead, it is a mass of fluid desire, Lacan's image for this is an *omelet* or *egg*, a human Humpty Dumpty so-to-speak. In this amorphous Imaginary state, the child has no boundaries

since it has no self. However, the child passes through the **Mirror stage**, where it sees itself reflected in the mirror, and this reflection provides the child with an image of itself, one at first of ideal completeness. The child identifies with the reflection in the mirror. Yet this image of completeness is quickly shattered, for the child must misread itself, for it simultaneously sees itself as unified and as an object, an Other. Thus the beginning of the split subject. It is important to note that during the Mirror stage the child begins to acquire language, learning immediately that what is desired and the words used to identify that object of desire are not the same. Language in the Mirror stage fragments the myth of the unified self contained in the Imaginary stage.

During the Imaginary and Mirror stages, the child is subject to the **desire-of-the-mother**, whereby the child has complete desire for the mother and believes the mother in turn exists solely for the child's pleasure. Again, a division occurs as the self misreads itself in terms of the image the self projects into the mirror (or interprets from the reflection). Mother is both self and other, as is the child's identity. Enter the father—again. By this time, the child is cast into the Symbolic stage by being thrust into the language of differences. Since language is based on the signifier | signified, it follows that once a child is inserted into language it sees that its desire—the naming of objects—is never fulfilled by the object itself, for language is arbitrary and empty. Furthermore, the child is thrown into a world of differences, for words only take on meaning in relation to other words, primarily the differences between words: male/female; father/son; mother/daughter; *moi*/*je*.

Consequently, the child, now split from itself, seeks fulfillment in other objects, the ***objet petit a***, loosely translated as "little object 'a.'" The *objet petit a* is a product of language, so it cannot really be found. Lacan contends that language operates as to preclude the child's fulfillment of finding an *objet petit a*. The mirror reflection becomes an apt metaphor: you are the reflection in the mirror, yet that reflection only "reflects" you (it truly isn't you). The distance between the mirror and where you are standing symbolizes the gap or gulf between words and a person's identity. That Alice is able to cross through the mirror into Looking-Glass Land, for example, represents her desire—she is in an imaginary realm (her mind?) where she can attempt to satiate her desire.

Lacan insists then language is a source of our desire but that language becomes the source of frustrated desire since words can never capture desire or the essence of meaning. Think about what happens when you stumble across a word you don't know: you look it up in a dictionary, only to find that the word is defined by other words, which have their own meanings, which you could look up in a dictionary, which…and we are in an endless, infinite loop. Take the word *liminal*. What does it mean? The *Merriam-Webster Online* dictionary defines *liminal* as a "sensory threshold," as something "barely perceptible," and as an "intermediate state, phase, or condition" that might exist between *life*and *death*.*Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. "liminal," http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/liminal. Now do you know what the word really means? Or are you a bit frustrated? One thing we do know for sure is that Alice travels to liminal spaces when she tumbles to Wonderland and when she crosses over to Looking-Glass Land.

Let's place all this in a tighter format. Remember, Freud claims that the dreamwork uses displacement and condensation to create the manifest content of the dream. For Lacan the dreamwork is a manifestation of language—displacement resides in **metonymy** and condensation in **metaphor**:

Wondering what *metonymy* and *metaphor* are? In *A Handbook to Literature*, C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon provide excellent definitions of these literary devices. *Metonymy* is "the substitution of the name of an object closely associated with a word for the word itself. We commonly speak of the monarch as 'the crown,' an object closely associated with royalty thus being made to stand for it."C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, eds., *A Handbook to Literature* (Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson, 2009). *Metaphor* is "an analogy identifying one object with another and ascribing to the first object one or more or the qualities of the second."C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, eds., *A Handbook to Literature* (Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson, 2009).

In effect, metonymy works by displacement, residing on a horizontal axis that reflects the displacement; thus, "a" is displaced by "b," which is displaced by "c," and so on. Metaphor, in turn, operates by substitution, and can be placed on a vertical axis where one thing stands in completely for another: "a" = "b."

You can now see how Lacan's theory begins to come together. Metonymy, being displacement, is a result of the Mirror stage where the child recognizes its reflection first as a complete substitution for itself (a metaphor), but it soon realizes that the reflection is of an Other, a displacement of the self (a metonym). Thus, since language is split between signifier | signified, it primarily operates as metonymy. Language as metonymy always leaves a gap or **absence or lack**, since no complete meaning can be attained. Language, consequently, is like the unconscious, which strives to fulfill repressed desire. Another way of understanding language as a gap is to open a dictionary to find a meaning of a word, as we have discussed earlier. Cast into a language of desire, humans are unable to

find stable meaning, for language cannot satisfy desire; we continually search for an *objet petit a* that will fulfill us, but that *objet* is based on a lack, for it is simply a product of language.

If Lacan subscribes to Freud's Oedipal complex, then the father must become a significant player in the development drama of the individual. Lacan argues that the desire-of-the-mother, a product of the Imaginary stage, is replaced by the **name-of-the-father**, the **phallus**, which represents law and authority and brings some boundary to the self. The phallus or name-of-the-father is not the sexual organ itself, but a symbolic representation that is similar to the superego. The phallus is another *objet petit a*, but it operates as an anchoring point along the horizontal axis of metonymy. As the human subject floats through language on the metonymic plane, it searches for the phallus and temporarily finds the phallus as a metaphor on the vertical plane. Thus the phallus becomes the privileged signifier, for it helps the split subject achieve temporary meaning in the endless journey through the language of desire. However, the phallus can never be secured, for it too resides in language and quickly slips away. Thus the search for the phallus or name-of-the-father is a frustrated desire since it is a product of language.

Finally, Lacan constructs the ideal realm called the Real, the ultimate place where the Imaginary and Symbolic stages can meet. To Lacan, though, the Real is only symbolic and beyond the reach of language—it represents the unattainable; it represents desire. The Imaginary and Symbolic are like two sides of a sheet of paper, similar to the signifier and signified; the Real is like a Möbius strip constructed from strands of paper where the Imaginary and Symbolic become entangled and lost in the web between the Imaginary and the Symbolic.

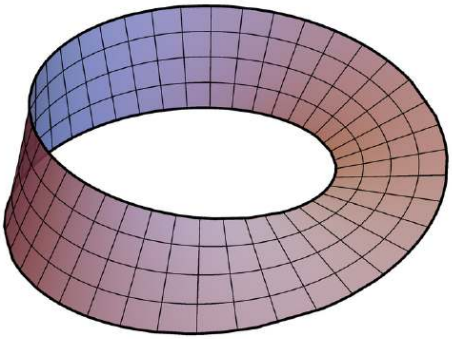


Figure **3.4.2**: Diagram of Möbius strip. (CC BY-SA 4.0; Stevvers via Wikipedia)

Lacan's theory is complex and at times confusing, yet like Freud's it is intriguing. His revising of Freud's concepts "into" language makes his theory particularly applicable to literary interpretation, for literature is based on language, which is structured like the unconscious. Whereas Freud suggests the literary work is structured like an author's dream in need of interpretation, Lacan proposes that language itself is a dream of condensation and displacement; therefore, Lacan's theory is centered more in actual language and less in the peculiar workings of each individual author and reader. Literary interpretation based on language, then, attempts to find meaning in a work that will elude us because language slides away from us. Our desire for interpretation, in a sense, can only be temporarily reached via an anchoring point (a written paper), but that point will be undercut with subsequent papers and interpretations.

Furthermore, Lacan's Imaginary, prelinguistic stage is appealing to feminist critics, for the Imaginary seems a maternal stage of unity that does not rely on a girl's symbolic castration to enter into the realm of the Symbolic, for both male and female are immersed into language, which casts each into a world of differences. In Freud's theory, a girl is defined by lacking—she desires the male organ that she does not have. Lacan, however, situates all this in language, revealing that women are marginalized not biologically but linguistically, for the privileged signifier is the phallus, or patriarchy.

Your Process

1. What aspect of Lacan's theory most interests you?
2. How could you take that interest in Lacan and apply it to a work of literature?
3. What can you envision as the benefits of such an application?
4. Are there any concerns you might have about your approach?

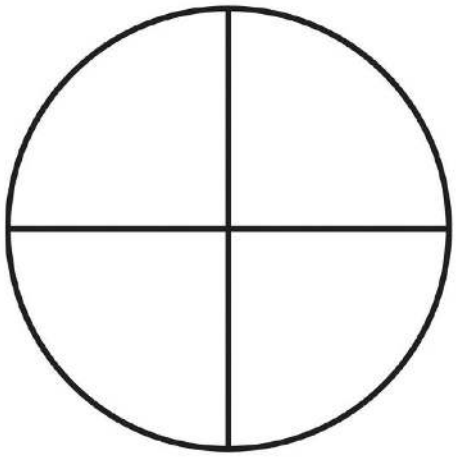
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3.5: Focus on Carl Jung (1875–1961) - The Archetypal Collective Unconsciousness

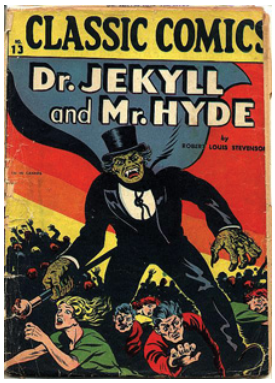
Carl Jung, like Lacan, was a disciple of Freud's, but unlike Lacan, Jung eventually split from Freud, believing that Freud focused too heavily on the importance of sexual desire and the repression that that desire causes. Jung felt that Freud's theories were, simply, too vague and could be manipulated to fit any scheme. Jung's complaint seems justified, for Freudian analysis can become reductive as a reader finds phallic symbolism in every knife and fork and yonic symbolism in the soup bowl. Freud's claim that the unconscious is a result of a person's repressed desire (which of course is sexual, libidinal), is challenged by Jung, who argues that the mind is constructed of multiple layers of consciousness, the unconscious composing only one of those layers. Jung's map of the mind is like a house with several stories: on one level lives the conscious, on another the personal unconscious (similar to Freud's unconscious), on another the **collective unconscious**, which represents a universal storehouse of images that are common to all humanity. Jung clearly separates himself from Freud, for the collective unconscious is much larger than the unconscious, suggesting that a commonality is shared by all humans—including the importance of myth, ritual, and religion.

The collective unconscious can be accessed through various **archetypes** that represent for a particular culture a variation of the collective unconscious. Archetypes are like universal Tupperware containers; a particular culture, society, or individual fills that container with its more "personal" symbol-mixture that is molded by the archetype container yet maintains its individual flavor. Thus an archetype is simultaneously universal and particular. Archetypes are those "big dreams" of a culture.

The overriding archetype for Jung is the **Self**, the image of wholeness or individuation. Jung's graphic depiction of the Self is the **mandala**, a circle containing four harmonious parts.



The mandala is beginning and end, perfectly balanced by the four chambers, which composes the unification of the whole Self. Jung's concept of the collective Self, as you can see, is diametrically opposed to Freud's and Lacan's fractured and split individual self. According to Jung each person wears an outward face to the world, a **mask or persona**, while the inward face contains the **shadow** and the anima/animus. The shadow is the dark side of the Self that we all hope to hide; it is also the "moral problem" that the Self must grapple with on its way to wholeness. The Self must eventually recognize its shadow as part of its nature. The *doppelgänger* is the German literary term for the double, and it captures the dark side of the human. Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) is a prototypical story of the double; it focuses on the experiences of the mannered Dr. Henry Jekyll and his alter ego, the beastly Mr. Hyde.Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886; Project Gutenberg, 2011), http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/42/pg42.html. Stevenson's novel famously suggests that the shadow resides naturally in the Self, though the Self wears a mask to hide that shadow side to the world and to the Self.



Classics Illustrated cover for Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1943).

Furthermore, every Self has its own masculine or feminine counterpart to the personality: the **anima**is the female part of the male; the **animus** is the masculine part of the female. The anima embodies Eros—desire—a maternal archetype that is both positive (the nurturing mother) and negative (the devouring witch). Anima archetypes include the Great Mother, the Tempting Whore, and the Destroying Crone. Conversely, the animus embodies Logos—reason—and is paternal, symbolized by the Great Father, the Wise Old Man, the Lover, and the Destroying Angel archetypes. Both anima and animus have positive and negative dimensions. As the shadow side of the Self is usually hidden or repressed inside, the anima or animus side of the Self is also internalized and hidden, for the Self is unwilling to recognize its feminine or masculine side. That is why the Self will project its opposite onto others, which explains erotic heterosexual love: the male and female are united, finding their anima or animus completed by their partner. Jung falls into the same trap as Freud to a degree—they both make essentialist assumptions about gender.

Since the goal of the Self is harmony, as seen in the mandala, the Self undertakes the archetypal quest to achieve **syzygy**, the fulfillment of unity, of balance. Jung fathoms that the **myths** of a culture highlight the Self's quest for completeness, symbolized by the mandala, and the quaternion Christ is the ideal unified Self, containing Father, Son, Holy Ghost, and Mary (thus balancing the anima and animus). Unlike Freud, who saw no value in religion, Jung's theory is cemented in religion, with the Self a reflection of God. The quest to find the Self, consequently, is a quest for God within the Self, symbolized by Christ, the purest archetype of the God-in-the-human-self. The quest for the Holy Grail in Arthurian legend, for example, symbolizes search for the unity of Self and God. Such a quest becomes the foundation for a culture's archetype, this archetype being a variation of the "big dream" of the collective unconscious, the grand archetype.

But how can you apply Jung to literary criticism? In "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry" (1922), Jung explains how literature and the writer operate under the archetype.Carl Jung, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," in *Twentieth Century Theories of Art*, ed. James M. Thompson (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1999), 151–67. Literature is not necessarily based on the personal unconscious of the writer, but on the unconscious mythology that is part of the collective unconsciousness. A writer, then, draws from the collective unconscious for the archetype. Literature is a powerful tool that operates like myth, ritual, and religion.

Other critics have adapted Jungian ideas. Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915), an anthropological compendium of cross-cultural myths, complements Jung's theories of myth.Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1922; Project Gutenberg, 2003), http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3623. Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*(1949) positions Jung in his definition of the monomyth—the departure, initiation, and return of the hero who finds completeness and wholeness during the quest.Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 3rd ed. (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008). George Lucas, for example, wrote the original *Star Wars Trilogy* as a modern myth that exemplifies Campbell's archetypal patterns. Darth Vader, the dark side of the Self, must be confronted, while the need for balance and control and harmony is found in Ben Kenobi's "force," which Luke Skywalker must master in order to confront his dark side, his Self, his father.*Star Wars Trilogy: Episode IV, A New Hope*; *Episode V, The Empire Strikes Back*; and *Episode VI, Return of the Jedi*, directed by George Lucas (1980; Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox, 2004), DVD. The most recent example of this myth is seen in Harry Potter's confrontation with Voldemort.

Jungian criticism is often applied to literature that is considered more mythic—fairy tales, fantasy, and medieval romances. In *Fairy Tales: Allegories of Inner Life* (1983), J. C. Cooper argues that "Jack and the Beanstalk" depicts common archetypes of the Fool and Trickster, as Jack moves from the fool (for buying "magic" beans) to the trickster (who can outwit the giant).J. C. Cooper,

Fairy Tales: Allegories of Inner Life (London: Aquarian, 1983). To Cooper, the fairy tale is about the universal pattern where goodness triumphs over evil, where ingenuity and innocence defeat brutality. Cooper's reading is far different than Bettelheim's.

While Jungian criticism is often applied to texts that privilege fantasy over realistic narrative, the theory can find uses in all forms of contemporary literature, as seen in John Neary's recent *Shadows and Illuminations: Literature as Spiritual Journey* (2011), in which he examines the work of writers as diverse as Jonathan Safran Foer, Yann Martel, Toni Morrison, to Jane Hamilton.John Neary, *Shadows and Illuminations: Literature as Spiritual Journey* (Eastbourne, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2011).

Your Process

1. What aspect of Jung's theory most interests you?
2. How could you take that interest in Jung and apply it to a work of literature?
3. What can you envision as the benefits of such an application?
4. Are there any concerns you might have about your approach?

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3.6: Reading Keats's "Urn" through the Psychoanalytic Lens

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-fringed 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, unwearièd,

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 its 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.'

CLASS PROCESS

1. Have your class read Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."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.
2. Break up into at least three groups.
3. Assign each group one critic: Freud, Lacan, or Jung.
4. Have them discuss ways to apply their theory to the poem.
5. Have them develop a claim about the poem that uses the theory.
6. Bring the class back together and have groups present their theories.
7. Engage in a larger group discussion about psychoanalytic literary criticism.
8. Now look at the following overview and compare with your class discussion.

Keats's "Urn," as you have discovered, lends itself well to the psychoanalytic perspective. Compare the classroom discussion with some critical applications of psychoanalytic theory to Keats's poem. Leon Waldoff in *Keats and the Silent Work of Imagination* (1985), for example, demonstrates how Keats's loss of family members creates "feelings of separation anxiety," especially the loss of his mother and brother Tom.Leon Waldoff, *Keats and the Silent Work of Imagination* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1985). This loss becomes manifest in "an unconscious determinant" that creates key symbols in Keats's odes, the Grecian urn being an example.Leon Waldoff, *Keats and the Silent Work of Imagination* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1985). The urn symbolizes, argues Waldoff, an "undying longing for permanence" that symbolizes an "unending quest conducted at the deepest levels of the mind by the silent work of the imagination, which repeatedly seeks to heal an insistent sense of loss and to deal with its more conscious complement—a penetrating awareness of the transience of human life and a concern with philosophical questions raised by that awareness."Leon Waldoff, *Keats and the Silent Work of Imagination* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1985).The urn, like the other artifacts in Keats's odes (nightingale, autumn, melancholy), shows "the fundamental impossibility of controlling imagination and the desire impelling it toward a finer conception of its object."Leon Waldoff, *Keats and the Silent Work of Imagination* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1985). Waldoff contends Keats's melancholia that results from familial loss "provides a structure or context within which the unconscious processes evident in the poetry may be seen to work with cohesion and unity of purpose in the direction they give to the imagination."Leon Waldoff, *Keats and the Silent Work of Imagination* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1985). Keats's life, then, is the key subtext that is the foundation of the odes.

A Lacanian reading could extend Waldoff's argument: the poet, unable to regain the lost past, attempts through poetry to fulfill this desire for his mother and brothers. The urn is an object of desire—*objet petit a*—that acts as a temporary anchoring point for the poet. However, since the poem generates meaning through language, and since language cannot fulfill desire, the urn image ultimately fails to fulfill; it is a "Cold Pastoral." Keats's repetition of the word *happy* in stanza three—"More happy love! more happy, happy love"; "Ah, happy, happy boughs"; "And happy melodist"—reflects the emptiness of language that tries to capture true desire. *Happy* can only approximate "happiness," the signified that the poet wishes to convey. In a sense, Keats's poem attempts to reach the Real to satiate the longing to move from the Symbolic realm that continually frustrates fulfillment.

Finally, in *The Nightingale and the Hawk: A Psychological Study of Keats's Odes* (1964), Katharine M. Wilson provides a Jungian interpretation of the odes. She argues that Keats's odes are attempts to tap into the archetypal collective unconsciousness, for poetry works by "images…which come from the deeper layers of the poet's psyche, rather than from his superficial observation, or from his personal unconscious."Katharine M. Wilson, *The Nightingale and the Hawk: A Psychological Study of Keats's Odes* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964). The odes are Keats's "quest for the Self." In "Urn," in particular, "beauty for Keats was entangled with intimation of the Self"; thus beauty's "permanence lies in the realm of the psyche." "The urn is like a frozen archetype," argues Wilson. "It is a permanent object passed from generation to generation of sorrowing humanity, but has fixed on its objects of beauty."Katharine M. Wilson, *The Nightingale and the Hawk: A Psychological Study of Keats's Odes*(London: Allen and Unwin, 1964). The urn, consequently, as frozen archetype epitomizes truth and beauty that resides in the Self, that Self tapping the larger collective unconscious for its images.

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3.7: Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism- A Process Approach

When you write a critical paper using a psychoanalytic approach, you need to determine the focus you will use. Will you focus on the author? On the characters or the narrator? On the formal construction of the text? Often, a reading will draw from all three levels (as does Waldoff's interpretation of Keats). Since psychoanalyzing an author requires considerable biographical research, many students opt to focus on character, theme, or text. You should also be guided by the following:

1. You must clearly define your psychoanalytic approach to the work—Freudian, Lacanian, Jungian, or some combination. You could explore ideas in a journal entry to help you focus on your critical approach. You should then construct a working thesis that will be your guide. Ask yourself the following: How does my psychoanalytic approach help my reader better understand the work I am interpreting? Is my application of psychoanalytic theory too reductive or forced onto the literary work?
2. You then need to reread the text through the psychoanalytic lens, taking notes and jotting down quotations that can be used for support in your paper. At this stage you should be amassing evidence to support your working thesis.
3. You should then construct a more concrete working thesis and informal organizational plan that will guide you as you write your draft. Remember, your paper must be organized around a clear focus/thesis.
4. You should finally get some feedback on your paper by sharing your draft with your instructor and classmates. Use this feedback for revision.

Peer Reviewing

After you have written a first draft, you should get some feedback from classmates. Use the relevant peer-review guide found in Chapter 10.

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3.8: Student Writers at Work- Jenn Nemec's Jungian Psychoanalytic Reading of "The Birthmark," Susan Moore's Freudian Reading of "The Birthmark," and Sarah David's Lacanian Reading of "The Birthmark"

Literary theory provides a lens through which we view a literary work, be it in a New Critical close reading of a short story, a feminist or gender reading of a poem, or a reader-response interpretation of a dramatic play. In fact, the theory we apply to a literary work will partly determine what we find in the work and how we interpret that work. For this chapter, you will see how theory guides your interpretation. The three papers below, which came from the same class, focus on Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" (serialized in a magazine in 1843; published in a story collection in 1846). Jenn found Jungian theory fascinating, Susan was intrigued by Freud, while Sarah was challenged by Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of language.

You can access "The Birthmark" at etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin...id=HawBirt.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1.

In this section we trace Jenn's writing process.

JENN'S PROCESS

Exploratory Journal Entry

Aylmer, the central character in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark," attempts to attain what Carl Jung calls syzygy, or wholeness of personality. To achieve syzygy, one must integrate the four parts of the individual self termed shadow, anima, animus, and spirit, respectively. Despite his efforts, the gifted Aylmer fails to achieve this quaternion, for not only does he err in identifying his shadow, but he lacks the necessary wisdom of the spirit.

Aylmer misjudges his shadow, or the moral problem challenging his whole ego-personality. Although it is Aminadab, Aylmer's faithful servant, who represents all the aspects of Aylmer's personality which he would like to reject, Aylmer identifies Georgiana's birthmark as the source of the evil he wants to deny and devotes all of his efforts to its elimination. Aylmer projects all his negative feelings upon his wife and recognizes her birthmark as the origin of imperfection rather than himself. The existence of the birthmark possesses Aylmer, who in turn becomes obsessed with it and its disposal.

The manifestations of both Georgiana's animus and Aylmer's anima are factors which contribute to the unattainability of syzygy. Georgiana's dependence upon Aylmer as her source of logos allows her husband to administer whatever treatment he deems necessary to rid the couple's life of the wretched birthmark. Additionally, Georgiana's quest for logos draws her to the book in which Aylmer has documented all of his failed experiments. Through Georgiana's discovery of Aylmer's scientific blunders, readers learn that the removal of Georgiana's birthmark is Aylmer's ultimate opportunity to "touch reality, to embrace the earth and fructify the field of the world" (Jung 671), thereby satisfying his anima's desire to possess the chaste White Lady side of Georgiana. Unfortunately, the encounter between Georgiana's animus and Aylmer's anima proves fatal—the woman's reliance upon her husband's ill-reasoning as he pursues his desire demonstrates that "when animus and anima meet, the animus [Aylmer] draws his sword of power and the anima [Georgiana] ejects her poison of illusion and seduction [the birthmark as blemish]" (Jung 673).

Even if the ambitious Aylmer had successfully perceived Aminadab to be his shadow rather than Georgiana's birthmark, the scientist still would have faltered in his steps toward achieving syzygy, for he lacked the necessary component of spirit, or what Jung called the Wise Old Man or Woman. Although Aylmer is described as spiritual in opposition to the earthly Aminadab, "The Birthmark" concludes that despite Aylmer's philosophical intelligence, he was by no means wise ("Yet, had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life the selfsame texture with the celestial").

Working Thesis (Gleaned from the Exploratory Journal Entry)

Despite his efforts, the gifted Aylmer fails to achieve the balance of the self, for not only does he err in identifying his shadow, but he lacks the necessary wisdom of the *spirit*.

Notes: Mapping of Ideas

Shadow	Anima
birthmark	Eros/desire
possesses Aylmer, who	Aylmer: Georgiana
is obsessed by it	Science
Aminadab: shadow	Georgiana: feminine side of Aylmer

Animus	Self/Spirit
logos, reason	Aylmer (ego) + Aminadab science, scientist (shadow) + Georgiana (anima)
Georgiana as object of experiment—Aylmer's	Aylmer ≠ shadow + anima
	Rejects shadow in name of anima
	Science projects feeling of imperfection onto G
	(birthmark)

Aylmer: In pursuit of syzygy\quaternion symbolizing wholeness fails because he misjudges his shadow and deludes himself into thinking science (reason) is pure and good for its own end—rejects wife (part of himself) for science while rejecting part of himself (his shadow). End must be tragedy.

Revised Thesis

Since Aylmer gravely blunders in identifying his shadow and is incapable of recognizing his dark side and integrating it with the other three archetypes—the anima, animus, and spirit—the scientist fails in his unconscious efforts to achieve syzygy, a complete Self in balance with itself. Thus Aylmer allows science to control his desire for perfection, which leads to tragedy—the death of Georgiana.

Final Draft

Jenn Nemec

Professor John Pennington

Literary Theory and Writing

February 26, 20–

"Beyond the Shadowy Scope": A Jungian Reading of Hawthorne's "The Birthmark"

In "Young Goodman Brown," Nathaniel Hawthorne describes Goodman Brown's night journey of the soul, where Brown sees that all humans are tainted by original sin, even his wife Faith. The story ends with Brown's death: "They carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom." Hawthorne suggests that Brown's inability to recognize the sinful nature of humankind leads to his miserable life, for humans must recognize the sinful side of the self. Carl Gustav Jung remarked that "it is quite within the bounds of possibility for a man to recognize the relative evil of his nature, but it is a rare and shattering occurrence for him to gaze in the face of absolute evil" (670). Aylmer, the central character in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark," refuses to acknowledge the dark side of the self, symbolized in his servant, Aminadab, his *shadow*, or the "demonic image of evil that represents the side of the self we reject" (Richter 644). Instead, Aylmer projects his negative feelings onto his wife, Georgiana, and the hand-shaped birthmark upon her cheek. Since Aylmer gravely blunders in identifying his *shadow* and is incapable of integrating this phenomenon with the other three principle archetypes—the *anima*, *animus*, and *spirit*—the scientist fails in his unconscious efforts to achieve *syzygy*, "a quaternion symbolizing wholeness, the quality of which people are usually in search" (Richter 644). "The Birthmark," like "Young Goodman Brown," shows the tragedy that can happen when people are unwilling to recognize sinful

(or the dark) side of the self, for, as Hawthorne writes, Aylmer "failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and, living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present" (224).

Jung argues that the *shadow* is "the 'negative' side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide" (Storr 87). Thus Aylmer rejects the notion that he has a shadow, this shadow symbolized by his laboratory servant Aminadab. If Aylmer recognizes Aminadab as part of his self, then he must recognize "the dark aspects of the personality as present and real" (Jung 669); therefore, Aminadab's existence poses "a moral problem that challenges [Aylmer's] whole ego-personality" (Jung 669). Although Aylmer wishes to believe the two men are very different, "The Birthmark" offers evidence that the amalgam of the two creates an eerie whole: "With his [Aminadab's] vast strength, his shaggy hair, his smoky aspect, and the indescribable earthiness that encrusted 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" (Hawthorne 216). The text likewise offers proof that unconsciously, Aylmer recognizes Aminadab as the part of himself he chooses to deny. The scientist exclaims after the "success" of his ultimate experiment, "Ah, clod! ah, earthly mass! … you have served me well! Matter and spirit—earth and heaven—have both done their part in this!" (223). Aylmer subconsciously acknowledges that the two men are halves of his whole self—Aminadab comprises the earthly portion while Aylmer embodies the heavenly part.

Despite the unconscious recognition of Aminadab as his *shadow*, Aylmer projects his fears of the shadow onto Georgiana, insisting that her birthmark is to blame for his feelings of discord: "Selecting it as the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death, Aylmer's somber imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than ever Georgiana's beauty … had given him delight" (Hawthorne 213). Aylmer becomes possessed with the birthmark and likewise obsessed with its disposal. Because Aylmer cannot come to terms with his failures as a man of science, he projects his negative feelings onto Georgiana and her birthmark; consequently, the blemish becomes a symbol for Aylmer's own imperfections. The fault "appears to lie, beyond all possibility of doubt, in the other person [that is, Georgiana]" (Jung 670), and Aylmer's "projections change the world into the replica of [his] unknown face" (Jung 669). By striving to eliminate Georgiana's birthmark, Aylmer endeavors to "cleanse" himself of his own imperfections.

Aylmer's inability to correctly perceive his *shadow* leads to his difficulties with integrating the contents of Georgiana's *animus*, "the masculine side to the female self" (Richter 644), with his *anima*, "the feminine side of the male self" (Richter 644); these factors further inhibit him from achieving the quaternion of *syzygy*. According to Jung, "The *animus* corresponds to the paternal *Logos* [reason, logic] just as the *anima* corresponds to the maternal *Eros* [love, desire]" (672). Following this theory, Georgiana's dependence upon Aylmer as her source of *logos* allows her husband to administer whatever treatment he deems necessary to rid the couple's life of the wretched birthmark. Additionally, Georgiana's quest for *logos* draws her to the book in which Aylmer has documented all of his failed experiments: "Much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe that his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures.… It [the folio] was the sad confession and continual exemplification of the shortcomings of the composite man… and of the despair that assails the higher nature at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part" (220). Through Georgiana's discovery of Aylmer's scientific blunders, readers learn that the removal of Georgiana's birthmark is Aylmer's ultimate opportunity to fulfill his "desire to touch reality, to embrace the earth and fructify the field of the world" and break his cycle of "no more than a series of fitful starts" (Jung 671), the culmination of his life's work. In Aylmer's glorious attempt to rid Georgiana of her imperfection, he tries to satisfy his *anima's* desire to possess the chaste "White Lady" *imago*. Unfortunately, the encounter between Georgiana's *animus* and Aylmer's *anima* proves fatal—the woman's reliance upon her husband's ill reasoning as he pursues his desire demonstrates that "when animus and anima meet, the animus [Aylmer] draws his sword of power and the anima [Georgiana] ejects her poison of illusion and seduction [the birthmark as blemish]" (Jung 673). Aylmer is left alone with his *shadow*, Aminadab, whose "hoarse, chuckling laugh [is] heard again" (Hawthorne 224) at Georgiana's death as the chilling tale of "The Birthmark" concludes.

Had Aylmer recognized Aminadab as his *shadow* rather than projected his disgust onto Georgiana and her birthmark, and had he successfully integrated the contents of both his wife's *animus* and his *anima*, the scientist still would have faltered in his steps toward achieving *syzygy*: for he lacked the necessary component of *spirit*, what Jung believed the presence of a wise old man or woman symbolized (Richter 644). Although Aylmer was a scientist of great philosophical intelligence and enormous potential, "The Birthmark" concludes that he was by no means wise. The closing lines of Hawthorne's story read, "Yet, had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life the selfsame texture with the celestial" (224). Aylmer's misguided projections onto Georgiana led him to "an autoerotic or autistic condition in which

one dreams a world whose reality remains forever unattainable" (Jung 670). Each part of Aylmer—the scientist, the husband, the lover—lost its sustenance in the death of Georgiana, for Aylmer "failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time and, living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present" (Hawthorne 224).

Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" spins a psychological web in which central character Aylmer becomes entangled. Riddled by obsession with his wife's birthmark, a man of superb intelligence fails to recognize his dastardly *shadow*, which his ominous servant, Aminadab, embodies. The encounter between Georgiana's *animus* and Aylmer's *anima* proves disastrous, for when the contents of the two cannot be integrated, death and destruction arises. In addition to these failures, Aylmer lacks the vitally important *spirit*; consequently, he cannot achieve the quaternion of *syzygy* which he unconsciously seeks. Jung remarked, "It is often tragic to see how blatantly a man bungles his own life and the lives of others yet remains totally incapable of seeing how much the whole tragedy originates in himself" (670). Aylmer's demise is a testament to Jung's observation, for Hawthorne's character is but a pathetic example of how the intricacies of personal evil can blind the most enlightened man of science and leave him muttering in the dark corners of his soul.

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3.9: Student Sample Paper- Susan Moore's "The Desire for Perfection in Hawthorne's 'The Birthmark'"

Susan Moore

John Pennington

Literary Theory and Writing

February 26, 20–

The Desire for Perfection in Hawthorne's "The Birthmark"

"Beauty is only skin deep," or so people say. If so, then the presence of a birthmark should not affect how its owner is viewed, for nothing the person did warranted the mark: he or she just happened to be born with this natural blemish, symbolic of human's original sin. However, in Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale "The Birthmark," a small mark on a woman's face becomes the obsession of her husband, who insists upon removing it with his scientific expertise. Because of his passionate pleas, the woman gives in to his demands, thus dying. A psychoanalytic interpretation of the plot adds a new dimension to the literal level of the story. Freud's division of the mind into three elements (the id, ego, and superego) plays an enormous role in a psychoanalytic interpretation of "The Birthmark." The id contains all human passions and desires that lead to pleasure, conforming to Freud's "pleasure principle." The superego, the id's opposite, follows the "reality principle," for it is the moral conscience of the individual that is created by parents' rule and society's laws. The ego is a mediator between the two, as it directs the pleasure principle to the reality principle, telling the person how to act properly.

What happens when the ego fails to do its job? "The Birthmark" is a sobering example. When the scientist Aylmer lets his desire for perfection loose upon his wife (under the guise of his superego, science), he kills Georgiana (thus killing the symbolic id of himself). The ego, represented by his servant Aminadab, fails to be the mediator necessary for balance. Hawthorne suggests that a competent ego is necessary to prevent the devastating consequences of Aylmer's behavior. Without the ego's balancing effects, either the id or the superego will take control of a person, shutting out the other half with horrible results.

In this dark tale, science acts as a pseudo-superego. Science strives to find through rigorous experimentation the answers to all of nature's mysteries. Science represents the rational and permissible, and the scientist, hoping to help perfect life, is permitted to experiment to help benefit humanity. Science is exact—the scientist continues to strive for that exact, perfect answer that will satisfy him or her. Aylmer lives and breathes science: "He had devoted himself … too unreservedly to scientific studies ever to be weaned from them by any second passion" (Hawthorne 212). Aylmer is therefore an agent of the superego science, giving himself over to the search for perfection. Through this rational mode of thinking Aylmer strives for the flawlessness the superego symbolizes. He says to his wife, Georgiana, that she has led him even farther into science than his previous experiments. To this he adds: "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" (215).

What is it about this flaw that so repulses the superego side of Aylmer? The birthmark, as little as it is, could represent the "evil" or impulsive id-like side of a person. It is red and hand-shaped, similar to the mark that would remain if someone slapped another on the face. Maybe the presence of this mark calls forth the same sort of reprimand by the superego that slapping someone would; the evil in that person is pointed out. However, the blemish appears on the face of an otherwise beautiful woman, so perhaps Hawthorne's symbolic meaning is that such a small blemish should not really matter, for we are all "blemished" in a small way. Furthermore, the mark is natural, and so it should not be condemned. If the blemish represents imperfection, then science as superego has permission to eliminate the blemish in the name of science. If the blemish, however, represents the impulses of the id, science as superego will be naturally opposed to it, trying to "kill" it, even though the ego needs the balance of the id and superego.

The fact that the mark is so tiny shows just how obsessed the superego can become with perfection. Aylmer feels driven to remove even this small reminder of the human his wife is: "But seeing her otherwise so perfect, he found this one defect grow more and more intolerable with every moment of their united lives" (213). As his wife is a part of him through the symbolic union of marriage, he sees the mark as a reflection of himself—imperfect. Consequently, he wants to repress or hide in his unconscious the reminder that his wife is not perfect, for if he cannot make her perfect, he would have to admit his own humanity and ultimate failure as a scientist. Thus he is tempted by his superego to achieve perfection: "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 mark of earthly imperfection" (212).

Despite her overwhelming beauty, Aylmer feels an almost neurotic need to remove the mark from Georgiana's face and, ironically, this need seems simultaneously a function of the id. Georgiana's beauty, then, can be seen as desire, for Aylmer wants her as wife (a perfect desirous object) and as specimen (the perfect scientific object). The pressure his wife feels from his id-superego-induced shame is enormous. Bowing to his overwhelming desires, she allows Aylmer free rein to perform any experiment he wishes, as long as the hateful mark is erased. She falls so under his influence that she no longer has any regard for her physical safety: "Danger? There is but one danger—that this horrible stigma shall be left upon my cheek!… Remove it, remove it, whatever be the cost or we shall both go mad!" (221). Georgiana as the id, beautiful to the narrator but flawed to Aylmer, gives way to the demands of the superego. Tragedy results.

This tragedy results because the ego does not balance the id-superego of Georgiana and Aylmer, a responsibility of the servant, Aminadab, the story's ego. Hawthorne describes Aminadab in earthy terms: "With his vast strength, his shaggy hair, his smoky aspect, and the indescribable earthiness that encrusted him, he seemed to represent man's physical nature" (216). Aminadab seems a perfect mediator between the abstract scientific superego and the uncontrolled passions of the id. His appearance is founded on the earth, as should be his actions. However, his status as Aylmer's servant indicates trouble. Hawthorne instantly defines the relationship between the two as one of master-servant (i.e., the superego as master, the ego as servant). Aminadab as ego should perform his duties, but he should balance the id with the superego. Yet he follows only Aylmer's monomaniacal drive for Georgiana's perfection: "[He] 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" (216).

At one point Aminadab does try to assert himself, but his actions are too little too late. Hearing of his master's plan, Aminadab should object. Unfortunately he waits until ordered to "Throw open the door of the boudoir" (216). The door opening is symbolic of throwing open the door into the domain of the id (Georgiana), a place the superego should never directly see. The bedroom as symbol for the id's desire is reinforced by the dream-like, beautiful description of the room as containing gorgeous curtains draped around the room to give it a heavenly effect: "For aught Georgiana knew, it might be a pavilion among the clouds" (216). This contrasts sharply with Aylmer's domain of the scientific lab in which "the atmosphere felt oppressively close, and was tainted with gaseous odors which had been tormented forth by the processes of science" (220). The id and superego are represented by these separate rooms. However, Aminadab acquiesces to Aylmer's request to open the door, offering only a mumbled, "If she were my wife, I'd never part with that birthmark" (216). While his last statement may reflect the ego-like voice (a woman's life should not be put at risk for a small birthmark), the statement is spoken too softly to be heard by Aylmer, symbolic of Aylmer's demented drive for scientific perfection. If the remark had been made earlier and more forcefully—as symbolic of the ego's balance of the id and superego—the ensuing tragedy might have been avoided. Aminadab could have been the voice of reason, informing Aylmer that no matter the spiritual or physical depth of Georgiana's birthmark, it did not detract from her beauty.

Ironically, Aylmer destroys what is truly beautiful just because there is no force telling him he is acting inappropriately. As his wife was part of him and a reflection of him through marriage, the loss of her is the same as losing an essential piece of himself. Georgiana is now perfect, and the scientific quest is completed but unsuccessful, "yet, had Aylmer 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" (224). If Aylmer had realized that acceptance of the "fault" (of the birthmark, of the id) would be possible in this world, he could have been happy. Like the scientist Rappaccini, who poisons his daughter to make her beautiful, Aylmer commits the Hawthornian unpardonable sin: he allows his zealous desire for scientific perfect to overtake his humanity. From a Freudian perspective, Aylmer, operating with faulty ego, is unwilling to acknowledge his id (Georgiana, her beauty, and her blemish) by destroying it by his superego.

The part Aylmer lost in Georgiana should have been united with him in spirit if the symbolic ego, Aminadab, had performed properly. Perhaps Aminadab's inaction is intentional as an attempt to teach Aylmer his tragic lesson. When Aylmer thinks that his last scientific treatment is working to remove the birthmark, he hears Aminadab laughing: "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!'" (223). Aylmer thinks the chuckle is a result of the servant's happiness for his master's success. Aminadab's last laugh when Georgiana dies indicates differently. It comes right after Aylmer knows his wife is dead: "The parting breath of the now perfect woman passed into the atmosphere, and her soul, lingering for a moment near her husband, took its heavenward flight. Then a

hoarse, chuckling laugh was heard again!" (224). Aminadab seems to laugh at Aylmer's expense, and at his loss. The scientist discovers what life that strives solely for perfection, or is controlled solely by the superego, will be like. Hawthorne in "The Birthmark" creates a cautionary tale about the limits of reason and passion.

As the story suggests, a life lived with only superego-like tendencies will lead to tragedy. One part cannot exist without its opposite, and both need to be accepted and mediated by the ego to realize the full potential of life. A balance needs to be struck between the drive for perfection and the drive to satisfy more "base" desires. If one element gains control, then it will destroy the other, thus destroying part of the person. A rational (superego-like) world would be dull and dangerous and an irrational (id-like) world would be chaotic and equally dangerous. Why kill a part that could complement and balance the other? Hawthorne's answer seems that many people are unable to recognize the need for such a balance.

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3.10: Student Sample Paper- Sarah David's "A Lacanian Analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'The Birthmark'"

Sarah David

John Pennington

Literary Theory and Writing

April 5, 20–

A Lacanian Analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark"

The focal point of Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Birthmark" is a mysterious mark: "In the center of Georgiana's cheek there was a singular mark.… 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 had laid her tiny hand upon the infant's cheek … to give her such sway over all hearts" (Hawthorne 170). However, Aylmer sees the birthmark very differently from other men, "selecting it as the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death" (170). This discrepancy confuses the reader and causes him or her to examine the true meaning of the birthmark. As the reader examines Aylmer's struggle to define the birthmark, his quest to rid Georgiana of her birthmark takes on new meaning.

Aylmer's quest to create perfect aesthetic beauty in his wife's appearance is analogous to Jacques Lacan's idea of searching for unity through language. Jacques Lacan is a student of Freud; however, he examines psychoanalysis through its relationship with language. Essentially he takes Freud's beliefs and applies them to language. While he agrees people are driven by their desires, he thinks problems stem from our inability to create a stable language. Lacan believes that everyone starts off in a pre-linguistic unified state because one cannot separate the self from others. This unified state only lasts until the child learns that he or she is separate from others, thus entering Lacan's Symbolic stage. After realizing he or she is a separate entity, the person then tries to identify images using language. However, since a signifier, a word, triggers the signified, an image or context represents language, and according to Lacan since there is no stability for signifiers, confusion occurs over the signifier representing one specific image. This confusion causes the person to feel a sense of loss. He or she then wishes for that wholeness or unity he or she had before and longs for the pre-linguistic state. This search for wholeness or the Real stage is ultimately unattainable. Reading "The Birthmark" from a Lacanian point of view, the reader can see that Aylmer's confusion over the signifier of the birthmark and his desire for unity, both of the signifier and the separateness of his loves, lead him to try to create perfect beauty in his wife as a way to regain his lost unity.

Language is a signifier that triggers the signified, but Lacan only acknowledges the signifier. He believes that "there is nothing that a signifier ultimately refers to" and "because of this lack of signifieds … the chain of signifiers … is constantly sliding and shifting and circulating" (Klages 2). Georgiana's birthmark becomes the signifier in Aylmer's search for unity. To Aylmer the birthmark is "the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death"; however; some of Georgiana's former "lovers were wont to say (the birthmark gave) her such sway over all hearts," thus seeing the birthmark in a positive light (Hawthorne 170). Aylmer's apprentice, Aminadab, even tells him, "If she were my wife, I'd never part with that birthmark" (175). Because the birthmark, the signifier, does not result in one specific meaning, it causes confusion for Aylmer.

Since Aylmer realizes that signifiers do not always signify one meaning, he begins to feel fragmented. He also feels fragmented by the separateness of his love for science and his love for Georgiana. Hawthorne writes: "It was not unusual for the love of science to rival the love of a woman" (169). This sense of separation occurs in Lacan's Symbolic stage. Language occurs in this stage because as the person is able to differentiate between the self and others he or she struggles to define the differences with words. Aylmer was already able to differentiate between what the birthmark meant to him and what it meant to others and since the meaning is not the same he feels a sense of separation over this lack of unity. His "awareness of separation … creates an anxiety, a sense of loss" (Klages 3). This feeling of separation of his two loves adds to the feeling of loss over the lack of a stable signifier for his wife's birthmark. He then wants, as Lacan would say, "to stabilize, to stop the chain of signifiers so that stable meaning … becomes possible" (Klages 2). Aylmer begins his search for unity, which can only be found in the Real stage, but realizes it can only be reached by "intertwining itself [the love for his wife] with his love of science, and uniting the strength of the latter to his own" (Hawthorne 169).

As previously mentioned, the Symbolic stage is where language happens and a person begins to separate the self from others as well as beginning to differentiate language. This sense of loss creates a longing to return to the wholeness of the pre-linguistic stage. A person would then be in search to find this unity in the Real stage, and although "you can never get back" to that unity "you always want to" (Klages 7). Aylmer relates finding his unity to ridding his wife of her birthmark and his desire becomes so strong that the birthmark "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" (Hawthorne 171). Aylmer thinks he finds an opportunity to find unity by attempting to create something that will remove Georgiana's birthmark.

Aylmer believes that by uniting his love of science with his love for his wife he will end the separation he feels between the two loves, and by removing the birthmark he will also remove the confusion over the signifier. Aylmer begins his search for unity, the Real stage, by trying to remove the birthmark. He attempts several times, all inevitably resulting in failure as the Real stage is unattainable. He first surrounds her with beautiful holograms, then presents her with a plant, which she kills, and thirdly tries spraying the air with perfume. All of these attempts fail, but Aylmer does not give up hope that he will be able to remove the birthmark and therefore find unity. Aylmer's desire for unity causes him to believe he can achieve unity once again and keeps him persevering to find a "cure" for Georgiana's imperfection and therefore the Real stage. Finally Aylmer mixes a drink, telling his wife, "The concoction of the draught has been perfect.… Unless all my science have deceived me, it cannot fail" (178). Georgiana drinks the potion and falls asleep. Aylmer watches her until he notices that the birthmark "is well-nigh gone!" (179) Aylmer is elated with his success, believing he has found the perfect beauty, his wholeness, for which he was searching only to hear his wife cry out, "Aylmer, dearest Aylmer, I am dying!" (179) He comes to her side "as the crimson tint of the birthmark … faded from her cheek … and her soul, lingering a moment near her husband, took its heavenward flight" (179). Aylmer's experience of this perfect beauty, his unity, was fleeting because just as the birthmark was fading away, true wholeness or reaching the Real stage is short lived and unattainable. In the end Hawthorne shows Lacan's claim that "the ideal concept of a wholly unified and psychologically complete individual is just that, an abstraction that is simply not attainable" (Bressler 129).

Aylmer's confusion over the birthmark, the signifier, coupled with the separation of his loves, eventually lead him on his unsuccessful quest for unity in perfecting Georgiana's beauty. Aylmer's confusion caused by the unstable signifier, the birthmark, is presented along with the impossibility of returning to the pre-linguistic wholeness everyone desires. Since "language shapes and ultimately structures our unconscious and conscious minds and thus shapes our self-identity," Alymer's distress over language manifests itself as his desire to get rid of the birthmark (Bressler 129). By reading "The Birthmark" from a Lacanian point of view, the reader is able to define Aylmer much differently than in other readings. Instead of seeing Aylmer as evil and striving for ultimate perfection or reading into the evils or dangers of science, the reader sees Aylmer as a more humane, regular person in the Symbolic stage searching to find unity in the Real stage. This also allows the reader to understand why he tries so desperately to cure—but ultimately kills—his wife over something as seemingly insignificant as a birthmark.

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3.11: End-of-Chapter Assessment

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we examined in depth three major approaches to psychoanalytic literary theory following Freud, Lacan, and Jung:

- For Freud: You learned about the pleasure and reality principles, the notion of the unconscious, the stages of sexual development, dreams as the road to the unconscious, and how to apply a Freudian reading to a text.
- For Lacan: You learned how Lacan took Freud's ideas and placed them in language acquisition, which can be seen in the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real stages, and ultimately how to apply a Lacanian reading to a text.
- For Jung: You learned how Jung broke away from Freud to define the collective unconsciousness, which contains universal archetypes—the Self, shadow, anima, and animus being central archetypes—and ultimately how to apply a Jungian reading to a text.
- You were given the opportunity to see the psychoanalytic methodology practiced in three student papers.
- You learned about the importance of the writing process, including peer review and the strategies for conducting peer review. Many of you also participated in peer review for your psychoanalytic paper.
- You wrote an analysis of a work of literature using one of the theories by Freud, Lacan, or Jung.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Freewriting exercise. Choose a short poem (no more than fifteen lines) you've never read before. Read through it several times. As you read the poem, jot down ideas that may relate to a psychoanalytic reading; in particular, consider how the poem could be read from a Freudian, Lacanian, and Jungian perspective.
2. Make a claim about the poem for each theory. What claim seems the most productive? The least productive? Discuss why a particular theory works best for the poem.

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS PEER REVIEW

1. Have students conduct peer review on one of the sample papers using the organizational peer-review guide found in Chapter 10, Section 10.2:
    1. Place students in groups of three to four and have them reread the paper for peer review and fill out the guide sheet.
    2. Have students discuss their feedback responses to the sample paper.
    3. Have students list the major feedback they discussed.
    4. Put the major issues on the blackboard or whiteboard.
    5. Discuss these responses. Make certain that you let students know that any paper can be improved.
2. Plan to have your students conduct peer review on the drafts of their papers that they are writing in your class. Use the peer-review guide from Chapter 10, Section 10.2 and have them work in groups of three and do the following:
    1. Bring two hard copies of their paper so that each member can read the paper, OR work in a computer lab where students can share their papers online. You may want to use the educational software that your campus supports—for example, Blackboard or Moodle—or you can have students use Google Drive to set up their peer-review groups.
    2. Have two students focus on the first paper in the group. While these students are reading, have the other student read the other two student papers.
    3. The two students should quickly fill out the peer-review sheet and then have a brief conversation about the strengths of the paper and ways the paper could be improved.
    4. Move to the next student and follow the same process. Depending on the length of your class, you may have to reduce the peer-review groups to two students.
    5. If time permits, ask the students to provide general comments—or ask questions—about the specific papers or the assignment overall.
    6. You may want to use peer review for each paper in your class.

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3.12: Suggestions for Further Reading

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Writing about Gender and Sexuality - Applying Feminist and Gender Criticism

Learning Objectives

- Understand the theory of feminism.
- Understand the theory of gender criticism, including queer theory and masculinity studies.
- Apply a feminist and/or gender methodology to works of literature.
- Engage in the writing process of a peer writer, including peer review.
- Review and evaluate a variety of feminist and gender papers by peer writers.
- Draft and revise a feminist or gender paper on a literary work.

4.1: Literary Snapshot- "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"
4.2: Feminist Theory- An Overview
4.3: Gender Criticism and Queer Theory
4.4: Gender Criticism- Masculinity Studies
4.5: Feminist and Gender Criticism- A Process Approach
4.6: Student Writer at Work- Gretchen Panzer's Feminist Response to F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby
4.7: Student Sample Paper- Carrie Obry's "Homoerotic Impulses in Willa Cather's 'Paul's Case'"
4.8: Student Sample Paper- Duncan Raunio's "The Tragedy of Performing Gender in Kate Chopin's The Awakening"
4.9: End-of-Chapter Assessment
4.10: Suggestions for Further Reading

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4.1: Literary Snapshot- "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"

Lewis Carroll, as we found out in previous chapters, is most famous for two books: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872). These books describe the adventures of seven-year-old Alice, who finds herself in a nonsensical world of the imagination after she tumbles down a rabbit hole (*Wonderland*) and enters a magic mirror (*Looking-Glass*). Here are the electronic versions of Carroll's texts again so can continue following Alice on her journeys:

http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html

etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html

Let's observe the interaction between Alice and the Caterpillar, which comes from chapter 5 of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, "Advice from a Caterpillar":

The Caterpillar was the first to speak.

"What size do you want to be?" it asked.

"Oh, I'm not particular as to size," Alice hastily replied; "Only one doesn't like changing so often, you know."

"I *don't* know," said the Caterpillar.

Alice said nothing: she had never been so much contradicted in all her life before, and she felt that she was losing her temper.

"Are you content now?" said the Caterpillar.

"Well, I should like to be a *little* larger, sir, if you wouldn't mind," said Alice: "three inches is such a wretched height to be."

"It is a very good height indeed!" said the Caterpillar angrily, rearing itself upright as it spoke (it was exactly three inches high).

"But I'm not used to it!" pleaded poor Alice in a piteous tone. And she thought to herself, "I wish the creatures wouldn't be so easily offended!"

"You'll get used to it in time," said the Caterpillar; and it put the hookah into its mouth and began smoking again.

This time Alice waited patiently until it chose to speak again. In a minute or two the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth and yawned once or twice, and shook itself. Then it got down off the mushroom, and crawled away into the grass merely remarking as it went, "One side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter."

"One side of *what?* The other side of *what* thought Alice to herself.

"Of the mushroom," said the Caterpillar, just if she had asked it aloud; and in another moment it was out of sight.

Alice remained looking thoughtfully at the mushroom room for a minute, trying to make out which we the two sides of it; and as it was perfectly round, she found this a very difficult question. However, at last she stretched her arms round it as far as they would go, and broke off a bit of the edge with each hand

"And now which is which?" she said to herself, and nibbled a little of the right-hand bit to try the effect; the next moment she felt a violent blow underneath her chin: it had struck her foot! She was a good deal frightened by this very sudden change, but she felt that there was no time to be lost, as she was shrinking rapidly; so she set to work at once to eat some of the other bit. Her chin was pressed so closely against her foot that there was hardly room to open her mouth; but she did it at last, and managed to swallow a morsel of the left-hand bit.

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"Come, my head's free at last!" said Alice in a tone of delight, which changed into alarm in another moment, when she found that her shoulders were nowhere to be found: all she could see, when she looked down, was an immense length of neck, which seemed to rise like a stalk out of a sea of green leaves that lay far below her.

“What *can* all that green stuff be?” said Alice. “And where *have* my shoulders got to? And oh, my poor hands, how is it I can’t see you?” She was moving them about as she spoke, but no result seemed to follow, except a little shaking among the distant green leaves.

As there seemed to be no chance of getting her hands up to her head, she tried to get her head down to them, and was delighted to find that her neck would bend about easily in any direction, like a serpent. She had just succeeded in curving it down into a graceful zigzag, and was going to dive in among the leaves, which she found to be nothing but the tops of the trees under which she had been wandering, when a sharp hiss made her draw back in a hurry: a large pigeon had flown into her face, and was beating her violently with its wings.



Illustration by Sir John Tenniel for Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865).

"Serpent!" screamed the Pigeon.

"I'm *not a* serpent!" said Alice indignantly. "Let me alone!"

"Serpent, I say again!" repeated the Pigeon, but in a more subdued tone, and added with a kind of sob, "I've tried every way, and nothing seems to suit them!"

"I haven't the least idea what you're talking about," said Alice.

"I've tried the roots of trees, and I've tried banks, and I've tried hedges," the Pigeon went on, without attending to her; "but those serpents! There's no pleasing them!"

Alice was more and more puzzled, but she thought there was no use saying anything more till the Pigeon had finished.

"As if it wasn't trouble enough hatching the eggs," said the Pigeon; "but I must be on the look out for serpents night and day! Why, I haven't had a wink of sleep these three weeks!"

"I'm very sorry you've been annoyed," said Alice, who was beginning to see its meaning.

"And just as I'd taken the highest tree in the wood," continued the Pigeon, raising its voice to a shriek, "and just as I was thinking I should be free of them at last, they, must needs come wriggling down from the sky! Ugh, Serpent!"

"But I'm *not a* serpent, I tell you!" said Alice "I'm a—I'm a—"

"Well! *What* are you?" said the Pigeon. "I can see you're trying to invent something!"

"I—I'm a little girl," said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through that day.

"A likely story indeed!" said the Pigeon in tone of the deepest contempt. "I've seen a good many little girls in my time, but never *one* with such a neck as that! No, no! You're a serpent; and there's no use denying it. I suppose you'll be telling me next that you never tasted an egg!"

"I *have* tasted eggs, certainly," said Alice, who was a very truthful child; "but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know."

"I don't believe it," said the Pigeon; "but if they do, why, then they're a kind of serpent, that's all I can say."

This was such a new idea to Alice, that she was quite silent for a minute or two, which gave the pigeon the opportunity of adding, "You're looking for eggs, I know *that* well enough; and what does matter to me whether you're a little girl or a serpent?"

"It matters a good deal to *me*," said Alice hastily; "but I'm not looking for eggs, as it happens; and if I was, I shouldn't want *yours:* I don't like them raw."

"Well, be off then!" said the Pigeon in a sulky tone, as it settled down again into its nest. Alice crouched down among the trees as well as she could, for her neck kept getting entangled among the branches, and every now and then she had to stop and untwist it. After a while she remembered that she still held the pieces of mushroom in her hands, and she set to work very carefully, nibbling it at one and then at the other, and growing sometimes taller and sometimes shorter, until she had succeeded in bringing herself down to her usual height.Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), chap. 5, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html.

A major theme that runs throughout Carroll's fantasies is that of identity—Alice wanders through Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land trying to find out who she is. In this excerpt she pinpoints a key element to her identity—she is a *girl*.

Gender defines who and what we are. If you were to finish the sentence "girls are…" or "boys are…," you'll likely discover that we all have unconscious norms—that is, assumptions about girls and boys, about men and women, about husbands and wives. The list could go on. These assumptions, though, socialize or train us into accepting particular gender roles that may not be desirable. For example, the first demarcation we make is whether the baby is a girl or a boy, and then we often associate this biological sexual distinction with given gender distinctions: girls are often put in pink, while boys are in blue. Male and female infants are put in "gender-appropriate" clothing to highlight the sex of the baby. This quick example situates us in feminist and gender criticism, which are powerful theories that allow literary critics to examine sex and gender in various texts. Alice begins to do that for us in the excerpt we just read.

The excerpt also highlights some essential notions about feminist and gender criticism, which we learn more about a bit later in this chapter. As Alice contemplates who she is, the Pigeon dismisses her by saying that she's "trying to invent something." That "something," we find out, is Alice's gender—she's a *girl*. In other words, we'll learn that in feminist and gender criticism, sex and gender are different: sex is a set of the biological markers that define whether someone is female, male, or intersex (having biological characteristics that do not fit neatly into either category), while gender evokes the attitudes a society has toward each sex

—that is, how we view a person according to his or her gender. We will also complicate this notion in the section on gender criticism, for the male-female heterosexual dynamic excludes gay and lesbian identity, as well as bisexual and transgendered selves. **LGBTQ** (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) issues are at the heart of a category of gender criticism called queer theory.

In addition, though Alice claims that she is a girl, the Pigeon is adamant about her being a *serpent*, which cleverly calls to mind larger themes in feminist criticism that date back to biblical times. In chapter 3 of Genesis, Eve is tempted by the serpent and subsequently tempts Adam to taste the forbidden fruit, thus violating God's prohibition and forcing Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.Gen. 3:1–6 (King James Version). In other words, the Fall of humans supposedly is a result of Eve's indiscretion. John Milton in *Paradise Lost* (1667), a central, canonical text in English literature, essentially argues that our fall is Eve's fault, a heavy burden to place on a woman.John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667; University of Virginia Electronic Text Center, 1993), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/MilPL67.html. Such a burden is not lost on feminist critics, and a key early examination of female characters and writers in nineteenth-century literature is Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), which argues that women are often depicted by authors as either pure, virginal creatures or madwomen-demons.Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, eds., *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000). Nina Auerbach's *Woman and the Demon* (1982) also plays with this dichotomy.Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

We should add one further dynamic to our discussion about Alice. When she claims that she is a *girl*, Alice also suggests that she is not a *boy*, highlighting the fact that the gender construction of men is important. Masculinity studies focuses on the social construction of maleness and how stereotypes of what is constituted as being male become a profound force on how men (and women) act in society.

Alice's gender issues have not been lost on those interpreting Carroll's books. Tim Burton's reimagining of Alice's story in the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010)*Alice in Wonderland*, directed by Tim Burton (Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD. situates Carroll's narrative as a Victorian matrimonial tale. The film begins with nineteen-year-old Alice (not the seven-year-old of the novel) being confronted with an unwanted marriage proposal; at nineteen, Alice is expected to marry, and to marry well. But Alice has no desire to be wed and escapes her predicament by following the white rabbit down the rabbit hole to the fantastical world, where she encounters a variety of strange creatures and adventures. At the end of the movie, she returns to the real Victorian world and stands up for her right not to wed. She succeeds, and the end of the movie finds her being an apprentice (which is typically reserved for men) in a shipping business where she will travel to China to open trade routes. Burton's film can be seen as a feminist interpretation of Carroll's books, yet it also draws attention to gender expectations of the Victorian age: Do we, for example, know that Alice's suitor really wants to marry her? Or is he, too, being subjected to the gender expectations of men? And what of all those odd characters that Alice meets? The Mad Hatter, for example, is certainly male, but his gender seems polymorphous—he doesn't fit the conventional view of what it means to be a man; in the same way, the Red Queen doesn't fit the conventional view of being a woman.

We've made this short excerpt from *Alice in Wonderland* do a lot of work to introduce the concepts of feminist and gender criticism. So let's follow the example of Humpty Dumpty, who tells Alice that when he makes a word mean multiple things, he always pays it extra: "They've a temper, some of them—particularly verbs, they're the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, *I* can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That's what *I* say!"

We hope that our chapter on feminist and gender criticism uses words precisely so that these important theories are clear and penetrable.

CLASS PROCESS

1. Have each student in the class keep a "gender log" for one week. In that log have students write down their observations about the gender relationships they see on campus.
2. Do gender stereotypes hold true?
3. What happens when someone defies such stereotypes?

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4.2: Feminist Theory- An Overview

Let's whet our appetite for literature in a different, maybe more peculiar way. Let's read a different text, this one from a local Wisconsin 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 husband's 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 at www.amazon.com/Feminisms-Anthology -Literary-Theory-Criticism/dp/0813523893#reader_0813523893.

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.

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4.3: Gender Criticism and Queer Theory

Gender criticism is an extension of feminist literary criticism, focusing 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—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. at 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, 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.

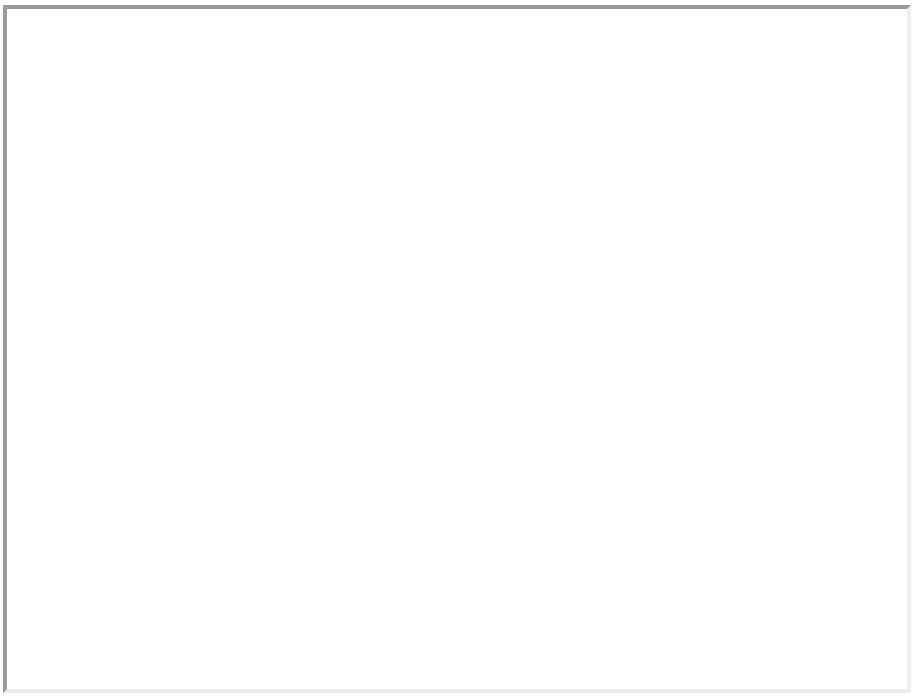
Your Process

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?

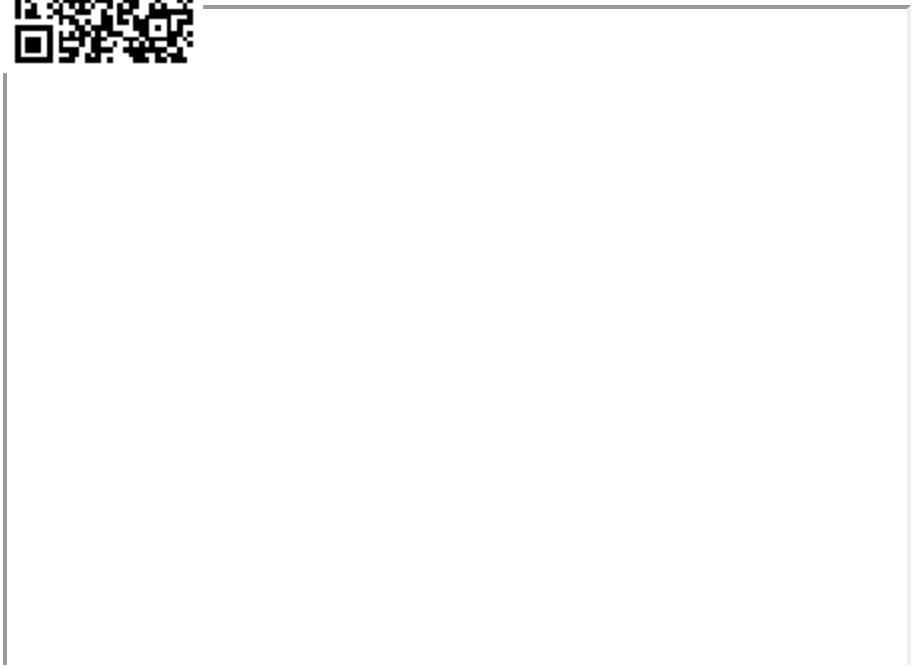
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4.4: Gender Criticism- Masculinity Studies

Just as feminist literary criticism and gender and sexuality criticism consider how identity shapes us, so does **masculinity studies** grow out of these fields and consider how men are often forced into what theorist Jackson Katz calls a "**man box**," or the very narrow box that defines what a "real man" is.Jackson Katz, *Tough Guise: Violence, Media and the Crisis in Masculinity*, directed by Sut Jhally (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 1999), DVD. If you are a sports fan, you will see many "man-box" commercials during a football game, for example, and often the humorous ads are those when a man doesn't act like a "man." Compare the following two commercials:









The first commercial while objectifying women, also suggests that the core audience for the commercial is men, who naturally objectify women. The second commercial focuses on the importance of men to "man-up"—to act like a man.

In his recent book, *Dude, You're a Fag* (2012), C. J. Pascoe looks at masculinity and sexuality in high school and examines all the ways that gay baiting (using gayness as a way to taunt someone about nongender- and nonsexuality-conforming behavior) is used to shore up young men's sense of self.C. J. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). For example, consider the difference of a girl being called a tomboy or a boy being called a sissy. Which is worse? Typically for a young man to be called a sissy is a kind of social death. Why? When a man is compared to someone who is perceived to have less power, in this instance a woman, then he is considered less manly and, therefore, by implication he must be gay, which creates pressure for men to conform to one idea of maleness. Media representations constantly assert what is proper masculinity, and it typically involves being a violent, hypersexual thug who is never dominated but only dominates.

How does this construction of masculinity affect maleness in literature? Consider Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926).Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (New York: Scribner, 2003). The book is narrated by Jake Barnes and concerns the exploits of the Lost Generation after World War I. Jake loves the femme fatale Brett Ashley, but he has been wounded in the war and is impotent. He's not fully a man. While much of Hemingway's work is challenged by feminists for being antiwoman, or **misogynist**, particularly in the depiction of Brett Ashley, a masculinity studies reading of the text depicts the unbearable struggle Jake encounters because he can't fulfill the societal expectations of being a man, which emphasize sexual potency. By reading Jake through a masculinity studies lens, we now have more compassion for Jake, and we may have a more complex view of Hemingway as a writer as we see him grappling with characters who can't fit neatly into the man box.

We can see more clearly through the lens of masculinity studies how gender norms are not exclusive to women but also affect men, which in turn affects the scope of a text.

Your Process

1. Read Robert Browning's "Porphyria's Lover," (http://www.bartleby.com/101/720.html).Robert Browning, "Porphyria's Lover," Bartleby.com, http://www.bartleby.com/101/720.html.
2. List the attributes of the man and the woman in lines 1–30.
3. Do those attributes for the male narrator change after line 30?
4. How might a reader's attitude evolve about the narrator using masculinity studies? Do you have more sympathy for the narrator, even though he is a murderer? Is he driven insane by his desire to fulfill his masculinity, whether as he sees himself, as Porphyria sees him, or as society might see him?

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4.5: Feminist and Gender Criticism- A Process Approach

Feminist and gender criticism are powerful literary methods that you can use to analyze literature. Be guided by the following process as you write your feminist or gender criticism paper.

1. Carefully *read the work* you will analyze.
2. *Formulate a general question* after your initial reading that identifies a problem—a tension—that addresses a key issue relevant to feminist, queer theory, or masculnity studies.
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 a theme?
    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 the 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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4.6: Student Writer at Work- Gretchen Panzer's Feminist Response to F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby

The Great Gatsby may be the one novel that a majority of readers have read. It's taught in high school and college classrooms alike and it's read for pure enjoyment. In other words, *The Great Gatsby* is a cultural icon, at least for American readers.

Gretchen is a meticulous planner of her papers, as the focus on her process demonstrates. Originally, Gretchen wrote a journal entry exploring possible topics for her paper, particularly related to key symbols in the novel.

GRETCHEN'S PROCESS

Exploratory Journal Entry

I definitely want to write about Gatsby, and my favorite scene is when he tosses the shirts about and Daisy starts crying. So I think I'm going to link the shirts scene to the scene with Owl Eyes and the books. Depending on what I find when I start researching, my thesis will be that the shirts and books are symbolic of Gatsby himself: real, but unopened. Like his possessions, Gatsby is authentic in some sense, or Nick wouldn't respect him. But his potential is diminished by the people around him; they know nothing of his past/innermost thoughts and therefore see only the shiny cover.

With this tentative focus in mind, Gretchen skims through the novel, copying quotes that relate to her original idea as well as other passages that catch her interest. Reading her list, she finds that she is more interested in exploring the genre of "love story" and the way the story is cast as a dream or fantasy of Gatsby's, who tries to "buy" Daisy's love with material objects. After revising her thesis, finding secondary sources on her topic, and creating a new outline, Gretchen is ready to start composing her essay. The following is her first draft, which she brought to class for a peer-review workshop.

First Draft

Gretchen Panzer

John Pennington

Great American Novels

May 1, 20–

Before the tragic sequence of events begins to unfold in F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, the novel almost seems as if it could be a perfect love story—one that will end not with death and disillusionment but with the promise of "happily ever after" for Jay Gatsby and the girl of his dreams. However, it is precisely because Daisy Buchanan is the girl of his dreams that their relationship is destined to fail. By simultaneously turning his dream-Daisy into an impossible ideal of love and a cheap symbol of material wealth, he loses any connection he might have had with the real, flawed person she truly is. Gatsby's famous idealism should not be considered an admirable trait; it is, in fact, a product of his blatant sexism.

The way in which Gatsby constructs his dream world is made evident in Fitzgerald's symbolism. Material possessions become the physical embodiment of the perfect love Gatsby pursues. Since he believes he cannot win Daisy's affections unless he is a man of means, he devotes his life to accumulating objects, disregarding their value even as he hopes it will transfer to his person. Two types of objects are particularly obvious in their symbolic value: the books in Gatsby's library and the array of shirts he displays for Daisy's benefit. Both collections reveal Gatsby's obsessive need to show off his wealth and seemingly paradoxical indifference to the objects themselves. Though the books are, as Owl Eyes points out, "[a]bsolutely real—have pages and everything" (Fitzgerald 50), they have never been read. Gatsby feels no need to actually make use of his library, for all the "thoroughness … [and] realism" he exhibits by purchasing actual books rather than those made from "a nice durable cardboard" (Fitzgerald 50). Clearly, Gatsby is more concerned with appearances than reality when it comes to his library—as long as his guests are impressed by its grandeur, the specific titles on its shelves are of no consequence.

As is the case with the books, Gatsby purchases vast quantities of clothing in order to impress Daisy. As part of the tour he gives Daisy, Gatsby tosses his expensive shirts in the air—a colorful display reminiscent of a peacock flashing bright feathers at a potential mate. Gatsby cannot take credit for their fashionable colors, however. He is not interested in personally selecting his own clothing, but delegates his shopping to an unnamed man in England (Fitzgerald 97). Mundane details such as color, cut, or fabric

are immaterial to Gatsby, just as title and author make no difference in his selection of books. It is instead the books' and shirts' contribution to the general splendor of his home, and therefore their part in his scheme to win Daisy, that gives them value. As Barbara Will asserts, "[w]hat motivates Gatsby is not the desire for material betterment … but the evanescent and the intangible" (Will 131). That material betterment can be used to achieve the evanescent, intangible ideal of love is the aspect which interests Gatsby.

Using material objects, Gatsby builds his dream of being with Daisy. Each book, each shirt symbolizes a step he is taking to realize his dream, as evidenced by Fitzgerald's use of a brick motif. The shirts are "piled like bricks in stacks a dozen high" (Fitzgerald 97)—tangible building blocks of an intangible dream. Despite their abundance, the dream-bricks create an unsteady edifice, as Nick learns when Owl Eyes hastily places the book they have been examining back on its shelf, insisting that "if one brick was removed the whole library was liable to collapse" (Fitzgerald 50). Because Gatsby constructs his life using dreams and meaningless material objects, it is structurally unsound, too fragile to reach the lofty heights he wants to attain. Ignoring this, he takes his idealism to such an extreme that he is unable to cope with the impossibility of his dream being realized—any forced confrontation with reality topples his tower of dream-bricks.

Yet confrontation with reality is inevitable. The dream-Daisy transcends all human limitations; Daisy could never live up to Gatsby's expectations, if only because she *lives* in the first place. To be human is to be flawed, to be dynamic rather than static—a concept Gatsby does not seem to grasp. He spends years waiting to be reunited with the girl he remembers, only to be disappointed when she does not measure up to the memory he has stretched and distorted into an impossible ideal. This phenomenon is explained as Nick observes the lovers' reunion:

There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart. (Fitzgerald 101)

By continuously embellishing his memory of Daisy with his own creative touches, Gatsby unintentionally ensures that the memory, or more accurately the dream, will surpass the reality and leave him disappointed and confused. The confusion sets in when Gatsby encounters the green light for the first time after he is reunited with Daisy:

the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one. (Fitzgerald 98)

The green light, which in Gatsby's eyes signifies the dream-Daisy he is separated from, becomes another inconsequential material item. Like the books and shirts, it is a tangible object valued by Gatsby not for its own worth, but for the deeper meaning it holds. Yet the green light is inescapably linked to money itself—the green paper currency that enables Gatsby to present himself to Daisy.

Fitzgerald's use of the color green to symbolize both Daisy and material wealth recurs throughout the novel, perhaps most interestingly when Daisy says to Nick, "'If you want to kiss me any time during the evening, Nick, just let me know and I'll be glad to arrange it for you. Just mention my name. Or present a green card. I'm giving out green—'" (Fitzgerald 111). With this statement, the connection between Daisy and material wealth loses its innocence. Money is no longer just a means for Gatsby to attain the loftier, more beautiful dream of love; it has an allure of its own. The "green card" Daisy mentions as a joke buys only kisses, but Gatsby's cash (as he supposes) can be used to purchase Daisy herself. Though she is the inspiration for Gatsby's dream, she becomes another brick in his architecture, one of the objects he uses to chase after his dream-Daisy. Gatsby's collection of "enchanted objects" has decreased not by one, but two—the green light and the real Daisy.

Demoted to the status of "object," Daisy becomes a symbol of the very substance Gatsby uses to win her over: money. Her vibrant charm, the source of which Nick could never discern, is falsely linked to material wealth. Nick, enthralled by Gatsby's idealistic vision, eventually agrees with his abrupt conclusion that "[h]er voice is full of money … that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it" (Fitzgerald 127).

No longer awestruck by her mysterious charm, "Nick and Gatsby progressively devitalize Daisy's symbolic meaning until she exists as a vulgar emblem of the money values which dominate their world" (Person 255).

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As Gretchen writes her paper in light of the feedback she's received from her peer-review partner and her professor, she discovers that the focus on "blatant sexism" seems overly obvious—and as she delves into the evidence, she keeps repeating the same idea about sexism. She realizes, after immersing herself in some feminist literary criticism, that a key concept is that of "voice"—that is, how women are often denied their voice in fiction, particularly in works written by men. Consequently, Gretchen takes what she has already written on Daisy's voice and rethinks her paper.

We told you that Gretchen was a meticulous planner, so she went through the novel again and constructed a detailed outline of evidence that will guide her as she revises her paper with the new focus. Here is the final draft of Gretchen's paper. Note that the opening of the paper is two paragraphs, and it will be useful to compare her introduction in the final version to the original introductory paragraph. Gretchen's process demonstrates how papers develop: initial ideas are modified, first drafts become exploratory drafts where writers discover ideas while writing, and revisions highlight the intellectual development of a paper.

Final Draft

Gretchen Panzer

John Pennington

Great American Novels

May 1, 20–

A Lost Voice: Sexism in *The Great Gatsby*

A typical reading of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* focuses on Jay Gatsby's supposedly universal appeal. He is considered an "everyman," representative of all determined, idealistic young Americans seeking the elusive American dream. Though this interpretation has some merit, its flaw lies in the assumption that Gatsby's famous idealism is indeed admirable. While Gatsby may truly be an "every*man*," his quest for romantic idealism has disastrous effects upon the women in the novel. Gatsby seeks a "happily ever after" ending with the girl of his dreams, Daisy Buchanan. He worships this dream-Daisy as an impossible ideal of love and devotes himself to achieving wealth and status in order to win her affection. Ironically, his idealism prevents him from achieving his goal. By simultaneously distorting Daisy into an ideal of love and a cheap symbol of material wealth, he loses any connection he might have had with the real, flawed person she truly is. Gatsby's idealism should not be considered an admirable trait; it is nothing more than ill-disguised sexism.

As the novel progresses, Daisy loses her voice—literally and metaphorically—when it is overwhelmed by the incessant clamor of the more forceful males. Initially revered as a romantic ideal, Daisy's beautiful, captivating voice is increasingly stifled by the competing voices of the two men in her love triangle: her husband and Gatsby. Reduced to a symbol, and then to a sham of a symbol, Daisy is devalued by men even as they claim to love her. Fitzgerald's dialogue and vivid descriptions of the characters' voices make it abundantly clear that Gatsby's "everyman" dream of winning a woman's heart is rooted in the notion of male superiority.

From the beginning of the novel, Daisy's voice is established as an instrument of self-expression. Nick's first description of his cousin focuses on the beautiful, but disturbing, quality of her voice. He remarks that, "I've heard it said that Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean in toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming." (Fitzgerald 13). The irony of this statement is subtle but very present; as Judith Fetterley points out in *The Resisting Reader*, "the criticism is not irrelevant or Nick wouldn't mention it, and indeed it does make Daisy less charming for it implies that the quality of her voice is simply something put on in order to gain an advantage over others" (84). Even as Nick admits that Daisy's voice is beautiful, he is driven by

masculine insecurity to negate its power. By assuming that she is manipulative, he devalues her "charming" manner of speaking and defines vocal expression as a method of obtaining power over others. While Nick is certainly justified in recognizing the power of a voice, the idea that Daisy, of all people, desires control over others is laughable. She is not attempting to lure hapless men into a deathtrap with her siren-song—she only wants to preserve what remains of her own voice, and ultimately is unable to even accomplish that. Her voice is indeed a weapon, but she does not use it as such; instead, it is used against her by Gatsby, Tom, and Nick.

Gatsby's assault against Daisy's voice begins innocently enough. They are long-lost lovers, reunited after years of separation, and he positively worships her. But Gatsby's admiration for Daisy is unhealthy; she is no longer a real person to him, but an impossible ideal. Even Gatsby cannot ignore his own impracticality, as his reunion with Daisy illustrates:

There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart. (Fitzgerald 101)

By continuously embellishing his memory of Daisy, Gatsby unintentionally ensures that the memory—or more accurately, the dream—will surpass any possible reality and disappoint him. Yet something about Daisy's voice calls him back. As Nick watches:

His hand took hold of hers and as she said something low in his ear he turned toward her with a rush of emotion. I think that voice held him most with its fluctuating, feverish warmth because it couldn't be over-dreamed—that voice was a deathless song. (Fitzgerald 101)

A human voice cannot be immortal, but Gatsby's overactive imagination persists in viewing Daisy as superhuman: flawless, timeless, and "deathless." As Barbara Will points out in "*The Great Gatsby* and the Obscene Word," he does not concern himself with reality, but with "the evanescent and the intangible" (131). Because he is obsessed with the intangible, the ideal, Gatsby attributes the appeal of Daisy's voice to the wrong source. There is nothing magical or mythic about it—its "fluctuating, feverish warmth," a very human characteristic, is the true source of its power. For all his professions of love, Gatsby fails to comprehend the emotive power of the human voice. He does not notice how Daisy's irrepressible emotions draw him in, how "a stirring warmth flowed from her as if her heart was trying to come out to you concealed in one of those breathless, thrilling words" (Fitzgerald 19). When Daisy sings, she tips into the air her "warm human magic" (115), not the cold, implacable power of a goddess. By clinging to the impossible ideal he has created, Gatsby fails to recognize the true source of Daisy's charm: her real, human emotions.

These emotions are essential to one particularly telling scene: when Gatsby tosses his shirts into the air to show off his wealth. As the pile grows, Daisy is struck by the force of her emotions: "Suddenly with a strained sound Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily. 'They're such beautiful shirts,' she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. 'It makes me sad because I've never seen such—such beautiful shirts before' (98). While part of this emotional outburst may be attributed to "her unexpected joy" at being reunited with Gatsby (94), her grief cannot be ignored. As Leland S. Person argues in "'Herstory' and Daisy Buchanan," "[t]he important point to recognize is that Gatsby is as much an ideal to Daisy as she is to him" (253). As Gatsby flaunts his material wealth in front of her eyes, Daisy begins to understand his motives, and subsequently feels the loss of her ideal lover. The beautiful shirts upset her because she realizes that they are representative of herself: desirable, but material. Gatsby believes that he wants to be with Daisy, but he actually wants to *have* Daisy—a very different goal. That Daisy's voice is "muffled in the thick folds" of Gatsby's shirts shows that already his voice is beginning to smother her own, and her dream of Gatsby as a perfect lover is an illusion. Gatsby is oblivious to Daisy's despair, misinterpreting what she tries to express.

As the novel progresses, Gatsby's misinterpretation of Daisy's voice becomes less accurate and more destructive. Eventually, like Nick and Tom, he views her as nothing more than a material object—a symbol of power, but herself powerless. Before Tom and Gatsby do verbal battle over Daisy, she desperately tries to calm them, using her beautiful voice. "Her voice struggled on through the heat, beating against it, moulding its senselessness into forms" (Fitzgerald 125), but instead of preventing the argument, it acts as a catalyst. Tom is incensed when Daisy's voice betrays what her words do not. When she tells Gatsby, "[y]ou always look so cool," everyone in the room is aware that "[s]he had told him that she loved him" (125).

At this moment, both Tom and Gatsby realize that neither can feel secure in his relationship with Daisy without seizing total control over her voice. Both men find it nearly impossible to speak after Daisy's lapse. Tom does not answer when his wife addresses him directly, and Gatsby "started to speak, [but] changed his mind," only speaking "with an effort" when Tom forces him to (126). It is

not the tension between the two men that makes it hard for them to converse, but their helplessness in the face of Daisy's power. Gatsby tells Nick, "I can't say anything in his house, old sport"—yet it was Daisy, not Gatsby, who gave away their secret. Nick recognizes this, commenting on Daisy's "indiscreet voice" (127). To restore his sense of control, Gatsby joins this attack on Daisy's voice, and the two conclude that "[i]t was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it.… High in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl" (127).

With this, as Person notes, "Nick and Gatsby progressively devitalize Daisy's symbolic meaning until she exists as a vulgar emblem of the money values which dominate their world" (255). First painted as a portrait of perfection, Daisy is now reduced to a crude symbol of power in its most vulgar form: money. As Person argues, she "is victimized by a male tendency to project a[n] … ultimately dehumanizing image on woman" (Person 257). Her beautiful voice is no longer a human quality, or even a superhuman quality. Instead, it is a mere object: something to be bought, sold, and fought over. By objectifying Daisy, the men can fight for control; whoever suppresses her voice most completely will be the winner.

Though the confrontation between Tom and Gatsby affects Daisy most of all, she cannot participate. The men take it upon themselves to speak for her, leaving her powerless. Whichever man she chooses—and choosing neither is never suggested as a possibility—will overpower her voice with his own. Fetterley is correct in noting that "Daisy's choices amount in reality to no more than the choice of which form she wishes her oppression to take" (100). Both men speak for her without once asking how she feels. At one point, Gatsby answers when Tom addresses Daisy directly (Fitzgerald 138). Daisy's only contribution to the conversation is to "helplessly" (137) interrupt them with pleas to stop and to reluctantly say whatever they want to hear. The erasure of her voice is complete when Gatsby launches into a lengthy defense of his good name:

with every word she was drawing further and further into herself, so he gave that up and only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible, struggling unhappily, undespairingly, toward that lost voice across the room. The voice begged again to go. (142)

Not only must Gatsby face the death of his dream, but also Daisy. She, too, had hoped that their love would be perfect, and now she must face Gatsby's imperfection. As he struggles to control her by smothering her voice with his own, he destroys the very quality he has always found most alluring in Daisy. Her voice—her identity as a human being—is "lost" forever. Fitzgerald does not write that "*Daisy* begged again to go"; the plea is made by "*the voice*," a disembodied, dehumanized entity. With this, Gatsby's part in the annihilation of Daisy's voice is complete. Even after he has lost her, Gatsby still insists that Daisy never loved Tom, that "she hardly knew what she was saying" when she made her final decision (Fitzgerald 159). He refuses to believe that she might be capable of knowing—and speaking—her own mind. And he is right in that respect: after all he and Tom have done to stifle her voice, how could she speak for herself?

The last time we see Daisy, she is both literally and metaphorically mute:

[Tom] was talking intently across the table at her and in his earnestness his hand had fallen upon and covered her own. Once in a while she looked up at him and nodded in agreement. (152)

She does not utilize her beautiful voice but communicates nonverbally, and then only to agree with Tom's words. Once revered as a perfect being, the ideal of love, Daisy is ultimately reduced to a "dead dream." In forcing Daisy to possess the symbolic value he desires, Gatsby *de*-values her. She is no longer a captivating woman with a beautiful voice; Gatsby, aided by Nick and Tom, has destroyed that voice forever. Gatsby will never achieve his "happily ever after"—not because he loses Daisy to Tom, but because he ensures that Daisy is lost to herself. She cannot give of herself when her voice, her identity, is stolen and destroyed by male tyranny. Perhaps it is this unjust, sexist ending that makes Fitzgerald's novel a story of the American "everyman." Though Gatsby's treatment of Daisy is not admirable, it is certainly typical of American gender relations.

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4.7: Student Sample Paper- Carrie Obry's "Homoerotic Impulses in Willa Cather's 'Paul's Case'"

Carrie's paper is guided by queer theory, which challenges the heteronormative way that readers often respond to a text. Carrie was interested in a queer reading of Willa Cather's "Paul's Case,"Willa Cather, *The Troll Garden and Selected Stories* (Project Gutenberg, 2009), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/346/346-h/346-h.htm#2H_4_0013. which you can read at Project Gutenberg (http://www.gutenberg.org/files/346/346-h/346-h.htm#2H_4_0013).

Carrie was intrigued by discovering that Cather's biographer, Sharon O'Brien, had labeled Cather a "lesbian writer" who focuses on gay and lesbian issues. Queer readings of texts often challenge the accepted interpretations of texts and open up the literary work to new critical debate. Carrie's paper certainly does do that, as she explores how Paul is forced into compulsory heterosexuality when his desires are anything but that.

Carrie Obry

Professor Pennington

Literature and Writing

April 17, 20–

Homoerotic Impulses in Willa Cather's "Paul's Case"

In Victorian culture, discussing sex was inappropriate, so literature from the period could not use sexually explicit language or ideas; if it did, it would risk not being well-received, or even published. During this time, "proper women were supposed to blush at the slightest allusion to sexuality; references to sex in literature were commonly bowdlerized" (Dynes 1344). Although Willa Cather is a modernist in literary terms, her writing emerges in an age that Victorian morality shaped, a time when sexuality was a thing not discussed. Larry Rubin claims that "Paul's Case," Cather's "minor masterpiece," appeared in 1905 "at the height of the period of Victorian repressiveness," so we almost expect that Cather "found it necessary to avoid altogether a direct confrontation with the question of her protagonist's sexual nature" (127). Consequently, Rubin says, many scholars have either "overlooked" or "ignored" it. Only after the 1970s did certain circles begin to recognize the homoerotic undertones of "Paul's Case," which had previously and consistently been labeled merely a contrast between a passionate and bourgeois lifestyle.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick claims that as a result of overlooking or ignoring the sexual temperament of authors and their characters, readers condemn literature to remain in the field of power that misinterpreted it. Her "Epistemology of the Closet" presents the idea that virtually every important epistemological core of 20th-century Western thought has been marked by issues of modern male homosexual and heterosexual definition. The very texts that "mobilized and promulgated the most potent images and categories for the canon of homophobic mastery" (182) simultaneously act as the lesser-known foundational texts of modern gay culture. She claims that landmark texts such as *Dorian Gray* and *Billy Budd* enact this double sexual identity. Although they both depict same-sex, erotic love, traditional interpretations veil the texts with a pretense of heterosexuality and integrate them into the literary canon as such. Contemporary thought, especially Sedgwick's field of gender studies, develops a more sensitive approach to understanding homoerotic issues; many scholars attempt to reorder past political inequities by reconsidering those who were previously excluded.

Larry Rubin interprets "Paul's Case" in this enlightening manner. He notes how the lifting of "social taboos" in the discussion of sex leads to highly evocative reinterpretations of literature. "Particularly in homosexuality," he says, "this newly unfettered approach to the libidinous urges of various literary characters" has helped to reinterpret "certain dark and previously unmentionable aspects of the psychological motivation of those characters and even the overall vision of authors involved" (127). Willa Cather is one such author; the protagonist in "Paul's Case," the story that established Cather's artistic maturity, is one such character. Both Cather's artistic style and life vision have become involved, even entangled, in the web of identity-politics, largely due to her non-traditional and often elusive sexual identity.

Since Cather was very particular about transmitting her personal information and writing into the public sphere, retrieving particular insight leads to an array of conflicting images. James Woodress, who has written a significant amount about Cather, argues that "documentary evidence does not exist to dispose of the question in one way or another … [so] whether she was [a lesbian] or not will have to remain moot" (86). Yet Karla Jay, in *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions*, depicts Cather as a radical lesbian by citing biographical pictures of "Willie the cross-dresser" trying to "come out" to a society that was unwilling to

notice. Moreover, contemporary aspects of literature include Cather as an essential author within gay and lesbian anthologies. The certainty by which many interpretations claim Cather as a lesbian rely on her long-standing, intense female relationships and her avoidance of marriage proposals from various men. Cather famously befriended Isabelle McClung and Edith Lewis, who helped form Cather's personality, and perhaps her lesbianism. In view of this fact, and of Cather's avoidance of marriage, Woodress claims: "It seems perfectly clear that she had no need for heterosexual relationships" (86).

Considering these conflicting ideas, scholars have more successfully shifted from speculation of sexual preference to examining the social implications of her adoption of a masculine persona. From age 14 through her first two years at the University of Nebraska, Cather cropped her hair short, wore the clothes of a young man, and called herself William, Willie, or Will (Begley 2). Evidently, creating a "female self" in the late Victorian era proved difficult. Sharon O'Brien states that Cather's attempt "to fashion a female self that could be compatible with the artist's role" may have been futile because there were "no acceptable models for identity and vocation in the late-Victorian culture" (qtd. in Thomas 8). "Paul's Case" emerges as a literary manifestation of Cather's non-conformity and her assuming of a male identity. Yet Cather is not sexually explicit; she imbues the story with innuendo that signals, perhaps unmistakably, a homosexual identity of the narrator, and also a homophobia inherent in the passionless life of Cordelia Street, both of which are to blame in Paul's impending suicide.

Before analyzing the story, understanding the innuendo of "Paul's Case" is paramount. Primarily, the sexual implicitness of the story demonstrates reticence in two important ways. It shows the difficulty of writing about homosexuality in 1905. As Claude Summer states, "1905 discourse on homosexuality was couched almost exclusively in terms of criminality and psychopathology" (109). Foucault's *History of Sexuality* concentrates on the idea that we produce modern sexuality from past historically distinctive discourse; hence modern thought arises from these dogmas. Foucault locates the genesis of "homosexual" definition and discourse around 1905, a time when "nineteenth-century psychiatrists entomologized … all those minor perverts" by giving them strange names such as "sexoesthetic introverts" (43). He formulates the history of homosexuality as follows:

The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood … [His sexuality] was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away … [T]he psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized—Westphal's famous article of 1870 on "contrary sexual sensations" can stand as its date of birth—less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility … the homosexual was now a species. (43)

At this point in history, homosexuality was no longer act-specific; it became a type of personality, rather than perverse recreation. At the turn of the 19th century, homosexuality was realized, so people were just beginning to struggle with the new idea of "homosexual identity."

The implicitness of "Paul's Case" also shows Cather's penchant for insinuation in her literature. A passage from her exploratory essay "The Novel Démueblé" demonstrates Cather's tacit approach to writing and particularly illuminates, along with Foucault, an exploration of "Paul's Case":

Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there—that, one might say, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel or the drama, as well as to poetry itself. (Cather 41–42)

From the inception of "Paul's Case," the reader begins to comprehend from the page what Cather has not "specifically named there." Paul consistently suppresses a truth from his teachers, his father, and perhaps from himself and the San Francisco boy he meets while sojourning in New York. What is Paul lying about? It is not his contempt for his teachers "which he seemingly made not the least effort to conceal" (Cather 260). It is his homosexuality, subdued not only in literary discursive forces and in Cather's life, but also at the most rudimentary level, in the psychology of an author's creation.

Cather mysteriously introduces Paul by referring to his "various misdemeanors" and to his father's own "perplexity" about him. His teachers are also perplexed. They say: "Paul's was not a usual case. It was scarcely possible to put into words the real cause of trouble" (260). Paul detects the apprehension people have of him; he "was always smiling, always glancing about him, seeming to feel that people might be watching him and trying to detect something" (260). He feels his homosexuality in Foucault's terms: "everywhere present in him … [and] written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away."

Although Paul cannot address his homosexuality in a direct, verbal way, he demonstrates it through his disposition: “There was something of the dandy about him, and he wore an opal pin in his neatly knotted black four-in-hand” and a “scandalous red carnation” in his buttonhole (259). Besides his choice in clothing, Paul’s eyes contribute a great deal to his personality. “His eyes were remarkable for a certain hysterical brilliancy” which he “continually used … in a conscious, theatrical sort of way, peculiarly offensive in a boy” (259). Cather associates the “glassy glitter” of his eye with a “belladonna,” giving Paul a distinct effeminate quality.

Paul’s adornments and flashy countenance render him an especially flamboyant boy. He dresses in the fashion of “dandyism” reflective of Oscar Wilde and the late 19th-century aesthetes, who above everything attempted to dress elegantly and fashionably. As Richard Dellamora states, “dandyism also reflects a loss of balance between the dual imperatives of leisure and work incumbent upon Victorian gentlemen. The dandy is too relaxed, too visible, and consumes to excess while producing little or nothing” (199). Here occurs a divide between the middle-class gentleman and the Wildean dandy, a dualism Cather enacts by repeatedly contrasting “boy” with “man.” She contrasts the relaxed Paul, who produces little or nothing, and the structured, “successful” men of Cordelia street. Paul is a “mere boy”; while his disposition is “the defiant manner of the boy’s” and “his boyish mirthfulness.” A “man,” however, is quite a different person. On the street “where all the houses were exactly alike … business men begot and reared large families of children … all of whom were exactly like their homes, and of a piece with the monotony in which they lived” (263). The “young man” of Cordelia Street whom the neighborhood likens Paul to mirror “was of a ruddy complexion, with a compressed, red mouth, and faded, nearsighted eyes” (265): an unpleasant sounding gentleman. Yet, Cordelia street imagines him, unlike Paul, “a young man with a future” who works for a “chief” in the iron and railroad industry. Paul wants none of the capitalistic success of “the iron kings.” Rather, he wants to hear their “legends,” their “stories of palaces in Venice, [and] yachts on the Mediterranean” (265). He could care less about the kings; Paul “was interested in the triumphs of cash-boys who had become famous” (265).

The “boy” Paul has the same contempt for “men” of the classroom: “the prosy men who never wore frock coats, or violets in their buttonholes” (267). They never adorn their austere image with violets, while Paul splashes violet water on his body. Finally, the only acquaintance of any importance to Paul is the “wild San Francisco boy” who offers to show Paul the night life of New York City. The two click intensely: “the two boys went off together after dinner, not returning to the hotel until seven o’clock the next morning” (271). Paul traverses New York City, taking in the energy that only people like himself, the “cash-boys” and the “San Francisco boys” desire. Hence, Paul defies the strict societal codes for “masculinity” by not only his fashion sense but also by his passionate leisure life.

The “verbal mood” and “emotional aura” (in Cather’s terms) of “Paul’s Case” also have an undeniable sexual essence. Besides Paul’s disposition, the passionate glitter in his eye “that drug does not produce,” the language Cather uses to describe his surroundings is clearly delineated. “Paul never went up Cordelia Street without a shudder of loathing” (263). This “every-day existence” is “but a sleep and a forgetting” for Paul. Cather uses *hopeless*, *sinking*, *defeat*, *ugliness*, *commonness*, *physical depression*, *odours*, *repulsion*, *colourless mass*, and *morbid* to describe Paul’s monotonous home. While Cather confines the description of this bourgeois mundanity to Cordelia Street, aspects of the passionate and theatrical world Paul yearns to enter, akin to the famous triumphs of the cash-boys, are scattered throughout the story. Cather uses *gay*four times; also, *airy*, *exhilarated*, *flourishes*, *suppression*, *charming*, *exotic*, *glistening*, *perverted*, *tempt*, *corrupt*, *thronged*, *fag*, and *fagged* charge the story with energy. Moreover, Paul, when in New York, “burnt like a fagot in a tempest” (270), which seems to describe the pinnacle of Paul’s secret world where he can play out his true sexual identity.

Although Cather’s language never directly describes sexuality, it creates a mood that signals the homosexuality of Paul. She writes, “In Paul’s world, the natural nearly always wore the guise of ugliness” (266). Paul’s world is Pittsburgh, a city of steel-like reality where his natural identity, if revealed, would wear the guise of ugliness. Paul cannot “come out” to a society unable or unwilling to accept his sexuality. Hence, both the rigidity of Cordelia street and Paul’s secrecy of his sexuality are at fault when we analyze his suicide. His passion should be able to transform his cut-out, “proper” relationships and insensitive surroundings in more just and loving directions. Instead, he gives in, hurtling himself in front of a moving train. Paul’s sexuality overcomes him. He “dropped back into the immense design of things” (274).

Of writing, Cather said: “Out of the teeming, gleaming stream of the present we must select the eternal material of art” (41). She evokes the sentiment that the present is gleaming and streaming; it stops for no one and yields no second consideration. But art is eternal material; it can capture an issue or idea and allow present critics to return to a given historical point to reconsider previous

discrimination, like bias against homosexuality. Although Cather did not explicitly argue issues of gender equality, her implicit response is equally as forceful.

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4.8: Student Sample Paper- Duncan Raunio's "The Tragedy of Performing Gender in Kate Chopin's The Awakening"

Duncan's paper is a gender analysis that uses feminist and masculinity studies as a way to explore the dynamic between Edna and Robert, the "secret" lovers in *The Awakening*. Duncan explores how Edna and Robert are trapped into performing heterosexual behaviors defined by a heteronormative society, when they might have homoerotic desires that doom their relationship from the start.

Duncan Raunio

Professor Karlyn Crowley

Literature and Writing

May 5, 20–

The Tragedy of Performing Gender in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*

While there are many possible interpretations of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, perhaps the most common is that Edna commits suicide in the end due to her unrequited love for Robert Lebrun. This is of no surprise, as Edna tells Robert that "I love you … only you; no one but you" (Chopin 132) at the peak of what would seem to be their secret affair. Edna seems to be completely enthralled with Robert, and her freedom through a life of sensuality can only be obtained by being with he who awakened her, so it seems natural, at least on the surface, that she is devastated when he decides to leave her in the end. With nothing to do but to go crawling back to her husband and demanding children, Edna is defeated. Unable to go on, she throws herself into the sea to die.

While this is a valid way of seeing *The Awakening*, it is perhaps overly narrow and superficial. By saying that Edna can only achieve her freedom through a romantic attachment to Robert Lebrun, one is implying that a woman can only achieve her freedom through attachment to a man and not by herself. Trying to get past the traditional view that a woman needs a man is where looking at *The Awakening* from a gender criticism approach can prove to be particularly helpful. In his essay "Gender Criticism and *The Awakening*," Ross C. Murfin states that one of the goals of gender criticism is to "criticize gender as we commonly conceive of it, to expose its insufficiency and inadequacy as a category" (224). He explains that many gender critics see gender as merely a construct of society, and that we are born into pre-existing notions of what "males" and "females" are supposed to be. By applying the ideas of gender criticism to *The Awakening*, the motives of some of the characters, most importantly Edna and Robert, become much deeper, as do the possible intentions Chopin had for her work. When one starts to examine what the "traditional" gender roles are for male and female, it becomes apparent that Robert and Edna exhibit behavior that is atypical, bordering on the homoerotic. Indeed, Edna can be seen as a "metaphorical lesbian." Robert, in turn, often displays homosexual tendencies. If one considers the possibility of Edna and Robert having homosexual tendencies, then their coming together seems less of a romantic passion than it is a confused search for understanding–understanding of sexual identity. While on the surface they are drawn together sexually because society tells them that they should be, on a deeper level they connect because they know the truth about each other's struggle. By having them separate in the end, Chopin is saying that society is not ready for homosexual love to be accepted as normal behavior, much less as a "gender."

Elizabeth LeBlanc explores the notion of Edna Pontellier as a "metaphorical lesbian" in her essay "The Metaphorical Lesbian: Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening*." What she means by this is not that Edna is a "tragically closeted dyke who dies because she cannot accept her orientation or because she has not 'found the right woman'", but rather she explores "the presence of lesbian motifs and manifestations" which allows one to "examine the strategies and tactics by which Edna attempts to establish a subjective identity" (237). Edna finds herself isolated from the group of "mother women" on Grand Isle, especially from Madame Ratignolle, who, when seen from the male perspective, is the ideal woman. Karen Simon explains how Edna finds Madame Ratignolle "incomprehensible" in some ways, especially when she does things like flirt with Edna's father. Yet Edna still remains connected to her female contemporaries; she in fact shares a strong bond with them, but only as individuals. Edna seeks to break away from the traditional notion of femininity, but she also makes sure to not isolate herself from the women around her. It is through her associations with other women that she feels the most alive and inspired, such as the sensuous beach scene with Madame Ratignolle, or the many times that Madame Reisz plays piano for her. These interactions help Edna to define herself, and

while she does not have any sexual encounters with any of the women, they lead her to the conclusion that a romantic life with a man will not satisfy the cravings inside of her.

If Edna can be seen as a metaphorical lesbian, then perhaps it follows that other characters can be seen in a homosexual light. In particular, Chopin's depiction of Robert Lebrun raises many questions as to what his real motivations are. Perhaps he too can be seen as a homosexual character. Suzanne Disheroon-Green in "Mr. Pontellier's Cigar, Robert's Cigarettes: Opening the Closet of Homosexuality and Phallic Power in *The Awakening*" explores this often overlooked possibility in detail. She does so by comparing Robert, the "homosexual male, who is figuratively emasculated by his heterosexual acquaintances" with Mr. Pontellier, the "overbearing, yet emotionally absent, traditional husband" (184). In her analysis, Disheroon-Green explains that Chopin makes the distinction between the heterosexual male and the homosexual through the "manipulation of phallic images" (184). As the traditional heterosexual male, Mr. Pontellier must show that he has control over his wife. He often "exerts his masculine supremacy over his wife … while smoking a cigar," which "serves as a phallic symbol, illuminating his patriarchal attitudes toward his wife" (184). This is in stark contrast to the more gentle personality of Robert Lebrun. The cigar can now be seen as an "emasculation image" when it is in association with Robert, the "single male figure in the novel who does not expect to be treated as a superior creature simply because of his masculinity" (184). Indeed, Robert is much more tender compared to Mr. Pontellier, and he is "effeminate and more comfortable in the beautiful world of women than in the smoke-filled clubs of men" (184).

This association with women is key to what makes him seen as a homosexual character. In *The Awakening*, we are told that "each summer at Grand Isle [Robert] had constituted himself the devoted attendant of some fair dame or damsel" (31). But what is important to note is that the type of women that he associates with were "married women, older widows, or girls too young to be considering marriage, but never women of the age to be seeking a husband" (Disheroon-Green 187), or, in other words, safe women. As a homosexual, he cannot identify with his fellow heterosexual male counterparts, so he creates friendships with the more sensually inclined women that he encounters on the island. Yet he is careful to choose whom he associates with, as he would not want his attachments to be mistaken as having a sexual agenda.

Mr. Pontellier seems to be on to Robert's deviance from the heterosexual norm, and he often treats Robert as an inferior man. In the scene where Edna and Robert are returning from the beach, Mr. Pontellier treats Edna as a "valuable piece of personal property" (Chopin 24), and, doing so in front of Robert, he seems to be saying that Robert is "not enough of a man to look after her properly" (Disheroon-Green 186). Also, there is only one instance in which Mr. Pontellier addresses Robert as anything but "Robert," again "indicating Mr. Pontellier's superiority" (187). Lastly, Disheroon-Green points out that in "contrast to Mr. Pontellier, Robert smokes cigarettes, ostensibly because he cannot afford cigars; the effeminate male smokes the smaller, more frail counterpart of the cigar" (188).

If one then considers both Edna and Robert to be characters with homosexual tendencies, or perhaps characters who rebel against other aspects of heteronormative femininity and masculinity, the reason for their closeness is not a sexual one at all. It may be that they are actually seeing this struggle against gender norms in each other, wishing to become closer because they both understand what the other is experiencing. However, society demands that they be involved with each other sexually, and they seemingly submit to this at first. While they symbolically seem to be converging on some new form of sexuality, the fact they are still "male" and "female" separates them indefinitely, and they do not wish to be together in the way that society says they should be. This is why Chopin has them separate in the end; her society was not ready for this sort of deviation from the gender norms. By having Edna and Robert stay together, they would eventually have had to admit their true sexual preferences to each other. While she seems to be hinting at this in *The Awakening*, she could not have explicitly stated it without her book causing a scandal.

A concept that Murfin brings up in his summary of gender criticism is the notion that "it is also possible … for women to read as men, men as women" (Murfin 227), and also that there can be gender to one's writing as well. If one can indeed read or write from a gender perspective, could one then perhaps love someone else from the perspective of a specific gender? Could a man love a woman the way a woman would love a woman, and vice versa? Chopin may have been hinting at this by having Edna and Robert seemingly converging on one gender to become, at least, symbolic lovers. This becomes more clear in the light of the recent developments of gender criticism, and also now that we as a society are able to be more accepting of homosexuality in the dawn of more liberal times. While a deviant sexual lifestyle was not acceptable in Chopin's time, it is much more "normal" today. Yet there is still much to find out about why and how. we love each other.

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4.9: End-of-Chapter Assessment

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we examined in depth the strategies for writing a paper on literature using feminist and/or gender criticism, which includes masculinity studies. The basic tenets of feminist and gender criticism, we learned, are the following:

- Feminist criticism focuses on the construction of what it means to be female—a girl, a woman. Such criticism can focus on the ways women are depicted in literature (primarily by male writers), how women writers develop female characters, and how women's writing may differ in structure from men's writing.
- Gender criticism, including queer theory, follows feminism's lead by adopting the belief that gender is a social construction. Thus gender criticism examines what it means to be a man or a woman, while queer theory expands this by looking at LGBTQ issues in more depth.
- Masculinity studies embraces the notion of social constructionism of gender and focuses on the ways society defines what it means to be a man, which often forces a man to perform a particular masculine role that might be at odds with his identity.
- You were given the opportunity to see the feminist and gender methodologies practiced in these student papers, demonstrating the rich complexity of feminist and gender criticism.
- You learned about the importance of the writing process, including peer review and the strategies for conducting peer review. Many of you also participated in peer review for your paper.
- You wrote a feminist or gender analysis of a work of literature.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Freewriting exercise. Read "Sonnet 130" by William Shakespeare:

   My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

   Coral is far more red, than her lips red:

   If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;

   If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

   I have seen roses damasked, red and white,

   But no such roses see I in her cheeks;

   And in some perfumes is there more delight

   Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

   I love to hear her speak, yet well I know

   That music hath a far more pleasing sound:

   I grant I never saw a goddess go,

   My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:

   And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,

   As any she belied with false compare.William Shakespeare, "CXXX," in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1609; Project Gutenberg, 2010), www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1041.

2. Read through the poem several times. As you read the poem, jot down the stereotypes that Shakespeare uses to depict women, particularly woman as an object of beauty.
3. The poem is obviously ironic, painting a negative picture of his love to highlight her essential beauty. Even so, write down your attitudes toward Shakespeare's depiction of the woman. Does he embrace the very objectification of women that he satirizes?
4. Does the poem reflect a particular notion of masculinity? Define the poem's attitude toward masculinity. Does the very notion of a love poem force the poet to perform an accepted gender role?

5. How might a queer theorist approach this poem? Does this approach complement the feminist and masculinity interpretations? Or does a queer reading challenge conventional interpretations of the poem?
6. If you were to write a paper on the poem, what approach do you think would be most helpful to you—feminist, gender, or masculinity focus? Explain.

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS EXERCISES

1. Have the students read Hemingway's "Hills like White Elephants." The story is a popular one, so you will find it reprinted in many literature anthologies.Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants," in *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 211–13.
2. Once the students have read the story, have a general discussion about their interpretation of the story. Many students will miss the point that the male is trying to convince the female to have an abortion, so part of the class discussion might examine how the text guides us to this interpretation (if you are using the reader-response chapter in this book, you can bring in the idea of gap filling).
3. Ask the students to write down their opinions of each character: Do they like the characters? Do they sympathize with one character over the other?
4. Then ask the students to write down their opinion of Hemingway from reading this story.
5. Finally, ask the students to read Paige's paper that follows. This feminist paper is a more nuanced reading of the story—she critiques Hemingway's perceived negative attitudes toward the women, yet Paige finds in the story a redemptive quality. Do your students agree with Paige's assessment?

Paige Caulum

Professor Karlyn Crowley

Introduction to Literature

March 23, 20–

Understanding the Complexity of the Feminine Identity Through the Use of Ambiguity:

Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants"

Ambiguity plays an important role in Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants." Not only does Hemingway make the subject of the American couple's discussion unclear, but he also leaves readers uncertain about the girl's final decision. While it is widely accepted knowledge that the American couple is discussing the option of abortion, critics and readers continue to disagree over the girl's final decision. From a feminist perspective, the girl's indecision whether or not to have an abortion is representative of the struggle for women to determine a sense of female identity that is not based on biological or social structures that value males. Although many readers assume the girl submits to the American man's wishes and goes through with the abortion, a careful reading of the text reveals the significance of the girl's indecisiveness and Hemingway's use of ambiguity to understanding the girl's development. From a feminist perspective, the answer of the girl's final decision is important not only to the understanding of the plot but also to the comprehension of the female experience and perspective in a patriarchal society. The girl's decision is complicated by the tension Hemingway establishes between the roles of motherhood and patriarchy in the oppression of women. As a result, Hemingway compels the reader to not only determine whether or not the girl has the abortion, but also whether the decision makes her an empowered or an oppressed woman. The paradox Hemingway establishes between the potential oppressive consequences of both accepting or rejecting motherhood and the relation to masculine influence demonstrates the uniqueness of women's struggle to establish an empowered, self-defined feminine identity in a patriarchal society.

Initially, the girl does not perceive the ways in which men oppress the feminine identity. However, the girl realizes that the issue of her pregnancy is too important for her to simply comply with the American's requests to have an abortion. As the American man attempts to take control over the girl's reproductive capacities, the girl begins to recognize the oppression women experience from males. From a biological perspective, the existence of gender differences, in which "[t]he male body is distinguished by the penis and the female body by reproductive capacity" (Hird 7), acts as a way to oppress females. The biological importance of gender roles, in which "procreation is produced through an 'active' male and 'passive' female" (Hird 9) results in a passive feminine identity, as "women's role in reproduction comes to be considered the basis of feminine gender identity" (DiQuinzio 4). The girl's apprehension to have an abortion illustrates the impact of biologically determined gender roles. The girl recognizes the implications

of having an abortion as she states, “And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible” (276), revealing that she acknowledges that “reproduction is part of a women’s natural constitution” (Hird 9) and fears the consequences of rejecting this constitution in deciding to have an abortion. Biological theory of gender development “emphasizes the salience of the sexual aim to reproduce” (Hird 9). From this perspective, then, a “girl’s only option for ‘normal’ social development is that she accept her allotted state by transferring her object desire to a man with which she will procreate” (Hird 9). As a result, the girl fears that having an abortion and remaining a childless woman would deem her as “socially undesirable, mal-adjusted, less nurturing, socially distant, and materialistic” (Hird 9). The girl’s recognition of her impending exclusion from the feminine identity if she has the abortion is apparent as she claims, “once they take it away, you never get it back” (276). Furthermore, the girl begins to express her resentment that the American does not have to worry about the importance of motherhood for the female identity, as she states, “Doesn’t it mean anything to you?” (277). The American’s response of “I don’t care anything about it” (277) illustrates how the feminine identity is based on the ability to reproduce, while the masculine identity is based on power and control. As a result, the girl recognizes the oppressive nature of the biological definition of femininity and realizes the need to escape this definition to form her own empowered identity.

As the girl struggles with the biological identification of women as passive, she begins to recognize the social oppression women experience as well. Initially, Hemingway’s characterization of the girl seems to follow the social norms of the patriarchal society which the girl and the American man are a part of. According to feminist theory, “the social construction of gender has historically resulted not only in difference but in inequality as well … masculinity and femininity are not only different but also differently valued” (DiQuinzio 2). At the beginning of Hemingway’s story, the girl relies on this social construction of femininity to determine her role in society as she recognizes that “it is the demands of civilized society that constrain individual identification” (Hird 11). As the American man brings up the topic of the girl’s pregnancy, the girl is passive to the man’s wishes, “not even knowing her own mind, accustomed to following a masterful male for her direction in life” (Renner 28). The girl remains silent as the American makes his argument by claiming “It’s really an awfully simple operation … I know you wouldn’t mind it, Jig” (275). In addition, the girl relies on the American to evaluate the consequences of the decision, as she asks, “And you think then we’ll be all right and happy” (275) if she has the abortion. The idea that women are considered as less than men in society is underscored by Hemingway’s characterization of the American as “the expert even on abortion, a uniquely female issue” (Renner 29). The American’s ability to make demands on an issue that is deeply connected to society’s definition of the female identity causes her to realize the oppression created by social determination of gender roles.

Hemingway’s use of ambiguity at the end of the story makes the reader determine the girl’s final decision and the consequences of that decision. Depending upon how a reader understands the biological and social construction of the female identity and the girl’s development throughout the story, the girl can be considered either an empowered or an oppressed female. Both theories of gender development result in an understanding of femininity as “less than fully human” (DiQuinzio 3). Despite the girl’s desire to escape the social and biological oppressive definitions of female identity, these definitions have conditioned her to react passively to male’s demands and, consequently, she “does not know her own mind and … cannot articulate it to her male leader” (Renner 29). On one hand, the girl could be understood as an empowered woman that comes to reject this passive role and assert her own values. From this perspective, readers could ascertain that the girl determines to keep the child. Throughout the story, the girl begins to indirectly express her feelings towards the abortion and assert herself. As a result of the man’s pressure and the girl’s habit of complying with male demands, she states, “Then I’ll do it. Because I don’t care about me” (275). However, the heavy sarcasm in this statement reveals that the girl resents the oppression of the female identity by males. In addition, the girl gets up from the table they are sitting at and moves to the other side of the room, escaping the pressure from the American and “remaining in a position to maintain her own viewpoint” (Renner 32–33). For the girl, the American’s constant pleading to have the abortion hinders her ability to reject the determined biological and social feminine roles and construct an aggressive female identity. Eventually, the girl asserts herself openly, saying, “Would you please please please please please please please stop talking?” (277). Through demanding that the American stop talking, the girl not only asserts “that she does not want to have an abortion and will listen to no more of his self-serving pleading for her to do so” (Renner 34), but she also effectively rids herself of his ability to keep her in her biological and social role as a passive female. In a final act of assertiveness, the girl does not allow the American to make her feel guilty about her decision to keep the child. After the girl has implicitly articulated her desire to have the child, the American “turns her sarcasm back on her … as [he] says, ‘Do you feel better?’” (Renner 37). However, the girl triumphantly replies, “I feel fine.… There’s nothing wrong with me. I feel fine” (278). Through denying the American the ability to make her feel guilty about her rejection of biological and social norms of feminine identity, the girl is fully able to define herself and emerge as an aggressive

female character. An understanding of the girl's character development from a feminist perspective reveals the importance of the girl's refusal of the American's power over her in her process of creating a self-confident feminine identity.

Hemingway's use of ambiguity, however, makes it difficult to determine not only the girl's decision but also the consequences of her decision. While readers may interpret the girl's refusal of the American's demands as empowering in the sense that she rejects the social oppression of women by males, her acceptance of motherhood could be viewed in terms of the biological and social oppressions of motherhood. In order to create a feminine identity not based on traditional biological and social views of femininity, the girl has to reject male superiority. The girl's rejection of male dominance is only possible through her refusal of the American's demands to have the abortion. However, most feminist theories agree that female oppression is connected to mothering both biologically and socially. In a biological sense, the experience of motherhood is "grounded in the female body, unmediated by culture or language, and directly accessible to women" (DiQuinzio 10). However, a feminist understanding of this theory argues, "women's role in reproduction comes to be considered the basis of feminine gender identity" (DiQuinzio 4). Social definitions of the role of motherhood also lends itself to the oppression of women, as "being a mother means possessing and exercising those attributes of personality or character and/or engaging in those activities or practices most closely associated with femininity" (DiQuinzio 10) in a society in which femininity is less valued than masculinity. In this sense, the girl's decision to refuse abortion and accept motherhood could be interpreted as her acceptance of the oppression of the biological and social constructions of female identity based on motherhood.

On the other hand, readers could interpret the girl's overall lack of assertiveness of her own values as her decision to comply with the American's demands and have the abortion. Hemingway's use of ambiguity is most apparent in his characterization of the girl, making it difficult to discern her own feelings towards the abortion. Throughout the story, the girl acts as the "classic portrait of the deferential female, without a strong identity, an accessory to the male, to whom she has been accustomed to look … for support and direction" (Renner 28). Although the girl's plea for the American to "please … stop talking" (277) is a moment of assertiveness, she is still unable to articulate clearly her values and attitudes towards having an abortion. As a result of the girl's inability to state her feelings to the American, many readers determine that she will "have the abortion in order to please and thus keep her lover" (Renner 27). From a feminist perspective, the girl's decision to comply to the American's demands and have the abortion, despite her own divided mind on the issue, renders her as a female oppressed by the masculine identity.

Despite Hemingway's reputation for treating female characters unsympathetically, "Hills Like White Elephants" focuses on the complexity of the female experience in a patriarchal society. Although Hemingway's use of ambiguity makes it impossible to determine whether or not the girl has the abortion or the consequences of her decision, the ambiguity actually allows for a unique understanding of the oppression of women in society and the feminine quest for an identity not based on social or biological oppression. Readers should recognize the importance of acknowledging and rejecting biological and social oppression of women in order for women to take control over the formation of their own identities. Hemingway's ambiguous ending causes readers to examine the complexity of establishing an empowered feminine identity within a male-dominated society.

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INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS PEER REVIEW

1. Have students conduct peer review on one of the sample papers using the organizational peer-review guide found in Chapter 10, Section 10.3:
    1. Place students in groups of three to four and have them reread the paper for peer review and fill out the guide sheet.
    2. Have students discuss their feedback responses to the sample paper.

3. Have students list the major feedback they discussed.
4. Put the major issues on the blackboard or whiteboard.
5. Discuss these responses. Make certain that you let students know that any paper can be improved.

2. Plan to have your students conduct peer review on the drafts of their papers that they are writing in your class. Use the peer-review guide from Chapter 10, Section 10.3 and have them work in groups of three and do the following:
    1. Bring two hard copies of their paper so that each member can read the paper, OR work in a computer lab where students can share their papers online. You may want to use the educational software that your campus supports—for example, Blackboard or Moodle—or you can have students use Google Drive to set up their peer-review groups.
    2. Have two students focus on the first paper in the group. While these students are reading, have the other student read the other two student papers.
    3. The two students should quickly fill out the peer-review sheet and then have a brief conversation about the strengths of the paper and ways the paper could be improved.
    4. Move to the next student and follow the same process. Depending on the length of your class, you may have to reduce the peer-review groups to two students.
    5. If time permits, ask the students to provide general comments—or ask questions—about the specific papers or the assignment overall.
    6. You may want to use peer review for each paper in your class.

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4.10: Suggestions for Further Reading

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity

Learning Objectives

- Examine the concerns of scholars working with African American, ethnic, and postcolonial theories.
- Apply various cultural theories to works of literature.
- Review works of poetry and fiction that explore issues of racial, ethnic, and cultural identity.
- Learn how to respectfully disagree with other scholars within an academic argument.
- Draft and revise a critique of a work of literature based on racial, ethnic, or cultural issues within the work.

5.1: Literary Snapshot- "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"
5.2: Postcolonial, Racial, and Ethnic Theory- An Overview
5.3: Writing about Race, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity- A Process Approach
5.4: Student Writer at Work- Ashley Eckhardt's Postcolonial Paper in Action
5.5: Student Writer at Work- Stefanie Jochman's African American Studies Paper in Action
5.6: Student Writer at Work- Hannah Schmitt's Ethnic Studies Paper in Action
5.7: Student Sample Student Paper- Alyce Hockers's "The Slavery Metaphor of Moby-Dick"
5.8: Strategies for Starting Your Cultural Identity Paper
5.E: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Exercises)
5.S: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Summary)

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5.1: Literary Snapshot- "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"

Lewis Carroll, as we found out in previous chapters, is most famous for two books: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872). These books follow the adventures of a seven-year-old, Alice, who tumbles down a rabbit hole (*Wonderland*) and enters a magic mirror (*Looking-Glass*), entering a nonsensical world of the imagination. If you have not already read these classic books—or wish to reread them—you can access them at the following links:

http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html

etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html

In one of the most well-known scenes from *Wonderland*, Alice encounters a Caterpillar sitting on top of a mushroom, "with its arms folded, quietly smoking a long hookah, and taking not the smallest notice of her or of anything else."Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), chap. 4, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html. The two engage in an exchange typical of this novel: their conversation is long, confrontational, and convoluted, as each partner in the conversation fails to understand or be understood by the other:

The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

"Who are *you*?" said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, "I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."

"What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar sternly. "**Explain yourself!"**

"I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see."

"I don't see," said the Caterpillar.

"I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly," Alice replied very politely, "for I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing."

"It isn't," said the Caterpillar.

"Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet," said Alice; "but when you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will some day, you know—and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?"

"Not a bit," said the Caterpillar.

"Well, perhaps your feelings may be different," said Alice; "all I know is, it would feel very queer to *me*."

"You!" said the Caterpillar contemptuously. "Who are **you**?"

Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation. Alice felt a little irritated at the Caterpillar's making such *very* short remarks, and she drew herself up and said, very gravely, "I think, you ought to tell me who *you* are, first."

"Why?" said the Caterpillar.

Here was another puzzling question; and as Alice could not think of any good reason, and as the Caterpillar seemed to be in a *very* unpleasant state of mind, she turned away.

"Come back!" the Caterpillar called after her. "I've something important to say!"

This sounded promising, certainly: Alice turned and came back again.

"Keep your temper," said the Caterpillar.

"Is that all?" said Alice, swallowing down her anger as well as she could.

"No," said the Caterpillar.

Alice thought she might as well wait, as she had nothing else to do, and perhaps after all it might tell her something worth hearing. For some minutes it puffed away without speaking, but at last it unfolded its arms, took the hookah out of its mouth again, and said, "So you think you're changed, do you?" [bold added]Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), chap. 5, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html.

Many readers identify closely with Alice in these scenes. They're bewildered at the behavior of the creatures Alice encounters and, perhaps, become as frustrated as she does when the citizens of Wonderland talk in circles around her. The "puzzling questions" Alice encounters seem unanswerable, simply nonsense that Alice is right to dismiss.

However, if we think of *Wonderland* as a narrative of encounter—a story of different cultures colliding—we might draw more nuanced conclusions about these scenes. Could we, for instance, read such scenes from the perspective of the inhabitants of Wonderland? How might the Caterpillar think of Alice during their exchanges? Consider these paragraphs:

The Caterpillar was the first to speak.

"What size do you want to be?" it asked.

"Oh, I'm not particular as to size," Alice hastily replied; "only one doesn't like changing so often, you know."

"I *don't* know," said the Caterpillar.

Alice said nothing: she had never been so much contradicted in her life before, and she felt that she was losing her temper.

"Are you content now?" said the Caterpillar.

"Well, I should like to be a *little* larger, sir, if you wouldn't mind," said Alice: "three inches is such a wretched height to be."

"It is a very good height indeed!" said the Caterpillar angrily, rearing itself upright as it spoke (it was exactly three inches high).

"But I'm not used to it!" pleaded poor Alice in a piteous tone. And she thought of herself, "I wish the creatures wouldn't be so easily offended!"

"You'll get used to it in time," said the Caterpillar; and it put the hookah into its mouth and began smoking again.Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), chap. 5, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html.

The Caterpillar takes offense when Alice suggests that "three inches is such a wretched height to be." As the story points out, the Caterpillar is "exactly three inches high," and it is angered that Alice defines the best possible height as her own height, dismissing its body as "wretched" without even considering its feelings. When Alice thinks, "I wish the creatures wouldn't be so easily offended," she reveals a feeling of innate superiority over the beings she encounters. Though the Caterpillar speaks with her, it is a "creature" who shouldn't be "so easily offended" even though she directly insults it.

As we see in Chapter 4, literary scholars are often interested in questions of identity in literary works. In that chapter we discuss identities drawn from gender and sexuality; in this chapter we look at identities drawn from race, ethnicity, and/or cultural background. For scholars interested in literary depictions of race and ethnicity, scenes such as the Caterpillar's in *Wonderland* can be read as demonstrating problematic attitudes toward minorities within Western cultures or toward people in non-Western societies. Such problematic attitudes are particularly disconcerting when found in widely read, **canonical** stories such as *Wonderland*. Let's look for a minute at the way the Caterpillar is depicted in the text and in early illustrations of the novel.



Illustration by Sir John Tenniel for Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865).

The Caterpillar is described as "quietly smoking a long hookah" and appears, from behind, almost like a thin man sitting cross-legged while smoking. Keep in mind that *Wonderland* was published in 1865, when the British Empire stretched around the world and was described as a "vast empire on which the sun never sets." The British Empire in 1865 controlled territories in the Mideast and Asia, including Hong Kong, India, and Singapore. The 1860s were also, as Jon Stratton points out in *Writing Sites: A Genealogy of the Postmodern World*, "the major period of British exploration and colonisation (sic) of Africa."Jon Stratton, *Writing Sites: A Genealogy of the Postmodern World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 168. You can see how far the British Empire expanded by looking at the red areas (British territories) on this map of the British Empire in 1886.



Map of the world by Captain J.C.R. Colomb and Maclure & Co. Published as a supplement for The Graphic, as the "Imperial Federation" (July, 1886).

To its original British readers, then, the Caterpillar would have evoked romanticized images of these "exotic" civilizations, smoking with a device that originated in the Middle East and would have been familiar to British citizens because of their presence in India. By contrast, Alice is drawn as the ideal of a nineteenth-century English girl, with white skin and blonde hair, knowledge of diverse academic subjects such as biology and poetry, and a heightened sense of manners and propriety.

For Stratton, *Wonderland* can be read as a "fantasy of civilising [*sic*] the natives" as Alice enters "an Other world where people behave differently," to which she "brings her own standards and manners to bear without any reference to the local set."Jon Stratton, *Writing Sites: A Genealogy of the Postmodern World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 170. Because Alice believes that her rules and standards are universal and should be obvious to all the people she encounters in Wonderland, she can be seen as a symbol of the British Empire, which worked to impose British standards of education, manners, religion, and politics on the people whose countries they controlled. "Were Alice to lose her place as the arbiter of meaning," Stratton claims, "she would lose her privileged position in Wonderland," a place where "colonial Otherness threatens the fixity of meaning by offering alternatives."Jon Stratton, *Writing Sites: A Genealogy of the Postmodern World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 172. Like the female image of Britannia in the center of the map shown, Alice is surrounded by exotic "natives" who she expects will look to her as a model of civilization.

The Caterpillar disrupts Alice's presumption of her own authority in Wonderland. He demands to know "Who are *you*?" and the question confuses and disturbs Alice. She insists, "I think, you ought to tell me who *you* are, first," but when the Caterpillar asks her "Why?" she "could not think of any good reason." Alice maintains a belief in her own superiority—a belief that she should be able to demand answers of the Caterpillar but not the other way around—but her experiences in Wonderland unsettle those beliefs.

Though Alice insists that the citizens of Wonderland are strange or foreign, for the citizens of Wonderland, Alice is the stranger unfairly judging their society and its customs based on her own cultural biases and assumptions.

Interestingly, the **colonial** ideas that are implicit in Carroll's original *Wonderland* become explicit in the latest film adaptation of the novel, Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). At the end of that film, Alice (who is nineteen in Burton's version) decides that she will help her father expand his business to China. As Kevin Slaten points out, this means that Alice will likely be involved in British-Chinese relations during the time of the Opium Wars, a pair of conflicts that decimated many areas along China's coast and led to what Chinese historians deemed a "century of humiliation" for the nation.Kevin Slaten, "Who Else Might Be Mad at Alice? China," *Real Clear World*, March 12, 2010, http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2010/03/12/who_else_might_be_mad_at_alice_china_98853.html. In other words, Burton places Alice in China during a period of colonial aggression, perhaps signaling that Alice's insistence on her authority over the denizens of Wonderland has prepared her to enact such authority on behalf of British trade interests in the "real world." Tim Burton's ending to *Alice in Wonderland* can be seen as a **postcolonial** interpretation of Lewis Carroll's novel: a critique of the politics underlying what seems to be a simple children's story.

Your Process

1. What are some other scenes in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that might read differently if you considered the other characters' perspectives rather than just Alice's?
2. What are some literary works that you think of as "ethnic" or "cultural"—that seem different or foreign to your own experience? Create a list in your notes. Then create a list of works that seem "normal," or familiar to your own experience. Compare your two lists. How is your experience of literature shaped by your own cultural, ethnic, or racial background?

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5.2: Postcolonial, Racial, and Ethnic Theory- An Overview

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.



Figure **5.2.1**: 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* (you can read *Huck 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. in its entirety at 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 a racial epithet 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, [1]. There is no easy solution to these debates. As literary critic Stephen Railton put it nearly thirty years ago: "Is *Huck Finn* racist? Yes and no; no and yes."Stephen Railton, "Jim and Mark Twain: What Do Dey Stan' For?" *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. http://www.vqronline.org/articles/1987/summerrailton-jim-mark/. However you feel about this novel, however, these debates illustrate the importance of literary critics considering issues of race, ethnicity, and culture as they read and interpret literature.

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 minority 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 minority 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.



Figure **5.2.2**: 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 whites 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, whites implied that blacks were inferior people both physically and morally—marked as "other" than whites, 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 blacks and whites, and in these final lines she insists on that equality. If her readers grant this last concession, however—if they agree that blacks and whites 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

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*, which you can find in full as an e-text provided by the University of Virginia (etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/ConDark.html).
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*(http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=113835207).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 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003...s.chinuaachebe. 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 (http://www.postcolonialweb.org/misc/authors.html) 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.

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5.3: Writing about Race, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity- A Process Approach

To review, race, ethnic, and cultural identity theory 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 race, ethnic, and cultural identity theory:

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.

Peer Reviewing

A central stage in the writing process is the feedback stage, in which you receive revision suggestions from classmates and your instructor. By receiving feedback on your paper, you will be able to make more intelligent revision decisions. Furthermore, by reading and responding to your peers' papers, you become a more astute reader, which will help when you revise your own papers. In Chapter 10, you will find peer-review sheets for each chapter.

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5.4: Student Writer at Work- Ashley Eckhardt's Postcolonial Paper in Action

In her Introduction to Literature class, Ashley read *Heart of Darkness* and Achebe's "An Image of Africa." She was intrigued by Achebe's argument, and wanted to delve deeper into the postcolonial implications of Conrad's novella. As you read Ashley's paper, take note of the different kinds of sources she uses and how she incorporates these sources into her argument. In ethnic and postcolonial critiques, scholars often use both **primary sources** (which include historical documents as well as literary works) and **secondary sources** (texts written by scholars about a particular literary work, time period, or other topic). With this in mind, let's begin reading Ashley's paper.

Ashley Eckhardt

Professor John Pennington

ENGL 150: Introduction to Literature

April 20, 20–

The Convergence of Races: 19th Century Imperialism and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Europe in the 19th century experienced a rash of imperialistic sentiment as nations competed to gain political and economic control of the African continent while supposedly civilizing the African people. The scientific developments of the time contributed to the concept of white supremacy as social Darwinism grabbed hold of the European population and turned the colonizers into saviors and reformers of inferior and backward barbarians. Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*, published in 1899, explores the effects this mad rush to conquer Africa had on the African natives and the land itself as colonizers enslaved the natives and depleted their natural resources which they so valued. This "Scramble for Africa" caused European society to deteriorate as well, as nations became embittered against one another in their pursuit of more territory and economic success in Africa, resulting in brutality towards one another and the native populations within Africa and the European continent. Conrad portrays how the colonizers' original philanthropic intentions turned to brutality and exploitation through the character of Kurtz, who creates a monopoly on the ivory trade in the Congo and subjugates the native tribes in his region through fear and violence.

Contemporary critics argue that Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* embraces the racist viewpoints of the 19th century through its use of derogatory descriptions of the African natives Marlow encounters in the Congo. The racism that ran rampant in 19th century Europe changed for some after Darwin's publication of his theory of natural selection in 1859. Some scientists and thinkers applied Darwin's ideas to society, in a movement known as social Darwinism, allowing people to justify their racism on the basis that certain races, like certain animals, were genetically designed to be superior to others. To the European mind-set, this meant that "white" Europeans were superior to all other races, particularly the "yellow" Asians and "dark" Africans (de Gobineau 167–68). Through the use of these misdirected scientific developments, many Europeans regarded the imperialistic activity of their governments as either their natural right as the superior race or as a civilizing mission to save the inferior and backward populations of Asia and Africa. It was this mind-set that led to King Leopold of Belgium's mission to the Congo at the end of the 19th century to "improve the well-being' of the inhabitants of the Congo" (Hawkins 292). Conrad shows the hypocrisy of this mission in Heart of Darkness as much of Marlow's journey through Africa takes place in the Belgian-controlled region surrounding the Congo River. Marlow describes these "civilizing" Europeans as "they wandered here and there with their absurd long staves in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence. The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it" (Conrad 44). To Conrad, these European philanthropists were hiding their true greed and self-righteousness behind the mask of civilization and enlightenment, one of the most disgusting and hypocritical aspects of imperialism, yet Conrad himself had difficulty in detaching himself from the social practices of his time. Joseph Conrad's main purpose in writing his novella *Heart of Darkness* was to relate the atrocities of 19th century, but he unconsciously succumbed to his own inherent Eurocentrism, allowing the stereotypes propagated by social Darwinism and racism to become evident within his work.

Let's take a quick break from Ashley's paper to look more closely at how she's putting these ideas together.

ASHLEY'S PROCESS

1. Note how Ashley combined several ideas into her introductory paragraphs. In her class they discussed colonialism (the "scramble for Africa") and also the way that social Darwinism shaped social thought at the time. Ashley creates a new argument

by bringing together different threads that she has not seen combined in the secondary sources she's read.

Your Process

1. Does the idea of writing a "surprising" claim sometimes seem daunting? Rather than coming up with a world-changing, completely unique idea for your postcolonial paper, how might you bring together several ideas to create something new?
2. Create a list of different ideas you've discussed in class around the work you hope to write about (ideas like "social Darwinism" or "civilization," as Ashley discusses in her paper). Do you spot connections between these concepts? Feel free to draw arrows between them, group them in a separate note, or otherwise indicate the connections you see.

Now let's turn back to Ashley's paper.

Conrad explores the treatment of Africans by the colonists in *Heart of Darkness* in an attempt to relate the atrocities committed by the European colonizers to the populace in Europe. Conrad was agitated over the brutal treatment of the native populations under European control and determined that the entire 19th-century imperialist system was immoral and needed to be abolished. Conrad saw imperialism as a system that brutally exploits native populations for greed and national pride, and he believed that such systems should not have been allowed to remain a mainstay in the governments of apparently civilized and enlightened countries. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow witnesses this unjust system in action immediately upon stepping onto the African continent as he watches a chain gang coming toward him:

Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind wagged to and fro like tails. I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking.… [T]hey were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from over the sea (Conrad 33).

Conrad, like Marlow, was greatly affected by this sight of imperial might and brutality and thus devoted himself to speaking out against the institution. His audience, however, was already imbued with racism against non-European cultures, making his task extremely difficult, as "Conrad's objection to imperialism on the grounds that it disrupted indigenous cultures was unusual in an era that failed to see the worth of those cultures" (Hawkins 294).

The population within Europe itself fully believed in the good intentions of their colonial missions, being equally saturated with the ideas of social Darwinism and the racism that followed from it. They gave their full support to these expeditions, as seen when Marlow's aunt commends him for his effort at "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" (Conrad 28). Even Kurtz's original intention, when he first began his expedition in the Congo, was to enlighten the Africans. It was only after he had been within the continent for some time that the temptation of immense wealth and power overcame him and he transformed into the greedy and self-serving despot that Marlow discovered on his own journey through the Congo. Conrad took it upon himself to alert the European populace to the vulgarities of the imperialistic actions they so admired. Conrad "came to believe that it was his task as a novelist to unmask society, to look below its surface to discern its essential character," and what he "discerned [was] a rapacious colonialism" (Raskin 120). With all the scientific justifications of imperialism, Conrad certainly had an arduous task before him, one that was made even more challenging by the numerous political and economic benefits acquired through this nefarious system.

ASHLEY'S PROCESS

1. Note how Ashley modifies the ideas of writers like Achebe. While Achebe simply calls Conrad "racist," Ashley attempts to navigate a middle ground. She acknowledges the deep racism of Conrad and his society but also recognizes that Conrad at least believed he was writing against imperialism.
2. When Ashley disagrees with the ideas of other scholars, she doesn't dismiss them outright. Instead, she incorporates the ideas she agrees with and respectfully counters those she sees as misguided, overstated, or incomplete. This kind of respectful disagreement is the foundation of most academic discourse.

Your Process

1. It can be tempting to simply write arguments that agree with the secondary research you read. After all, the people writing those articles are likely professors, and you are just a student. However, English professors value students who are unafraid to counter the status quo, so long as they do so using good primary and secondary evidence.
2. Have you read any criticism that you feel didn't quite get the novel, story, poem, play, or essay you're writing about right? Perhaps you didn't disagree with the entire essay, but you did disagree with one or two points that it made. Jot down those areas of disagreement.

Behind the façade of a civilizing mission lay the real motivations for European imperialism in the 19th century: political and economic control of these territories. As nationalism grew within the countries themselves, the European nations became increasingly competitive with one another. The acquisition of colonies became a symbol of national pride as well as of superiority. Conrad, despite his opposition to imperialism, remained unconsciously influenced by this sense of nationalism; a concept espoused by Fredric Jameson in the "ideology of the form," in which a contradiction exists between the content of the writer's work and the social conventions of the writer's time (Jameson 1957). It became necessary to be in control of colonies somewhere within the world to be considered among the great nations of Europe, and those that held numerous, and especially large and lucrative territories, reigned supreme. Political leaders of the time stressed the importance of imperialism to ensure their nation's prosperity. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu shares these sentiments when he states that "a people which colonizes is a people which projects into the future the foundations of its grandeur and eventual supremacy" (178).

Marlow witnessed the extent these colonizers were willing to go to achieve political and economic dominance in Europe, as they subjected their colonies to devastation and virtual rape of resources in their attempt to become the wealthiest and most powerful nation in Europe. Kurtz reflects the selfish desires for wealth and power that was common to many of the imperialists; "he desired to have kings meet him at railway-stations on his return from some ghastly Nowhere, where he intended to accomplish great things. 'You show them you have in you something that is really profitable, and then there will be no limits to the recognition of your ability,' he would say" (Conrad 110). The colonizers not only stole the natural resources of the territories they conquered, but imposed their own culture and industry onto the existing populations. The chain gang that Marlow witnessed at the outset of his experiences in the Congo portrays how the legal system was used within Africa, condemning Africans, who were completely innocent within their own cultures, but were now branded as criminals by the European invaders. The attempt to build a railroad along the Congo to aid the Europeans in their desire to move goods from within the interior of Africa to the coast was not for the benefit of the African natives either, but rather to expedite the colonizers' shipments so they could become more prosperous more quickly. Greed and self-righteousness led to the devastating destruction of the virgin forests and rivers of Africa, which, in Conrad's opinion, was pointless and shameful; the construction of the railroad that Marlow observes is described as "objectless blasting," and seemed to be devoid of any purpose or progress whatsoever (Conrad 33).

The destruction of the native populations in Africa and Asia led to the similar destruction of European society as it became inundated with the immoral and selfish actions of the colonizers, justifying them through social Darwinism. Conrad wished to prevent this decline by preaching against the evils of imperialism through works like Heart of Darkness. He foresaw the negative effects imperialist actions would have, and were already beginning to have, on Europe itself. "The European conquerors sundered the tribes to make Africans serve alien material aims. In doing so, Conrad indicates, imperialism destroyed the cultural integrity not only of Africa but of Europe as well" (Hawkins 296). The competition between the nations often led to bitter resentment and even warfare. The Boer War in South Africa, for example, occurred between the Dutch and the British over territory and diamonds. The British were jealous that the Dutch occupied the land with the majority of the diamond deposits and were thus driven by greed and national pride to acquire portions of that land for themselves. Similar situations occurred between other European nations throughout Africa and Asia in the 19th century, although not all came to the extreme consequence of war.

Imperialism was also destroying individual Europeans psychologically, as many people blamed the brutal actions of the colonizers on their barbaric environment. To many Europeans, including Conrad himself, Africa epitomized the idea of savagery; consequently *Heart of Darkness*expresses "the fear of the Victorian English that if whites were to be isolated from their secure environment and its refinement, they would degenerate into abominable savagery and become beasts of unspeakable lust" (Okafor 19). Kurtz appears to be the victim of his environment as this originally moral and upright citizen succumbs to the animalistic nature of Africa, turning to a life of violence, greed, and gratification. Even Marlow feels his surroundings are changing him as he

recollects the European doctor's desire to witness the mental changes of individuals during their sojourn in Africa and he determines that he is suddenly "becoming scientifically interesting" after being in the Congo for only a few weeks (Conrad 40). This portrayal of Africa as savage and subversive led many contemporary critics of *Heart of Darkness* to consider it racist and a reflection of Conrad's Eurocentrism.

ASHLEY'S PROCESS

1. As she read various secondary sources, Ashley noticed that most postcolonial criticism focused on the experience of the colonized. Ashley wanted to expand these ideas and to think about the detrimental effects of colonialism on the colonizers. You can see those ideas developing here, as Ashley extends typical critiques of colonialism to discuss the novel's meaning for its European readers.

Conrad, despite his lofty ideal of persuading the European population to terminate their imperialistic activities, was unconsciously a product of the very system he was preaching against. Jameson claims that a "host of distinct generic messages" can be detected in a text, "some of them objectified survivals from older modes of cultural production, some anticipatory." As a result, *Heart of Darkness* suffers from Conrad's rejection of imperialism and yet his inability to fully eradicate his own personal racial biases (Jameson 1958). Many of his descriptions of Africa and its population were negative or derogatory, hindering the effect it had on his European audience. Africa is portrayed "as a land of savages who do not have any worthwhile culture or civilization," propagating this stereotype to an audience that fully accepts this perception of the continent and its people (Okafor 20). To this audience, it is Africa itself, in its wild and savage ways, that corrupts the white Europeans and makes them commit the atrocious acts that they did; inevitably they turn Conrad's message on its head, the Europeans only became brutal and selfish once they were within Africa and under the "heavy, mute spell of the wilderness—that seemed to draw [one] to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions" (Conrad 106–07). As a result, Conrad's novella encouraged many of the stereotypes that propagated the imperialist movement within Europe in the 19th century. One particular example is the comparison between Kurtz's Intended and his African lover. Kurtz's Intended represents the chaste, moral, and flawless character that self-defined Europe at the time; "her forehead, smooth and white, remained illumined by the unextinguishable light of belief and love" (Conrad 120). Kurtz's African lover, however, was "savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her" (Conrad 99). Both women symbolize the stereotypes of races in the 19th century; the white race was considered perfect in morals while the "dark" races where considered animalistic and wild, with a sense of danger about them. Conrad was unable to avoid these stereotypes within his writing, flawing his ability to portray the evils of imperialism, as he was unable to free himself from the racism that fueled it.

ASHLEY'S PROCESS

1. In the following section, note how Ashley weaves extratextual primary sources (Conrad's letter to his cousin) and secondary sources (Parry's book) into her argument.

Conrad also remained ambivalent about imperialism itself throughout his life, further detracting from his ability to persuade European society of its evils. He appeared to laud British imperialism, as he once wrote to his cousin about the Boer War, "that they —the Boers—are struggling in good faith for their independence cannot be doubted; but it is also a fact that they have no idea of liberty, which can only be found under the English flag all over the world" (Hawkins 293). This uncertainty about his own views regarding imperialism is found within Marlow as well. He is clearly agitated over Kurtz's conduct in the Congo, but still remains faithful to him and protects his reputation. Marlow lies to Kurtz's Intended about his last words and his actions while in Africa; as a result, his failing to recognise the import of the real lie when he protects Kurtz's reputation in Europe with evasions and by deliberate deception abets the exalted fantasies of the Intended, is the fiction's means of showing up Marlow's capacity for self-delusion and the strength of a commitment to Europeanism which blinds him to the act as one that is a betrayal of his principles. (Parry 36)

Marlow, like Conrad, cannot completely eradicate his Eurocentrism, weakening his argument against the institution of imperialism within Europe in the 19th century.

Joseph Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness* during the high point in European imperialism of the 19th century. His purpose in writing the novella was to speak out against the system of imperialism that he felt was corrupting both the colonized populations as well as Europe itself. Conrad lived in a period of rampant racism, justified by social Darwinism, which supported the "civilizing"

expeditions to Africa and Asia, and later the brutal exploitation of the native people of those regions. The political and economic benefits that resulted from imperialistic endeavors also contributed to the popular support that surrounded the vicious system. As a result, Conrad's attempt to persuade the European people of the detriments of imperialism was hampered by his unconscious Eurocentrism, as seen in his savage descriptions of Africa and its people in relation to the purity of the Europeans. Despite this setback, however, Conrad's novella did much to enlighten his European audience to the true nature of imperialism and "inspired the reformers who eventually ended [King] Leopold's rule" (Hawkins 293). *Heart of Darkness* is still important one hundred years after it was written to portray the atrocities of 19th century imperialism to a contemporary audience.

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Ultimately, Ashley's paper extends the insights of postcolonial critique, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of the novella's attitudes toward race while, for the most part, agreeing with postcolonial critics like Achebe that the text displays a deeply problematic racism. What's more, Ashley ties these postcolonial ideas to the historical subtext of social Darwinism, which adds a new dimension to her postcolonial analysis.

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5.5: Student Writer at Work- Stefanie Jochman's African American Studies Paper in Action

In her Introduction to African American Literature class, Stefanie read Charles Chesnutt's late nineteenth-century novel *The Marrow of Tradition*. Chesnutt was an African American writer born to free black parents during slavery. His writing focused on the aftermath of slavery at the turn of the twentieth century. *The Marrow of Tradition* fictionalized and commented on the 1898 race riot in Wilmington, North Carolina. The story explores the lives of both white and black characters, and Stefanie was interested in the ways these communities are represented in conflict and cooperation around the character of Dodie Cartaret, the infant son of a prominent white family in the novel's fictional town, who must be saved by Dr. Miller, a young black man.

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 (ideally) read Charles Chesnutt's 1901 novel *The Marrow of Tradition*, which is available for free from the University of North Carolina's *Documenting the American South* project. A summary of the novel can be found at http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/chesnuttmarrow/summary.html and the full text at http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/chesnuttmarrow/chesmarrow.html.

Here is Stefanie's proposal. You can see that she's not yet developed a detailed claim about Dodie but is working with complex ideas that will lead her to a rich, debatable, and engaging claim later in her writing process.

Stefanie Jochman

Paper Proposal #2

EN309

Dr. Crowley

October 1, 20–

Paper Proposal #2

1. I am working on Chesnutt's use of Dodie Carteret as a symbolic character because I want to show how Dodie affects major points of the novel, especially those involving racial conflict and its possible resolutions, in order to prove that Dodie represents the opportunity for racial equality in America.
2. Evidence that will help to solve my "problem."

   The Carterets' love for Dodie instigates many instances of racial conflict.

   - Dr. Miller faces Maj. Carteret's bigotry when he comes to Dodie's aid (92).
   - When Dodie almost falls out of the window, Olivia blames Janet. "Twice within a few weeks her child had been in serious danger, and upon each occasion a member of the Miller family had been involved" (111).
   - Major Carteret assembles the Big Three in part to defend the property he believes Dodie should inherit and also to provide his son with a white-ruled Wellington.

   Dodie is, for the Carteret's, a reassurance of their superiority.

3. When Olivia finally gives birth to a child, she feels as though she is no longer threatened by her more fertile half-sister.

   Dodie's fever serves as an equalizer for Carteret and Dr. Miller.

   - "In the agony of his own predicament…for a moment the veil of race prejudice was rent in twain, and he saw things as they were, in their correct proportions and relations…Miller's refusal to go with him was pure, elemental justice…In Dr. Miller's place, he would have done the same thing" (241).
   - "It was his fault!" (242)

   In order to save Dodie or, in the symbolic case, American society, the Carteret's must appeal to the Millers.

4. The line “There’s time enough, but none to spare,” contextually refers to the time allowed to save Dodie’s life. However, this statement also acts as Chesnutt’s message to white Americans that they can help solve the problem of racial violence and inequality if they work with their black brothers and sisters rather than against them; such action must be taken quickly.
5. After examining *The Marrow of Tradition*, I have come to the conclusion that Theodore “Dodie” Carteret serves as a symbol of American society during the Reconstruction in that Dr. Miller’s ability to heal him could initiate a peaceful union of black and white society. Not only is Dodie symbolic, his life also mirrors the life of Wellington itself; his birth coincides with the birth of a white supremacist movement, his fever reflects the heat of the riot, and his undetermined fate represents the malleability of Wellington after the race riot with its biggest supremacist enlisting the aid of a black doctor. By giving a white infant so much significance in the story, Chesnutt is inferring that the race “problem” must be solved by whites as well as blacks.

As Stefanie develops her paper in response to her instructor’s comments, she hones in on precisely what Dodie symbolizes and how he “affects major points of the novel.” Eventually she develops that vague idea into a well-honed introduction with a specific, debatable claim:

At first glance, it may seem that Dodie, an infant, has little to say about racism in American society. However, as a baby, Dodie is symbolic of the potential for a new birth in American racial relations. Once readers pay attention to Dodie’s presence in the novel, they can recognize how his health parallels the tumultuous life of Wellington and thus grasp an understanding of how racism affects a community. Furthermore, by observing Dodie’s relationship to characters like his mulatto cousin or situations like his expectoration of an old rattle, readers reveal Chesnutt’s underlying themes of racial identity and his suggestions for how societal change can be made.

Keeping that claim in mind, let’s look at Stefanie’s entire paper:

Stefanie Jochman

Professor Karlyn Crowley

EN309A

November 5, 20–

Dodie Carteret and *The Marrow of Tradition*: “The Burden of the Nation” On An Infant’s Shoulders

During the time of the American Reconstruction, many whites believed that racial inequality was solely a “Negro problem.” However, in his collection of essays, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. DuBois argues that “the burden belongs to the nation,” meaning that blacks and whites are both responsible for creating a more equal society. In *The Marrow of Tradition* author Chesnutt echoes DuBois’s message of interracial cooperation with the story arch surrounding Theodore “Dodie” Carteret, the infant son of the novel’s primary white characters, Major Phillip and Mrs. Olivia Carteret. While many critics have focused on the importance of the novel’s adult characters, they have neglected the importance of baby Dodie Carteret. At first glance, it may seem that Dodie, an infant, has little to say about racism in American society. However, as a baby, Dodie is symbolic of the potential for a new birth in American racial relations. Once readers pay attention to Dodie’s presence in the novel, they can recognize how his health parallels the tumultuous life of Wellington and thus grasp an understanding of how racism affects a community. Furthermore, by observing Dodie’s relationship to characters like his mulatto cousin or situations like his expectoration of an old rattle, readers reveal Chesnutt’s underlying themes of racial identity and his suggestions for how societal change can be made. Finally, by accepting the importance of Dodie to *The Marrow of Tradition*, readers also accept their responsibility to promote social change and equality for all races.

Born in the first chapter of the novel and near death in the last, Dodie Carteret lives in tandem with the novel’s plot. Dodie’s birth sets into motion Major Carteret’s plan for white supremacy. That movement causes the fictional Wellington race riot, an event based on an actual riot in Wilmington, North Carolina, that is central to the novel’s plot. Dodie also plays a role in the heated confrontations between the Carterets and the Millers, two couples who represent the white and black races, respectively. Near the conclusion, Dodie develops a fever when Wellington erupts in the flames of racial violence. The events of Dodie’s life mirror those occurring in Wellington, and by constructing such parallels between Dodie’s life and Wellington’s racial climate, Chesnutt magnifies the effects of racism on a community. For example, shortly after Dodie’s christening, Major Carteret meets with Captain McBane and General Beaumont to establish the white supremacy campaign. Here, Dodie’s birth coincides with the birth of changes in the social structure of Wellington. Major Carteret’s family lost their fortune in the Civil War; now that he has a son to receive

inheritance and power, Carteret desires to create a world in which African American businesses and causes will not threaten Dodie's chances of wealth and happiness (44). Carteret's scathing articles about African Americans in his newspaper create violence and hatred in a once ideal community.

Dodie not only symbolizes the birth of a new era in Wellington history; his arrival also indicates the death of an old one. Dodie is part of a new generation that has never experienced slavery, and thus he would be unfamiliar with plantation life and its demoralizing attitude towards African Americans. How he and other children react towards the attitudes of the past will help to determine the future of Wellington and American society. Charles Chesnutt uses this aspect of Dodie's character to his advantage. He constructs a symbolic event centering on Dodie in which the baby's reaction to his own near-death experience hints at Chesnutt's desires for the new generation. At Dodie's christening, Polly Ochiltree gives her great-nephew an old rattle. Aunt Polly Ochiltree is one of Chesnutt's characterizations of the "Old South,"–the era of pre-Civil War history immortalized in plantation fiction. She upholds the "Old South" mentality of supporting black inferiority and submission. When Dodie is born she declares "I shall leave my house and land to this child! He is a Carteret—he would never sell them to a negro" yet she inadvertently threatens her bequest by giving Dodie the rattle. Dodie begins gasping for air after he chokes on a piece of Aunt Polly's rattle. He is physically strangled by a figurative piece of the "Old South" (123). When Dodie finally spits out the rattle on his own, Chesnutt is making an important statement. In order to breathe, society—like Dodie—must discharge that which is strangling it.

A further parallel between Dodie and Wellington is created when Dodie contracts croup near the end of the novel. Throughout *The Marrow of Tradition*, Dodie suffers from colds and other common childhood infections; he recuperates from each and continues growing and developing. Similarly, life in Wellington remains relatively quiet as the supremacist movement grows and develops. Then, when Carteret's campaign gets out of hand and the riot ensues, life in town is disrupted. At the same time Dodie, Carteret's son, contracts the croup. The croup is an inflammation of the bronchi that involves congestion, mucus, and a high fever. Such symptoms are comparative to the intense heat and congested streets of the riot. During the riot, fire silences screams; the streets run red with the blood of blacks and whites; an angry mob tramples citizens; and, when the riot reaches fever-pitch, Dr. Miller's hospital is burned to the ground.

When Dr. Miller encounters the riot, he describes its emotional heat as one in which "friendship, religion, humanity, reason, all shrivel up like dry leaves in a raging furnace" (217). Such a furnace could only reside in Hell, to which Wellington's riotous state bears similarities. In her haste to escape the danger of the hellish riot, Dodie's nurse leaves him near the draught of an open window, so he catches cold and develops the croup (235). Dodie's croup and Wellington's riot share the same root cause: Major Carteret's white supremacist movement, which brought Hell to earth. Chesnutt's narrator observes how even Carteret is surprised by the damage his movement has done. "'Is it serious?'…He had always thought of the croup as a childish ailment, that yielded readily to proper treatment; but the child's evident distress impressed him with sudden fear" (236). The major's amazement, while directed toward his son's illness, also infers that Carteret realizes he can no longer control the riot and fears that he will suffer for his part in it. Indeed, Dodie "burns" with fever over the flames of his father's earthly Hell. Since Dodie is Chesnutt's symbol for future generations of white Americans, his fever warns white readers that, though African Americans are the ones attacked during the Wellington riot, the white race will pay for their sins if racial violence continues.

Chesnutt's decision to construct parallels between Wellington and Dodie, the white child of upper-class parents, is important to the novel's overall message of interracial cooperation. It would be easy for readers to identify the effects of racism and racial oppression upon an African American child; that child is on the receiving end of the oppression. When Chesnutt focuses on a white child amidst an environment of racial oppression and inequality, however, readers recognize the negative effects of supremacy on the oppressors. Furthermore, readers can observe how whites' prejudice towards blacks endangers them and their children. Major Carteret expects Dodie to live a life of ease, free from "Negro domination," because he, as Dr. Price informs Dr. Miller, "has certain principles…certain inflexible rules of conduct by which he regulates his life. One of these…forbids the recognition of the Negro as a social equal" (88). However, Carteret's efforts to protect Dodie by upholding the "purity and prestige of [his] race" are worthless (89). By showcasing Dodie's swallowing of the rattle, his near-tumble from the window, and his deathly bout with croup, Chesnutt proves the futility of Major Carteret's white supremacist movement. Carteret establishes the campaign in an effort to protect his son and any assets his son would inherit; yet that campaign does nothing to shield his progeny from the clutches of disease or the violence of a town riot.

Continuing with his examination of the effects of white supremacy Chesnutt highlights the invisibility of African Americans as well as their undetermined future by naming the white child, Dodie, while leaving the black child, the Millers' son, to die nameless and

unknown to readers. Early in the novel, Chesnutt's narrator makes it a point to describe in detail the naming of Dodie Carteret, saying, "they named the Carteret baby Theodore Felix…Having thus given the child two beautiful names, replete with religious and sentimental significance, they called him—'Dodie'" (50). The sarcastic tone with which Dodie's nickname is introduced suggests not only are the white traditions of naming and nicknaming silly and self-degrading but also that Dodie is, from birth, a spoiled child. However, it is when Dodie is being doted upon—whether being given a new toy, held near the window to see a mockingbird, or cared for by a nanny—that his well-being is threatened. In this way, Chesnutt suggests that a coddled society has the potential to die young.

In contrast to his spoiled cousin, the Millers' son is never given a name by the narrator. He is rarely mentioned other than when he is seen traveling with his mother, and his life has little significance to the narrative until he dies. Even then, he and his mother are lumped among the dead bodies in the streets after the riot. They are nameless, faceless, and lost until Dr. Miller finds them near a lamppost (227). The mob's cruelty towards African American women and children speaks to the dehumanizing nature of racism and its devastating consequences. Furthermore, the namelessness of the Millers' son in comparison to the publicized life of Dodie subtly hints at the invisibility most African Americans suffered during the Reconstruction Era. Here, the neglected society also dies young. By juxtaposing the two children, Chesnutt implies that a happy medium must be met in which both children—and both races—are given equal attention in order for them to survive.

The comparison and contrast of Dodie and his African American cousin can be extended into the relationship between their parents, the Carterets and the Millers. While Dodie's parallel to Wellington is important to the message of *The Marrow of Tradition*, Dodie serves the novel best as the thread which sews together the Millers' and the Carterets' fates. Initially, Dodie is a source of pride and achievement for the Carterets in their desire to be superior to the Millers. At the beginning of the novel Dodie is as much a welcomed miracle as he is a status symbol, because his birth reestablishes Major Carteret's position as a dominant male in Wellington. Indeed, Major Carteret is able to gain General Beaumont and Captain McBane's attention after the birth of his son, because, as Beaumont remarks, "now that you have a son, major…you'll be all the more interested in doing something to make this town fit to live in" (63). During the Reconstruction Era, a child was a symbol of biological wealth: one's ability to "go forth and multiply." A childless man was left without an heir to his fortune or his family heritage, leaving him in a weakened state compared to fellow businessmen with children to control their future assets. As Chesnutt's narrator informs readers, "One cloud had marred the otherwise perfect serenity of [the Carteret's] happiness. Olivia was childless. To have children to perpetuate the name of which he was so proud, to write it still higher on the roll of honor had been [Major Carteret's] dearest hope" (44–45). To make matters worse in Major Carteret's mind, the African American Miller family has already been blessed with a son and is thus more biologically wealthy than he; a man whom Carteret refuses to acknowledge as a social equal has a greater chance of being remembered and accumulating a fortune. Dodie's birth assures Major Carteret that his name—the family's legacy and position in Wellington society—will not be lost to history. Instead, Dodie will be the heir "to take a place in the world commensurate with the dignity of his ancestors" (62). Carteret is no longer threatened with social inequality amongst his peers. If his plan for white supremacy succeeds, his family will have as much of a chance to succeed as those of the other old "names" and their progeny.

While Dodie pits Major Carteret against Dr. Miller, he is also the answer to Olivia's desires and the cure for her jealousy towards her half-sister, Janet Miller. As the Carteret family's servant Mammy Jane points out "de wust of all, w'iles Mis' 'Livy ain' had no child'en befo', dis yer sister er her'n is got a fine-lookin little yaller boy, w'at favors de fam'ly, so dat ef Mis' 'Livy 'd see de chile anywhere, it 'd mos' break her heart fer ter think 'bout her not havin' no child'en herse'f" (49). Though she does not admit it verbally, Olivia is extremely jealous of Janet's fertility. Since, in her mind, she is superior to Janet and more entitled to her family's heritage–including its physical likeness—Olivia considers Janet's baby to be a trump card: a wealth that Janet, as Olivia's half-sister and the product of a socially taboo relationship, should not receive before Olivia. Aunt Polly poisons Olivia's already poor view of Janet's mother Julia by telling the story of Julia and Mr. Merkel's secret marriage. Thus, Olivia fears that "her father had…preferred another to her" (202). Since she, like her husband, associates love and legacy with wealth she goes to desperate lengths to protect Dodie's inheritance, the majority of her father's estate. While the size of her family is now equal to Janet's, the Merkel inheritance will ensure Olivia's son's social superiority to any of Janet's children.

At first, Dodie's life fuels his parents' greed and prejudice as they struggle to remain superior to the Millers. In the novel's conclusion, however, Dodie is made to be the olive branch of atonement—a reparation of injustice—and peace for both the families and their races. The atonement for the riot begins when Dodie falls ill with the croup and Carteret reluctantly runs to Miller, a man whose aid he previously refused on the basis of color, for help. Upon arriving, Carteret observes the angry doctor gesturing toward

the body of his son, saying "'dead, his little life snuffed out like a candle, because you and a handful of your friends thought you must override the laws and run this town at any cost…as you have sown so may you reap!" Miller finally speaks for his race and demands that Carteret atone for the deaths he caused by watching Dodie die. Recognizing in Miller the same pain he is feeling for Dodie, Carteret admits "Miller's refusal to go with him was pure, elemental justice…In Dr. Miller's place he would have done the same thing." In fact, the connection is so powerful, that Carteret experiences an "involuntary admiration" for Dr. Miller, and, admitting he was wrong for having turned away Miller's services, takes the blame for his child's impending death (241). At this moment, Carteret is changed. By recognizing the pride and love both he and Miller have for their sons, he can no longer fully separate himself from African Americans or believe "The Negroes have themselves to blame…I wash my hands of them" (233). He recognizes his part in the riot, and in shouldering that burden, emphasizes W. E. B. DuBois's claim that "the hands of none of us are clean" (*The Souls of Black Folk* 72).

When Olivia makes her appeal to the Millers to spare Dodie's life, she also acknowledges the dirt on her hands while empowering her half-sister Janet. Chesnutt's narrator acknowledges the way Dodie's croup has, to paraphrase Polly Ochiltree, turned the world upside-down: "Death, the great leveler…wrought a marvelous transformation on the bearing of the two women. The sad-eyed Janet towered erect, with menacing aspect, like an avenging goddess. The other, whose pride had been her life, stood in the attitude of a trembling suppliant" (125, 244). Olivia, who avoided confronting her half-sister out of fear, pride, loathing, and greed, must finally confront the woman her family wronged in order to save Dodie. Olivia is even willing to reveal her deepest secret; Janet is her legal sister. While Janet thought that being considered a Merkel was what she had always desired, when she hears Olivia's proclamation, she develops another of her own: "I throw back your father's name…but that you may know that a woman may be foully wronged, and yet may have a heart to feel, even for one who injured her, you may have your child's life" (246). As if speaking for an entire race thought to be in want or desire of the life of a white citizen, Janet rejects name, estate, reputation, and relation, but, in doing so, affirms her equality with Olivia as a human being, mother, and citizen of Wellington. Furthermore, both Janet and her husband's reactions to the Carterets' pleas suggest that, in times of racial conflict, African Americans must be willing to take a stand, but they must also be willing to work with whites—rather than against them—to obtain equality

The Carterets level themselves with the Millers and, in doing so, take a step toward accepting racial equality, but their responsibility to society is far from over. In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Dodie Carteret and the Millers' son represent Wellington's future generations, but at the novel's conclusion Dodie is suffering and his cousin is dead. Thus, the new generation is forcing the old one to reckon with its racial division. Like DuBois's theory concerning racial equality, Dodie's only chance at survival depends on the cooperation of both races, and, as his attending physician Dr. Evans emphasizes, "There's time enough, but none to spare" (246). However, even if Dodie survives, the absence of his cousin forces him, previously the representative for the new white generation, to represent all races, and thus work towards a society of equals. Here, at the last page of the novel, Dodie ceases to be an ailing white child and becomes a symbol for America's ailing society. Chesnutt wrote *The Marrow of Tradition* in order to bring attention to the societal consequences of race riots and oppression. Dr. Evans' last remark is intended to spur readers into action as much as it hastens Dr. Miller. Once readers recognize Dodie's importance to Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* as a symbol of Wellington, racial relations, and the future of American life, they can understand the urgency of "there's time enough but none to spare" and rush to shoulder W. E. B. DuBois' burden of the nation.

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5.6: Student Writer at Work- Hannah Schmitt's Ethnic Studies Paper in Action

Now we'll look at a paper drawing on many of the same themes as Ashley's and Stefanie's paper but discussing a modern American novel about the Native American experience. In her modern American literature survey, Hannah read the novel *Tracks* by Native American writer Louis Erdrich.Louis Erdrich, *Tracks* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004). Hannah is particularly interested in the character Pauline, who attempts to erase her Native American identity and assimilate into white culture, particularly through her devotion to the Catholic religion. Hannah's paper investigates many topics common to postcolonial and racial criticism, particularly the idea of mimicry. Hannah skillfully explicates the complex motives behind Pauline's mimicry in the novel. Hannah demonstrates sympathy for Pauline while explaining the damaging social forces that led her to think as she does about her native culture.

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. In most sections, we've provided links to public, electronic editions of the texts under discussion. The following paper, however, discusses a modern work that is still under copyright, Louise Erdrich's novel *Tracks*. The interpretive moves in the paper should make sense whether you've read the novel or not, but we highly recommend that you buy and read the novel to accompany your work with the sample paper. You can buy *Tracks* at Amazon (www.amazon.com/gp/product/006...ryacorsonlhom-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0060972459).
2. As you read Hannah's paper, keep Ashley's *Heart of Darkness* paper in mind. Jot down your ideas about how the two compare. Keep in mind that while *Heart of Darkness* was written by an author from the imperial culture, *Tracks* was written by a minority writer. How does this difference shape the two arguments written about the works? Can you spot common concerns between the two papers? Where do they diverge?

Hannah Schmitt

Professor John Neary

ENGL 236: U.S. Literature II

3 April 20–

"Kill the Indian … and Save the Man"

Pauline Puyat and the Fragmenting Force of the U.S. Government in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*

In 1892, Capt. Richard H. Pratt delivered a paper, "The Advantage of Mingling Indians with Whites" at the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction. In this speech, Pratt infamously proposed to "Kill the Indian … and save the man" (Pratt 261). Pratt's argument would become the most notorious summary of the mission of government-sanctioned Indian boarding schools, which attempted to forcibly assimilate Native American children into white culture. From the 19th into the early 20th century, the United States actively sought to destroy Native cultures through forced assimilation and, as Pratt requoted in his speech, believed "that the only good Indian was a dead one" (260).

Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* unfolds in the 1910s, in the midst of Pratt's boarding school culture. The Ojibwe characters in *Tracks* must respond to the United States' threat to their culture and attempt to sort out their own cultural identities in the midst of profound racial tension. The two narrators of the text, Nanapush and Pauline, deal with the intense racism they encounter in different ways. Nanapush, the fairly stable, reliable narrator, rejects white culture and attempts to preserve Ojibwe culture despite social pressures to abandon it. Pauline takes a different approach. Unlike Nanapush's voice, Pauline's narrative structure is erratic, full of wild assumptions and bizarre occurrences. Pauline is at times cruel, manipulative, guilty, masochistic, morose, cunning, illogical, and, above all, highly religious. In light of Pauline's many failings, readers may be tempted to view Pauline as the unmitigated villain of the story, and dismiss her story as irrelevant. Such a dismissive reading of Pauline overlooks the novel's historical context, particularly the pervasiveness of discrimination against Native Americans and the arid cultural climate created by the United States' boarding school programs. If audiences read Pauline without considering these crucial factors, Pauline's character loses its essential historical commentary. While Pauline's flaws are indeed substantial, they are not entirely her fault. Unlike Nanapush, who firmly believes in the value of his Ojibwe roots and rejects the racism of encroaching white culture, Pauline listens to the United

States government's stance on Native Americans. She comes to believe that in order to be accepted by the surrounding white society she must indeed kill her inner Indian to save her white identity. Over the course of *Tracks*, then, Pauline attempts to erase her Ojibwe identity through her extreme, conservative Catholicism. Herein lies the significance of Pauline's character. As her quest to assimilate into white society and therefore ease her guilt over her identity continues, Pauline—and, through Pauline, her audience—discovers that she cannot assimilate the way the United States government wants her to. Pauline's connection to her Ojibwe heritage runs so deep that when she attempts to "kill" it she inadvertently fragments her own existence and plunges into a frantic insanity. Through Pauline's experiences, readers learn that the United States' attempt to "kill the Indian … and save the man" is not only unethical, but impossible.

Pauline's guilt over her racial identity causes her to distance herself from her culture by rejecting its values, specifically reproduction. Even before Pauline enters the convent, she attempts to reject reproduction in favor of death, recognizing that if she procreates, she will continue her Ojibwe line. Unlike Fleur, who celebrates reproduction, Pauline seeks out death and shows no interest in perpetuating her culture. While Fleur and Nanapush embrace their culture and see it as something desirable which ought to be preserved, Pauline only sees her guilt, and has absorbed the criticisms against her society. In Pauline's eyes, her heritage should not be preserved. Whenever Pauline finds herself in a position which traditionally places her in control of preserving life (and, therefore, culture), Pauline attempts to deny or subvert her role. Pauline becomes a midwife for her community, but transforms this life-giving role so she becomes a symbol of death. When Pauline becomes pregnant, she sees her pregnancy as the continuation of an identity from which she distances herself. The other Ojibwe characters in the text celebrate new children as a hope for life in their rapidly shrinking community: they pamper Lulu and celebrate Fleur's pregnancies despite their misgivings about Fleur herself. To Pauline, however, bearing children solidifies her bond to a community she feels ashamed of, and therefore attempts to abort her pregnancy. When Pauline feels Marie move later in her pregnancy, Pauline describes how "the fists of hate took me so hard that I wept" (133). At Marie's birth, Pauline frantically attempts to stop her labor, afraid that if she gave birth she "would be lonelier … an outcast … a human being who could be touched by no other human" (135). Pauline rejects Marie because she continues a cultural identity. As a mother, Pauline would always be tied to her Ojibwe roots because she has helped perpetuate their society.

In order to stem her association with reproduction—and with it, her Ojibwe heritage—Pauline rejects not only procreation but also her own sexuality. After she banishes her sexuality, Pauline attempts to fill the sexual void she has created with voyeurism and manipulation, alternatives which never fully satisfy her repressed sexual longings. Pauline describes her own sexual encounters with Napoleon as unfulfilling, and rejects her own sexual tensions. Instead, Pauline contents herself with watching other couples have sex and manipulating the sexuality of those around her. When Pauline finds herself drawn to Eli, she responds by manipulating him and Sophia (another character Pauline oversexualizes) into having sex. Pauline takes the sexual expression which her culture values and attempts to turn it into something negative, by stigmatizing Sophie and threatening the relationship between Fleur and Eli. Pauline wants to punish the other characters in the novel for their sexual urges.

At the same time, though, Pauline seems to envy other characters' freedom of sexual expression, and attempts to achieve her own sexual satisfaction by living vicariously through them. Even as she exploits Sophie and Eli, "pitiless" and declares that "they were not allowed to stop" (84), Pauline "shrank backwards into their pleasure" (83). When Pauline describes how "Sophie shuddered [and] her eyes rolled to the whites," she also presents readers with the image of Sophie's "skirt floating like a flower" (83). Pauline distorts the sex Eli and Sophie have, but she almost subconsciously slips traditionally beautiful metaphors into her otherwise coarse descriptions. Similarly, when Eli and Fleur make up in the winter, Pauline describes how the ice fishers outside their cabin celebrated their relationship and drew hope from Fleur and Eli (130). After Pauline fails to prevent Fleur's miscarriage, her description of the end of Fleur's pregnancy shows her ambivalence towards child-rearing. Though Pauline rejects sexual activity of her own, she nonetheless attempts to relieve her repressed sexuality, and at times seems envious of the other characters.

By becoming a nun, then, Pauline rejects cultural pressure to reproduce, but at the cost of her already-tortured sexuality. She enters into a way of life which discourages its followers from expressing sexual energy. By joining a community which forbids sexual congress, Pauline avoids confronting her heritage. Pauline can refuse to perpetuate her heritage without justifying her actions, because the rule of her religious order expressly forbids sexual activity. Rather than creating her desire to refrain from sexual relationships, Pauline's decision to join a religious order justifies for her actions.

Besides allowing her an outlet with which to express her own sexual guilt, Pauline's commitment to a religious order also helps her erase her guilt over her existence. Unlike Nanapush and Fleur, Pauline is genuinely ashamed of her Ojibwe identity. By becoming a

nun, Pauline seeks to create anonymity in order for her to dispel her guilt about her heritage, and hopes to craft a new identity for herself where others would define her according to her lifestyle rather than her race. By joining a community where the members share a common dress, abide by common rules, and worship in a common way, Pauline seeks anonymity and, with it, a reprieve from her own self-loathing. Furthermore, the comparative isolation of a religious community provides Pauline with a buffer between herself and the highly racialized world outside the convent. She finds, however, that not even religious life erases her identity enough to make her forget her own racialized existence. Though Nanapush, Margaret, and Fleur treat Pauline "as they would a white" (145), the whites with whom Pauline longs to belong refuse to accept Pauline on the basis of her religious commitment, and they continue to evaluate Pauline in terms of her race. Towards the end of the text, Pauline's convent declares that it will not accept any more Native Americans and, in doing so, clearly reaffirms the racial separation between Pauline and the white nuns at her convent (138). Pauline realizes that actually becoming white is the only way she can release herself from the shame she feels about her own identity. Catholicism, then, offers Pauline the chance to change her own genealogy.

Historically, Catholicism has revered mysticism as a plausible and, for certain people, a natural experience. Rather than reconciling herself with her guilt by learning to appreciate her native culture, Pauline tries to change her race. Pauline cannot erase her own racial identity, but, because of Catholicism's acceptance of mysticism, she is able to reject it by having Jesus declare her "not one speck of Indian but wholly white" (137). Through her conversations with Jesus (real or imagined), Pauline attempts to actually change her own race by having Christ create a new one. Unfortunately for Pauline, characters cannot typically change their race at will, and Pauline gradually loses touch with the world around her. As Pauline's struggle to create a white identity for herself intensifies, she finds herself edging towards insanity, and begins communing with statues, insisting on her own magical capabilities, and conversing with visions. Catholicism, though, allows Pauline to have these experiences and even provides theological justification for her actions. In the eyes of mystical Catholicism, Pauline's religious extremism becomes not only possible but perhaps even encouraged. Even though Pauline's extremism psychologically damages her, Catholicism encourages her to continue delving into her mystical experiences. Through her mystical experiences, Pauline is able to conform to the dictates of her society and believes she can create a new, white identity.

Catholicism also allows Pauline to justify her masochism and, in doing so, lends itself to Pauline's self-destruction. Just as her insanity can be understood through the lens of Catholicism as mysticism, Pauline's self-inflicted suffering can be seen as religious asceticism. Like mysticism, asceticism has historically held a prominent place in Catholic history—many saints (particularly from the Middle Ages) practiced "mortification of the flesh." Just as Pauline's desire to lose her identity and her visions are encouraged under some forms of Catholicism, Pauline's masochism gains religious significance when she filters it through a religious lens. Pauline's willingness to hurt herself reaches extremes in the novel, and she engages in clearly self-destructive behavior in an attempt to alleviate her guilt. Over the course of the text, Pauline scrubs her hands raw, takes to wearing potato sack drawers, and starves herself. Pauline regulates her most basic bodily functions—such as urination—in order to alleviate her guilty conscience. Though even the Mother Superior of her convent discourages her practices, the religious heritage of Catholicism makes Pauline's practices more acceptable, and she is seen as overly devout rather than as psychologically unwell. Pauline releases her guilt by hurting herself while lessening her stigma.

However, Pauline also distorts the message of Catholicism. As Pauline attempts to scour her Ojibwe heritage from her life, she alters the traditional images of Catholicism to support her outlandish attempts to achieve racial superiority. As she delves deeper into Catholicism, she recognizes the hypocrisy of the racism she encounters and manipulates traditional Catholic prayers and images to express how angry and ostracized she feels. Pauline cannibalizes her religion in a desperate bid to make Catholicism once again relate to her. When she and Fleur encounter Margaret after Fleur's miscarriage, Pauline imagines Margaret scolding her: "she jabbered at me, finding the blood, the cold ashes, how it was my fault, my fault, and my most grievous fault" (163). Pauline takes the *mea culpa* line from the Confiteor, a part of the traditional Catholic Mass, and changes it from a means of expressing her guilt to releasing herself from it. By invoking these words as Margaret accuses her instead of recording the actual charge Margaret brings against her, Pauline paradoxically attempts to step-side her guilt by drawing on overtly religious language to establish her own spiritual superiority. Margaret threatens Pauline because Margaret, like Nanapush, becomes a whole, healthy individual by embracing her culture. She reminds Pauline that Pauline psychologically unstable. To counteract her misgivings about herself, Pauline refuses to assign weight to Margaret's accusations. Even the verbs Pauline uses seem to doubt the legitimacy of Margaret's concerns: she depicts Margaret as "jabbering" at her instead of scolding her. The religious imagery Pauline uses creates a moral high ground—just as becoming a nun creates distance between Pauline and the other Ojibwe characters, Pauline relies on her religious knowledge to establish superiority over Margaret.

Pauline's guilt, though, also makes her angry at the religion to which she belongs, and her prayers gradually develop a sardonic edge as she realizes she cannot become whole. As Fleur desperately attempts to save her child, Pauline prays to the "God who bound my wrists, who tripped me, [the] Lord and Author of all Lies" (158). Later on, as she lies ill at the convent, she prays, "Dark from dark … True God from True" (195). In both these instances, Pauline takes traditional religious imagery and reverses it, applying typically negative imagery to the Catholic God. In the first instance, God takes on a traditional title for Satan and becomes the "Author of all Lies." The Catholic God has failed to assuage Pauline's guilt and has created a world in which she cannot achieve the unracialized (read: white) existence she longs for. Pauline has attempted to erase her heritage with her faith, and realizes that even her religious vocation cannot free her from the racism of the society around her. The second prayer, which she adapts from the Nicene Creed, changes the Creed's "light from light" to "dark from dark," thereby reversing God's origin story. The God Pauline trusted in to provide her with equality betrays her, and she realizes that not even her deity seems able to forget her race. Pauline's religious commitment changes then, and she declares that "Christ was weak" (192). Her comparatively devout tone at the beginning of her religious quest gives way to her distrust in the promises of her religion, and she eventually rejects the religious belief in the superiority of Christ entirely.

Pauline, though, is not the only character to draw from her spirituality in order to deal with her racial identity. Nanapush recognizes Pauline's struggle because he has worked through similar issues. He, however, ultimately accepted his Ojibwe heritage, and can therefore develop into a healthy, fulfilled adult. As an older man, Nanapush has already dealt with his own misgivings about his identity, and has developed his own philosophy for dealing with encroaching white society. At the beginning of the novel, Nanapush recounts witnessing the deaths of his relatives and friends. By this time, he is familiar with white society—in his youth, he served as a guide for buffalo hunters (139). When the novel begins, then, Nanapush is acutely aware of the racism of surrounding white society. Unlike Pauline, though, Nanapush has decided that the best way to confront discrimination is not to assimilate and attempt to erase his cultural heritage but rather to hold true to his cultural heritage and reject the pressures of white society. Nanapush does not ignore racism; rather, he acknowledges white society and then manipulates it to his advantage. Like a traditional trickster, Nanapush slyly waits until he has an opportunity to exploit the system which oppresses him, then strikes. Because of his own background Nanapush recognizes Pauline's struggle to deal with her guilt and, in his own trickster way, attempts to convince her that she cannot find fulfillment by rejecting bits of herself. Nanapush is observant, and takes it upon himself to point out Pauline's actions to others. When Pauline begins wearing her shoes on the wrong feet, Nanapush declares "God is turning that woman into a duck," and draws everyone's attention to Pauline's feet (146). When Pauline takes to wearing potato sack drawers and bars herself from urinating during the day, Nanapush cleverly pokes fun at her practices by plying her with liquids and then telling a story about water (149). By constantly drawing attention to Pauline's practices, Nanapush turns her devotional practices into a joke, and attempts to show Pauline how ridiculous her actions are. However, Pauline cannot or will not accept the alternative Nanapush offers to her own guilt, because she is unwilling or unable to recognize the goodness of her own culture.

Though, Pauline wants to "kill the Indian … and save the man," she discovers that this approach to dealing with her identity not only fails to assuage her guilt but also drives her insane. Over the course of *Tracks*, readers watch Pauline unsuccessfully try to separate herself from her Ojibwe heritage. As Pauline slips into insanity, readers realize that Pauline cannot develop into a healthy individual without first accepting herself.

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5.7: Student Sample Student Paper- Alyce Hockers's "The Slavery Metaphor of Moby-Dick"

This final sample paper by Alyce examines the practice of whaling in Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* as a metaphor for and critique of African American slavery in the mid-nineteenth century.Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick, or, The Whale* (1952; University of Virginia Electronic Text Center, 1993), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Mel2Mob.html. The links that Alyce points out are perhaps less obvious than in other works about slavery, but the surprise of her argument is partly what makes it so successful. Many critics have discussed Melville's construction of race in *Moby-Dick*, and Alyce draws on those critical voices to make her case. By linking ideas of race in the novel with ideas about the whaling industry, however, Alyce connects the central activity of the novel (hunting for whales) to a central social and political issue of the day, slavery.

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 (ideally) read Herman Melville's 1852 novel, *Moby-Dick*. *Moby-Dick* is a long novel, however. For an initial reading, you might instead consider Robert A. diCurcio's "Nantucket's Tried-Out *Moby-Dick*," which provides a summary of the novel along with a selection of "core chapters" that will help you understand the broad strokes of the work. Before you get started, read diCurcio's "Note to the First Time Reader" (http://www.melville.org/diCurcio/bib.htm).Robert A. diCurcio, ed., *Nantucket's Tried-Out* Moby-Dick*: Robert A. diCurcio's Companion Reader to Melville's Masterpiece* (Nantucket, MA: Aeternium, 1996), http://www.melville.org/diCurcio/bib.htm.
2. Again, keep the previous three papers in mind as you read this final peer paper. What points of convergence and divergence do you see among the four?

Alyce Hockers

Professor Ryan Cordell

English 235: U.S. Literature 1

April 14, 2011

"The Slavery Metaphor of *Moby-Dick*"

"Who aint a slave? Tell me that … [H]owever the old sea-captains may order me about—however they may thump and punch me about, I have the satisfaction of knowing that it is all right; that everybody else is one way or other served in much the same way either in a physical or metaphysical point of view" (Melville 23–24). The issue of slavery, although not discussed explicitly in Herman Melville's Moby-Dick, is criticized subtly in a parallel of the industries of whaling and slavery. During the time that *Moby-Dick* was written, whaling and slavery were two of the biggest sources of economy in America, and it is therefore not surprising that the two had some striking commonalities. When readers of *Moby-Dick* in the mid-19th century picked up the novel, they were expecting a high-seas adventure tale about whaling. Instead they were subtly handed an interpretation of slavery, which was an incredibly debated topic, thanks in part to the recent publishing of the Fugitive Slave Laws, which was at the forefront of American minds during the period of the publishing of the novel. It is important for the modern reader to understand the subtle metaphor comparing slavery and whaling; not only does it help us grasp the history of both institutions, but it also helps us gain insight into the fact that Melville could very well have been against white supremacy. It was difficult to discuss views on the institution of slavery at the time period, so Melville may have been using his novel as a subtle message into his insights on the issues of the industry. Throughout the entirety of Melville's novel, the business of whaling is used as an extended metaphor of slavery and the pursuit, capture, and killing of runaway slaves to help readers understand the brutal and unethical nature of the institution of slavery.

The chasing of whales through the vast oceans is analogous to the chase of runaway slaves after they had escaped from their masters. The chase was about dehumanizing the hunted group; in this case: the whales or the slaves. Although the whale is already non-human, men treated them like they were an object rather than a life form. Both whales and slaves were not only hunted mercilessly, but also all for profit. Whaling was an incredibly profitable enterprise if you survived the journey to bring home the

spoils of the hunt. The hunting of slaves, albeit much less dangerous, was also profitable. Wealthy landowners gave extremely large sums of money (at least for the time period) in return for the capture and return of their runaways. Landowners needed their slaves, just as America needed sperm oil, and both enterprises would reward money to whomever could supply them with their means to their desired end. When looking for runaway slaves, wanted posters often gave descriptions of the runaways that included various scars and marks that were on the bodies as a means of identification. Fred Bernard comments that "[i]mportant to the capture of runaways were their various marks, some natural, others inflicted" (396). Slaves were scarred from many things, including various beatings by their masters. One advertisement said this in the description of a runaway slave: "has had the upper lid of his right eye torn, and a scar on his forehead" (Advertisement). The same can be said for whales. Many of the animals escaped after having been marked by whalers, but not entirely captured. "Not a few are captured having the deep scars of these encounters,—furrowed heads, broken teeth, scolloped fins; and in some instances, wrenched and dislocated mouths" (Melville 349). This effectively gave them scars that could be used to identify them, most notably seen when the book is discussing Moby Dick. Captain Ahab repeatedly remembers every scar on the white whale, including his deformed jaw, and uses those to identify the whale to other men during his search.

There are also strong parallels with whaling and slavery in direct regard to color. Other than Moby-Dick himself, who is part white (the implications of which will be discussed in the subsequent paragraph), most whales are entirely black. The narrator of Moby-Dick comments, "blackness was the rule amongst almost all whales" (Melville 139). And Captain Ahab is considered, by most interpreters, to be white, as were most whaling captains of the time. This vision of whites (whaling captains) chasing blacks (whales) immediately conjures up illusions of slavery. With such an obvious parallel, Melville's brashness with his views of slavery, during a time period in which the institution was highly debated, is quite surprising.

There is an obvious and glaring issue with the story of whaling as an extended metaphor for chasing slaves. Throughout this article, we have talked about whites chasing blacks. But in *Moby-Dick*, isn't the Pequod a black ship and Moby Dick, notably, a white whale? Why is this all turned around? Fred Bernard thinks that it is because Moby Dick serves to represent a black trying to pass as a white, which makes him all the more pursued because of it (392). During the time, whites tried to keep blacks as completely separate from them as possible. Mulattos were frowned upon and tortured even though they were part white. Moby Dick, although often portrayed as white, is actually only partly white. His hump is albino while the rest of his body is black, like the rest of the members of his species. I think, at the very least, that the discrepancy in the metaphor only serves as irony and makes the metaphor even more profound. Everything is the same between whaling and the chasing of slaves. The chase, the torture, the killing, and the aftermath all have strong parallels in both industries. The only difference is that the roles have been reversed. What if it were the blacks (the black ship) chasing the whites (the white whale)? The irony gives more food for thought and attacks the ethics of the institution of slavery. I think that the switching of the colors of the chaser and chasee in *Moby-Dick*, rather than being a reason against the story as a metaphor, actually supports it. The metaphor itself makes you think about slavery, but the switching of the roles makes you evaluate the ethics of it.

Both the whales portrayed in *Moby-Dick* and the slaves of America fought vehemently against whaling and slavery, respectively, although the fight was unfair and seemingly futile. The whales that the *Pequod* would harpoon would drag the boats across the ocean for hours before giving up to capture. In the chapter "Stubb Kills a Whale," the narrator comments that "whole Atlantics and Pacifics seemed passed as they shot on their way, till at length the whale somewhat slackened his flight" (Melville 256). And the vast amount of slaves that did run away from their masters is a testament to their "resistance to servitude." Graham Russel comments of the implications of the wanted poster advertising runaway slaves: "First and foremost, runaway notices are evidence of slave resistance" (Russell xiii-xiv). There were steadfast rules regarding slavery and regarding whaling. The fast-fish, loose-fish rules were similar to the fugitive slave laws. If someone else caught a whale (or slave) that already belonged to someone else, they couldn't claim it for their own (Ellickson 89). But, if no one had laid claim to that particular whale yet, it was fair game for anyone. This is similar to how blacks were plucked from Africa and used as slaves when they hadn't been purchased yet. After a slave had already been purchased, though, another white man could not take the slave as his own. And even if the slave ran away, other whites were obligated to return them to their original master. "The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 mandated that states to which escaped slaves fled were obligated to return them to their masters upon their discovery and subjected persons who helped runaway slaves to criminal sanctions" ("Fugitive Slave Act"). Examples abound of court cases where slaves were awarded back to their masters after running away. Although whaling cases were usually settled out of court, the ideas were the same. An ironic intersection of the two industries occurred in April of 1851. Escaped slave Thomas Sims was brought to court and awarded back to

his master. The judge that handed down the decision just so happened to be Melville's father-in-law (Pisano 12–13). The relation between Melville and slavery at the time gives weight to the novel's interpretation as an epic metaphor.

Slaves and whales were also only known superficially to their chasers during the time period. At the time, whites treated blacks as if they were a different species. They could describe them physically, but they didn't know the true character of the race. The same can be said for the whaler's knowledge of whales. Ishmael goes into great detail describing how whales cannot be accurately described because they can't be taken out of their element without ruining what they really are. "The living whale, in his full majesty and significance, is only to be seen at sea in unfathomable waters; and afloat the vast bulk of him is out of sight … and out of that element it is a thing eternally impossible for mortal man to hoist him bodily into the air, so as to preserve all his mighty swells and undulations" (Melville 239). Africans taken out of Africa and turned into slaves weren't the same beings as they were in their home country. They were out of their element and they had been changed, which is analogous to whales who are removed from their watery homes. Without water to hold them up, they are not the same and cannot be accurately understood or depicted. On the same note of the concept of foreign species, there was also a language barrier in both industries. There is the obvious language barrier between whales and humans, but blacks also spoke their own language, while it may still have been a version of English. We can see this notably when the cook, Fleece, gives his sermon to the whales using the slave dialogue of the time, which is in stark contrast to the tongue of the white man: "Cussed fellow-critters! Kick up de damndest row as ever you can; fill your dam bellies 'till dey bust—and den die!" (Melville 281). The communication barrier between the two allowed for hostility between the groups. Had the whales or the slaves been able to speak the same language as the whalemen or the white man, they may have been on more even playing fields and the group dynamics may have been less like predator and prey.

The ferocious capture and brutal killings of whales portrayed in Moby-Dick parallel the captures and killings of slaves during the 19th century before emancipation. In contrast to the aforementioned chasing being about dehumanizing the prey, the killing was about domination by the hunter. Although the exact details regarding whales and slaves aren't the same, seeing as they were happening on completely different terrains, the big picture is extremely similar. Just as whales were chained to the sides of boats after capture, so, too, were slaves chained after being apprehended. Moses Roper, a slave, writes in his autobiography that a white man "chained me down in a log-pen with a 40 lb. chain, and made me lie on the damp earth all night" (13). The white man also chained him to another slave and, Roper goes on, "He kept me chained to her during the week, and repeatedly flogged us both while thus chained together, and forced us to keep up with the other slaves, although retarded by the heavy weight of the log-chain" (15). This was either in preparation for death or to be brought back to their masters. Also, as described before, slaves were mercilessly whipped as punishment for anything, an action which sometimes led to death. Whales were continually stabbed with harpoons to capture them and kill them. The abuse continues after the killing of the first whale aboard the Pequod. Stubb orders a piece of the whale to be cut away and cooked for him for dinner. David Cope comments that this "displays a tyrannical streak directly connected to [Stubb's] role on the ship and indirectly to the assumption that, as a white man, he may abuse blacks without repercussion." This is paralleled further as the scene goes on. As Stubb is physically abusing the whale by eating his flesh, he is also verbally abusing Fleece, an African American. He mocks this black cook as he devours the whale, strongly showing a correlation of the abuse by white men of blacks and whales (Melville 264–65).

The aftermath of the killings wraps up the ongoing whaling metaphor of slavery during the 19th century. After killing whales, the whalemen tied them to the boat as a symbol of their accomplishments. They also beheaded them and skinned them. The whale's head was the most valuable piece of the creature's body, so it was often hung by beams from a whaling ship, like the Pequod, not only to harvest the profitable pieces but also as a symbol of the domination of the ship and the men on board. Fred Bernard discusses a reward poster reprinted by William Lloyd Garrison in the *Liberator*, an anti-slavery proponent of the time period, in which a sum of money is offered for the return of a slave, but even more money is offered for the slave's head. "Tying this analogue to Melville is the fact that these slave heads, like those of the sperm whale … were worth more than the mere bodies of the victims" (398). The head was a symbol of the creature's life force; the part that identified the animal and gave it its essence. The white man taking control of the head was like taking control of the core of the creature, which both industries were aiming to do. In the end, both industries led to near extinction. The hunting of whales led to dwindling numbers and near extinction of the creatures. The hunting of escaped blacks led to uproar in terms of ethics, which ultimately and eventually led to emancipation: the extinction of slavery.

A discrepancy lies in the economics of both industries. Although both industries involved killings, one industry got their profits from a dead animal, while the other got theirs from live ones. This anomaly, rather than discrediting the validity of the metaphor,

actually helps us understand the motivations of white hunters. Whales were more profitable dead than they were alive, but slaves were more profitable alive than they were dead. Indeed, an individual slave was more profitable living as a worker, but had slaves been allowed to get away with escaping from their owners, the industry would have quickly crumbled. Killing a runaway slave, although not initially a great monetary decision, sets an example for other slaves to keep their place.

Herman Melville's Moby-Dick acts as an extended metaphor to parallel the whaling industry with the institution of slavery and the chasing of escaped slaves. We may never know Melville's true views of slavery, but shouldn't we take a hint from the fact that Moby-Dick, analogous to a runaway slave, was the ultimate victor? During the 19th century, Melville's possible views against white supremacy would not have been well received by the masses, so Moby-Dick could have been a front to subtly portray his thoughts on slavery. Although not as racially motivated as some other books of the time, or even other books of Melville's, Moby-Dick has strong racial themes that, although not at first apparent, critique racial inequalities of the time and question the ethics of slavery.

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5.8: Strategies for Starting Your Cultural Identity Paper

This chapter summarizes a range of different ideas about literature that all center on the identity of authors, their characters, and (in part) their readers. In each paper we find a close consideration of the way different groups interact: how they perceive and represent each other, how they talk to and about each other, and how they exert power against each other. Whether discussing the effects of colonialism in nineteenth-century Africa, the perils of assimilation for Native Americans in the early twentieth-century United States, or the economic parallels between slavery and whaling in nineteenth-century America, each paper takes seriously the cultural and political realities that underlie the creation of literature, and each sees literature as a force that can shape those cultural and political realities. When reading literary works, you should be attentive to issues of identity, power, assimilation, and/or prejudice.

If you follow these steps, you'll be well on your way to writing a compelling paper on racial, ethnic, or cultural themes:

1. Consider the racial, ethnic, or cultural background of the author. Do the characters in the work come from a similar background? Does the author come from a colonized or minority population? Conversely, does the author come from an imperial or majority population? Does the work seem intended to address issues particular to the author's background?
2. Consider the history of the work's setting and/or composition. What were the major political realities of the day? Were there major conflicts, settlements, or economic realities that would have shaped the author's or his or her contemporary readers' worldviews? Are the settings in the work familiar to the author's experience, or are they "other" or exotic settings? How might the politics of the day shape the work's themes, images, settings, or characters?
3. Research the reactions of previous critics to the work. Have they noticed particular attitudes toward race, ethnicity, or culture in the text? Do you agree with their assessment, or do you see ideas they have missed? Can you extend, modify, or correct their arguments?
4. Consider the possible readers of the work. How do you think members of the groups represented in the work would feel about the way their race, ethnicity, or culture is represented? If you come from a group depicted in the work you've chosen, how does that depiction make you feel?

In short, you want to ask how the work you are studying represents the identities of the groups it depicts. If you can begin to answer these questions, you'll be well on your way to a cultural analysis of a literary text. Remember that you can write a cultural analysis in many modes: you can celebrate a work's progressive representation of race or you can critique a work's problematic complicity in negative social attitudes. Either way, you can write a compelling argument about race, culture, and ethnicity in literature.

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5.E: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Exercises)

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Freewriting exercise. Choose a work you've read that includes characters from distinct racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. Next, draw a line down the center of a sheet of blank paper. On each side of the paper, compile a list of words that could be used to describe the text's depiction of characters from a particular group in the novel. Don't worry about whether you like or agree with those descriptions—your goal right now is to understand how the text depicts each group. Next, use the second side of the paper to compile words that describe the text's approach to another group. After creating these lists, compare them. Do you notice any interesting convergences, divergences, or tensions between the two lists? Now you're ready to start researching further.
2. As you research secondary sources for your paper, keep a list of all the ideas in the articles you read that you *disagree with*. Remember that you needn't disagree with the entire article. You may decide that the author misreads a particular quote, takes part of her argument too far, or draws a wrong conclusion from particular secondary sources. As you compile this list, think about how you might incorporate your disagreement into your argument—where can you insert your opinion into the scholarly conversations you are reading?

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS EXERCISES

1. The *Heart of Darkness* paper offers a solid analysis of the text's relationship to colonialism, but the argument is not particularly surprising. In some ways the paper simply brings together a range of critics and amplifies their arguments about the novella. In your class, distribute photocopies of the paper (or, if you meet in a computer lab, e-mail the file) to the class. Divide the class into groups of three to four students. Ask each group to develop three recommendations that would help make the paper's argument more surprising. You might ask them the following questions: What small aspects of this argument might the author further develop? Were there any claims or reasons that surprised you? If so, how might those be expanded and perhaps incorporated into the paper's introduction?
2. Schedule a visit to the computer lab with your students. Have your students visit a digital project focused on racial, ethnic, or postcolonial issues. You might consider Adeline Koh's *Digitizing "Chinese Englishmen"* (http://chineseenglishmen.adelinekoh.org), Angel David Nieves's *Soweto '76*(http://www.soweto76archive.org), or the University of Richmond's *Visualizing Emancipation*project (http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation), depending on your course topic.Adeline Koh, "Digitizing 'Chinese Englishmen': Representations of Race and Empire in the Nineteenth Century," http://chineseenglishmen.adelinekoh.org; Angel David Nieves, "Soweto '76," http://www.soweto76archive.org; "Visualizing Emancipation," National Endowment for the Humanities and University of Richmond, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation. Give students twenty minutes to explore the resource, letting them know that you will expect each group to "report out" at the end of their time. By the end of twenty minutes, each group should have developed (a) at least one new claim about the literary work or time period you are studying and (b) at least two research questions prompted by the project they explored. If time allows after all groups report out, you might choose one of the proposed research questions and begin exploring its answer(s) as a class.

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS PEER REVIEW

1. Have students conduct peer review on one of the sample papers using the organizational peer-review guide found in Chapter 10, Section 10.4:
    1. Place students in groups of three to four and have them reread the paper for peer review and fill out the guide sheet.
    2. Have students discuss their feedback responses to the sample paper.
    3. Have students list the major feedback they discussed.
    4. Put the major issues on the blackboard or whiteboard.
    5. Discuss these responses. Make certain that you let students know that any paper can be improved.
2. Plan to have your students conduct peer review on the drafts of their essays that they are writing in your class. Use the peer-review guide from Chapter 10, Section 10.4 and have them work in groups of three and do the following:
    1. Bring two hard copies of their essay so that each member can read the paper, OR work in a computer lab where students can share their papers online. You may want to use the educational software that your campus supports—for example,

Blackboard or Moodle—or you can have students use Google Drive to set up their peer-review groups.

2. Have two students focus on the first paper in the group. While these students are reading, have the other student read the other two student papers.
3. The two students should quickly fill out the peer-review sheet and then have a brief conversation about the strengths of the paper and ways the paper could be improved.
4. Move to the next student and follow the same process. Depending on the length of your class, you may have to reduce the peer-review groups to two students.
5. If time permits, ask the students to provide general comments—or ask questions—about the specific papers or the assignment overall.
6. You may want to use peer review for each paper in your class.

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5.S: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Summary)

Key Takeaways

- Just as literature reflects history, literature also reflects the cultural assumptions shared by the society in which it was produced. Often works from the Western canon view nonwhite characters in prejudiced ways that justify Western imperialism.
- You can understand a text's racial, ethnic, or cultural messages by paying particular attention to the way that groups of people are described, particularly in contrast to other groups.
- When writing about race, ethnicity, and colonialism, utilize both primary and secondary sources to fully engage with the text's historical context. Using a mix of primary and secondary sources will be key to writing through the lens of New Historicism, a literary theory that we explore in Chapter 7.
- When writing about literature, you can modify, extend, dispute, or challenge the opinions of other scholars. By demonstrating how your ideas differ from theirs, you demonstrate your maturity as a thinker and writer.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Sources on African American and Ethnic Criticism

- Awkward, Michael. *Inspiring Influences: Tradition, Revision, and Afro-American Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.
- Ferrante, Joan, and Prince Brown Jr., eds. *The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity in the United States*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001.
- Hazel, Ervin, ed. *African American Literary Criticism*. New York: Twayne, 1999.
- LaCapra, Dominick, ed. *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Mitchell, Angelyn, ed. *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Sources on Postcolonial Criticism

- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- ———, eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Kennedy, Valerie. *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Poddar, Prem, and David Johnson, eds. *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Thought in English*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981–91*. London: Penguin, 1991.
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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Writing about Readers - Applying Reader-Response Theory

Learning Objectives

- Understand the theory of reader response, which focuses on the reader's reading experience.
- Apply the reader-response methodology to works of literature.
- Engage in the writing process of a peer writer, including peer review.
- Review and evaluate a variety of reader-response papers by peer writers.
- Draft and revise a reader-response paper on a literary work.

6.1: Literary Snapshot- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

6.2: Reader-Response Theory- An Overview

6.3: Focus on Reader-Response Strategies

6.4: Reader Response- A Process Approach

6.5: Student Writer at Work- Amy Ferdinandt's Reader Response to James Thurber's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

6.6: Student Sample Paper- Hannah Schmitt's "The Death of Intellectualism in Grahame-Smith and Austen's Pride and Prejudice and Zombies"

6.7: Student Sample Paper- Erin Huebner Gloege's "Identity Themes in Dickinson- Four Students Reading"

6.8: End-of-Chapter Assessment

6.9: Suggestions for Further Reading

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6.1: Literary Snapshot- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Lewis Carroll, as we found out in previous chapters, is most famous for two books: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872). These books follow the adventures of the 7–year-old, Alice, who tumbles down a rabbit hole (*Wonderland*) and enters a magic mirror (*Looking-Glass*), entering a nonsensical world of the imagination. If you have not already read these classic books—or wish to reread them—you can access them at the following links:

http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html

etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html

Alice finds herself challenged to make sense of a seemingly absurd world inhabited by odd creatures. Throughout her adventures, Alice attempts to apply logic to her experiences; in other words, Alice tries to interpret and find meaning in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land.

Alice acts like a literary critic. In previous chapters, you became like Alice—that is, you learned about a literary theory and applied that theory as you analyzed a work of literature. This chapter asks you to reimagine your role as a literary critic: you will be asked to analyze not only the text but also the role of the reader in constructing meaning. In a sense, you will be asked to be a lot like Alice, trying to figure out your reading experience as you immerse yourself in a literary creation.

Our scene comes from chapter 10, "The Lobster-Quadrille" in *Wonderland*:

"Stand up and repeat "'*'Tis the voice of the sluggard,*'" said the Gryphon.

"How the creatures order one about, and make one repeat lessons!" thought Alice; "I might as well be at school at once." However, she got up, and began to repeat it, but her head was so full of the Lobster Quadrille, that she hardly knew what she was saying, and the words came very queer indeed:—

"'Tis the voice of the Lobster; I heard him declare,

'You have baked me too brown, I must sugar my hair.'

As a duck with its eyelids, so he with his nose

Trims his belt and his buttons, and turns out his toes.

When the sands are all dry, he is gay as a lark,

And will talk in contemptuous tones of the Shark:

But, when the tide rises and sharks are around,

His voice has a timid and tremulous sound."

"That's different from what I used to say when I was a child," said the Gryphon.

"Well, I never heard it before," said the Mock Turtle; "but it sounds uncommon nonsense."

Alice said nothing; she had sat down with her face in her hands, wondering if anything would *ever*happen in a natural way again.

"I should like to have it explained," said the Mock Turtle.

"She can't explain it," said the Gryphon hastily. "Go on with the next verse."

"But about his toes?" the Mock Turtle persisted. "How *could* he turn them out with his nose, you know?"

"It's the first position in dancing." Alice said; but was dreadfully puzzled by the whole thing, and longed to change the subject.

"Go on with the next verse," the Gryphon repeated impatiently: "it begins '*I passed by his garden.*'"

Alice did not dare to disobey, though she felt sure it would all come wrong, and she went on in a trembling voice:—

"I passed by his garden, and marked, with one eye,

How the Owl and the Panther were sharing a pie:

The Panther took pie-crust, and gravy, and meat,

While the Owl had the dish as its share of the treat.

When the pie was all finished, the Owl, as a boon,

Was kindly permitted to pocket the spoon:

While the Panther received knife and fork with a growl,

And concluded the banquet—"

"What *is* the use of repeating all that stuff," the Mock Turtle interrupted, "if you don't explain it as you go on? It's by far the most confusing thing I ever heard!"

"Yes, I think you'd better leave off," said the Gryphon: and Alice was only too glad to do so.Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), chap. 10, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html.

Alice finds herself reciting a poem about a Lobster and then continuing with a poem about an Owl and a Panther. Not only is Alice creating—that is, she makes up these poems—but she also requires the reader to finish the second poem:

While the Panther received knife and fork with a growl,

And concluded the banquet—

By eating the Owl!

"By eating the Owl!" The poem nudges the reader to complete the line by filling in the final ending to the poem: we know that the Panther will eat the Owl. Of course, a reader might complete the poem by writing, "by throwing in the towel," or "by picking up a trowel," "by running down the hall," or even "with an even greater howl." In any case, you, as the reader, have activated the text.

You have engaged in the theory of reader response.



Illustration by Sir John Tenniel for Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865).

Reader-response theory suggests that the role of the reader is essential to the meaning of a literary text, for only in the reading experience does the literary work come alive. *Frankenstein* (1818) doesn't exist, so to speak, until the reader reads *Frankenstein* and reanimates it to life, becoming a cocreator of the text.Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1831; University of Virginia Electronic Text Center, 1994), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/SheFran.html.

Wallace Stevens's "Anecdote of the Jar."

I placed a jar in Tennessee,

And round it was, upon a hill.

It made the slovenly wilderness

Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,

And sprawled around, no longer wild.

The jar was round upon the ground

And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion every where.

The jar was gray and bare.

It did not give of bird or bush,

Like nothing else in Tennessee.

CLASS PROCESS

1. Read Wallace Stevens's "Anecdote of the Jar."Wallace Stevens, "Anecdote of a Jar," University of Pennsylvania, http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/stevens-ancedote.html.
2. Write down your reading experience: What went on in your mind while you were reading the poem? Did you like the poem? Dislike it? Were you confused by the poem?
3. Jot down what you think the poem is about—the theme of the poem.
4. Break into groups of three or four. Compare your experiences with each other. Then compare your interpretations.
5. List the student-group interpretations on the blackboard, whiteboard, or other high- or low-tech medium into two categories: Experiences While Reading and Interpretation of the Poem.
6. Discuss the differences between the reading experience and the ways the students interpreted the poem.

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6.2: Reader-Response Theory- An Overview

Let's begin with the famous opening from Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816):"Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her."Jane Austen, *Emma* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2011).

Oh, that Emma Woodhouse. "Handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition," certainly, but also vain, proud, and a mischievous-matchmaker in those things related to love. Not much of a character to base a novel on, the reader might muse. Austen was nervous about her creation of Emma, for as she wrote in a letter: "I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like." Yet Austen does exactly this: in *Emma*, she creates a character that taxes the reader's patience, one the author recognizes that readers may not like.

Austen's comments on Emma point to the fact that readers identify with characters in a novel. And we can extrapolate further: readers like or dislike what they read; readers are moved to joy, anger, sadness, and so on by a literary work; and readers read literature from a personal level. For an author, this "reader response" is of utmost importance, as Austen most certainly realizes. If readers do not like Emma, do not empathize with her on some emotional level, then they will dislike the novel.

CLASS PROCESS

1. List the literary works that you were told were great or important but that you actually disliked. Your instructor should also share his or her dislikes. This should lead to a lively discussion.

You will see that "likes" and "dislikes" are important markers in reader-response theory. Here's an example: in *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen* (1984), the author, Fay Weldon, writes to her niece Alice, trying to convince her of the importance of Austen. "You tell me in passing," writes Weldon, "that you are doing a college course in English Literature, and are obliged to read Jane Austen; that you find her boring, petty and irrelevant and, that as the world is in crisis, and the future catastrophic, you cannot imagine what purpose there can be in your reading her."Fay Weldon, *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2011), 11. Weldon responds, "*Emma* opens with a paragraph which sends shivers of pleasure down my spine: it glitters with sheer competence: with the animation of the writer who has discovered power: who is at ease in the pathways of the City of Invention. Here is Emma, exciting envy in the heart of the reader and also, one suspects, the writer—and now, she declares, Emma will be undone; and I, the writer, and you, the reader, will share in this experience."Fay Weldon, *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen*(London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2011), 96. Weldon, of course, is responding to Austen on a very personal level—on the gut level we should say—which can make one have "shivers of pleasure" or "exciting envy" or "share in this [reading] experience." What Weldon does to Austen and *Emma* is perform a reader-response interpretation.

Reader-response literary criticism recognizes the simple fact that readers respond to literature on an emotional level and that such responses are important to the understanding of the work. Long ago, even Aristotle recognized how important an audience's reaction is to tragedy, for a key to tragedy is **catharsis**, the purging of the audience's emotions. If you recall from Chapter 1, the concept of the *affective fallacy* was central to the New Critical methodology—a reader was never to confuse the interpretation of the literary work with the "feeling" she or he had while reading. These New Critics warned the reader that affective responses lead only to subjectivity; thus New Critics suggested that the reader pay close attention to the intricacies of the text under observation for meaning, for the text as a well-wrought urn contains meaning.

Reader-response critics, on the other hand, embrace the affective fallacy (what reader-response critic Stanley Fish has called the "**affective fallacy fallacy**"), for they believe that a reader's affective response is importance to criticism.Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). Instead of focusing on literature as a well-wrought urn, reader-response critics focus on the reader, who "completes" or "activates" the text as he or she reads. In a sense, the reader becomes the most important element in the reading process, supplanting even the author.

When you think about it, reader-response criticism makes perfect sense. How many times have you become so immersed in a work that you are oblivious to the world around you? If you like fantasy literature, you might still recall the first time you read the Harry Potter series—you were transported out of your Muggle world into the magical Hogwarts, where Harry and his friends battle the dark forces of the one we should not name. How many of you stood in line to get your copy of the latest Harry Potter novel at midnight? Or camped out at the theater to be one of the first to see the final installment of *The Deathly Hallows*? There may even

be a few of you who are not Potter fans, but be warned—don't share those thoughts too readily! A case point: one of the editors of this textbook, John Pennington, found this out quite clearly. He teaches a general-education course called Science Fiction and Fantasy, which attracts die-hard fans of these popular forms of fiction. When the first volume of the Harry Potter series came out, he was approached by a student, who told him that this was the best fantasy literature since J. R. R. Tolkien, maybe even better. Quite a claim, and one that came from a very intelligent student who clearly was excited about *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*! However, Pennington found that he did not enjoy the novel as much as his student had. So he read the next volume, and the next, and…you get the picture. To put it bluntly, he wasn't that impressed with the Harry Potter series. He eventually published an article in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, a critical journal that focuses on children's literature. In that article, he critiques the Harry Potter series as ineffective—shall we say, "failed"—fantasy literature.John Pennington, "From Elfland to Hogwarts, or the Aesthetic Trouble with Harry Potter," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 26, no. 1 (2002): 78–97, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/lion_and_the_unicorn/toc/uni26.1.html.

Over the years, he has received emails from students who are doing research papers on Harry Potter. To demonstrate that literature is often read with passion, read the following e-mail to John Pennington, which he received from a student who was doing such a research paper:

Hello, Professor Pennington. My name is Emily. I'm a senior English major at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, TX.

For my honors thesis, I have been doing research on fantasy literature (I'm making a comparison of magical and fantastic creatures in American and British literature) and in my search, I stumbled across your piece "From Elfland to Hogwarts, or the Aesthetic Trouble with Harry Potter." I won't lie to you, I am an avid Harry Potter fan. I am the president of the St. Mary's Harry Potter club, called Dumbledore's Army.

Mary's Harry Potter club, called Dumbledore's Army. I was just wondering if your feelings about certain aspects of the Harry Potter series have changed now that all the books have been released? I definitely agreed with some of your opinions and arguments (even as a little girl reading the books I made the connection between Tolkien/Rowling and Lewis/Rowling), but there are also instances in which I feel you were being too harsh. For instance, you said that while Voldemort was clearly the representation of the archetype for evil, there was none for good. I disagree. I don't believe that the figure for good needs to be a person or being at all. Instead, in the case of the Harry Potter, the symbol of the good archetype is love. Although, arguably, good and love could be seen as synonyms in some cases (through the right analytic lens), I think that love's manifestations in the Harry Potter series are what truly combats Voldemort (rather than Harry's attempts at battle—another aspect I, and indeed Harry, agree with you on: all he had was luck) and therefore become the figure of good.

I did find your piece helpful for my research and I do plan to read more of your published works in the future.

One other question: Do you often get e-mails from people who are disgruntled by your criticism of the Potter series? I would imagine the answer is yes.

Thank you for your time.

—Emily Bryant-Mundschau

One should not do battle with Dumbledore's Army! In a follow-up email, where John admited to Emily that his critical views of Harry Potter had not really changed, he also added that he was a little disappointed that Rowling had indicated in an interview about her first novel for adults—The Casual Vacancy (2012)—that she didn't see herself as a role model for children. Emily responded: "If it hadn't been for getting a copy of The Sorcerer's Stone in the 3rd grade, I may not be an English major now. I think a lot of the English majors of my generation are proof that she is a role model for children. Also, I think she must be intentionally ignoring the fact that there is a Harry Potter amusement park…how could kids not adore her?" Emily and John, interestingly, were acting as both critic and fan (or nonfan in John's case). In other words, readers are to a degree torn between the role of being an objective critic and a subjective fan, a tension that reader-response theory can help explain. Some publishers, in fact, concentrate on critical works on Harry Potter, creating a critical industry that extolls the virtues of the Harry Potter series. Winged Lion/Zossima Press is just one example, and the titles highlight how scholarly investigation becomes fused with personal enthusiasm for the books.



Book covers courtesy of Winged Lion/Zossima Press.

But there's a flip side to the "positive" reading experience, too. How many times have you become so irritated by a work—or by a piece of criticism!—that you failed to finish it or dreaded every second while you were between the pages? Some may never develop a "taste" for Henry James, for example. And as much as you might admire *Moby-Dick* (1851) by Herman Melville, you must admit that the so-called cetological center does tax a reader's patience.

Your Process

1. List your three favorite works of literature and write a short paragraph for each explaining why you like them so much.
2. Now do the same for your three least favorite works. Why do you dislike them?
3. Do you notice any patterns in the works you like and dislike? Why do you suppose you feel the way you do about these works?
4. Are there any works that you disliked upon initial reading but grew to like later? Or works you initially loved but now find tiring? Explain.
5. Choose either one of the likes or dislikes and consider using the work as the text for your reader-response paper. The following are some key guiding questions you can ask after reading the overview of the types of reader-response theory: Why do I like or dislike this work so much? How do I read this work in a way that might explain my attitude toward the work? Does the work touch on—or challenge—my identity theme? Does my reading connect to an interpretive community? Does my gender, race, class, sexual orientation, or another aspect of my identity have anything to do with my response?

CLASS PROCESS

1. List your favorite literary works that you read primarily as a fan.
2. Does this fan favorite hold up to critical scrutiny? Why or why not?
3. How do you negotiate this tension between being a fan and a critic?

4. Have your instructor list these fan favorites on the board.
5. Discuss the tension between fan and critic using these examples.
6. Choose either one of the likes or dislikes you listed and consider using the work as the text for your reader-response essay. The following are some key guiding questions you can ask after reading the overview of the types of reader-response theory: Why do I like or dislike this work so much? How do I read this work in a way that may explain my attitude toward the work? Does the work touch on—or challenge—my identity theme? Does my reading connect to an interpretive community? Does my gender, race, class, sexual orientation, or another aspect of my identity have anything to do with my response?

Now that we have acknowledged the fact that personal responses are an important component to the reading process—and to all literary discussion—we can begin learning about the variety of reader responses. As a New Critic, you remember, you scrutinized the text carefully; as a reader-response critic you will discover how your personal likes and dislikes shape your interpretation of a work.

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6.3: Focus on Reader-Response Strategies

Reader-response strategies can be categorized, according to Richard Beach in *A Teacher's Introduction to Reader-Response Theories* (1993), into five types: **textual**, **experiential**, **psychological**, **social**, and **cultural**.Richard Beach, *A Teacher's Introduction to Reader-Response Theories* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1993). Let's review those categories.

Textual Reader-Response Strategies

Performing a close reading of a text teaches you to look "closely" at the way a text operates and to glean some meaning from the workings of the text. In other words, your interpretation is primarily directed by the text. Textual reader-response approaches admit to the fact that the text does influence the way readers read and construct meaning. Thus the reader and text interact in the process of formulating a meaning of the text. Imagine a text as a painting in an art gallery: your interpretation of the painting will be based on whether you like it or not, but this reaction will be directed by the painting itself. Or consider a literary text as a musical composition; as a listener, you are moved by the music, but you must relate the music to some experience to make it work emotionally on you. Another metaphor: a text is like an unfinished sculpture; the reader must bring the finished form to the work. Thus to textual reader-response critics, the text directs interpretation as the reader directs the text to interpretation.

Literature as Transaction: Gap Filling and Ghost Chapters

A pioneer in reader-response criticism is Louise Rosenblatt, whose *Literature as Exploration* (5th ed., 1995) provided an alternative theory to the persistent New Critical approaches that gained such popularity. Rosenblatt contends that literature must become personal for it to have its full impact on the reader;Louise Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: Modern Language Association, 1995). in fact, New Criticism's affective fallacy prevents the reader from engaging the text on any personal level. Rosenblatt's approach, like the New Critical reading methods, provides a classroom strategy; however, whereas the New Critics centered on the literary text, Rosenblatt centers on the reader.

Rosenblatt believes readers transact with the text by bringing in their past life experiences to help interpret the text.Louise Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: Modern Language Association, 1995). Reading literature becomes an event—the reader activates the work through reading. Rosenblatt argues that any literary text allows for an **efferent reading**, which is what the reader believes should be retained after the reading; the **aesthetic reading**, on the other hand, is what the reader experiences while reading.Louise Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: Modern Language Association, 1995). The aesthetic reading accounts for the changes in a reader's attitude toward a literary work. Rosenblatt's theory provides for a process of reading that leads to discussion and interpretation: a reader transacts with a literary text during the reading process, focusing on the aesthetic response while reading. After reading, then, the reader reflects on the aesthetic response and compares it to the textual evidence and other interpretations. In a way, literary interpretation is more focused on the transaction—the process of reading—than on an interpretation of a particular work.

Another important reader-response theorist is Wolfgang Iser, who complements Rosenblatt. Iser believes that a literary work has meaning once a reader engages in the text.Wolfgang Iser, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Text*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979).According to Iser, every literary work is balanced by two poles, the **artistic** and the **esthetic poles**, roughly corresponding to Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic readings. For Iser, the artistic pole is that created by the author; the esthetic pole is that realized or completed by the reader.Wolfgang Iser, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Text*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979). Since a literary work is caught between these two poles, its meaning resides in the gap between these poles; the primary quality of a text is its indeterminacy. A textual critic, Iser recognizes that the text—the artistic pole—guides the reader who resides in the esthetic pole. He distinguishes between the **implied reader**, one the text creates for itself, and the **actual reader**, the reader who brings "things" to the text.Wolfgang Iser, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Text*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979). Consequently, there exists a gap between the implied and actual reader, and between the artistic and esthetic poles. The reader, then, must perform gap filling to concretize the text. Umberto Eco, another reader-response critic, takes gap filling even further, arguing that readers write ghost chapters for texts as a way to understand the transaction that happens between the text and reader.Umberto Eco, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach." in *Reader-Response Criticism from Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. ed by Jane P. Tompkins. (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) pgs. 50–69.

As you can see, Iser's textual reader-response criticism is based on his contention that the reader concretizes the text—gives it meaning—while the text necessarily guides this concretization. Consequently, a literary text operates by indeterminacy; it has gaps that the reader attempts to fill.

Transaction: The Rhetoric of Fiction

Another pioneer in reader-response criticism is Wayne Booth, who in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961; revised edition 1983) analyzes the way literature engages us through its language, or rhetoric.Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Booth shows readers how authors manipulate them into seeing things they have never seen before. Booth's most important contributions to reader-response criticism (and literary criticism in general) are his concepts of the implied author (or narrator) and the unreliable narrator, and how these force us to confront reading as an ethical act.

The **implied author**—the narrative voice the author creates in a work—is the most important artistic effect: in a sense, the implied author directs the reader's reaction to the literary work, guiding—or sometimes forcing—the reader to react on an emotional level since the implied author brings his or her ethical principles to the text. By directing the reader's interpretation, the implied author limits the reader's response while forcing the reader to react to the implied author.

For example, Booth contends that the implied author in *Emma* recognizes that the reader must be able to empathize and like Emma; if not, the novel will fail.Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Thus Austen creates an implied author—the narrator—who controls our perception of Emma by creating a character the reader can empathize with, laugh at when appropriate, and condemn when needed. Since the implied author becomes like a friend and guide, we as readers can rely on the narrative voice to guide us.

Booth recognizes that while a text's implied author may be reliable, the work may still have an **unreliable narrator**. The narrator in Jonathan Swift's "Modest Proposal" seems perfectly reliable and in control until we realize that his proposal to alleviate the poverty of the Ireland is to raise babies as edible delicacies!Jonathan Swift, "Modest Proposal" (London: 1729; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 2004), etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/SwiMode.html. Or think of the first-person narrators of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) or J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951).J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (London: Little, Brown, 1951). An unreliable narrator requires the author and reader to engage in a special bond whereby they acknowledge that the narrator cannot be trusted; in a way, then, the reader and author engage in a transaction by recognizing the limited view of the unreliable implied author. The unreliable narrator, ultimately, forces the reader to respond on some moral plane.

By appealing to the moral qualities of the reader, Booth provides a framework for an **ethics of reading** that he defines in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (1988). Using Rosenblatt's distinction between the efferent and aesthetic reading, Booth argues that the reader must carry over the efferent reading into the aesthetic, for the efferent reading requires us to compare our personal experience and moral beliefs with the narrative.Wayne Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Since a literary work takes us over for the duration of the reading experience, an ethics of reading will require the reader to eventually judge the ethical dimension to a work. **Nonce beliefs** are the beliefs the narrator and reader embrace only during the reading. **Fixed norms** are the beliefs on which the entire literary work depends for effect but also are applicable to the real world. As an example, Booth uses Aesop's fables, for a talking animal relates to our nonce beliefs—the talking animal is acknowledged as essential to the narrative—when the fixed norms will entail the moral that concludes the fable. Thus the nonce and fixed beliefs require a transaction between reader and work. Booth suggests that an ethics of reading becomes a two-stage process: (1) the reader must surrender fully to the reading experience and then (2) the reader must contemplate the reading experience from an ethical perspective (which depends on the reader's own moral stance).Wayne Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). In other words, we should keep company with the literary work and maintain an open mind until we conclude that the work might be harmful to us—or be in conflict with our moral beliefs. As you can see, Booth's ethics of reading is determined by the reader's moral makeup, which is dependent on a specific time and reading experience. It is open to change.

Kate Chopin's "The Storm" (1898) is a good example of this."Kate Chopin 'The Storm,'" The Kate Chopin International Society, http://www.katechopin.org/the-storm.shtml. In the story, a married woman has a passionate affair one afternoon with an acquaintance who by chance comes to her house to escape a storm. Their relationship is set up in an earlier story, "At the Cadian Ball" (1892), Chopin presents the affair as a natural impulse; the ending of the story tells us that both parties are happy and

content.Kate Chopin, “At the ’Cadian Ball,” in *The Awakening, and Selected Stories*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert (New York: Penguin, 1984). While in the company of “The Storm,” you will respond to the story itself as it occupies you, yet after your reading you will complete the reading by bringing your ethics into play: do you reject the story because it does not condemn adultery? Do you embrace the story because of its honest depiction of sexual passion?

Booth’s brand of textual reader-response criticism is a valuable tool for readers since he provides a textual model of reading—the implied author who is reliable and unreliable—that embraces the ethical dimension of the reader, who must transact with the literary work.

Textual reader-response criticism, as exemplified by Rosenblatt, Booth, and Iser, is a powerful literary critical tool to use when analyzing texts. Using some conventions of New Criticism, these critics are able to show how text and reader can simultaneously be active during the reading process.

Your Process

1. Read the following fable by Aesop:

THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

The Hare was once boasting of his speed before the other animals. “I have never yet been beaten,” said he, “when I put forth my full speed. I challenge any one here to race with me.”

The Tortoise said quietly, “I accept your challenge.”

“That is a good joke,” said the Hare; “I could dance round you all the way.”

“Keep your boasting till you’ve beaten,” answered the Tortoise. “Shall we race?”

So a course was fixed and a start was made. The Hare darted almost out of sight at once, but soon stopped and, to show his contempt for the Tortoise, lay down to have a nap. The Tortoise plodded on and plodded on, and when the Hare awoke from his nap, he saw the Tortoise just near the winning-post and could not run up in time to save the race. Then said the Tortoise: “Plodding wins the race.”Aesop, “The Hare and the Tortoise,” *Aesop’s Fables*, http://www.aesops-fables.org.uk/aesop-fable-the-hare-and-the-tortoise.htm.

2. Use Booth’s notions of fixed and nonce beliefs to examine how you will respond to the moral of the fable. Does plodding win the race in your value system?
3. Are there gaps in the narrative that you filled in to make sense of the narrative? What were they? Can you apply Rosenblatt’s and Iser’s notions of how readers complete the text?

Experiential Reader Response

Experiential reader-response critics like Stanley Fish are unlike the textual reader-response critics in one very important aspect—they emphasize the reader’s reading process over the literary work. Fish calls this kind of reader response **affective stylistics**, reminding us of the “affect” that literature has on us and of the New Critical affective fallacy that rejected any emotional response a reader might have to a literary work.Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). To Fish, then, affective stylistics is the experience the reader has while reading, which he defines as a three-fold process:

1. Readers surrender themselves to the text, letting the text wash over them; in fact, at this stage, readers should not be concerned with trying to understand what the work is about.
2. Readers next concentrate on their reading responses while reading, seeing how each word, each sentence, each paragraph elicits a response.
3. Finally, readers should describe the reading experience by structuring their reading responses, which may be in conflict with the common interpretation of a work.Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Fish’s thesis is seductive, for when we read, we are constantly reacting to our reading, connecting it to our personal lives, to other literary works we have read, and to our reading experience at that particular reading moment. Sometimes we will love to read;

other times we dread it. In *Surprised by Sin*, Fish examines how the reader is affected by a reading of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), that epic poem that describes the fall of Adam and Eve.John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667; University of Virginia Electronic Text Center, 1993), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/MilPL67.html.Fish argues that the reading experience of *Paradise Lost* mirrors the actual Fall of Adam and Eve from the Garden.Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

As intriguing as Fish's affective stylistics may be, the reality is that readers often agree on meaning; that is, they tend to see similar things in the same text. A textual reader-response critic would argue that the text—through its transaction with the reader—leads to such common interpretation, but Fish is interested in another possibility—that we are trained to find similar meanings. He calls this idea **interpretive communities**. To Fish, then, a reader of an interpretive community brings a meaning *to* the text because he or she is trained to.Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). A student in a modernist poetry class, for example, would interpret Wallace Stevens's "Anecdote of the Jar" in terms of modernism and the poetic movements in modernism and be at ease making claims about the poem's meaning. Literary theory, which you are learning as you work your way through this text, also demonstrates the interpretive community. If you are intrigued by Freudian psychoanalytic criticism, you will find Freudian meanings in the works that you are reading; likewise, a feminist critic will find gender issues when reading. Another way to understand interpretive communities is to note that the American legal system has embraced the idea of interpretive communities in jury selection: for example, if a defense attorney who is representing a college student in an underage drinking case can get members on the jury who agree that the drinking age should be lowered to nineteen, then the jury may have already interpreted the evidence in light of their beliefs and will find the student not guilty.

Experiential reader response acknowledges that reading is a subjective process and attempts to understand how to analyze such subjective responses.

Sonnet 127

In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;
But now is black beauty's successive heir,
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame:
For since each hand hath put on Nature's power,
Fairing the foul with Art's false borrowed face,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Sland'ring creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says beauty should look so.

Your Process

1. Read the Sonnet 127 from Shakespeare.William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 127," in *Sonnets* (1609; University of Virginia Electronic Text Center, 1992), etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/ShaSonQ.html. As you read, jot down what is going on in your mind. Do you try to make sense of the poem while reading? Do you become frustrated while reading? Do certain words evoke feelings?
2. Have you read other sonnets by Shakespeare? If so, what do you remember about them? Did you bring your knowledge of the sonnets to the reading of this one? Did you read the poem coming from a particular interpretive community?

3. How did your interpretive community shape your interpretation of the poem? What ideas from your community did you bring in interpreting the poem?

Psychological Reader Response

When we read, we are continually connecting the text to our lives, almost as if the literary work is speaking to us personally. Psychological reader response helps us better understand this phenomenon.

Subjective Analysis

Often called **subjective criticism**, this form of reader-response criticism is championed by David Bleich, who believes that a reader's response becomes the text itself, ripe for analysis (or psychoanalysis). To Bleich, a literary text comprises a real entity—the text, the words on the page, which is a concrete object—and our interpretation of the concrete text, which can be seen as a symbolic object. We "resymbolize" the text through our perceptions and beliefs. Meaning, then, is negotiated: our reading response (highly personal) is often brought to a larger body (communal) to discuss the meaning of a piece of literature. The classroom is a perfect example: you are assigned to read something, you read it and develop a personal interpretation, and then you share that interpretation with the class; ultimately, the class creates a more communal interpretation. In subjective criticism, knowledge is seen as socially constructed from the interaction of all readers; thus, interpretation is seen as personal, yet communal, the common element being that reading is subjective. The transaction that happens in subjective criticism is between the personal reader-oriented response statement and the more public-oriented response statement, which reflects the themes in the text.

Subjective criticism focuses on the negotiation for meaning—your view is not wrong if it is based on some objective reading of the text.

Identity Analysis

Norman Holland's approach to reader response follows in the footsteps of subjective criticism. According to Holland, people deal with texts the same way they deal with life. Holland would say that we gravitate toward particular literary works because they speak to our inner—our psychological—needs. In other words, each reader has an identity that we can analyze, which will open up the literary text to personal interpretation based on a reader's identity. Thus we use the term "**identity analysis**" to describe the form of psychological reader-response criticism that suggests that we are drawn to literary works that speak to our psychological needs—conversely, we are repelled or troubled by works that do not meet our needs.

These identity needs are often repressed in the unconscious and are in need of an outlet, which is provided by reading. When reading, then, we can engage our repressed desires or needs. Why do we read fantasy literature? Romance literature? Thrillers? Self-help books? Science fiction? Reading becomes a personal way to cope with life.

This coping process is interpretation, for literature exposes more about the reader than about the text itself. Holland believes that each reader has an "**identity theme**," a pattern of defense that he or she brings to a text. In turn, we gravitate to texts that tend to reinforce our identity themes and our needs. The contrary is also true: we will avoid texts that challenge our identity or threaten our psychological needs. When we read a text, we see ourselves reflected back at us. Holland calls this transactional process **DEFT**: we read in **d**efense (a coping strategy that aligns with our **e**xpectations) that leads to **f**antasy (our ability to find gratification) and finally to **t**ransformation (that leads to a total unifying effect for the reader).

Your Process

1. List the literary works that you have read multiple times.
2. Why do you return to these works?
3. Do they reflect issues that connect to your life? Can you venture to define your identity theme?
4. Are there literary works you dislike? Why? Do these dislikes have anything to do with your identity theme?

Social Reader Response

Often referred to as "reception theory," social reader response is interested in how a literary work is received over time. In fact, the status of a literary work is dependent on the reader's reception of the work. Hans Robert Jauss, a key figure in "reception theory," argues that the history of the reader is as important as the history of the literary work; in fact, the reader's evolving interpretation is

at the heart of the changing literary status.Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic Reception*. Tans. Timothy Baht. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982). To Jauss, every literary work continually evolves as the reader's reception modifies according to the reader's needs.

A classic example from nineteenth-century American literature is *Moby-Dick* (1851), now considered one of the greatest—if not the greatest—American novel ever written.Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick, or, The Whale* (1952; University of Virginia Electronic Text Center, 1993), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Mel2Mob.html. Andrew Delbanco titles the first chapter of his book *Required Reading: Why Our American Classics Matter Now* (1997) "Melville's Sacramental Style," which brings an almost religious fervor to the importance of Melville generally and *Moby-Dick* specifically.Andrew Delbanco, *Required Reading: Why Our American Classics Matter Now* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1997). But this has not always been the case. Contemporary reviews of *Moby-Dick* were mixed, but many were quite unfavorable; these tainted Melville's reputation and made it difficult for him to continue as a successful author. Melville.org has compiled a collection of contemporary reviews, one of which we reprint here:

Thrice unlucky Herman Melville!…

This is an odd book, professing to be a novel; wantonly eccentric; outrageously bombastic; in places charmingly and vividly descriptive. The author has read up laboriously to make a show of cetalogical [*sic*] learning…Herman Melville is wise in this sort of wisdom. He uses it as stuffing to fill out his skeleton story. Bad stuffing it makes, serving only to try the patience of his readers, and to tempt them to wish both him and his whales at the bottom of an unfathomable sea…

The story of this novel scarcely deserves the name…Mr. Melville cannot do without savages so he makes half of his *dramatis personae* wild Indians, Malays, and other untamed humanities… What the author's original intention in spinning his preposterous yarn was, it is impossible to guess; evidently, when we compare the first and third volumes, it was never carried out…

Having said so much that may be interpreted as a censure, it is right that we should add a word of praise where deserved. There are sketches of scenes at sea, of whaling adventures, storms, and ship-life, equal to any we have ever met with…

Mr. Herman Melville has earned a deservedly high reputation for his performances in descriptive fiction. He has gathered his own materials, and travelled along fresh and untrodden literary paths, exhibiting powers of no common order, and great originality. The more careful, therefore, should he be to maintain the fame he so rapidly acquired, and not waste his strength on such purposeless and unequal doings as these rambling volumes about spermaceti whales. [ellipses in original]"Contemporary Criticism and Reviews," The Life and Works of Herman Melville, http://www.melville.org/hmmoby.htm#Contemporary.

—*London Literary Gazette*, December 6, 1851

Many critics felt that *Moby-Dick* was a falling off of Melville's talent, and that view remained for the rest of Melville's life.

Why the change in reputation? Critics started reassessing *Moby-Dick*, scholars tell us, in 1919, and by 1930 the novel was frequently taught in college classrooms, thus cementing its critical reputation. In 1941 F. O. Mathiessen, in *American Renaissance*, placed Melville as a central writer in the nineteenth century.F. O. Mathieson, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941). In addition, the rise of literary theory that focused on race, class, and gender led to new revisionist readings of Melville; more recently, queer theory has argued that *Moby-Dick* is a central text in gay and lesbian literature.

Another example is Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937).Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998). Hurston was a popular author in America, but contemporary writers like Richard Wright and Langston Hughes were critical of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* because it seemed far away from the "protest fiction" other African American writers (mainly men) were publishing. Here is an excerpt from Richard Wright:

Miss Hurston seems to have no desire whatever to move in the direction of serious fiction… [ellipses in original]

Their Eyes Were Watching God is the story of Zora Neale Hurston's Janie who, at sixteen, married a grubbing farmer at the anxious instigation of her slave-born grandmother. The romantic Janie, in the highly-charged language of Miss Hurston, longed to be a pear tree in blossom and have a "dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace." Restless, she fled from her farmer husband and married Jody, an up-and-coming Negro business man who, in the end, proved to be no better than her first husband. After twenty years of clerking for her self-made Jody, Janie found herself a frustrated

widow of forty with a small fortune on her hands. Tea Cake, “from in and through Georgia,” drifted along and, despite his youth, Janie took him. For more than two years they lived happily; but Tea Cake was bitten by a mad dog and was infected with rabies. One night in a canine rage Tea Cake tried to murder Janie, thereby forcing her to shoot the only man she had ever loved.

Miss Hurston can write, but her prose is cloaked in that facile sensuality that has dogged Negro expression since the days of Phillis Wheatley. Her dialogue manages to catch the psychological movements of the Negro folk-mind in their pure simplicity, but that’s as far as it goes.

Miss Hurston *voluntarily* continues in her novel the tradition which was *forced* upon the Negro in the theatre, that is, the minstrel technique that makes the “white folks” laugh. Her characters eat and laugh and cry and work and kill; they swing like a pendulum eternally in that safe and narrow orbit in which America likes to see the Negro live: between laughter and tears.“Their Eyes Are Watching Their Eyes Were Watching God,” University of Virginia, http://people.virginia.edu/~sfr/enam854/summer/hurston.html.

Thanks to these unfavorable reviews, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* became a forgotten text, and it remained so until Alice Walker, author of *The Color Purple* and many other works, wrote an essay in *Ms. Magazine*, “In Search of Zora Neale Hurston,” that recounts her search for Hurston’s grave in Eatonville, Florida. Walker eventually bought a grave marker for Hurston’s grave, which reflects the beginning of Hurston’s reputation as a great American novelist.Alice Walker, “Finding Zora,” *Ms. Magazine*, March 1975, 74–75. Now *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Hurston are featured in Delbanco’s study on the American classics.

CLASS PROJECT: RECEPTION REVIEW

1. Choose a popular literary text. *The New York Times Best Seller List* is a great place to start.
2. Find three reviews of that work. You can find reviews by using a search engine—Google, for example—and if your library has *Book Review Digest* or *Book Review Index*, these are important databases.
3. Write a short paper that briefly summarizes each review and then comment on the reviews. Do the reviewers agree on the book in their reviews? If not, explore the differences.

Cultural Reader Response

Cultural reader response acknowledges that readers will bring their personal background to the reading of a text. What is that background? A variety of markers, including gender, race, sexual orientation, even political affiliation compose someone’s background. In other words, as readers we may interpret a literary work in light of where we are situated in society.

For example, gender is key to the way that readers respond to a literary work. See Amy Ferdinandt’s response to James Thurber’s “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” later in the chapter. Do men and women read differently? Some may say, “Yes.” An important text to highlight women’s reading experiences is Janice Radway’s *Reading the Romance* (1984).Jane Radway, *Reading the Romance*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Radway examines why women readers gravitate to the romance novel. Radway’s ideas, for example, could be applied to Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* series, a romance series about a young woman, Bella Swan, who falls in love with a vampire, Edward Cullen, but who is also attracted to a werewolf, Jacob Black.Stephenie Meyer, *The Twilight Saga Collection* (London: Little, Brown, 2009). The target audience for *Twilight* is adolescent girls, and it is unusual for boys to read *Twilight*. Why? *Harry Potter*, on the other hand, appeals to both male and female readers, as does Suzanne Collins’s *Hunger Games* trilogy.Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games Trilogy* (New York: Scholastic, 2010). Another useful text to look at is *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts and Contexts* (1986), edited by Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocinio P. Schweickart.Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocinio P. Schweickart, eds., *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

Another example to highlight culture and reading can be seen in Alan Gribben’s NewSouth edition of *Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn* (2011). This controversial edition replaces the “n-word” in *Huckleberry Finn* with the word *slave*; in *Tom Sawyer*, Gribben eliminates any derogatory language that refers to Native Americans and replaces Twain’s use of “half-breed” to, as Gribben writes, “‘half-blood,’ which is less disrespectful and has even taken on a degree of panache since J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005).”Mark Twain, *Mark Twain’s Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn: The NewSouth Edition*, ed. Alan Gribben (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth, 2011); J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (New York: Scholastic, 2005). Gribben acknowledges that Twain’s language can be seen as derogatory toward ethnic groups, which might preclude them from reading the texts.Mark Twain, *Mark Twain’s Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn: The NewSouth Edition*, ed. Alan Gribben (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth, 2011). Critics argue that changing one word for another, as in

Huckleberry Finn, doesn't address the complexity of race issues in Twain. For a fascinating discussion of race regarding Twain, see the Bedford's Case Study in Critical Controversy edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*(second ed., 2004), edited by Gerald Graff and James Phelan. In the unit on race, the editors provide a variety of interpretations of Twain's use of the "n-word," which highlights the complexity of race in reading.Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Case Study in Critical Controversy*, 2nd ed., ed. Gerald Graff and James Phelan (Boston: Bedford, 2003).

As you can see, cultural reader response takes seriously how a literary work might evoke a particular response from a reader based on his or her gender, race, class status, sexual orientation, and so forth, and how a reader might bring a reading strategy based on his or her identity.

Your Process

1. Write a journal or blog entry that explores your cultural position as a reader.
2. Does your gender, race, religion, politics, sexual orientation, and/or another cultural marker partly determine what you read and how you read literary works? Give at least two concrete examples.

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6.4: Reader Response- A Process Approach

Reader response is a powerful literary method that is refreshing since it allows you to concentrate on yourself as a reader specifically or on readers generally.

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 and that.
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 reader-response theory add meaning?
    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 the 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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6.5: Student Writer at Work- Amy Ferdinandt's Reader Response to James Thurber's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

Amy had read Thurber's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" numerous times in high school and was convinced that it was a comical story about a husband and wife. She was somewhat surprised to see the story reprinted again in her college textbook, which reminded her that the story is central to the American literary canon. If you haven't read the story, you can do so at the *Zoetrope: All-Story*website.James Thurber, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," *Zoetrope: All-Story* 5, no. 1 (2001), www.all-story.com/issues.cgi?...y&story_id=100.

AMY'S PROCESS

Since Amy was in search of a story to do a reader-response paper on, she thought she might return to a story she knew quite well. She discovered, however, that her response to the story was quite different than it had been when she read it in high school. In fact, she realized that the story now irritated her. Her goal in the paper was to examine why she had this shift in interpretation of the story.

Amy had just taken a Shakespeare course where they learned about the Renaissance notions of women and men. They studied Ian MacLean's *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, which provides a binary chart of the perceived differences between men and women:Ian MacLean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

Men	Women
limit	unlimited
odd	even
one	plurality
right	left
square	oblong
at rest	moving
straight	curved
light	darkness
good	evil

Amy also added to the list other binaries that she had encountered in discussions in other college classes, many outside of English literature:

Husband	Wife
father	mother
reason	emotion
strong	weak
active	passive
public	domestic

Such a chart, of course, suggests that one category is privileged over another: reason over emotion, good over evil, light over darkness, active over passive, strong over weak, and husband over wife. In other words, men over women. And Amy realized that the humor in Thurber's essay results because he inverts these binaries, because Mrs. Mitty becomes a stereotypical nagging wife

and seems to take on the active male role, while Walter becomes passive, more in line with another stereotype that is placed upon a woman. Now Amy was in a bind: as a female reader, how was she to find humor in such stereotypes of men and women?

Amy's paper blends textual and cultural reader-response theory—the use of gap filling with the notion that gender influences reading strategies. The first draft of Amy's paper begins with a journal entry that she wrote to generate ideas for her paper:

It is certain that women misread "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." I did. I found myself initially wishing that Mrs. Mitty would just let Walter daydream in peace. But after reading the story again and paying attention to the portrayal of Mrs. Mitty, I realized that it is imperative that women rebel against the texts that would oppress them. By misreading a text, the woman reader understands it in a way that is conventional and acceptable to the literary world. But in so doing, she is also distancing herself from the text, not fully embracing it or its meaning in her life. By rebelling against the text, the female reader not only has to understand the point of view of the author and the male audience, but she also has to formulate her own opinions and create a sort of dialogue between the text and herself. Rebelling against the text and the stereotypes encourages an active dialogue between the woman and the text which, in turn, guarantees an active and (most likely) angry reader response. I became a resisting reader.

That paragraph, as you will see, becomes the final paragraph in the finished paper. Amy decided to bring the personal—her impassioned plea—in at the end and allow the more theoretical and objective discussion to drive the paper, thereby making the personal plea at the end more profound and possibly more persuasive.

As a side note, if you think Amy may protest too much in her paper, you might want to read another popular story by Thurber, "The Unicorn in the Garden" (http://english.glendale.cc.ca.us/unicorn1.html).James Thurber, "The Unicorn in the Garden," Glendale Community College, http://english.glendale.cc.ca.us/unicorn1.html.

Is Amy on to something in her paper?

Final Draft

Amy Ferdinandt

Professor Pennington

Introduction to Literature

24 April 20–

To Misread or to Rebel: A Woman's Reading of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

At its simplest, reading is "an activity that is guided by the text; this must be processed by the reader who is then, in turn, affected by what he has processed" (Iser 63). The text is the compass and map, the reader is the explorer. However, the explorer cannot disregard those unexpected boulders in the path which he or she encounters along the journey that are not written on the map. Likewise, the woman reader does not come to the text without outside influences. She comes with her experiences as a woman—a professional woman, a divorcée, a single mother. Her reading, then, is influenced by her experiences. So when she reads a piece of literature like "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" by James Thurber, which paints a highly negative picture of Mitty's wife, the woman reader is forced to either misread the story and accept Mrs. Mitty as a domineering, mothering wife, or rebel against that picture and become angry at the society which sees her that way.

Due to pre-existing sociosexual standards, women see characters, family structures, even societal structures from the bottom as an oppressed group rather than from a powerful position on the top, as men do. As Louise Rosenblatt states: a reader's "tendency toward identification [with characters or events] will certainly be guided by our preoccupations at the time we read. Our problems and needs may lead us to focus on those characters and situations through which we may achieve the satisfactions, the balanced vision, or perhaps merely the unequivocal motives unattained in our own lives" (38). A woman reader who feels chained by her role as a housewife is more likely to identify with an individual who is oppressed or feels trapped than the reader's executive husband is. Likewise, a woman who is unable to have children might respond to a story of a child's death more emotionally than a woman who does not want children. However, if the perspective of a woman does not match that of the male author whose work she is reading, a woman reader who has been shaped by a male-dominated society is forced to misread the text, reacting to the "words on the page in one way rather than another because she operates according to the same set of rules that the author used to generate them" (Tompkins xvii). By accepting the author's perspective and reading the text as he intended, the woman reader is forced to disregard her own, female perspective. This, in turn, leads to a concept called "asymmetrical contingency," described by

Iser as that which occurs “when Partner A gives up trying to implement his own behavioral plan and without resistance follows that of Partner B. He adapts himself to and is absorbed by the behavioral strategy of B” (164). Using this argument, it becomes clear that a woman reader (Partner A) when faced with a text written by a man (Partner B) will most likely succumb to the perspective of the writer and she is thus forced to misread the text. Or, she could rebel against the text and raise an angry, feminist voice in protest.

James Thurber, in the eyes of most literary critics, is one of the foremost American humorists of the 20th century, and his short story “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” is believed to have “ushered in a major [literary] period … where the individual can maintain his self … an appropriate way of assaulting rigid forms” (Elias 432). The rigid form in Thurber’s story is Mrs. Mitty, the main character’s wife. She is portrayed by Walter Mitty as a horrible, mothering nag. As a way of escaping her constant griping, he imagines fantastic daydreams which carry him away from Mrs. Mitty’s voice. Yet she repeatedly interrupts his reveries and Mitty responds to her as though she is “grossly unfamiliar, like a strange woman who had yelled at him in the crowd” (286). Not only is his wife annoying to him, but she is also distant and removed from what he cares about, like a stranger. When she does speak to him, it seems reflective of the way a mother would speak to a child. For example, Mrs. Mitty asks, “‘Why don’t you wear your gloves? Have you lost your gloves?’ Walter Mitty reached in a pocket and brought out the gloves. He put them on, but after she had turned and gone into the building and he had driven on to a red light, he took them off again” (286). Mrs. Mitty’s care for her husband’s health is seen as nagging to Walter Mitty, and the audience is amused that he responds like a child and does the opposite of what Mrs. Mitty asked of him. Finally, the clearest way in which Mrs. Mitty is portrayed as a burdensome wife is at the end of the piece when Walter, waiting for his wife to exit the store, imagines that he is facing “the firing squad; erect and motionless, proud and disdainful, Walter Mitty the Undefeated, inscrutable to the last” (289). Not only is Mrs. Mitty portrayed as a mothering, bothersome hen, but she is ultimately described as that which will be the death of Walter Mitty.

Mrs. Mitty is a direct literary descendant of the first woman to be stereotyped as a nagging wife, Dame Van Winkle, the creation of the American writer, Washington Irving. Likewise, Walter Mitty is a reflection of his dreaming predecessor, Rip Van Winkle, who falls into a deep sleep for a hundred years and awakes to the relief of finding out that his nagging wife has died. Judith Fetterley explains in her book, The Resisting Reader, how such a portrayal of women forces a woman who reads “Rip Van Winkle” and other such stories “to find herself excluded from the experience of the story” so that she “cannot read the story without being assaulted by the negative images of women it presents” (10). The result, it seems, is for a woman reader of a story like “Rip Van Winkle” or “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” to either be excluded from the text, or accept the negative images of women the story puts forth. As Fetterley points out, “The consequence for the female reader is a divided self. She is asked to identify with Rip and against herself, to scorn the amiable sex and act just like it, to laugh at Dame Van Winkle and accept that she represents ‘woman,’ to be at once both repressor and repressed, and ultimately to realize that she is neither” (11). Thus, a woman is forced to misread the text and accept “woman as villain.” as Fetterley names it, or rebel against both the story and its message.

So how does a woman reader respond to this portrayal of Mrs. Mitty? If she were to follow Iser’s claim, she would defer to the male point of view presented by the author. She would sympathize with Mitty, as Thurber wants us to do, and see domineering women in her own life that resemble Mrs. Mitty. She may see her mother and remember all the times that she nagged her about zipping up her coat against the bitter winter wind. Or the female reader might identify Mrs. Mitty with her controlling mother-in-law and chuckle at Mitty’s attempts to escape her control, just as her husband tries to escape the criticism and control of his own mother. Iser’s ideal female reader would undoubtedly look at her own position as mother and wife and would vow to never become such a domineering person. This reader would probably also agree with a critic who says that “Mitty has a wife who embodies the authority of a society in which the husband cannot function” (Lindner 440). She could see the faults in a relationship that is too controlled by a woman and recognize that a man needs to feel important and dominant in his relationship with his wife. It could be said that the female reader would agree completely with Thurber’s portrayal of the domineering wife. The female reader could simply misread the text.

Or, the female reader could rebel against the text. She could see Mrs. Mitty as a woman who is trying to do her best to keep her husband well and cared for. She could see Walter as a man with a fleeting grip on reality who daydreams that he is a fighter pilot, a brilliant surgeon, a gun expert, or a military hero, when he actually is a poor driver with a slow reaction time to a green traffic light. The female reader could read critics of Thurber who say that by allowing his wife to dominate him, Mitty becomes a “non-hero in a civilization in which women are winning the battle of the sexes” (Hasley 533) and become angry that a woman’s fight for equality is seen merely as a battle between the sexes. She could read Walter’s daydreams as his attempt to dominate his wife, since all of his fantasies center on him in traditional roles of power. This, for most women, would cause anger at Mitty (and indirectly Thurber) for

creating and promoting a society which believes that women need to stay subservient to men. From a male point of view, it becomes a battle of the sexes. In a woman's eyes, her reading is simply a struggle for equality within the text and in the world outside that the text reflects.

It is certain that women misread "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." I did. I found myself initially wishing that Mrs. Mitty would just let Walter daydream in peace. But after reading the story again and paying attention to the portrayal of Mrs. Mitty, I realized that it is imperative that women rebel against the texts that would oppress them. By misreading a text, the woman reader understands it in a way that is conventional and acceptable to the literary world. But in so doing, she is also distancing herself from the text, not fully embracing it or its meaning in her life. By rebelling against the text, the female reader not only has to understand the point of view of the author and the male audience, but she also has to formulate her own opinions and create a sort of dialogue between the text and herself. Rebelling against the text and the stereotypes encourages an active dialogue between the woman and the text which, in turn, guarantees an active and (most likely) angry reader response. I became a resisting reader.

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6.6: Student Sample Paper- Hannah Schmitt's "The Death of Intellectualism in Grahame-Smith and Austen's Pride and Prejudice and Zombies"

This chapter begins with an example from Jane Austen's *Emma*. Austen has become a cultural commodity—that is, she is continually updated and revised to make her relevant to our society. On the one hand, there are the serious scholars of Austen, who analyze her work as central to the key canon of literature. On the other hand, there exists the Janeites, who are the ultimate fans of the novelist, groupies so to speak.

This tension leads to interesting updates. The 1995 movie *Clueless*, for example, is an updating of *Emma*, centering the courtship dynamics in a high school. *Lost in Austen*, a 2008 television series, is a kind of time-swapping story where a young Londoner of the twenty-first century changes roles with Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813; Project Gutenberg, 2008), www.gutenberg.org/files/1342/1342-h/1342-h.htm. Karen Joy Fowler's novel *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004) concerns a book club that meets to discuss Austen; it was made into a popular movie in 2007.Karen Joy Fowler, *The Jane Austen Book Club* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

The most audacious reappropriating of Austen may be Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009).Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*(Philadelphia: Quirk, 2009). Hannah was interested in the popularity of such an update and explores possible reasons for this popularity in the following paper, which develops its argument by engaging in reader-response criticism.

Hannah Schmitt

Professor Londo

Literature and Writing

May 22, 20–

The Death of Intellectualism in Grahame-Smith and Austen's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains" (Austen and Grahame-Smith 7). So begins *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, the surprise *New York Times* Best Seller mashup by Seth Grahame-Smith, in which the characters of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* are faced with an imminent zombie apocalypse. When *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was first released in 2009, it marked the beginning of a slew of literary mashups. However, despite Quirk Classic's best efforts, none of its subsequent works matched the popularity of the Austen mashup, which has since been made into a graphic novel and an iPhone game. Interestingly, when *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is re-imagined, even its re-imagined counterpart meets with more success than other literary mashups. The sheer replicability of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* suggests that its appeal extends far beyond a frivolous spoof and touches some cultural nerve. At its heart, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* attempts to grapple with contemporary fears of the death of intellectualism.

In recent years, critics have thought of a number of theories to explain the newfound interest in zombies which dominates popular culture, and our society's interest in zombies has been attributed to everything from "the global financial crisis" (Hall 1) to "a fascination, paranoia and socio-politico-cultural movement of war" (Sulter-Cohen 183). In her article "The Living Dead? Construction of People with Alzheimer's as Zombies," Susan M. Behuniak draws attention to the damaging cultural trend of comparing zombies with individuals who have Alzheimer's, triggering "emotional responses of disgust and utter terror" towards patients (72). Though Behuniak specifically states in her article that she wishes to dissect rather than encourage the connection between zombies and persons with Alzheimer's (71–72), I think the cultural tendency to link them hints that zombies, to at least some extent, tap into our culture's fears about intellectual loss.

Our society is obsessed with the possible failures of its own education system, and struggles with not only education legislation but also misgivings about the educational appropriacy of newer forms of technology such as texting, video gaming, and prolonged Internet exposure. The Bush administration's controversial education reform act, No Child Left Behind, has given way to a slew of texts such as Jonathan Kozol's *The Shame of the Nation*, Diane Ravitch's *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*, and *Many Children Left Behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act Is Damaging Our Children and Our Schools*, edited by Deborah Meier and George Wood, which herald the approaching end of creative intellect and the failure of the education system in the United States. Conservative educational critics, such as John Stossel

in his special “Stupid in America,” blame perceived educational shortcomings of the United States on bureaucracy of the public school system and teacher unions. Conservatives and liberals alike have agreed that the United States’ education system is inadequate, and our culture is regularly confronted with critics warning of the imminent failure of education.

The success of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, then, comes from Grahame-Smith’s ability to recognize and respond to current cultural fears. Our society no longer fears sea monsters, and even traditionally villainous creatures such as vampires and werewolves have become fairly innocuous (or, at least, brooding and misunderstood), because our society has come to either embrace or deny the fears which created these creatures. If one views zombies as the embodiments of the death of intellect, then zombies remain potent because of their immediate cultural relevance.

As Jane Austen’s most famous novel, *Pride and Prejudice* has defined our culture’s understanding of Regency-era literature and become virtually synonymous with cultured romance. However, the popularity of *Pride and Prejudice* comes at the cost of sacrificing the nonromantic elements of her work, such as her focus on social status and satiric commentary on decorum. In her essay “Austen Therapy: *Pride and Prejudice* and Popular Culture,” Marilyn Francus argues that modern adaptions of *Pride and Prejudice*—particularly chick lit such as Shannon Hale’s *Austenland* and Alexandra Potter’s *Me and Mr. Darcy*—“perpetuate *Pride and Prejudice* as a pure romance narrative” and “reinforce *Pride and Prejudice*’s power as a real, realizable narrative, rather than as a fictional one.” Audiences recognize characters such as Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet but also reduce these characters to their broadest, most cliched sense, as models for romantic literature. Cultural re-imaginations of *Pride and Prejudice* have established the prominence and recognizability of the text, but also remove *Pride and Prejudice*from its larger social context, thereby creating an atmosphere for *Pride and Prejudice* which encourages readers to distance the text from its nonromantic elements. *Pride and Prejudice* is recognizable enough that readers understand how the characters ought to act and popular enough that some audiences will accept adaptions and updating as continuations rather than affronts, making it ideal fodder for parody.

The humor of this parody allows the Grahame-Smith to justify the “ultra-violent zombie mayhem” the book’s tagline promises. The violence of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* reflects the fear of ostracization and irrationality which may accompany the end of intellectualism. The intellectual void of the zombies in the novel is so potent that the only way the otherwise-rational main characters are able to defend themselves is through brute force. The violence of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* affects all of the characters, and becomes the only acceptable way to handle zombie attacks. In this sense, all the characters in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* are affected by the zombie-creating plague, even if they are not directly afflicted. Because the “unmentionables” draw strength from their numbers, the sympathy of others, and the ease by which the infection is spread, the main characters must be merciless. Zombies, like the intellectual void they represent, are incapable of listening to reason. Furthermore, zombieism is transmitted through biting, which zombies do fairly frequently, and upon death, so virtually anyone can contract “the strange plague” (30). Any character can become a zombie at any time, and only violence can stop zombies.

The violence created by the presence of zombies affects nearly all of the characters in the text. Mr. Bennet, who was reading a newspaper at the beginning of the original text, is now polishing his musket when Mrs. Bennet tells him of their new neighbor (7). Lady Catherine de Bourgh becomes a famous zombie slayer, and her house comes equipped with a dojo and ninjas (129). The five Bennet sisters—Jane included—flip-flop between their original personalities and their hardened, warrior personas. Even Mr. Bingley’s values change, as he notices that he has “never seen ladies so steady-handed in combat” (32). Because the threat of zombie is always-present, the characters change the way they relate in order to accommodate their chaotic lifestyle.

Even when there are no zombies present, the characters’ methods of relating to each other change. Elizabeth signals her rejection of Mr. Darcy’s first proposal by physically attacking him (151), and at the end of the novel Lady Catherine challenges Elizabeth to a death match (289). When Mr. Darcy goes to London in search of Wickham after Lydia’s elopement, he beats Mrs. Younge into submission (259) and, after he finds Wickham, Darcy “render[s] him [Wickham] lame, as punishment for a lifetime of vice and betrayal” (260). Though presented comedically, the extreme amounts of violence in the characters need to use in order to vanquish their undead foes spills into other aspects of their lives, and the social discourse which marked all of the previously mentioned circumstances in the original *Pride and Prejudice* become characterized by violence. The characters lose their abilities to talk through their problems and express their anger pacifistically, and, in the face of the constant danger of losing their logic, actually forfeit their ability to coexist peaceably.

Of all the characters in the text, Mr. Collins and Mrs. Bennet undergo perhaps the least noticeable changes in character, perhaps because they already address the concerns raised by *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. As a character who lacks intellectualism himself, Mr. Collins reminds readers of how the perception of intellect has changed since Austen’s time. Both Mrs. Bennet and Mr.

Collins lack the violent urgency of the other characters in the text, and seem blithely unaware of the looming zombie apocalypse—indeed, Mr. Collins fails to notice when his own wife, who had been "stricken" just before their engagement (99), gradually devolves into a slobbering brain eater (120). Mrs. Bennet is far too concerned with the future marital happiness of her daughters to register the dangers of attending social events, when zombies are most inclined to launch their ill-conceived assaults. Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Collins represent a different kind of intellectual death—pettiness and self-obsessed conceit. However, the pomp of these characters, while recognizable to modern audiences, is not as totalizing as the anti-intellectualism of the zombies. Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Collins are still foolish, but even they possess some grain of sense. The "unmentionables" which populate the novel do not.

Just as significant as the success of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is the relative failure of subsequent texts. While *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* made the New York Times Bestseller list after its release, it lacked the enthusiastic reception and cult classic-style popularity of its predecessor because, unlike *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* did not tap into a cultural moment. Our society has no reason to fear or relate to sea monsters. The mashup genre depends on cultural context for its success.

Through its use of dark comedy, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* both temporarily assuages its audience's fears of the decline of intellectualism and subtly reminds readers that a society's ability to cohere is directly related to its intellectual capacities. By taking characters who have become cultural staples because of their simplifications, Grahame-Smith creates a text which is at once highly recognizable and available for satire. The success of this novel directly hinges on its ability to recognize and reproduce cultural fears, allowing readers to achieve a catharsis.

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6.7: Student Sample Paper- Erin Huebner Gloege's "Identity Themes in Dickinson- Four Students Reading"

Erin's paper presented here adopts Holland's notion that literature taps into each reader's identity theme, which directs the way that readers will respond to and interpret a literary work. This paper breaks a bit from the traditional thesis-support structure as Erin describes her research project and makes general observations about the four readers at the end of the paper.

After Great Pain

After great pain, a formal feeling comes—

The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs—

The stiff Heart questions was it He, that bore,

And Yesterday, or Centuries before?

The Feet, mechanical, go round—

Of Ground, or Air, or Ought—

A Wooden way

Regardless grown,

A Quartz contentment, like a stone—

This is the Hour of Lead—

Remembered, if outlived,

As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow—

First—Chill—then Stupor—then the letting go—

Erin Huebner Gloege

Professor Pennington

Literature and Theory

November 7, 20–

Identity Themes in Dickinson: Four Students Reading

When reading the same poem, two readers will ultimately come to different interpretations of which neither one is necessarily more correct than the other. Because of the inevitable variance of responses, some literary critics have abandoned the notion that an "objective" reading exists. Reader-response critics agree that all readings are "subjective" because they must be filtered through the reader. Each reader brings a unique background and approach to the work that he or she will read. In the words of Norman Holland, "As readers, each of us will bring different kinds of external information to bear. Each will seek out the particular themes that concern him. Each will have different ways of making the text into an experience with a coherence and significance that satisfies" (123). Critics, such as David Bleich, go so far as to say that "it is the reader who determines whether a piece of writing is literature" (1254). If it is assumed that the reader is essential to the distinction of a work as literature and each reader approaches the work differently, then how do we understand and evaluate different interpretations of a work.

Norman Holland presents a strategy that correlates any interpretation to the individual personality of the reader: "*interpretation is a function of identity*" (123). When a reader interprets a text through his or her identity theme, he or she first fits the text closely to his or her way of adapting to difficult situation; he or she approaches the work as he or she would approach life. Secondly, the reader unconsciously associates the work to his or her desires and experiences. Lastly, the reader moves from the desires to significance where he or she can share and communicate a meaning with others (Holland 126–27). These steps are all taken in accordance with the person's identity theme, the way he or she approaches life. Thus, an interpretation of a text can be analyzed and explained by understanding the reader's approach to life, his or her identity theme.

The Project

My goal for this paper is to apply Holland's theory of identity themes to particular readers and their interpretations. I will show that indeed each of the interpretations that I present are related to the reader's approach to life. With the four interpretations that I collected, I will first give a brief profile of the reader and his or her approach to life followed by a generalization of this profile, which I see as the identity theme for this person. Secondly, I will relate, as was written by the reader, his or her interpretation, which is often in the form of scattered notes. When helpful, I will also relate the reader's verbal comments, which usually show a judgment by the reader of his or her ability to interpret literature. Finally, I will explain the connection between the reader's approach to life and his or her interpretation. As assumed by Holland's theory, the following examples demonstrate a direct correlation between the reader's identity theme and his or her interpretation.

In order to give a full understanding of this project, I will present my methods for collecting the interpretation. First, I chose a poem by Emily Dickinson called "After Great Pain." I printed copies of the poem without the author's name on it. I then gave the poem to four readers, which I tried to pick from various academic fields. In addition, I know all of the readers personally; I found this necessary under the time restraint and my need to create a profile of the reader without developing an extensive process of getting to know the person. I asked the readers to write their responses on the sheet of paper and to answer the following questions: 1) what is the poem about or what does it mean? and 2) do you like it and why or why not?

The only task that remains is the heart of the matter, to present the profiles and interpretations and link them in a way that demonstrates that the interpretation is the result of the identity theme.

Profiles, Interpretations, and Their Connection

All of the readers are resident on a Catholic liberal arts college campus either as students or professors. Additionally, all are of Caucasian decent. The profiles attempt to provide general additional information as well as the essential background for an understanding of the person's identity theme.

Reader A

Reader A is a twenty-one year old female majoring in religious studies and with a minor in peace and justice studies. Because of her academic area as well as her commitment to service, she is keenly aware of pain and need and the issues of justice involved in helping those in need. She has been closely touched by the plight of abused people especially children. Through conversations with her, I have learned that she is specifically interested in how sexual and physical abuse affects victims throughout their lives. She desires very much to understand the struggle and healing process that an abused person undergoes; understanding is the key to facing such a struggle. I would state her identity theme as follows: when faced with difficulty, an understanding of its effects on the person as a whole is essential to that person's ability to cope with the difficulty.

Reader A's Interpretation

- Sexual Abuse/Physical Abuse 3rd & 4th line—childhood
- Pressing on, living numbly so as not to feel / acknowledge feeling
- Like:–can identify
- –hope in last line?: "then the letting go"
- Dislike: use of capitalization—some are appropriate, others I cannot see significance of their capitalization
- Good poem! I keep seeing new things/feeling more deeply each time I read it!

Interpretation as the Result of Identity Theme

Reader A's interpretation first and foremost is immediately connects the "great pain" with abuse and "Yesterday, or Centuries before" with childhood. Immediately following the connection to childhood abuse, she describes some stages of dealing with the pain that are not particularly connected to any one line of the poem but seem to be an overall feeling. The stages are apparent in her note: "pressing on, living Numbly so as not to feel/acknowledge feeling." Her understanding of the response to abuse as expressed in the above note ends her interpretation, leading me to think that having gained an understanding of the response, she is satisfied with her interpretation. She has applied her identity theme of needing understanding in order to cope; she copes with the abuse she finds in the poem by understanding and identifying a reaction to it. Being satisfied, she moves on to her feelings towards the poem. She like it because she "can identify" with it or in other words she connects with the author's understanding of the reaction to pain; reader A finds that the author, just like her, seeks an understanding of the reaction to pain. Yet she dislikes the some of the

capitalization because she “cannot see significance of their capitalization.” Her lack of understanding is the only disturbing point. Reader A’s final conclusion as should be expected is positive because she has found her identity theme of understanding difficulty.

Reader B

Reader B is a twenty-year-old female majoring in music and education with a minor in chemistry. Probably due to her musical and scientific background, she is aware of how things work together. For her, everything has a proper place and explanation. She would agree with my description of her as a “neat freak.” She finds disorder disturbing and responds to unsettling events by putting other things in her world into place, like lining up books or always making her bed. I would state her identity theme as follows: when faced with difficulty, organization is the key to maintaining sanity and staying in control.

Reader B’s Interpretation

- Calm after the storm—remembering the agony; in remembering the body reacts with stiffness—trying not to feel—numbness
- Could it be remembering an abortion?—stiffness, lifelessness—as the life has gone out of the person—Chill—Stupor—letting go
- Want to be strong—Nerves sit ceremoniously—but the feelings all come back and the only way to get rid of them is to let go
- Honestly, this doesn’t really make sense to me. Different phrases seem like they invoke images of God “was it He, that bore…” “A Wooden way”
- I don’t really like it because it all just seems to be fragments, although thoughts are usually just fragments!

Interpretation as the Result of Identity Theme

Reader B is organized about her interpretation. She takes each stanza and tries to find some meaning in it. With each partial interpretation, she cites particular lines, words, or feelings that led her to her conclusion of meaning. For example, when she suggests that the poem could be about “remembering an abortion,” she calls on “stiffness,” which is probably connected to “stiff Heart.” The most interesting thing about Reader B’s response is not her interpretation but her reaction to the poem. She says that the poem “doesn’t really make sense” and then comments on her dislike of the fragmentation of the poem. Her identity theme of organization ties her inability to understand to the lack of organization in the poem. Fragments seem unconnected and disorganized to her; thus, she is left without the ability to cope with the difficulty that the poem presents her because she cannot find order in the “madness.” Unable to find order, she cannot identify with the author’s description of a reaction to pain and therefore dislikes the poem. She finds her identity theme incompatible with the poem and thus abandons it.

Reader C

Reader C is a nineteen-year-old male majoring in philosophy and political science. Over the past two years, much of his life has been centered on the development of his faith. He includes God as a constant in his picture of life especially when presented with any difficulties. He is also aware that personally he has been faced with only minor difficulties. Sometimes he feels inadequate in relating to others who have experienced more traumatic events in their lives. He has also been impressed by his friends’ ability to include faith in their difficulties. I would state his identity theme as follows: when faced with difficulty, turning to God is essential to coping and surviving.

Reader C’s Interpretation

[noted on text] Line 4: “He”–Christ, “bore”–Jesus bearing sins

- Line 7: “A Wooden way”—Crucifixion?
- Line 13: “First—Chill—then Stupor—then the letting go—”—process of dealing with great pain
- I took this poem as a way people deal with personal trauma in their life. In the first stanza I get a sense of the dust settle after a disaster has struck, and a person starting to settle down and ask: “Why did this happen to me?” Even more specifically if God is there and bearing, or helping with, the person’s pain.
- The second stanza is rather confusing. I don’t understand how the imagery fits with my interpretation of the poem.
- In the last stanza has the tone of the first, with the image of winter and cold symbolizing pain and confusion and the “Freezing persons” going through the process of dealing with pain: the shock, the confusion, and then learning to live with it.

Interpretation as the Result of Identity Theme

Reader C immediately identifies “great pain” as a trauma. Then, he reacts as his identity theme would dictate: he brings God into the picture. He identifies a question that is often directed towards God: “Why did this happen to me?” His next step is to specify the question as a relation to God; he includes God as a supporting figure. His idea of God as a supportive figure does not seem to stem from any one part of the poem but more from some of the images that Reader C has identified with God such as “He bore” as Christ bearing sins. As Reader C continues with his interpretation, he admits that he cannot fit the second stanza into his interpretation. Even so, he does not abandon his interpretation but comes back to it in the third stanza. Reader C’s final paragraph does not mention God but talks of a person dealing with difficulty. To me, it seems as though Reader C finds no need to further back up his interjection of God into the poem. He deciphers difficulty, inserts God as support, and goes on dealing with the difficulty. This response is consistent with his identity theme, which calls for the presence of God whenever presented with a difficulty.

Reader D

Reader D is a late middle-aged male mathematics professor. Being mathematically minded, he expects a solution or a “right answer” to any presented problem. In addition, he has been exposed to more losses than my previous readers because of his age and experience with a large student and faculty body. Experience of death and loss always increase with age. I would state his identity theme as follows: when face with difficulty, one must seek the “right answer” in order to find resolution.

Reader D’s Interpretation

The poem describes the feeling after a tremendous loss (perhaps the death of someone very close). The person suffering the loss becomes numb, going through life in a listless manner, oblivious to everything; focusing only on the pain. If a person survives this pain, it is remembered as a central event in his or her life. The last line brings to mind the stages of anger, denial, and resolution.

- The first paragraph brings to mind the question of whether this poem is what God suffered when Jesus suffered and died.

Interpretation as the Result of Identity Theme

Reader D identifies the “great pain” as a loss probably due to death. I ascribe this interpretation as coming from his experiences with death. He then describes the person’s reactions to the death. This interpretation probably grows out of his observations and personal experience of the difficulty of dealing with death. Although his interpretation does not seem directly related to his identity theme, his comments concerning his interpretation do. After I had read his response, he asked me if he had got it right. He wanted to know if he had come up with the right answer. He assumed that there was a correct solution to the problem I had proposed of interpreting the poem. So, rather than using his identity theme to interpret the poem, Reader D uses his identity theme to approach the poem. Reader D, it appears, struggles to understand the poem, and he responds, according to his identity theme, by trying to find the “right answer.”

Conclusion

Although I began this project with some doubt about the relation between a person’s approach to life and their interpretations to a poem, I have been convinced by the above examples that there is definitely a correlation between the two. Even so, I also believe that this project fails to show a direct and undeniable cause and effect relationship between a person’s identity theme and his or her approach to literature. Holland’s theory in this preliminary investigation holds up, but I still have doubts about its strength under a more vigorous examination because the correspondence found in the above examples does not have the “tight fit” described by Holland.

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6.8: End-of-Chapter Assessment

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we examined in depth the strategies for writing a paper on literature using reader-response theory. The basic tenets of reader response, we learned, are the following:

- A reader-response critic focuses on the reader as a central figure in literary interpretation.
- You learned that there are five categories of such theory: textual, experiential, psychological, social, and cultural.
- You were given the opportunity to see the reader-response methodology practiced in three student papers.
- You learned about the importance of the writing process, including peer review and the strategies for conducting peer review. Many of you also participated in peer review for your reader-response paper.
- You wrote a reader-response analysis of a work of literature.

WRITING EXERCISES

Read Kate Chopin's "A Story of an Hour" (1894), which follows.Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour," Virginia Commonwealth University, http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/webtexts/hour. As you read, write down what you were experiencing as you read the story (capturing the essence of experiential reader response).

"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 [*sic*] 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 her 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 [*sic*] 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.

1. Describe in a short paragraph what you were experiencing as you read the story. Could you focus on some aspect of that experience for a longer paper?
2. Now reread the story. Briefly describe in short paragraphs how you might apply the following reader-response approaches in a more formal paper.

Textual

How does the story guide you to make certain assumptions about the way we should read the text? What gaps are you asked to fill in to make sense of the story? Write a short ghost chapter that describes the marriage between the wife and husband (in the voice of the wife). Do the same, but this time in the voice of the husband.

Psychological

What identity themes might the story evoke in readers?

Experiential

You started this exercise by writing down your reading experience. List the possible interpretive communities that could find meaning in the story. An obvious example would be feminist critics who are trained to read a literary text through gender awareness.

Social

Find contemporary reviews of “A Story of an Hour.” How was it received? Why do you think it is such a canonical story in American literature?

Cultural

How might gender determine the interpretation of the story? Might a female reader respond differently than a male reader? The story privileges heterosexuality: How might a gay or lesbian response look? Might race and class come into play?

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS PEER REVIEW

1. Have students conduct peer review on one of the sample papers using the organizational peer-review guide found in Chapter 10, Section 10.5:
    1. Place students in groups of three to four and have them reread the paper for peer review and fill out the guide sheet
    2. Have students discuss their feedback responses to the sample paper.
    3. Have students list the major feedback they discussed.
    4. Put the major issues on the blackboard or whiteboard.
    5. Discuss these responses. Make certain that you let students know that any paper can be improved.
2. Plan to have your students conduct peer review on the drafts of their papers that they are writing in your class. Use the peer-review guide from Chapter 10, Section 10.5 and have them work in groups of three and do the following:
    1. Bring two hard copies of their paper so that each member can read the paper, OR work in a computer lab where students can share their papers on line. You may want to use the educational software that your campus supports—for example, Blackboard or Moodle—or you can have students use Google Drive to set up their peer-review groups.
    2. Have two students focus on the first paper in the group. While these students are reading, have the other student read the other two student papers.
    3. The two students should quickly fill out the peer-review sheet and then have a brief conversation about the strengths of the paper and ways the paper could be improved.
    4. Move to the next student and follow the same process. Depending on the length of your class, you may have to reduce the peer-review groups to two students.
    5. If time permits, ask the students to provide general comments—or ask questions—about the specific papers or the assignment overall.
    6. You may want to use peer review for each paper in your class.

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6.9: Suggestions for Further Reading

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Writing about History and Culture from a New Historical Perspective

Learning Objectives

- Examine methods that scholars use to write about literature as a historical text.
- Apply New Historical theory to works of literature.
- Research and synthesize primary and secondary sources for a historical research paper.
- Review and evaluate the research and writing process of a peer writer.
- Draft and revise a historical critique of a literary work.

7.1: Literary Snapshot- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
7.2: New Historical Criticism- An Overview
7.3: Finding a Historical Topic- Paige Caulum's Melville's "Benito Cereno"
7.4: Finding Historical Evidence- Melville's "Benito Cereno"
7.5: Testing and Refining Your Historical Claim
7.6: Student Sample Paper- Paige Caulum's "Herman Melville's 'Benito Cereno'- A Political Commentary on Manifest Destiny"
7.7: Writing about History and Culture- A Process Approach
7.8: Student Sample Paper- Stefanie Jochman's "'Words of Lead'- Emily Dickinson's Poetry and the Grief of the Civil War"
7.9: Strategies for Starting Your New Historical Paper
7.10: End-of-Chapter Assessment
7.11: Suggestions for Further Reading

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7.1: Literary Snapshot- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Lewis Carroll, as we found out in previous chapters, is most famous for two books: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872). These books follow the adventures of a seven-year-old, Alice, who tumbles down a rabbit hole (*Wonderland*) and enters a magic mirror (*Looking-Glass*), entering a nonsensical world of the imagination. If you have not already read these classic books—or wish to reread them—you can access them at the following links:

http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html

etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html

Once Alice tumbles down the rabbit-hole in *Wonderland*, she encounters a topsy-turvy world that is disconnected from the real Victorian world she is from. She forgets the lessons she learns in her world quickly and drinks from a bottle that is marked "DRINK ME," which shuts her "up like a telescope."Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), chap. 1, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html. Undaunted, she then eats from a cake in a box marked "EAT ME," which as you can guess, makes her quite large—nine feet tall, to be exact—which is so large that when she gets upset over her predicament and starts to cry, she creates an enormous pool of tears. As she starts swimming, having now shrunk to about two feet in height, she finds herself paddling with an odd menagerie of animals—a mouse, a duck, a lory, an eaglet, and even an extinct dodo bird.

Needless to say, the animals don't like being so wet. How to dry off? Let's listen in on the plans:

They were indeed a queer-looking party that assembled on the bank—the birds with draggled feathers, the animals with their fur clinging close to them, and all dripping wet, cross, and uncomfortable.

The first question of course was, how to get dry again: they had a consultation about this, and after a few minutes it seemed quite natural to Alice to find herself talking familiarly with them, as if she had known them all her life. Indeed, she had quite a long argument with the Lory, who at last turned sulky, and would only say, "I am older than you, and must know better"; and this Alice would not allow without knowing how old it was, and, as the Lory positively refused to tell its age, there was no more to be said.

At last the Mouse, who seemed to be a person of authority among them, called out, "Sit down, all of you, and listen to me! *I'll* soon make you dry enough!" They all sat down at once, in a large ring, with the Mouse in the middle. Alice kept her eyes anxiously fixed on it, for she felt sure she would catch a bad cold if she did not get dry very soon.

"Ahem!" said the Mouse with an important air, "are you all ready? This is the driest thing I know. Silence all round, if you please! '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—'"

"Ugh!" said the Lory, with a shiver.

"I beg your pardon!" said the Mouse, frowning, but very politely: "Did you speak?"

"Not I!" said the Lory hastily.

"I thought you did," said the Mouse. "—I proceed. 'Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria, declared for him: and even Stigand, the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable–'"

"Found *what*?" said the Duck.

"Found *it*," the Mouse replied rather crossly: "of course you know what '*it*' means."

"I know what '*it*' means well enough, when *I* find a thing," said the Duck: "it's generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?"

The Mouse did not notice this question, but hurriedly went on, "'—found it advisable to go with Edgar Atheling to meet William and offer him the crown. William's conduct at first was moderate. But the insolence of his Normans—' How are you getting on now, my dear?" it continued, turning to Alice as it spoke.

"As wet as ever," said Alice in a melancholy tone: "it doesn't seem to dry me at all."Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), chap. 3, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html.

The mouse believes that by telling a "dry" tale, he will dry off his companions. And what better dry tale to tell than one involving a history lesson, one about William the Conqueror (of the eleventh century). Carroll, of course, is having fun with the perception that history is boring, particularly when history becomes a series of factual dates that require memorization. In fact, much of *Wonderland*—as well as the sequel *Through the Looking-Glass*—finds Carroll satirizing various Victorian social issues, including the notion of the child (and gender roles), the purpose of literature for children, the debate over Darwinian evolution, the discussion over linguistic development, the controversy over religious debate (Lewis Carroll, whose real name was Charles Dodgson, was a professor and clergyman at Oxford University), and the most productive educational methods. And we are only scratching the surface here.

In other words, if we read *Wonderland* as a historical text that illuminates the age in which Carroll wrote, then history is certainly not dry, nor is literature dry, for the two speak in dialogue with one another. Just as Alice tumbles down the rabbit hole, you will be asked in this unit to enter the wonderland that is called New Historical criticism. Instead of being dry, we hope that we whet your appetite for writing about literature focusing on history and culture.

Your Process

1. Has your experience studying history been similar to Alice's? Or have you enjoyed studying history? Jot down your thoughts about studying history.
2. Have you ever read a work of literature that made you think about a particular historical event or period? Describe this work and its connection to that historical moment.

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7.2: New Historical Criticism- An Overview

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.

Your Process

1. How have you learned to connect literature and history? Jot down two or three examples from previous classes.

Sometimes it's obvious the way history can help us understand a piece of literature. When reading William Butler Yeats's poem "Easter 1916" (which you can read online at http://www.poetryfoundation .org/poem/172061), for instance, readers immediately wonder how the date named in the poem's title shapes the poem's meaning."Easter 1916 by William Butler Yeats," The Atlantic Online, http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/unbound/poetry/soundings/easter.htm.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.

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* & American Culture," University of Virginia, http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/sitemap.html. *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).

Your Process

1. Pick something you've read or watched recently. It doesn't matter what you choose: 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.

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" (http://www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/object.xq?objectid=songsie.b.illbk.36&java=yes), written by the poet William Blake in 1794.

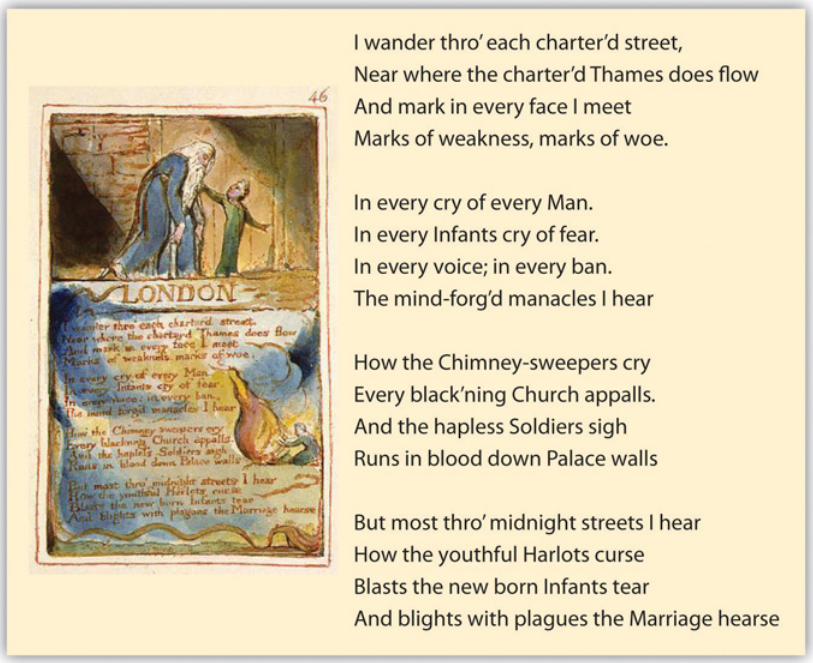


Illustration by William Blake for "London" from his Songs of Innocence and Experience (1794).

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.*Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. "charter," http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/charter. "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. To help us think through these ideas further, let’s look at a student’s research and writing process.

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7.3: Finding a Historical Topic- Paige Caulum's Melville's "Benito Cereno"

Paige is a student in an Introduction to Literature class. She's preparing to write her final research paper for the class, and she's interested in writing about Herman Melville's short story "Benito Cereno," which she read earlier in the semester.Herman Melville, "Benito Cereno," *Putnam's Monthly*6, no. 34 (October 1855): 353–67, Making of America Collection, Cornell University Library, http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=putn;cc=putn;rgn= full%20text;idno=putn0006-4;didno=putn0006-4;view=image;seq=0359;nodepu tn0006-4%253A4.

Your Process

1. As we've suggested throughout this text, these process descriptions will make more sense if you've read the literary work under discussion. For this section, you should read Herman Melville's 1855 short story, "Benito Cereno." Our discussion of student research and writing will reveal important plot details that you may want to discover on your own first. Melville first published the story serially, in three parts, in *Putnam's Monthly*. You can read it just as Melville's readers did via the following links:
   - Part one: http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=putn;cc=putn;rgn=fulltext; idno=putn0006-4;didno=putn0006-4;view=image;seq=0359;node=putn0006-4%3A4.
   - Part two: http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=putn;cc=putn;rgn=fulltext; idno=putn0006-5;didno=putn0006-5;view=image;seq=0465;node=putn0006-5%3A3.
   - Part three: http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=putn;cc=putn;rgn=full text;idno=putn0006-6;didno=putn0006-6;view=image;seq=0639;node=putn0006-6%3A18.
2. As you read, make note of anything that seems historically interesting: references to names, dates, events, customs, and so forth.

Though written in 1855, "Benito Cereno" is set in 1799. The story focuses on Captain Amasa Delano, whose ship, the *Bachelor's Delight*, encounters the Spanish slave ship *San Dominick* near an island off the coast of Chile. The story is, in many ways, a detective story, as Captain Delano attempts to decipher the strange behavior of the *San Dominick*'s crew, the enslaved Africans, and the ship's captain, Benito Cereno. The story culminates in a dramatic moment of violence that reveals to Delano that the Africans are actually in charge of the ship. The Spanish sailors, Delano realizes, have been acting their "rightful" parts on threat of death from the former slaves, who hope Delano will leave while still unaware of their mutiny. Let's look at Paige's process to see how she develops a **working thesis**—an early idea about what she might use as her claim for the essay—about Melville's story.

PAIGE'S PROCESS

1. Paige knows that the publication date of the story is important, so she does some preliminary research to identify the important issues that were confronting America specifically and the world generally during the 1850s. In other words, Paige considers that "Benito Cereno" may be engaging in some form of cultural debate or discussion.
2. Paige then does a background investigation of Herman Melville; she finds biographical material helpful.
3. After her initial inquiries, Paige thinks that her paper will focus on the historical issue of slavery in the story, for "Benito Cereno" can be read as a meditation on slavery's injustices. Paige discovers that Melville was an abolitionist and that critics interpret "Benito Cereno" as Melville's warning to his fellow citizens about the devastating—and potentially bloody—consequences that could follow should the United States continue to allow slavery. Many scholars, Paige uncovers, believe that Melville based his story on the Amistad case (http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/amistad), settled in 1841 by the United States Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the Africans who rebelled against and killed their captors."Teaching with Documents: The Amistad Case," United States National Archives, http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/amistad. On the other hand, in Melville's story the rebel slaves are not vindicated; in fact, they are executed for their actions against the crew of the *San Dominick*.
4. Paige is interested in exploring these tensions further. She hopes that some historical research can help her understand the complex messages about race and slavery in Melville's "Benito Cereno."
5. Before doing significant research, however, Paige develops a working thesis that will help her make sense of her early research:

Working Thesis

Melville's 'Benito Cereno' can be understood as a political commentary on the potential consequences of slavery for the United States.

This working claim is very broad: a reader would certainly ask, "Understood by whom?" "What potential consequences?" and "What kind of commentary?" However, this broad claim gives Paige a starting point. She has isolated a few key terms that she will use as she begins to research the topic further.

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7.4: Finding Historical Evidence- Melville's "Benito Cereno"

Now that Paige has a topic, she needs to begin researching it to find **evidence** that she can use to develop and support her claims. Most historical claims require two kinds of evidence. **Primary sources** are texts—literary or nonliterary—from the historical period being studied. When you're writing about literature, your literary texts are usually primary sources. Paige is writing about American culture just before the Civil War, and so she can consider "Benito Cereno"—which was written in 1855—a primary text. Paige knows that she needs more primary texts to help her understand the complex treatment of slavery in "Benito Cereno." She must read the short story in parallel with contemporary texts that discuss similar subjects. She decides to look for other texts about slavery in several digital archives. A good researcher, however, will make certain that he or she has investigated what other scholars have written on a particular topic. In order to help her make better sense of her primary sources, she next turns to the ideas of other modern scholars. Books and articles written by scholars about a particular literary work, historical period, or other academic topic are referred to as **secondary sources**.

Archival research involves visiting collections of primary texts. Sometimes these collections are stored physically in libraries. Scholars interested in these materials must travel to the archives that hold them. If you're a student in California and are interested in William Faulkner, for instance, you'd have to travel to the University of Mississippi or the University of Virginia to see many of Faulkner's papers. Though special collections like these are accessible only to a small group of faculty and students (mostly those at larger research universities), this type of research has been the basis of most historical literary criticism. Increasingly, however, primary sources can be found in extensive—and often freely available—**digital archives**. Today, literary scholars and students at all types of schools have access to a wealth of primary historical sources, including magazines, newspapers, out-of-print novels, artworks, and much more.

PAIGE'S PROCESS

1. Paige begins her research centered on her working thesis claim. She first wants to see what other literary critics have written about "Benito Cereno," so she uses the *Modern Language Association International Bibliography*. She finds that there are 270 entries for her story; when she restricts the search to "Benito Cereno" and "slavery," she finds that there are thirty-seven entries. She suspects that her idea is a common one.
2. As she continues her research, she is especially interested in digital archives. She finds an important research source: Cornell University's Making of America Collection (http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moa), a free archive of primary materials from the nineteenth century.Making of America Collection, Cornell University Library, http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moa. When she first visits the collection, she searches for "slave." This search returns 21,319 matches: far too many for Paige to investigate for this paper. Searching in digital archives can be tricky. When a search term is too broad, like Paige's, then it will result in too many primary sources. If a scholar's search terms are too precise, she might not find anything using them. When Paige searches Making of America for the term "slave revolt," for instance, nothing matches. This isn't because none of the sources there discuss slaves rebelling against their masters, but because none happen to use that exact term to describe those rebellions.

   Good historical research requires a mixture of precise and broad inquiries. When "slave" returned 21,319 hits, Paige knew she needed to hone her search terms. When "slave revolt" returned none, she also knew to try other combinations, to keep experimenting until she found a set of results she could manage. Good historical research also requires scholarly flexibility. Often claims must be reconsidered, adjusted, or entirely revised in light of the primary evidence the scholar uncovers. Writing well about history requires that a scholar's claims follow from the evidence; historical criticism suffers when scholars pick and choose only the evidence that fits the claims they want to make.

3. Paige's initial idea on slavery seems simultaneously too common and too large, so she begins to rethink her topic. How about approaching the story from a different perspective? As she looks through the Making of America Collection, she finds an article, titled "Cuba," in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* from January of 1853 (http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=putn;cc=putn;idno= putn0001-1;node=putn0001-1%253A3;view=image;seq=15;size=100;page=root)."Cuba," *Putnam's Monthly* 14, no. 5 (January 1853): 3–16, Making of America Collection, Cornell University Library, http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=putn;cc=putn;idno=putn0001-1;node=putn0001-1%253A3; view=image;seq=15;size=100;page=root. While this article does briefly mention Americans' fears of "the rising of a fierce black population"—what she hoped to read about—she becomes

more and more interested in the way that the author compares the American "race" and the Spanish "race." The author, no doubt a white American, consistently describes white Americans in glowing, positive terms, while describing the Spanish rulers of Cuba in less flattering ways. Paige sees two connections as she reads. First, the comparisons between the Americans and Spanish in the article remind her of the ways that Melville contrasts Captains Delano and Cereno in "Benito Cereno." Second, the article reminds her of "Manifest Destiny" (http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Manifest_Destiny), a nineteenth-century idea that her teacher discussed in class. Basically, proponents of Manifest Destiny believed that the United States had the right—even the duty—to expand across North America. They saw American ideals as transcendent and believed that Americans had a moral duty to spread them to other people.

4. Paige returns to the *MLA International Bibliography* and finds only two entries on "Benito Cereno" and "Manifest Destiny," which suggests that she has chosen a more original idea than her initial one.
5. Paige then returns to the digital archive. As Paige thinks about "Benito Cereno" in relationship to Manifest Destiny, more and more correspondences become evident. Because "Cuba" was published in the same magazine that published "Benito Cereno," Paige can safely assume that Melville's historical readers would have been familiar with the ideas and sentiments expressed in "Cuba." Paige decides that this new topic will prove more fruitful than her original one, and so she returns to the Making of America Collection with a new set of search terms to explore. She can search far more precisely when looking for articles related to Manifest Destiny than she could when searching for articles about slavery, and she finds several potentially interesting primary sources. These include "The Great Nation of Futurity," from the *Democratic Review* in November of 1839 (http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=usde;cc=usde;g=moagrp;xc=1;q1=futurity;rgn=full%20text;cite1=futurity;cite1restrict=title;idno=usde0006-4;didno= usde0006-4;node=usde0006-4%253A6;view=image;seq=0350). Many scholars see this article as one of the earliest expressions of the ideas that would later become known as "Manifest Destiny." (In fact, the author of "The Great Nation of Futurity," John L. O'Sullivan, coined the term "Manifest Destiny" in an 1845 article titled "Annexation."John L. O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," *The United States Democratic Review* 6, no. 23 (November 1839): 426–30, Making of America Collection, Cornell University Library, http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=usde;cc=usde;rgn=full%20text;idno=usde0017-1; didno=usde0017-1;view=image;seq=0013;node=usde0017-1%3A3. Between "Cuba" and "The Great Nation of Futurity," Paige has ample historical evidence with which she can begin interpreting the ways that "Benito Cereno" reflects contemporary ideas about Manifest Destiny.

Revised Working Thesis

An examination of the American attitude of Manifest Destiny during the 1850s and the factual event that Melville based his story after allows for an understanding of "Benito Cereno" as a political commentary on the effects of America's perceptions of itself on its relationship with other nations.

Working Outline

1. Introduction with Thesis
2. Manifest Destiny: History of events: How Delano embodies this idea (historically and in the text)
3. Views of Spain: How Delano reflects this idea
4. How these views affect relationships, Delano's desires, etc.
5. Melville's commentary

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7.5: Testing and Refining Your Historical Claim

Paige now has an interesting idea for her paper. But she also realizes that she needs some feedback from her instructor as this stage. She submits her revised thesis and outline and receives positive comments about the topic, but a more specific challenge: "Your working claim seems too descriptive of your topic. What kind of 'political commentary' was Melville making in the story? What do you mean by America's perceptions of itself? Of other nations? In other words, you can make a more critical claim about Melville's political commentary."

Revised Working Thesis 2: The Introductory Paragraph

Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno*, published in 1855, offers a profound look into the political consciousness of the 1850s. While most critics regard Benito Cereno as a political text mostly for its satirical perspective on America's use of black slaves, Melville's story also presents a profound insight into 1850s American self-image in relation to the rest of the world. Specifically, Melville's construction of the characters of American Captain Amasa Delano and Spanish Don Benito Cereno, and the relationship between them, acts as a way to reflect and comment upon American society of the 1850s. Furthermore, Melville's adaptation of the plot and characters of Benito Cereno from an actual event demonstrates his interest in current events and politics as motivation for his writing. Without an understanding of the historical events and attitudes of 1850s America, particularly the American belief in Manifest Destiny, readers may miss the chance to read Melville's work as a political commentary on American society. As a result, it is important to understand the historical events and American attitudes surrounding the publication of Benito Cereno in order to understand Melville's analysis of American society within his text. An examination of the American attitude of Manifest Destiny during the 1850s and the factual event that Melville based his story on allows for an understanding of Melville's Benito Cereno as a political commentary on the hypocrisy of America's domestic and foreign policies.

Paige now turns from her research and back toward her paper. She expands her working claim just a bit, but enough to make a claim that requires demonstration (see Chapter 1 for more on thesis claims and introductory paragraphs). She will argue that Melville depicts the hypocrisy of America's attitudes toward Manifest Destiny in light of its continued practice of slavery. She now is ready to begin more intensive research and begin drafting her paper.

By combining the insights of scholars with primary historical evidence, Paige can begin to build a thick description of Manifest Destiny in "Benito Cereno." "Thick description" is a term historicist literary scholars adopted from anthropology. A thick description focuses on very specific textual details and explains those details by showing how they reflect, demonstrate, or challenge the text's culture. A good thick description juxtaposes religious, social, political, or other historical texts with quotes from the literary text and shows how the literary text being studied can be understood within the larger web of its historical moment. In many ways, a thick description is a close reading with a twist: historical details, rather than the writer's own ideas alone, are used to understand the text. In Paige's case, she focuses on textual moments that speak to the idea of American exceptionalism, and she contextualizes those literary details by juxtaposing them with the political essays she found in *Putnam's Magazine* and the *Democratic Review*. Her final paper convincingly describes some of the social ideas that underlay the political ideology of "Benito Cereno" and gives readers a new way to think about the text—a way, coincidentally, that expands our understanding of the story's political message beyond the binaries of slavery and abolition.

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7.6: Student Sample Paper- Paige Caulum's "Herman Melville's 'Benito Cereno'- A Political Commentary on Manifest Destiny"

You can read Paige's final paper here.

Paige Caulum

Professor Karlyn Crowley

Introduction to Literature

May 1, 20—

Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno": A Political Commentary on Manifest Destiny

Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno," published in 1855, offers a profound look into the political consciousness of the 1850s. While most critics regard "Benito Cereno" as a political text mostly for its satirical perspective on America's use of black slaves, Melville's story also presents a profound insight into 1850s American self-image in relation to the rest of the world. Specifically, Melville's construction of the characters of American Captain Amasa Delano and Spanish Don Benito Cereno, and the relationship between them, acts as a way to reflect and comment upon American society of the 1850s. Furthermore, Melville's adaptation of the plot and characters of "Benito Cereno" from an actual event demonstrates his interest in current events and politics as motivation for his writing. Without an understanding of the historical events and attitudes of 1850s America, particularly the American belief in Manifest Destiny, readers may miss the chance to read Melville's work as a political commentary on American society. As a result, it is important to understand the historical events and American attitudes surrounding the publication of "Benito Cereno" in order to understand Melville's analysis of American society within his text. An examination of the American attitude of Manifest Destiny during the 1850s and the factual event that Melville based his story on allows for an understanding of Melville's "Benito Cereno" as a political commentary on the hypocrisy of America's domestic and foreign policies.

The American belief in Manifest Destiny governed how Americans dealt with foreign and domestic affairs during the 19th century. "Manifest Destiny" became the popular term to describe the American belief that Americans were of an "elect nation, destined by Providence to govern the globe" (Emery 49) after the publication of John O'Sullivan's article "The Great Nation of Futurity" in *The United States Democratic Review* in 1839. In his article, O'Sullivan describes the popular sentiments of the American people:

We must onward to the fulfillment of our mission—to the entire development of the principle of our organization—freedom of conscience, freedom of person, freedom of trade and business pursuits, universality of freedom and equality. This is our high destiny and in nature's eternal, inevitable decree of cause of effect we must accomplish it. All this will be our future history, to establish on earth and moral dignity and salvation of man—the immutable truth and beneficence of God. For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen.… Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be *the great nation* of futurity? (O'Sullivan 430)

The concept of America as the chosen nation to spread its ideal republic throughout the world and to liberate oppressed people was accompanied by an increase of American territory westward and the national revolutions of the European colonies in Latin America. To abolitionists such as Melville, this statement stands in stark contrast to the legality of slavery in the Southern half of the United States. The tension between the doctrine of Manifest Destiny and the existence of slavery in America would eventually play a role in the destruction of the Union and the start of the Civil War, as "[t]he commitment of both major parties to Manifest Destiny only raised the question of slavery, the question that American nationalism was supposed to bury" (Rogin 103).

The Napoleonic Wars in Europe during the early part of the 19th century caused Spain to lose its hold on its colonies abroad. As a result, many Spanish colonies in Latin America attempted to gain independence and establish their own governments throughout the 19th century. America supported the struggles of the Latin American natives, as they believed "it is neither to be expected nor desired that the people [of Latin America], far from the reach of the oppressors of Spain, should submit to be governed by them" ("Cuba" 12). In addition, the idea of Manifest Destiny led most Americans to believe that it was America's duty to help oppressed nations and extend their republican form of government, as they believed in "the philanthropic mission of their country to extend the same [commercial freedoms] throughout the hemisphere" ("Cuba" 15). Americans also believed in spreading their republican institutions westward. Shortly after O'Sullivan's speech on Manifest Destiny, the United States annexed Texas and signed the Treaty of Guadalupe—Hidalgo, in which the United States gained 525,000 square miles from Mexico. The belief that the American

form of government and way of life was “the loftiest developments of human wisdom” (“The Spanish-American Republics” 339) had a profound impact on how Americans were perceived by the rest of the world and governed the ways America interacted with other nations. From Melville’s perspective, however, America’s condemnation of European colonialism conflicted with its enthusiasm for westward expansion. Melville criticizes this hypocrisy through his characterization of Captain Amasa Delano as a self-righteous American and Delano’s description of Don Benito Cereno as a contemptible European. Furthermore, Melville revealed his criticism that these self-important attitudes made America vulnerable to failure by illustrating how Delano’s arrogant attitude leads to his inability to detect the actual situation aboard the ship and his near destruction at the hands of the slaves.

First published in *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine* in 1855, “Benito Cereno” reflects the conventional American attitudes of Manifest Destiny and anti-Spanish colonialism. Melville’s characterization of American Captain Amasa Delano, along with Delano’s description of the Spaniard Don Benito, illustrates the concept of the self-important American critical of Europeans. For example, while Delano is depicted as “a person of a singularly undistrustful good nature” (2406), Don Benito is described by Delano as a “of unfriendly indifference” (2410) and “anything but dignified” (2419). In the article “Cuba,” published in *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine* in January of 1853, similar attitudes of American and Spanish dispositions are expressed. The author of “Cuba” describes Americans as “an enlightened, progressive race” (16), while the Spaniards are “the extreme reverse” (14). Furthermore, Delano repeatedly praises his “charity” (2410) and “benevolent interest” (2412) towards the passengers of the *San Dominick*, reflecting the American tendency to “feel a lively sympathy for the oppressed everywhere” (“Cuba” 3). The idea that Americans felt they were superior to other nationalities is illustrated in Delano’s claim, “How unlike we are made! What to me … would have been a solemn satisfaction, the bare suggestion, even, terrifies the Spaniard into this trance” (2417). In addition, Delano attributes his success of saving the *San Dominick* to “the ever-watchful Providence above” (2445), reflecting the belief that America was “under the guidance of a manifest and beneficent Providence” (para. 5), as stated in President Franklin Pierce’s inauguration speech in 1853. These historical events and documents reveal the motivation behind Melville’s characterization of Delano and Don Benito.

The paradox of the belief that Americans were “a great friend of humanity … very anxious to fight for the liberation of enslaved nations and colonies” (Rogin 73) and the use of millions of African slaves in southern America and America’s own westward imperialism was difficult for many Americans, including Melville, to accept. Melville, an abolitionist, used “Benito Cereno” to examine “the false claims and confidences of Manifest Destiny” (Emery 50). Melville comments on the failures of the belief in Manifest Destiny through Captain Delano’s extreme distrust of Don Benito, which causes him to miss the actual situation aboard the *San Dominick*. While Delano struggles with misgivings against Don Benito, as he “he began to feel a ghostly dread of Don Benito” (2422), and felt Don Benito and Babo had “the air of conspirators” (2421), his sympathy for the blacks never wavers, as he “took to negroes, not philanthropically, but genially, just as other men to Newfoundland dogs” (2435). More than anything, Delano’s suspicions of Don Benito are based on his prejudices against European colonizers as a result of the sentiments of American Manifest Destiny. At the time, American’s were suspicious of Spain’s colonial policies, describing them as “hoary with abuses, and blackened with corruption” (“The Spanish-American Republics” 339). Delano comments that “[b]ut as a nation—continued he in his reveries—these Spaniards are all an odd set; the very word Spaniard has a curious, conspirator, Guy-Fawkish twang to it” (2431). Melville’s reference to Guy Fawkes signals how “fears of ‘the Spaniard’ hand tenanted the minds of Anglo-Saxons since the days of the Gunpowder plot” (Emery 52). Furthermore, Delano attributes the “sad disrepair” (2407) and the “noisy confusion” (2411) of the ship to the “debility … bodily and mental, of the Spanish captain” (2410) and the “sullen inefficiency of the whites” (2410). By blaming Don Benito for the disorder of the ship, “Delano takes a second expansionist tack” (Emery 52) and projects his prejudice of the “pandemonium, enervation, and tyranny” (Emery 53) of the Spanish government onto Don Benito.

Delano’s tendency to blame the Spaniard for his unease aboard the *San Dominick* causes him to overlook the inherent tensions aboard the ship. In this sense, Delano’s inability to perceive the actual problems of the *San Dominick* because of his preoccupation with his suspicions of Don Benito reflects the faults of Manifest Destiny, as America was “too busy glancing abroad to notice local friction” (Emery 50). Melville’s political commentary on American values and attitudes is established in the faults of Captain Delano himself. Captain Delano fails to understand the actual situation aboard the ship as a result of his focus on Don Benito, as he “began to regard the stranger’s conduct something in the light of an intentional affront” (2419). An understanding of Melville’s familiarization of the historical event and documents reveals that he based Delano’s missed interpretation of the situation on the ship on what actually happened. According to statements made by Delano, Cereno, and Babo, “[u]p to and including the time of Delano’s departure from the *Trial*, Babo’s plan was brilliantly achieved, with Delano, on leaving, knowing little more than he did before boarding” (Stuckey and Leslie 265–66). In addition, the documents reveal that the “developments on the *Trial* remained so

impenetrable to [Delano] that he thought Benito Cereno might be his enemy" (Stuckey and Leslie 266). The fact that Delano's misunderstanding about the situation aboard the ship was factual gives credit to Melville's use of the story to criticize the delusions created by Manifest Destiny, "for at the same time when national forces, in the fullness of a very genuine vigor, were achieving an external triumph, the very triumph itself was subjecting their nationalism to internal stresses which … would bring the nation to a supreme crisis" (Rogin 102).

Although the 1850s marked the golden age of American westward expansion, "The Spanish-American Republics" expresses the American disdain for Spanish colonialism, claiming Spanish colonialism is "impelled by ambition and avarice, sustained by the proudest monarch in the world, enjoying the full sunshine of royal favor, followed and cheered on by the enthusiasts of a proselyting faith, inflamed by the wildest dreams of conquest, and striking for the dominion of the world" ("The Spanish-American Republics" 338). While Spanish colonialism was "the pursuit of robbery and plunder" ("Cuba" 6), American expansionism, marked by the annexation of Texas in 1845 and the Treaty of Guadalupe—Hidalgo of 1848, was a "noble enterprise" ("Cuba" 10), the result of the "irrepressible desire of states to become united to each other by the 'New Law of Annexation'" ("Cuba" 10). In the same sense, Delano justifies his plan to take over the *San Dominick* from Don Benito's rule, as he claims, "There was a difference between the idea of Don Benito's darkly pre-ordaining Captain Delano's fate, and Captain Delano's lightly arranging Don Benito's" (2424). Delano's ability to delusion himself into believing that there is a difference between his plot to take the *San Dominick* and Don Benito's supposed plan to pirate Delano's ship reflects America's tendency to justify its actions in the same way.

Melville establishes Delano's justifications for his taking of the *San Dominick* in order to reveal and criticize the same type of hypocrisy practiced by the Americans in their justification of westward expansion, yet condemnation of European colonialism. It is important to note Melville's familiarization with the character of the historical Captain Delano, which he discovered through reading Delano's recordings of his life in *Voyages*, to understand how Melville structures his commentary on American values. Melville harbored an extreme dislike for Captain Delano as he represented the hypocrisy of American society. For example, although Delano condemns European exploitation of Latin American natives and resources, he also "sees New Guinea, Ceram, Goram, and other isle in their vicinity as places from which great treasures might be secured in exchange for the least costly items" (Stuckey and Leslie, 269). In addition, Captain Delano's piratical motivations for helping Benito Cereno are revealed in his demands for "half of the 'Trial' and all on board her for taking the ship and bringing her safe into port.… This promise [he] made [on assurance] from the Spanish captain of the 'Trial'" (Stuckey and Leslie 275). Melville uses the duplicity of Delano's statements in his letters to the Spanish kings in his text to "depict Manifest Destiny as the rhetorical camouflage for a largely 'piratical' enterprise" (Emery 54). In more than one letter to the Spanish government, Delano claims, "the services rendered off the island St. Maria were from pure motives of humanity" (Stuckey and Leslie 275), while simultaneously "refus[ing] to accept … 'three thousand dollars by way of gratification' from Benito Cereno … instead demand[ing] a larger reward" (Stuckey and Leslie 275). Delano's insistence on compensation reveals the contradiction between American statements of ideology and the desire to acquire more wealth and property.

Even Benito Cereno comments on American hypocrisy, as he claims, "no one takes more advantage of our alliance and friendship than the Anglo-Americans; they enter our ports frequently, finding protection and assistance which surpasses the limits of hospitality … but it is not surprising that the most generous nation should produce a monster who, deluded by ambition, should choose to ignore the public well-being" (277). Melville's creation of sympathy for Benito Cereno as a character reveals Melville's similar attitude towards American policy. In Melville's story, Delano's justification for his plan to "with[draw] the command from [Benito Cereno]" and "send her to Conception, in charge of his second mate" (2424) as his desire to redeem the oppressed represents the "interventionism of mid-century Americans" (Emery 53). Furthermore, Melville's presentation of the contradiction between Delano's reasoning for his actions as benevolent and his underlying desire to expand his wealth "invalidates the distinction … between American expansionism and the 'corrupt' colonialism of European nations" (Emery 55). In addition, Delano's underlying desire to take command of the ship rather than save the oppressed is revealed by his decision to chase the *San Dominick* after the Spaniards had escaped, claiming "But to kill or maim the negroes was not the object. To take them, with the ship, was the object" (2449). The fact that Delano plans on keeping the negroes, who would have been considered valuable cargo, showcases that Delano did not go after the ship to save the other Spaniards still aboard the *San Dominick* or to bring the negroes to justice. Furthermore, despite Don Benito's urge to Delano to "not give chase" (2448), Delano encourages his sailors to join in the capture of the ship because "[the ship] and her cargo, including some gold and silver, were worth more than a thousand doubloons" (2448). Again, Melville extracted the basis of this scene from the historical statements made by Benito Cereno and Captain Delano, further supporting the concept of Melville's text as a commentary on American practices. For example, although Delano "observed that

Don Benito was 'frightened at his own shadow'" (Stuckey and Leslie 266) during the chase of the *Trial*, Delano continues to pursue the ship, as he even "ordered the cannons on the *Perseverance* to be run out of port holes and fired at the *Trial*" (Stuckey and Leslie 266). In addition, Melville's description of Delano promising his crew monetary rewards for capturing the ship is based on the factual events, as Delano claimed in one of his letters, "I promised to my people one half of the 'Trial' and all on board her for taking the ship and bringing her safe into port" (Stuckey and Leslie 275). Melville used his text as a way to showcase the greed of the American people and the ultimate failures of the American ideal of Manifest Destiny.

Melville's exposure of the hypocrisy of Manifest Destiny also functions, finally, as a criticism of slavery in America. The contradiction Melville establishes between Delano's proclamations of sympathy towards the negroes and his simultaneous treatment of them as slaves exposes Melville's criticism on America's condemnation of European use of slavery and its concurrent policy of legal slavery in the South. Melville again uses his characterization of Delano to represent these American views, as Delano's attempt to liberate Atufal, claiming, "in view of his general docility, as well as in some natural respect for his spirit, remit him his penalty" (2418) is shortly followed by his claim, "'I should like to have [Babo] here myself—what will you take for him?'" (2424). Americans believed they were supposed to aid the oppressed, as revealed in President Franklin's inauguration speech as he said, "our country has, in my judgment, thus far fulfilled its highest duty to suffering humanity. It has spoken and will continue to speak, not only by its words, but by its acts, the language of sympathy, encouragement, and hope to those who earnestly listen to tones which pronounce for the largest rational liberty" (Pierce para. 4). However, Melville recognized that the existence of slavery in America was not consistent with these claims of sympathy toward the oppressed. A reading of Melville's text as a criticism of slavery is validated by the existence of similar hypocritical attitudes toward slavery in the factual Captain Delano. For example, Delano criticizes European enslavement of Latin American natives, as he claims "the natives manifested no hostility toward [the Europeans].… 'But the Europeans seized and carried them away as slaves, in a most treacherous way'" (Stuckey and Leslie 268). However, according to his writings in *Voyages*, "Delano had occasion to sail with slaves without evincing the slightest concern" and Delano expressed his views that slaves "were commodities of exchange … and should be exploited as such" (Stuckey and Leslie, 269). Melville used the character of Captain Delano as representative of the American people, who often claimed to be the refuge for oppressed souls, yet engaged in one of the most oppressive human rights abuses themselves.

A close look into the history behind Melville's *Benito Cereno* allows us to understand the motivations behind the text and his construction of the characters and plot. Specifically, the hypocrisy of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny alongside America's criticisms of European colonialism and use of oppression on America's slaves was the focus of Melville's commentary on American society. The fact that Melville based his story on an actual event and his characters on actual people makes his criticisms against the American policy of Manifest Destiny even more poignant. In this sense, an examination of historical documents to understand the political and social culture of America in the 1850s is imperative for an understanding of Melville's construction of characters and plot as a way to criticize American contradictory policies.

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7.7: Writing about History and Culture- A Process Approach

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.

Peer Reviewing

A central stage in the writing process is the feedback stage, in which you receive revision suggestions from classmates and your instructor. By receiving feedback on your paper, you will be able to make more intelligent revision decisions. Furthermore, by reading and responding to your peers' papers, you become a more astute reader, which will help when you revise your own papers. In Chapter 10, you will find peer-review sheets for each chapter.

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7.8: Student Sample Paper- Stefanie Jochman's "'Words of Lead'- Emily Dickinson's Poetry and the Grief of the Civil War"

The following sample paper by Stefanie engages New Historicism and applies to Emily Dickinson (1830–86), now considered one of the greatest poets in American literature. But Dickinson was an unknown writer during her life: she wrote around eighteen thousand poems, but only eleven were printed during her lifetime, and those were published anonymously. She lived her entire life in her family's home in Amherst, Massachusetts (you can tour her home today), never married, and was seen as a recluse spinster by the townspeople. Yet she had fruitful relationships with friends by corresponding with them via letters.

Today, some might assume that readers have always had access to her poetry; however, that is a common misconception. The first volume of her poems was published in 1890, four years after her death; moreover, the editor chose to change her erratic and unusual spelling, punctuation, and wording to conform to the accepted English of the late 1800s. Not until 1955 did readers have a reliable edition of her poetry: Thomas H. Johnson's *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*.Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1955). In 1958 Johnson and Theodora Ward published *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*.Emily Dickinson, *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1958). In 1998 R. W. Franklin revised Johnson's edition to create what is now considered the most accurate edition: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Varorium Edition*.Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*, ed. R. W. Franklin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

We provide this brief overview of Dickinson's publications since she seems an unlikely candidate for a New Historical paper—she appears to have secluded herself from society, not interested in engaging with that society. In addition, since she only published a select few of her poem anonymously, one might suppose that she could not have entered into a dialogue with the issues of her day. Stefanie makes a compelling case against such assumptions. More important, Stefanie's paper demonstrates how literature—even when not published—is engaged in the time period in which it was written. Additionally, her paper shows us how literature can inform our contemporary view of a past event (in this case the Civil War). In other words, her paper reflects the power of a New Historical reading.

Please note: Stefanie provides the poems in an appendix to her paper since these are rarely anthologized (if at all) and therefore may be unfamiliar to readers. You can also read Dickinson's poetry at Poets.org."Emily Dickinson," Poets.org, http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/155.

Stefanie Jochman

Professor John Neary

Introduction to Literature

April 9, 20—

"Words of Lead": Emily Dickinson's Poetry and the Grief of the Civil War

In a letter to her friend and advisor Thomas W. Higginson, a colonel in the Union army, Emily Dickinson confessed: "War feels to me an oblique place" (letter 280). For many years, that quotation, in combination with the rarity of Dickinson's reference to the war in other manuscripts, was misinterpreted as indifference or confusion towards the Civil War. However, Dickinson's interpretation of the war as "oblique" is the best way to describe the nation-dividing conflict that took place on American soil from 1861–65. The Civil War divided families, friendships, and political parties. Arguably a battle for honor (most of the Confederate soldiers, contrary to popular myth, were not fighting in favor of slavery—they were not wealthy enough to own slaves) the Civil War was a conflict of blurred lines. Union supporters were in favor of preserving the Union, but not all of them were passionate about the abolition of slavery; Confederates, most notably General Robert E. Lee, mourned the idea of dissolving the union, but considered their first loyalty to be to their states. Emily Dickinson was not the only person to whom the war seemed oblique; like any period of wartime, feelings of confusion and sorrow pierced the hearts of those on the home front.

An understanding of the mixed feelings shared by many during the Civil War warrants another examination of Dickinson's life and work during the war years, her most productive period. An investigation into her family's connection to the war yields evidence of her father's intriguing opinion of the conflict (he supported the Union but was disgusted by radical abolitionists), as well as Austin Dickinson's ability to monetarily "dodge" the draft. Dickinson's correspondence with Thomas Higginson, who secretly worked

with John Brown and was later the commander of one of the Union army's first black regiments, questions her view of slavery. Also, Dickinson's willingness to publish several poems in a Union fundraiser suggests that she, though quite silent about politics in her letters, supported the North and its troops. However, the strongest argument for Dickinson's investment in the "oblique" War Between the States is her own poetry, which frequently focuses on the deaths of soldiers that she and her family had once hosted in their home. Poems like "When I was small, a Woman died" (poem # 596); "It feels a shame to be alive" (# 444); and "Fate slew Him, but He did not drop" (# 1031) reflect Dickinson's emotional connection to the Civil War, as well as her fascination with the glorified deaths of soldiers. Given the charged atmosphere surrounding Emily Dickinson during the war years—her father's political activism, Amherst's installation of a telegraph that transmitted news of the war, Thomas Higginson's military pursuits, and the loss of dear friends like Frazer Stearn—it is impossible to deny Emily Dickinson's connection to and knowledge of the Civil War. For Dickinson, the war may have been "oblique," but her poetry provides clarity for readers trying to grasp a citizen's reaction to the Civil War.

The popular myth promoting Emily Dickinson's distance from both Amherst society and the Civil War can be partially attributed to the political and social climate of small-town New England during the middle of the 19th century. In *The American Civil War*, Peter Parish notes that those living in the North were at an advantage because the majority of the war was fought on southern soil. "Small town … New England … followed its familiar pattern, and local news was only occasionally overshadowed by momentous events far away," writes Parish (374). In fact, the North, despite the loss of its troops, actually benefited technologically and financially from the war. "Northern industry had a growth that was almost explosive … [such that] the North had little trouble in financing the war," reports Bruce Catton (444–46). Therefore, Emily Dickinson, a single woman in the North with no immediate family fighting in the war, could easily be detached from the day-to-day drain of wartime in a way that most Southerners could not. Furthermore, Amherst was a relatively secluded town. As Millicent Todd Bingham, daughter of Dickinson's first editor points out: "Until December, 1861, there was no telegraph.… Indeed Amherst was hardly more than a cluster of farms" (65). The war began with the firing of Fort Sumter in April of 1861, and while the Amherst community did receive its news from the *Springfield Republican* and locally printed *Hampshire and Franklin Express* (Bingham 121), it is quite likely that, until the telegraph arrived in 1861, immediate and accurate news of the war was rare.

However, the war news that did reach Amherst affected Dickinson and her poetry. A letter to family friend and editor of the *Republican*, Samuel Bowles, dated March 1862, offers the poem "Victory comes late" (# 690), in which Dickinson writes: "Victory comes late, /And is held low to freezing lips / Too rapt with frost / To mind it!" (letter 257).[1] In his notes on the letter, Thomas Johnson questions the dating of the poem, but also suggests that, had the poem actually been written in 1862, it may have coincided with the death of Bowles and the Dickinsons' mutual friend, Frazer Stearns (*Letters* 400). Given the national news surrounding the date of publication, it is even more likely that the poem was written in 1862. An article in the *Republican* on February 20, 1862, celebrated the Northern victory at Fort Donelson, Tennessee: "The news of the capture … reached town about 1 p.m. The bells were rung, and more tin horns brought into requisition by the students than the priests blew around the walls of Jericho" (Leyda 46). While not a well-known battle, John Y. Simon writes in *The Civil War Battlefield Guide* that "Fort Donelson … became the site of the first major Confederate defeat in the Civil War. Victory at Donelson started Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant on his road to Appomattox" (17). After a year of solid defeats like that of the first Battle of Bull Run, where Lee's forces solidly trounced the Union army, the North needed to boost its quickly falling spirits. Fort Donelson helped northerners to re-envision a Union victory in the war. Surely news of the South's nearly unstoppable forces had reached Amherst and dampened its citizens' spirits, therefore making the victory at Fort Donelson a cause to celebrate wildly. Dickinson's "Victory comes late" reflects the feelings of her neighbors at the news of Fort Donelson. The lines regarding "freezing lips/ Too rapt with frost" (2–3) describe the conditions of the soldiers fighting in Tennessee, where "both armies froze when overnight temperatures unexpectedly fell to twelve degrees" (Simon 18). However, both those injuries felt by both the frozen soldiers and their families at home were, like Dickinson writes, "Too rapt with frost!" (3) to be concerned with the lateness of victory. At the very least, a solid Union victory had finally arrived.

As mentioned in the *Republican*, the students at Amherst Academy were actively involved in the Amherst community. Though secluded, the town of Amherst was a place of superior educational repute, thanks to the college. Emily's father, Edward Dickinson, was treasurer of Amherst Academy for nearly forty years. The Dickinsons were a prominent, powerful Massachusetts family, and patriarch Edward's political involvement during the war kept the family financially secure. In fact, the Dickinsons' wealth allowed them to distance themselves from the battlefield. In 1864, an article appeared in the *Republican* reporting that Austin Dickinson, Emily's brother, was drafted into the army, but he quickly paid $500 for a substitute to serve in his place (Leyda 88). Austin and Emily's father could have assisted in the procuring and purchasing of the substitute, as he was a powerful man in the community

and sometimes took part in recruitment programs.[2] Edward Dickinson was very involved in the Whig party, the precursor to Abraham Lincoln's Republican party. In 1850, when battles over slavery were reaching a fever-pitch, the Whig party maintained a membership of northern and southern politicians. However, this combination would eventually lead to the party's destruction. As northerners drifted closer and closer to slavery-intolerant abolitionism, the northern Whigs demanded similar policies within their political party. The Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 permitted the spread of slavery to the West and enraged northern Whigs such that they formed the Republican party with a platform that abruptly halted the spread of slavery. Both the Constitutional Unionist and Republican parties offered prominent positions to Edward Dickinson, but he rejected them in favor of his own political leanings. As Alfred Habegger points out in *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books: The Life of Emily Dickinson*, "Edward kept clear of all parties, [but] he vigorously backed the northern war effort, offering bounties to volunteers and … condemning not just the South but the spectrum of northern political opinion" (402). He disapproved of radical and outspoken abolitionists who were riling southern tempers, thereby encouraging war.

What Emily Dickinson thought of her father's political efforts is unclear, although Habegger, quoting one of her letters, notes that Dickinson did not look well upon being thrust into the public eye as a politician's daughter: "'I hear they wish to make me Lieutenant-Governor's daughter. Were they cats I would pull their tails, but as they are only patriots, I must forego the bliss.' Her odd mixture of disdain and respect resembles her father's mixed signals" (401). In 1864, however, Dickinson approved three poems for publication in *Drum Beat*, "a fund-raising paper … to raise money for the United States Sanitary Commission" (Dandurand 18).[3] Dickinson's pro bono publication in *Drum Beat* is significant because it displays a political sectionalism previously unbeknownst to Dickinson scholars. "The poems published … must be seen as her contribution to the Union cause," asserts Karen Dandurand (22). Dickinson was not a successful poet while she was alive, therefore her donation of the poems during a time when she could rarely publish them for profit suggests that she was sympathetic to the Union. It is interesting to note that the paper raised funds for the Sanitary Commission, especially since, in a letter to Mrs. Samuel Bowles, she admitted that she would not "weave Blankets or Boots" (letter 235) like other women who crafted such items for the Sanitary Commission (Habegger 402).

Perhaps Dickinson was spurred into political action by the threat of Austin's call to war in the draft of 1864. Perhaps the poems for *Drum Beat* were Dickinson's way of healing her good friend Colonel Thomas Higginson's war wound. Dickinson wrote anxiously to Higginson after learning of his injury: "Are you in danger—I did not know that you were hurt.… I am surprised and anxious, since receiving your note" (letter 290). In the same letter, Dickinson offers Higginson a bit of poetry that reflects both her anxiety over his injury as well as the toll the war was taking on the country. She writes: "The only News I know/ Is Bulletins all day/ From Immortality" (1–3). Far from the telegraph-less confines of secluded Amherst, the opening stanza to "The Only News I know" (# 827) expresses the exhaustion she felt after hearing three years' worth of war news and surviving the deaths of her Aunts Lavinia and Lamira (Habegger 400). Also present in the letter is a fear that another of her beloved friends will die. In one of the stanzas Dickinson omitted from her letter to Higginson, she writes: "The Only One I meet/ Is God—The Only Street— / Existence—This traversed" (7–9). Death surrounded Emily Dickinson such that she felt she communicated with God as though she herself were dead. The "Bulletins.… From Immortality" that she mentions to Higginson are death notices, which, in Amherst, had already been delivered to several of the college trustees' families, including that of President Stearns, whose son Frazer died at the battle of Newbern in North Carolina. The death of Frazer Stearns inspired some of Emily Dickinson's most emotional writings about the war. She writes about Stearn at length in several of her letters to her cousins Louise and Francis Norcross, saying "brave Frazer —'killed at Newbern,' darlings. His big heart shot away by a 'minie ball.' I had read of those—I didn't think that Frazer would carry one to Eden with him" (letter 255). As Thomas Johnson suggests, "Victory comes late" may have expressed bitterness over Frazer's death (*Letters* 400), but another poem, "It don't sound so terrible—quite—as it did" (# 426), struggles to put into words the pain that Dickinson observed in her brother Austin when he learned of Frazer Stearns' death:

It don't sound so terrible—quite—as it did—

I run it over—"Dead," brain, "Dead."

……

Turn it, a little—full in the face

A Trouble looks bitterest—

Shift it—just—

Say “When Tomorrow comes this way—

I shall have waded down one Day.” (1–2, 5–9)

Dickinson expressed concern for Austin in a letter to Samuel Bowles, saying, “Austin is chilled—by Frazer’s murder—He says—his Brain keeps saying over ‘Frazer is killed’.… Two or three words of lead—that dropped so deep, they keep weighing” (letter 256). Dickinson’s words fall like the “words of lead” she wrote about to Samuel Bowles; her speaker—presumably Austin—is so sad and desperate in search of comfort for his grief. The poet’s concern could be extended to the rest of the United States. “It don’t sound so terrible—quite—as it did” makes tears speak, and it accurately describes the disbelief most Americans were feeling during the second year of the Civil War. When the South first fired on Fort Sumter, people on both sides of the conflict believed that the war would last only months. Instead, the war lasted four long and weary years. Citizens in the North and South did their best to “shift” the pain of war so they could cope. Nevertheless, the deaths of Frazer Stearns and other soldiers came as a terrible surprise to their families and the nation. Months after Stearns’s death, Emily Dickinson wrote another letter to Samuel Bowles in which she described an encounter with a Union soldier who had asked for “a nosegay” before leaving for battle. She confesses to Bowles “It is easier to look behind at a pain, than to see it coming” (letter 272), so she turned the soldier away, knowing that the pain of befriending another potentially dead man would be too much for her.

The traumatic deaths of Union and Confederate soldiers left the nation feeling survivors’ guilt. The poem, “It feels a shame to be Alive” (# 444), suggests that Dickinson herself felt guilty to be alive in Amherst when men like Frazer Stearns were dying; she also envies the significance of a military life. She writes:

It feels a shame to be Alive—

When Men so brave—are dead

One envies the Distinguished Dust—

Permitted—such a Head—…

The price is great—Sublimely paid—

Do we deserve—a Thing—

That lives—like Dollars—must be piled

Before we may obtain?…

Dickinson’s speaker “envies the Distinguished Dust,” indicating her own fascination with the glorified deaths of soldiers. Death is a frequent topic of Dickinson’s poetry, but she attributes a special significance to the death of a soldier, whose ashes are not simply ashes, but “Distinguished Dust.” Further evidence of Dickinson’s fascination with military death is available in her letters. When she describes the homecoming of Frazer Stearns’s body, she tells the Norcross cousins, “Nobody here could look on Frazer—not even his father. The doctors would not allow it … we will mind ourselves of this young crusader—too brave that he could fear to die” (letter 255). Dickinson’s mention of Stearns’s closed casket implies that she would have liked to see the dead body, and her desire to keep Frazer alive in memory suggests a reverence toward his sacrifice.

Dickinson scholar Leigh-Anne Urbanowicz Marcellin discusses the poet’s obsession with soldiers’ deaths as a relation of opposites: “She is both fascinated with and repulsed by the fallen men; they are at once beautiful and hideous and their deaths noble and meaningless” (65). The deaths of those in “It feels a shame to be Alive” were certainly noble and meaningful, as is the death of a soldier in another poem of the Civil War period, “When I was small, a Woman died” (# 596). This poem describes the death of an orphaned son who “Went up from the Potomac / His face all Victory” (3–4). Dickinson celebrates a battlefield death and sees it as an opportunity for a reunion of souls, “proud in Apparition / That Woman and her Boy” (13–14). Here, battle is the soldier’s vehicle of salvation and happiness. Perhaps the poem is Dickinson’s own effort to “shift” the pain of grief. By attributing a higher purpose to death, Dickinson can console herself about the magnitude of casualties. In 1862 alone, the North faced two of its most devastating conflicts: the battle of Antietam, where more American men were lost in one day than any other day of combat in the nation’s history, and the battle of Fredericksburg, where the mistakes of General Burnside cost 12,600 Union lives (Simon 103). The blood and souls of the Civil War demanded Dickinson’s attention and showcased themselves in her work.

As the war progressed, Dickinson stepped away from the deaths of soldiers and narrowed her focus to death itself. Nevertheless, her poetry continued to reflect the events of the war and the emotions surrounding them. Throughout the war, the wounded were

sent home to recuperate or be permanently released from their army contracts. However, these soldiers would not return home the same bright-eyed, eager young men they once were. In “Dying! To be afraid of thee” (# 831), Dickinson surmises what the psyche of a war veteran would say to death. To be afraid of death, Dickinson’s speaker suggests, “One must to thine Artillery/ Have left exposed a Friend” (2–3); only one who has seen death can fear it. Men on the battlefield witnessed death in the instant decapitation of cannon fire or a bullet’s swift piercing of the heart. At the poem’s conclusion, Dickinson’s speaker describes “Two Armies, Love and Certainty/ And Love and the Reverse” (11–12). Here, the armies are Heaven and Hell, and the prospect of Hell—or “Love and the Reverse”—is what strikes fear into the hearts of those who have seen death. Dickinson raises a still religiously taboo question: when is killing not a sin? Is one who kills in war destined for Hell? Such questions must have plagued the minds of the hollowed-eyed surviving soldiers of the Civil War.

By 1865, the nation was, not surprisingly, exhausted by war. Similarly, Dickinson’s poetry during the final years is short, sparse, and skeletal. Many of the 1865 poems are only four lines long. Alfred Habegger suggests: “War gave [Dickinson] a powerful vehicle with which to parse her own extremity” (404). One poem, “Fate slew Him, but He did not drop” (# 1031), is an example of Dickinson’s combination of themes. The poem is a description of Christ, “Impaled … on fiercest stakes– / He neutralized them all” (3–4), who overcomes the obstacles thrown by Fate, which, in this poem represents the opposite of God, thereby showcasing Dickinson’s penchant for religious imagery. However, the poem also includes military language. Dickinson writes: “She [Fate] stung him—sapped His firm Advance” (5), implying that Christ was a soldier, or that soldiers were Christ-like in their sacrifice. Christ the Soldier is then, at the poem’s conclusion, “Acknowledged … a Man” (8). The final line presents some trouble, given that Christians believe Christ proclaimed his divinity in the resurrection; however, the concept of Christ the soldier works well with the poem’s conclusion. Young boys left for war with the hopes of becoming men. By using the Christ/soldier imagery, Dickinson questions whether or not the thousands who volunteered for military service accomplished such a feat. Here, Dickinson also criticizes how male-dominated society forced the war upon its young men with the draft. Should they have endured a pain that could be likened to Christ’s on the cross? In her later, death-centered poetry Dickinson presents herself as an objector to the war. She may have supported the goals of the Union forces, but the grief she experienced—even as one so detached from actual battle—made her question the necessity, as well as the methods, of war.

Endnotes

1. Please see the Appendix to read “Victory comes late” and other referenced poems in their entirety.
2. In *The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson*, Jay Leyda includes documentation of both Austin’s use of a substitute and Edward Dickinson’s involvement in recruitment.

   An excerpt from the *Hampshire and Franklin Express*, dated July 18, 1862 reads:

   Meeting of the Citizens of Amherst. $100 Bounty Offered to Each Volunteer. …On motion of W.A. Dickinson it was voted, That…the town should pay $100 dollars bounty in addition to what the U.S. and State governments pay…It was here announced by Hon. Edward Dickinson that Mr. William Stearns…had offered a bounty of $25 to every Soldier who should enlist from Amherst not exceeding 36…The following persons guaranteed $100 in case town did not appropriate. (63—the omissions are Leyda’s)

   A record of enlistment for May, 1864, states: “Complete Record of the Names of all the Soldiers and Officers…from Amherst, Mass. During the Rebellion begun in 1861…Names of men who were drafted from Amherst…who furnished substitutes May 1864 Dickinson Wm Austin Paid for substitute 500” (89; the omissions are Leyda’s).
3. Karen Dandurand writes: “‘Blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple,’ titled ‘Sunset,’ appeared in the *Drum Beat* on 29 February; ‘Flowers—Well—if anybody’…titled ‘Flowers’ on 2 March; and ‘These are the days when Birds come back’…titled ‘October,’ on 11 March” (18). None of these poems have a direct reference to war, soldiering, or death; however, both “Flowers—well, if anybody” and “These are the days when Birds come back” are tonally melancholy and desperate. In “Flowers—well, if anybody,” Dickinson describes the flowers as having “Too much pathos in their faces,” a sentiment that could easily be transferred to returning soldiers (9). Nevertheless, the actual publication of the *Drum Beat* poems is more important than their content when discussing Dickinson’s relationship to the war.

Appendix

To provide the reader with a better understanding of Dickinson's war poetry, all poems referenced within the essay are printed here in their entirety. All poems, except "Victory comes late," are taken from Thomas H. Johnson's *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. "Victory comes late" appears as it was written in Dickinson's letter to Samuel Bowles, March 1862.

Victory comes late,

And is held low to freezing lips

Too rapt with frost

To mind it!

How sweet it would have tasted!

Just a drop!

Was God so economical?

His table's spread too high

Except we dine on tiptoe!

Crumbs fit such little mouths—

Cherries—suit *Robins*—

The Eagle's golden breakfast—*dazzles them*!

God keep his vow to *"Sparrows,"*

Who of little love—know how to starve!

426

It don't sound so terrible—quite—as it did—

I run it over—"Dead", "Brain", "Dead"

Put it in Latin—left of my school—

Seems it don't shriek so—under rule.

Turn it, a little—full in the face

A Trouble looks bitterest—

Shift it—just—

Say "When Tomorrow comes this way—

I shall have waded down one Day."

I suppose it will interrupt me some

Till I get accustomed—but then the Tomb

Like other new Things—shows largest—then—

And smaller, by Habit—

It's shrewder then

Put the Thought in advance—a Year—

How like "a fit"—then—

Murder—wear!

444

It feels a shame to be Alive—

When Men so brave—are dead-

One envies the Distinguished Dust—

Permitted—such a Head—

The Stone—that tells defending Whom

This Spartan put away

What little of Him we—possessed

In Pawn for Liberty

The price is great—Sublimely paid—

Do we deserve—a Thing—

That lives—like Dollars—must be piled

Before we may obtain?

Are we that wait—sufficient worth—

That such Enormous Pearl

As life—dissolved be—for Us—

In Battle's—horrid Bowl?

It may be—a Renown to live—

I think a Man who die—

Those unsustained—Saviors—

Present Divinity—

596

When I was small, a Woman died—

Today—her Only Boy

Went up from the Potomac—

His face all Victory

To look at her—How slowly

The seasons must have turned

Till Bullets clipt an Angle

And He passed quickly round

If pride shall be in Paradise—

Ourself cannot decide—

Of their imperial Conduct—

No person testified—

But, proud in Apparition—

That Woman and her Boy

Pass back and forth, before my Brain

As even in the sky—

I'm confident that Bravoes

Perpetual break abroad

For Braveries, remote as this

In Scarlet Maryland—

827

The Only News I know

Is Bulletins all Day

From Immortality.

The Only Shows I see—

Tomorrow and Today—

Perchance Eternity

The Only One I meet

Is God—The Only Street—

Existence—This traversed

If Other News there be—

Or Admirabler Show—

I'll tell it You—

831

Dying! To be afraid of thee

One must to thine Artillery

Have left exposed a Friend—

Than thine old Arrow is a Shot

Delivered straighter to the Heart

The leaving Love behind.

Not for itself, the Dust is shy,

But, enemy, Beloved be

Thy Batteries divorce.

Fight sternly in a Dying eye.

Two Armies, Love and Certainty

And Love and the Reverse.

1031

Fate slew Him, but He did not drop—

She felled—He did not fall—

Impaled Him on Her fiercest stakes—

He neutralized them all—

She stung Him—sapped His firm Advance—

But when Her Worst was done

And He—unmoved regarded Her—

Acknowledged Him a Man.

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This page titled 7.8: Student Sample Paper- Stefanie Jochman's "'Words of Lead'- Emily Dickinson's Poetry and the Grief of the Civil War" is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Anonymous via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

7.9: Strategies for Starting Your New Historical Paper

We have just seen how Paige's research and writing process led to a New Historical paper centered on Melville's "Benito Cereno" and the American notion of Manifest Destiny. We also looked at Stefanie's analysis of Emily Dickinson and the Civil War. In both cases, the writers' processes were complex ones—developed as they got further and further into their projects. This complexity of research and writing is natural—all writers engage in this process. The difficulty of "doing" historical criticism, however, seems to be that you must have a base knowledge that most students in an introductory literature class don't yet have. But let us assure you that students can write an involving New Historical paper if they are diligent about conducting research, which will eventually lead to a working topic that will lead to a critical claim.

While Paige's and Stefanie's researching and writing processes were recursive ones (see Chapter 1 for a review of recursive processes), we can chart a strategy that will help you as you undertake a writing project that uses New Historical theory. A general key is that you need to approach such an assignment by surrounding your topic; that is, you need to examine your author and work from a variety of perspectives, which includes a parallel reading of multiple texts that leads to a thick description of your subject. Be guided by the following general steps to get you started on an exciting New Historical paper:

1. Situate the author and his or her work in its specific historical time period. What were some of the key concerns of the day? A valuable way to do this is to examine the other historical and cultural texts that appeared around the time of the work's publication: newspapers of the day, to get a feel for the key issues of the day, are a great starting point. Also examine the other social documents of the time period: religious and political pamphlets, economic discussions, and so forth. In addition, you'll want to look at any biographies or autobiographies of your author, which will often engage in historical issues. This kind of research has been made much easier with the advent of digital archives, which will help you find primary sources related to your topic.
2. Focus on the author and his or her intentions. Examine the letters, the journals, and the interviews of the author to glean information. Authorial intention is a complex issue, but it is important to see what the writer was hoping to accomplish, regardless of whether he or she was successful.
3. Examine the work's reception. How did the critics receive the work? Positively? Negatively? A mixture? Often a work's reception will transform over time, which is called reception theory (see Chapter 6, which focuses on reader-response theory for a definition of this concept). You have learned about canon formation in this text, and it is valuable to explore how a work's reception has transformed over time, not only the reception by academic scholars but the reception by popular readers too.
4. Connect the work you are analyzing to the other major works of literature that were written during this time. Do these works suggest some larger concerns that your writer is exploring? Make certain that your research is transnational—that is, don't be limited by geography or nation. One example of such a timeline can be found at http://www.socsdteachers.org/tzenglish/literature_timeline.htm."Literature Timeline," Dept. of English, Tappan Zee High School, http://www.socsdteachers.org/tzenglish/literature_timeline.htm.
5. Consider the implications of the literary work on today's culture and anticipate the effects it might have on the future. Why is reading and discussing your author and work important today? Why might your author and work be important to the future?

Once you have conducted your initial research using the following steps, you'll be in a position to start making more concrete working claims about your project. Keep in mind that writing a paper on literature using New Historicism allows you to speculate more than when applying other literary theories. We don't know for certain, for example, if Melville was aware that in "Benito Cereno" he was critiquing the notion of Manifest Destiny. But Paige makes a persuasive argument that opens up the story to further discussion.

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7.10: End-of-Chapter Assessment

Key Takeaways

- Literature both reflects and influences its historical moment. You should consider literary texts in light of the cultural, economic, artistic, religious, political, and social forces surrounding their creation.
- You can understand a literary text's historical influences by reading alongside nonliterary texts: for example, newspapers, sermons, political pamphlets, and scientific treatises.
- When writing about literature from a New Historical perspective, you should use a combination of primary and secondary sources as evidence to support your thesis and claims.
- Historical research is a process: your thesis and claims should evolve as you investigate primary and secondary sources and as you begin writing your paper.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Freewriting exercise. Choose an author that interests you. On a sheet of paper—or on your computer—start writing about what you know about your author, focusing on the historical connections you see related to your author and work. After writing for a short while, create a list of possible ideas that you might want to pursue. Now you are ready to start conducting research.
2. Once you have an author that you are considering writing a new historical paper about, start doing some initial research to see the historical connections that may lead to fruitful investigations. Begin by examining archives and websites that are related to your author. An interesting example that may help you see these connections can be found on the Victorian Web: http://www.victorianweb.org.George P. Landlow, The Victorian Web, http://www.victorianweb.org.

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS EXERCISES

1. Begin the class in which you plan to discuss Paige's "Manifest Destiny" paper by projecting John Gast's 1872 painting *American Progress*(http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:American_progress.JPG).John Gast, *American Progress* (1872), painting, Wikipedia, http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:American_progress.JPG. Alternatively, you could print copies out for your students. Tell your students that you'll be compiling a "close reading" of the painting and then give them several minutes to look over the image. You might suggest that they jot down details that they find interesting or telling. After they've had some time, ask them to share what details they noticed. As they suggest details ("The Native Americans are all in the dark on the left side of the painting"; "Lady Liberty is stringing telegraph wire as she glides west"), press them to suggest theories about the significance of those details ("The artist wants to represent native people as unenlightened or even evil"; "The artist wants to show America as technologically advanced"). Compile these ideas on the board, or ask one of your students to record them. Finally, ask your students to relate these details to the ideas about Manifest Destiny that they read in Paige's paper.
2. Workshop Paige's paper in class. Divide your class into groups of three to four students. Distribute photocopies of Paige's paper so that they can write on it. Ask each group to read the paper with an eye toward how it could be further developed or improved. You might provide them with a list of questions to guide their discussion. We've provided a few such questions, but there are certainly more you could ask.
    1. Underline the main claim or the paper. Is the claim specific? Debatable? Reasonable? How might Paige revise the claim to make it more engaging?
    2. Mark the primary evidence that Paige uses with brackets. Mark the secondary evidence Paige uses with parentheses. Where does the paper include enough evidence to convince you? Are there any sections where more evidence is warranted? What kind of evidence (primary or secondary) is needed to make those sections more convincing?
    3. Read each paragraph with an eye toward clarity. Are there any sections where you lose track of the argument? How might Paige revise those sections to better guide readers toward her main points?

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS PEER REVIEW

1. Have students conduct peer review on one of the sample papers using the organizational peer-review guide found in Chapter 10, Section 10.6:
    1. Place students in groups of three to four and have them reread the paper for peer review and fill out the guide sheet
    2. Have students discuss their feedback responses to the sample paper.

3. Have students list the major feedback they discussed.
4. Put the major issues on the blackboard or whiteboard.
5. Discuss these responses. Make certain that you let students know that any paper can be improved.

2. Plan to have your students conduct peer review on the drafts of their papers that they are writing in your class. Use the peer-review guide from Chapter 10, Section 10.6 and have them work in groups of three and do the following:
    1. Bring two hard copies of their paper so that each member can read the paper, OR work in a computer lab where students can share their papers on line. You may want to use the educational software that your campus supports—for example, Blackboard or Moodle—or you can have students use Google Drive to set up their peer-review groups.
    2. Have two students focus on the first paper in the group. While these students are reading, have the other student read the other two student papers.
    3. The two students should quickly fill out the peer-review sheet and then have a brief conversation about the strengths of the paper and ways the paper could be improved.
    4. Move to the next student and follow the same process. Depending on the length of your class, you may have to reduce the peer-review groups to two students.
    5. If time permits, ask the students to provide general comments—or ask questions—about the specific papers or the assignment overall.
    6. You may want to use peer review for each paper in your class.

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7.11: Suggestions for Further Reading

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Writing about the Natural World

Learning Objectives

- Examine the concerns of scholars working to understand literary representations of the natural world.
- Apply ecocriticism to works of literature.
- Review works of poetry and fiction that explore the relationships between human beings and animals, plants, natural features, and natural phenomena.
- Learn how to revise an academic argument for clarity, persuasiveness, and stylistic grace.
- Draft and revise a critique of a work of literature based on environmental concerns.

8.1: Literary Snapshot- "Through the Looking-Glass"

8.2: Ecocriticism- An Overview

8.3: Focus on Ecocritical Approaches - Ecofeminism and Darwinian Literary Criticism

8.4: Writing about the Natural World - A Process Approach

8.5: Student Writer at Work- Jens Paasen’s Ecocritical Paper in Development

8.6: Student Sample Paper- Jens Paasen’s “If You Want to Belong, You Have to Buy- Disney’s Pocahontas and Consumerism in a Natural Disguise”

8.7: Student Sample Paper- Allison Shakelton’s “Separation from Nature in ’The Light Princess’”

8.8: End-of-Chapter Assessment

8.9: Suggestions for Further Reading

Thumnail: A pretty Cow. pixabay.com/photos/cow-bull-...asture-431729/

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8.1: Literary Snapshot- "Through the Looking-Glass"

Lewis Carroll, as we found out in previous chapters, is most famous for two books: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872). These books follow the adventures of a seven-year-old, Alice, who tumbles down a rabbit hole (*Wonderland*) and enters a magic mirror (*Looking-Glass*), entering a nonsensical world of the imagination. If you have not already read these classic books—or wish to reread them—you can access them at the following links:

http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html

etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, the sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice meets the twins Tweedledum and Tweedledee, who recite the following poem. It's a long poem (as Alice worries it will be), but the episode is worth reading in full:

"What shall I repeat to her?" said Tweedledee, looking round at Tweedledum with great solemn eyes, and not noticing Alice's question.

"'*The Walrus and the Carpenter*' is the longest," Tweedledum replied, giving his brother an affectionate hug.

Tweedledee began instantly:

"*The sun was shining—*"

Here Alice ventured to interrupt him. "If it's *very* long," she said, as politely as she could, "would you please tell me first which road—"

Tweedledee smiled gently, and began again:

"The sun was shining on the sea,

Shining with all his might:

He did his very best to make

The billows smooth and bright—

And this was odd, because it was

The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,

Because she thought the sun

Had got no business to be there

After the day was done—

'It's very rude of him,' she said,

'To come and spoil the fun!'

The sea was wet as wet could be,

The sands were dry as dry.

You could not see a cloud, because

No cloud was in the sky:

No birds were flying overhead—

There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter

Were walking close at hand;

They wept like anything to see

Such quantities of sand:

'If this were only cleared away,'

They said, 'it would be grand!'

'If seven maids with seven mops

Swept it for half a year,

Do you suppose,' the Walrus said,

'That they could get it clear?'

'I doubt it,' said the Carpenter,

And shed a bitter tear.

'O Oysters, come and walk with us!'

The Walrus did beseech.

'A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,

Along the briny beach:

We cannot do with more than four,

To give a hand to each.'

The eldest Oyster looked at him.

But never a word he said:

The eldest Oyster winked his eye,

And shook his heavy head—

Meaning to say he did not choose

To leave the oyster-bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,

All eager for the treat:

Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,

Their shoes were clean and neat—

And this was odd, because, you know,

They hadn't any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,

And yet another four;

And thick and fast they came at last,

And more, and more, and more—

All hopping through the frothy waves,

And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter

Walked on a mile or so,

And then they rested on a rock

Conveniently low:

And all the little Oysters stood

And waited in a row.

'The time has come,' the Walrus said,

'To talk of many things:

Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—

Of cabbages—and kings—

And why the sea is boiling hot—

And whether pigs have wings.'

'But wait a bit,' the Oysters cried,

'Before we have our chat;

For some of us are out of breath,

And all of us are fat!'

'No hurry!' said the Carpenter.

They thanked him much for that.

'A loaf of bread,' the Walrus said,

'Is what we chiefly need:

Pepper and vinegar besides

Are very good indeed—

Now if you're ready Oysters dear,

We can begin to feed.'

'But not on us!' the Oysters cried,

Turning a little blue,

'After such kindness, that would be

A dismal thing to do!'

'The night is fine,' the Walrus said

'Do you admire the view?

'It was so kind of you to come!

And you are very nice!'

The Carpenter said nothing but

'Cut us another slice:

I wish you were not quite so deaf—

I've had to ask you twice!'

'It seems a shame,' the Walrus said,

'To play them such a trick,

After we've brought them out so far,

And made them trot so quick!'

The Carpenter said nothing but

'The butter's spread too thick!'

'I weep for you,' the Walrus said.

'I deeply sympathize.'

With sobs and tears he sorted out

Those of the largest size.

Holding his pocket handkerchief

Before his streaming eyes.

'O Oysters,' said the Carpenter.

'You've had a pleasant run!

Shall we be trotting home again?'

But answer came there none—

And that was scarcely odd, because

They'd eaten every one."

"I like the Walrus best," said Alice: "because you see he was a *little* sorry for the poor oysters."

"He ate more than the Carpenter, though," said Tweedledee. "You see he held his handkerchief in front, so that the Carpenter couldn't count how many he took: contrariwise."

"That was mean!" Alice said indignantly. "Then I like the Carpenter best—if he didn't eat so many as the Walrus."

"But he ate as many as he could get," said Tweedledum.

This was a puzzler. After a pause, Alice began, "Well! They were *both* very unpleasant characters—"Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (New York: Macmillan, 1899; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1993), chap. 4, etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html.

We might interpret the poem didactically: as a warning to children not to trust strange adults, for instance. The "eldest Oyster" refuses to follow the Walrus and the Carpenter, and he, unlike his siblings, isn't eaten. Indeed, the poem was probably meant to mimic or even parody didactic children's literature from the nineteenth century. It's recited by Tweedledum and Tweedledee, after all, who "looked so exactly like a couple of great schoolboys" and who recite poems with great vigor, as if eager to please a teacher.

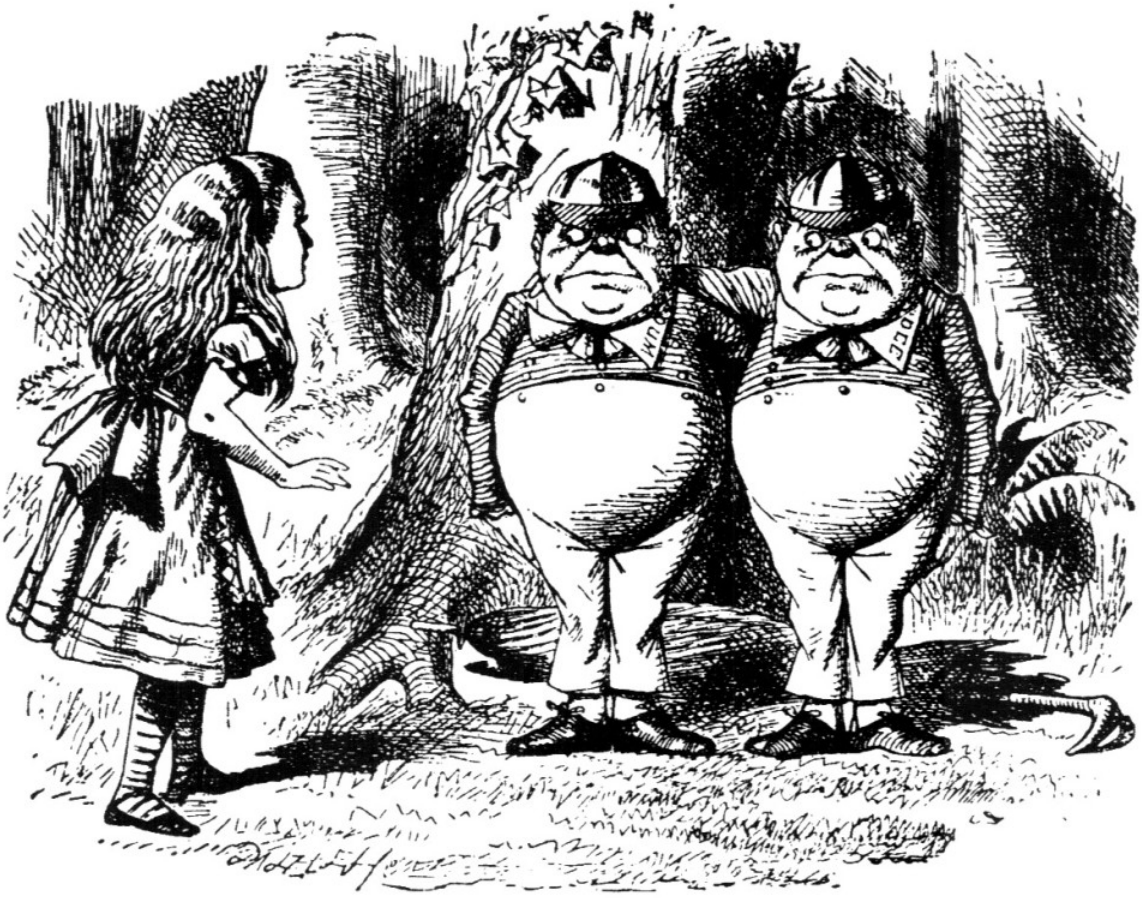


Illustration by Sir John Tenniel for Lewis Carroll's Through the LookingGlass and What Alice Found There(1872).

There's another possibility here, however. We can read this episode as a commentary on human beings' relationships with the natural world. Look at the way the Walrus and Carpenter discuss the beach they're walking on: "They wept like anything to see / Such quantities of sand: / 'If this were only cleared away,' / They said, 'it would be grand!'" They wish to clear away the sand—to alter the landscape to suit their whims. That landscape is already altered: "You could not see a cloud," the poem relates, "because / No cloud was in the sky." What's more, "No birds were flying overhead— / There were no birds to fly." The natural world is marked by absence in this poem, and its two central characters weep because they cannot remove the sand from the seashore. Reading through the lens of environmental or **ecocriticism**, we might interpret these characters as representatives of human disregard for nature.

Such a reading might also help us understand the Walrus's and the Carpenter's treatment of the Oysters. They don't simply trick the Oysters for sustenance—they gorge themselves, eating every one. They need "another slice" of bread, thickly spread butter, and "pepper and vinegar besides."



Illustration by Sir John Tenniel for Lewis Carroll's Through the LookingGlass and What Alice Found There (1872).

Look at the illustration of this scene: you see the Carpenter looking a little sick from overeating, and oyster shells strewn all around the beach like litter. It's a scene of excess, of ill restraint. After hearing this story, Alice can't decide which character was most unpleasant—the Walrus, who consumed the most oysters, or the Carpenter, who seemed unrepentant for his deceit. Alice, then, sees two moral problems in what the Walrus and the Carpenter do in the poem. First, she rejects their lack of sympathy for the Oysters, and second, she rejects the wastefulness of their consumption. In the end, Alice simply decides, "Well! They were *both* very unpleasant characters." Part of what makes them so unpleasant, an ecocritic might suggest, is that they view the natural world and its creatures as theirs to exploit, with no repercussions or responsibilities on their part.

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8.2: Ecocriticism- An Overview

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."Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). 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. 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.



Painting by Caspar David Friedrich, The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog (1818).

https://human.libretexts.org/@go/page/14869

To get a better sense of these concerns, let's look at "The World Is Too Much with Us," a poem written by one of the most well-known Romantics, William Wordsworth.William Wordsworth, "The World Is Too Much with Us," Poets.org, www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15878. It was published in 1807.

"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.

Your Process

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 (for a thorough explanation of the unconscious, see Chapter 3). 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.

In America, writers also focused on the environment and the dangers of industrialization. Two famous examples are Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), which you can read at thoreau.eserver.org/walden00.html, and Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Nature" (1836), which you can read at oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl3...emerson-a.html #Introduction. 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 but also 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*.

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 Rebecca Harding Davis's short story, *Life in the Iron Mills*, which you can find in full as an e-text provided by Project Gutenberg (http://www.gutenberg.org/files/876/876-h/876-h.htm) and as a free audiobook provided by Librivox (http://librivox.org/life-in-the-iron-mills-by-rebecca-harding-davis/).
2. 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.
3. You might also be interested to look at the magazine in which *Life in the Iron Mills* originally appeared: *The Atlantic* for April 1861. You can find this historical text for free at the Internet Archive (http://archive.org/details/atlantic07bostuoft). Harding Davis's story appears on page 430. Look at the articles that appear around this short story—how might those contexts help you build a "thick description" of Harding Davis's text? For more on "thick description," see Chapter 7.

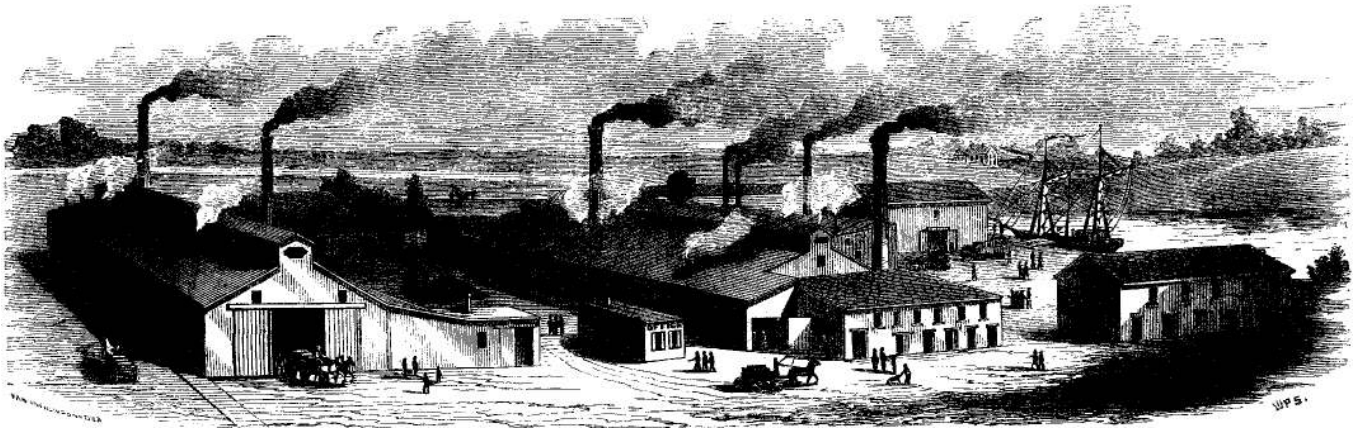


Illustration from "Wilmington and Its Industries," Lippincott's Magazine of Popular Literature and Science (April, 1873).

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 (see Chapter 5 for ideas about how you might develop such a reading). 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.Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861; Project Gutenberg 2008), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/876/876-h/876-h.htm.

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.Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861; Project Gutenberg 2008), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/876/876-h/876-h.htm.

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.If you're unfamiliar with the Quakers, or the Religious Society of Friends, see this resource from the BBC: http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/subdivisions/quakers_1.shtml. 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.Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861; Project Gutenberg 2008), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/876/876-h/876-h.htm.

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 men and women who rely on it. You can probably see that these ideas relate closely to ideas one would find in modern **environmentalist** 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 movement. 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 environmentalist concerns, drawing out nuances of the story that may not have been apparent to earlier readers.

Your Process

1. After looking at these two examples, what seem to be the primary questions that ecocritics ask of literary works? In the notes box, make a list of priorities (i.e., things to look out for) for you to follow when you read as an ecocritic.

When you're reading literature as an ecocritic, then, 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? For instance, does the text seem to make an argument for or against conservationism, preservation, or restoration?

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8.3: Focus on Ecocritical Approaches - Ecofeminism and Darwinian Literary Criticism

Ecofeminism

As you may have guessed from its name, ecological feminism, or "**ecofeminism**," combines the ideas of ecocriticism with those of feminism (for an in-depth look at feminism, see Chapter 4). In other words, it is a form of feminism that critiques the oppression of nature as well as the oppression of women, and argues that our relationship to nature is a feminist issue. Ecofeminists explore the ways in which both women and the natural world are devalued and exploited by the patriarchal societies in which we live. They call attention to the way that women are seen as connected to nature, while men are conceptually linked to culture, and how these connections have been used to justify both the abuse of the environment and the oppression of women. As you can imagine, ecofeminism is heavily influenced by the "green" movement, or environmentalism, as well as by feminism; in fact, ecofeminism as a movement really developed in the 1970s and 1980s, alongside environmentalism and second-wave feminism.

Like other feminist critics, ecofeminists often take an intersectional approach in their analyses. **Intersectionality** refers to a sociological theory that sees social inequalities as being interconnected and inseparable from one another. It explores how the various categories of identity—gender, sexuality, race, class, ability, religion, and so on—interact with one another to create the complex system of inequalities in society. As individuals, we experience this matrix of oppression in unique ways: for example, a gay African American man might experience his oppression in a very different way than a white lesbian experiences hers, though they are both affected by homophobia. Ecofeminism lends itself well to an intersectional approach since it already explores the intersection of two systems of oppression: gender inequality and the domination of humans over nature. In addition, some ecofeminists consider how the oppression of women and nature intersects with other forms of oppression. As Jens, the author of our first student sample paper in this chapter, points out, we could look at Disney's *Pocahontas* through a variety of critical lenses: ecocritical, feminist, racial, ethnic, and cultural studies. An ecofeminist might use all these lenses in the same analysis!

Let's revisit Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills* to see how an ecofeminist approach to the story might differ from the ecocritical approach we took earlier. Here are the links to the story again:

- E-text: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/876/876-h/876-h.htm
- Audiobook: http://librivox.org/life-in-the-iron-mills-by-rebecca-harding-davis/

Harding Davis sets her story in "a town of iron-works," where the character Hugh Wolfe works in a mill making railroad iron. While Harding Davis focuses on the hardships and oppression faced by those who work in the mills, an ecofeminist critic might point out that the first stage in the iron manufacturing process is the mining of iron ore from the earth. Mining is a highly problematic practice from an ecofeminist perspective, as it involves digging into the earth, removing materials that naturally belong underground, and disrupting ecosystems by destroying plant and animal life in the process. Furthermore, because we have historically gendered the earth as female (you may already be familiar with the image of "Mother Earth"), mining can be seen as parallel to—and even a justification of—sexual violence against women. As Carolyn Merchant explains in her influential ecofeminist text *The Death of Nature* (1980), mining used to be viewed as an unethical practice for this very reason—at least, until the Scientific Revolution from the sixteenth to eighteenth century changed our attitude toward nature. Merchant writes, "The image of the earth as a living organism and nurturing mother has served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings. One does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold or mutilate her body, although commercial mining would soon require that. As long as the earth was considered to be alive and sensitive, it could be considered a breach of human ethical behavior to carry out destructive acts against it."Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

"Digging into the matrices and pockets of the earth for metals," she continues, "was like mining the female flesh for pleasure"—or, in more explicit terms, mining turned Mother Earth into "a passive receptor of human rape."Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2003). Although some would argue that it is not appropriate to compare mining the earth to raping human women, this parallel forces us to see mining in a new light: as a violation of the earth rather than as a human "right" to take whatever we desire from nature.

Our perceptions of Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills* are certainly altered when we add an ecofeminist dimension to our critique. Now, not only do we see how Harding Davis is responding to the oppression of the working class and the large-scale pollution that resulted from the Industrial Revolution; we also recognize that the iron mills exist because humans' attitudes toward

the earth changed dramatically just prior to the time when Harding Davis's story is set. Hugh Wolfe can work in the iron mill because other men work as miners, enacting violence on the feminized earth. We can begin to see the matrix of oppression in this relationship: mining—an act of violence against nature that parallels violence against women through the gendering of the earth as female—leads to iron manufacturing, an industry in which rich individuals exploit and oppress members of the working class. In addition, the gendered division of labor in the town (Wolfe and other men work in the iron mill, while Deb and other women work in the cotton mill) and the pollution caused by the mills bring us, full circle, back to the oppression of women and of the environment. Thus, by simultaneously examining the treatment of women and the treatment of the natural world in an intersectional ecofeminist analysis, we can bring to light multiple forms of oppression at the same time—and begin to understand how they are related to one another.

Darwinian Literary Criticism

Also called literary Darwinism or Darwinian evolutionary literary criticism, **Darwinian literary criticism** grapples with a key notion: What is the adaptive value of literature and art to human survival? We can understand, for example, how humans evolved to create a spear for hunting since food is essential for survival. But what do we make of a spear that is ornately carved into a beautiful, artistic object? How does that art add to the adaptive survival value of a person or a species? Two questions central to Darwinian literary critics are the following: Why do humans tell stories? Do stories provide some genetic advantage in the pursuit of survival? Darwinian literary criticism examines literature, in particular, through the lens of evolutionary theory.

When Darwin published *Origin of Species* in 1859, he transformed the way we viewed the natural world. Darwin argued that humans—that all species—evolved from a common ancestor. Over time, species diversity developed according to four key principles, according to Darwin: (1) nature provides limited resources for survival, though there are more organisms than resources; (2) as a result, these organisms fight for survival (which became known as the "survival of the fittest"); (3) organisms pass on genetic traits to their heirs, though those traits that survive are the ones that have the greatest survival value; (4) those with the strongest genetic traits survive, while those who do not receive those traits become extinct. In this Darwinian scheme, why do humans continue to tell stories and make art? For Darwinian literary critics, the answer is that creating art must be a key survival trait.

For example, in 1813 Jane Austen published *Pride and Prejudice*, a story about the Bennett sisters who must make advantageous marriages so that they will be cared for. This novel, Austen's most famous and well loved, is a popular love story elevated to high art. How might Darwinian literary critics read this love story? One way to interpret is to focus on biological survival. Elizabeth Bennett, for example, finally makes the best match by marrying the aristocrat, Mr. Darcy, and this marriage combines the best genetic traits of both lovers, which makes their survival more likely. How's that to destroy a love story?!

While Darwinian literary criticism is a varied and complex field, a useful focus for you is to speculate how particular stories—specifically those that have survived the test of time—reflect core narratives of survival. Such stories may include mythic stories that provide humans with a way to bond together as a group, thus increasing the probability of survival. An interesting example of this comes from the field of fairy tale studies. Jack Zipes in *Why Fairy Tales Stick* and *The Irresistible Fairy Tale* argues that the classic fairy tales—"Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Snow White," or "Hansel and Gretel," for example—replicate patterns of survival that are attractive to readers, providing them with strategies for survival.Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012). Zipes evokes the theories of Richard Dawkins who, in *The Selfish Gene* (1976), argued for the idea of a **meme**, "an informational pattern contained in a human brain (or artifacts such as books or pictures) and stored in its memory, capable of being copied to another individual's brain that will store it and replicate it."Jack Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (New York, Routledge, 2006), 4. In other words, important stories that help with human survival are inherited, passed down, and replicated or transformed to meet a culture's need for survival.

In *The Irresistible Fairy Tale*, Zipes provides a reading of "Hansel and Gretel," a favorite tale found in the Brothers Grimm's collection of fairy tales (which has inspired the popular television show *Grimm*). Zipes suggests that "Hansel and Gretel" evokes key issues about survival that continue to plague us—"the problems raised by the discourse in this tale have not been resolved in reality: poverty, conflict with stepparents, the trauma of abandonment, child abuse, and male domination."Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 220. Thus

fairy tales continue to impact contemporary readers because the issues raised by the tales are central to human survival. The tales are also revised and adapted for contemporary readers to further show the relevancy of these unresolved issues.

Darwinian literary criticism is an evolving field (no pun intended) in literary theory, which may suggest that literary theory itself is an important meme for the survival of literature in the twenty-first century.

Your Process

1. List your favorite fairy tale.
2. List the key adaptations or retellings of the tale (Disney, for example).
3. Write down reasons why you think this fairy tale is so important to you and what the adaptations have done to the original tale.
4. Now connect this to Darwinian literary criticism: Does your fairy tale provide you with a technique for survival? Explain.

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8.4: Writing about the Natural World - A Process Approach

To review, ecocriticism 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 an ecocritical 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.

Peer Reviewing

A central stage in the writing process is the feedback stage, in which you receive revision suggestions from classmates and your instructor. By receiving feedback on your paper, you will be able to make more intelligent revision decisions. Furthermore, by reading and responding to your peers' papers, you become a more astute reader, which will help when you revise your own papers. In Chapter 10, you will find peer-review sheets for each chapter.

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8.5: Student Writer at Work- Jens Paasen's Ecocritical Paper in Development

Throughout most of this book, we've shown you exemplary student papers representing each school of literary criticism. In this chapter, we want to focus on how you can **revise** a paper to improve its organization and argument. In order to do this, we start with a paper written by Jens Paasen in his Introduction to Literature class. Jens focuses on a subject that might seem strange for a literature classroom: Walt Disney's film, *Pocahontas*. In class, however, Jens and his classmates have concentrated on literary depictions of the natural world, and Jens believes this film could be interesting if looked at through an ecocritical lens. As Jens works through these ideas, he gets lots of new ideas about how ecocriticism could inform his argument. Watch the way Jens follows these distinct ideas in this first draft of his paper. At the end of the paper we will discuss how Jens made revisions with advice from his professor and peer colleagues.

Your Process

1. As we've suggested throughout this text, these process papers will make more sense if you are familiar with the work under discussion. In most sections we've provided links to public, electronic editions of the texts under discussion. The film discussed in Jens's paper, however, is still under copyright. The interpretive moves in the paper should make sense whether you've seen the movie or not, but we highly recommend that you watch the movie before studying the sample paper. You can rent or buy a digital copy of Disney's *Pocahontas* online.
2. As you read Jens's paper, pay particular attention to the claims that Jens makes. Perhaps list his main claims on a separate sheet of paper. How many distinct ideas do you count?

Jens Paasen

Professor Laurie MacDiarmid

Introduction to Literature

March 3, 20–

Disney's *Pocahontas* and Ecocriticism: Dualism, Anthropocentrism and Animals

1 Introduction and Theoretical Background

In June 1995 Disney released its 33rd animated feature. For the first time ever Disney based a film on actual historical characters and events. The legend surrounding one of the earliest and great American heroines served as a reference: the legend of the Indian princess Matoaka, better known as Pocahontas.

Since its release, the film has been considered from various perspectives. Critics especially found fault with the depiction of Native Americans and the figure of Pocahontas from a feminist perspective. However, the idea and function of nature in the film, apart from some exceptions, appears to be unconsidered. The following term paper wants to take a critical look at the idea of nature in the film and consider its depiction and function from an ecocritical perspective.

The setting of *Pocahontas* is the English colony of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Nature and wilderness are surely the single most dominating features of this setting. One of the very first things the character Captain John Smith notices when scouting the terrain is: "[…] a wilder, more challenging country I couldn't design" (*Pocahontas* scene 11). Nature is omnipresent in the film and appears in various forms and functions.

This paper does not want to contribute to the debate about common points of criticism in *Pocahontas*. I think Russell Means, former head of the American Indian Movement and voice of chief Powhatan in the film, caused enough of a controversy when he called the film "The single finest work ever done on American Indians by Hollywood" (Gabriel and Goldberg). The right or wrong depiction of Native Americans is no more interesting for this work than the question of historical truth and authenticity. The parallelism between femininity and nature in the film will also not be considered as it is an issue of ecofeminism. Neither will the figure of Pocahontas be considered from a feminist perspective. The fact that the whole film, though portraying nature in a very spiritual and positive light, is based on a machinery of culture and capitalism, i.e. the Disney corporation, will not be considered, but should still be borne in mind. The paper will work exclusively intradiegetic in the world of the film and totally disregard outer factors. The following questions will be examined in the course of the paper. How are nature and culture presented as opposing

concepts? How is nature instrumentalized to create anthropocentrism? How authentic are the animals presented in the film, and what functions do they have?

2 Disney's *Pocahontas*

2.1 Some Introductory Words On Literal Determinism

One of the most important features of ecocriticism is that it denies what Peter Barry calls "the first item in the list of five recurrent ideas in critical theory":

They turn away from the "social constructivism" and "linguistic determinism" of dominant literary theories (with their emphasis on the linguistic and social constructedness of the external world) and instead emphasize ecocentric values of meticulous observation, collective ethical responsibility, and the claims of the world beyond ourselves. (34)

This feature is, however, at least in some way contradictory. Literature and film, as every form of art, are culturally constructed depictions of reality. It is of course true that nature, in the sense the term is used by ecocritics, exists as an entity of its own and beyond ourselves. Nevertheless it cannot find entrance into cultural products in that sense. Even if an author or director would manage to create a perfect depiction of nature it would still be embedded into the cultural construct of his work. And even if that not be so, still, every human being is a captive of his or her own perception. Nature in film is thus twice filtered through the perception of the producer and that of the audience. *Pocahontas* is a good example for this. Against the background of the fact that it is an animated film and is based on the cultural machinery of the Disney Corporation we realize that the film begins and ends with a copper engraving showing the first and last shot of the film. This refers to the fact that the story of Pocahontas is deeply embedded in American history, culture and self-perception and we realize that nature cannot exist in an authentic way in this film. In the course of the following observations we should always keep in mind that the nature presented in the film is an artificial one. It is always there for a specific purpose and never for its own sake.

2.2 Nature, Culture and Anthropocentrism

Dualism is an "explanation of the world in terms of two opposed terms" (Garrard 183). Ecocriticism tends to divide the world into the terms of *nature* and *culture* and to study the relationship between them. In doing so, it regards nature as an entity of its own and in its own right, which eludes cultural beliefs or practice, as Barry points out:

"For the ecocritic, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ironised as a concept by enclosure within knowing inverted commas, but actually presents an entity which affects us, and which we can affect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it" (252).

One can, of course, argue that the word "nature" (from Latin *natura* for birth, origin) is a cultural manifestation. It is a term, established by humans, to delimit their world from anything that exists outside this world. On the other hand, one can also argue that humankind as a part of creation is an integral part of nature and that all its cultural expressions are thus, too. The first view, as the ecocritical attempt to regard nature as an entity of its own, tends to see nature as the "other" and excludes humankind from nature in creating a second entity named culture. The second view, on the other hand, rather integrates the concept of culture into the larger concept of nature. As I pointed out earlier, nature cannot find entrance into a cultural construct like a film without being culturally filtered. Every representation of nature in a film serves a certain purpose, even if it is just to entertain the viewer with an epic sight of wilderness. This section of my analysis will regard nature and culture as two separate entities and examine their depiction, their relations and their differences in Disney's *Pocahontas*. Furthermore, it will try to investigate and describe how nature in the film is used to move humans into the center of attention and to create anthropocentrism.

In the initial song we find the following lines:

For the New World is like heaven

And we'll all be rich and free

Or so we have been told

By The Virginia Company. (*Pocahontas* scene 1)

These lines clearly show that the settlers' expectations and perception of the New World are totally shaped by a cultural force (The Virginia Company) before they even arrive. Virginia is depicted as an untouched paradise where wealth, freedom and glory are

awaiting everyone. The power of culture behind the settlers' perception is indicated by the line "so we have been told." Smith is the only one fully breaking through this predetermined view and seeing the New World with other eyes than those of the Virginia Company.

The film continues with a further depiction of culture. Directly after the initial song the *Susan Constant* is shown in a violent storm. An ecocritical approach moving away from anthropocentrism would regard it just as such, a force of nature regularly appearing in the open sea. But as we are located in the dramatic course of a film we have to analyze the storm in terms of its meaning and anthropocentric potential. Using the ecocritical distinction between nature and culture, the storm may be read as an uproar of the New World's nature against the cultural forces arriving in form of the settlers. We find proof for this assumption when the power of culture is demonstrated in the same scene. After Smith rescues Thomas's life, Governor Ratcliffe comes on deck to ask whether there is any trouble. Shortly before he arrives the former storm promptly turns into a mild shower. In this scene Ratcliffe appears as the personification of culture as opposed to nature. His very presence seems to coerce the forces of nature to retreat, thus demonstrating the dominance of culture over nature. Following this course the storm appears as strongly putting humans into the center of attention. This is, of course, not a filmic statement about the dominance of culture over nature. It rather underlines Ratcliffe's position in this debate and establishes him as the main force of culture in the course of the film.

Scene 3 gives the impression of the complete reverse of a world where nature is subordinated to humans. As Roxana Preda points out:

The Native Americans, on the other hand, are pictured as a *communitas*, shown to live in balance with nature, living off it without destroying it. The rhythm of their life is attuned to the natural one of the seasons, the cyclical return giving them the stability and security they need. All of nature repeats itself in this eternal rhythm, containing the lives of the tribe in a changeless pattern. In this view, a river is not the symbol of transformation and movement but is "steady like the beating drum." This steady beat is the ruling metaphor of their existence. Their aim is to "walk in balance," keep the traditions, take what nature is willing to give. … The Powhatans live in an ecological paradise in which there is no separation between the human and the natural world. This is a clean environment. (325)

The cleanliness and totally harmonic style of the place create the illusion of a world where there is virtually no difference between human and nature. While the settlers are established as the side of culture which exploits nature and is only interested in profit, the Indians are depicted as the side of nature where no such behavior exists. Whether the Powhatans practiced an exploitation of nature or not is an issue of the authentic depiction of Native Americans in film, which I am not able to investigate in this study. The impression that the Indians are totally on a par with nature is, however, only artificially maintained. As the following observations will show, nature, in the case of the Indians, especially Pocahontas, is as much used to put them into the center of attention as in the case of the settlers.

In scene 5 nature seems so be in the focus of attention, but only at first glance. Powhatan wants Pocahontas to accept Kocoum's hand in marriage and illustrates the situation through nature:

You are the daughter of the chief. It is time to take your place among your people. Even the wild mountain stream must someday join the big river.

As the river cuts his path

Though the river's proud and strong,

He will choose the smoothest course—

That's why rivers live so long.

They're steady

As the steady beating drum. (*Pocahontas* scene 5)

The analogy between Pocahontas and her people and the big river and the wild mountain stream is obvious. Powhatan's words correspond to the lifestyle of his people. He compares the *path* of the daughter of a chief to marry and take her place among her people to a natural process. Social structures are naturalized and disguised as natural and inescapable. The mechanism behind this instrumentalizes nature to put a human in her place. The *communitas*, in the sense that Preda uses the term, turns out to deprive individuals of their individuality via nature. Pocahontas seems to escape this mechanism in scene 6. But instead of escaping it, she

only resumes it. The river becomes a metaphor for the life she is living and the options she is facing. The end of her song illustrates this metaphor in a vivid way:

Should I choose the smoothest course

Steady as the beating drum?

Should I marry Kocoum?

Is all my dreaming at an end?

Or do you still wait for me, dream giver,

Just around the riverbend? (*Pocahontas* scene 6)

In Scene 7 the juxtaposition of nature and culture reaches a first climax. Pocahontas, not able to interpret her dream and to find her path, asks Grandmother Willow for advice.

[Pocahontas] But, Grandmother Willow, what is my path? How am I ever going to find it?

[Grandmother Willow] Your mother asked me the very same question.

[P] She did? What did you tell her?

[GW] I told her to listen. All around you are spirits, child. They live in the earth, the water, the sky. If you listen, they will guide you. (*Pocahontas* scene 7)

Grandmother Willow brings Pocahontas's attention to the spirits living invisibly in the visible nature. The powers of nature, concreted in the concept of these spirits, have the power to guide if one listens. Grandmother Willow invokes this power with her song. "*Que que na-tor-ra*" is Algonquin and means "you will understand." It is remarkable, though a coincidence, that the word *na-to-ra*, meaning "to understand," resembles the word *natura*, or nature, thus indicating that nature and to understand mean the very same thing. However, for Pocahontas this is true. As she begins to listen to nature she understands. As Grandmother Willow begins to sing, disembodied voices can be heard and a mystical breeze moves her branches. The same voices repeat the last line of her song. It is likely to regard them as the voices of the spiritual world making themselves audible for Pocahontas to allow her to connect with it.

The connection succeeds. When Pocahontas listens to the wind it tells her that "strange clouds" are coming. As she climbs on a tree and glances over the landscape she notices the sails of the *Susan Constant* seeming to glide slowly over the treetops. In her answer to Grandmother Willow's question what she is seeing she agrees with the wind: "Clouds. Strange clouds." Ecocritics see nature as an entity of its own and in its own right existing beyond human terms of reality. What the wind is telling Pocahontas and what she sees prove this claim in a vivid way. The nature of the New World, impersonated in the wind, is totally unaware of white European culture. Literally "seeing" the sails of the *Susan Constant* for the first time it does the only logical thing in settling them with its own picture area and finding a matching concept. The sails are clouds, strange clouds, though. The very same mechanism, though used by a human, is at work a few minutes earlier when Pocahontas tells Grandmother Willow about her dream. She translates the compass she is dreaming about into a spinning arrow matching her own reality.

In scene 12 we find a similar case as in scene 2. Smith, who is scouting the terrain, perceives the presence of a stranger and hides behind a waterfall, ready to shoot. As he notices Pocahontas's shape through the water he jumps out and points his gun at her. The situation is then strongly dramatized. Pocahontas's body appears from out of the mist. The wind softly plays in her hair. She looks at Smith with a mixture of innocence and vulnerability. He looks deep into her eyes and wades through the water to reach her—and then she runs off. Two details are easily overlooked in this scene. First, the mist virtually appears within a second, and second, the sound of the waterfall suddenly stops. These seemingly circumstantial details appear in a very interesting light from an ecocritical perspective. The mist only serves to provide the moment with more pathos. The waterfall appears analogously to the storm in scene 2. Natural phenomena are simply subordinated in human presence or seem to appear and disappear in order to accentuate a situation where humans are in the center of attention. The mist and the waterfall are not independent natural phenomena in this scene. They are mere effects, switched on or off in the right moment to contribute to anthropocentrism.

We have investigated the dualism between nature and culture so far. Some ecocritics seek to achieve a status for nature in which it incorporates culture. In Disney's *Pocahontas*, however, it shows that nature is subordinated to culture. Powerful forces of nature

seem to retreat in humans' presence. Natural phenomena are switched on or off at the right time as if they were special effects. Nature represents human struggles and situations. It also came to light that Powhatan disguises the way of life of his people as a natural process. But it was also shown that nature can make itself audible and form itself a platform. We found out that nature has its own picture area to which cultural phenomena may be applied.

2.3 The Leaves as Recurring Element

During the whole film a gust of wind carrying a handful of multicolored leaves accompanies nearly every movement the heroine is making. The leaves appear more often in the film than any other element of nature, and thus need special attention. They are closely connected with the role of wind in the film. Their first appearance, at the transition of scenes 2 and 3, indicates this. Kekata explains Pocahontas's absence to Powhatan with the words: "She has her mother's spirit. She goes wherever the wind takes her." We then see a stream of leaves appearing and guiding us to Pocahontas, who stand on a cliff. In scene 7 Grandmother Willow tells Pocahontas to listen to the wind. As Pocahontas begins to open up her mind for the voices of the spiritual world the leaves appear. In scene 17 Powhatan claims to feel her mother's presence in the wind:

[C] When I see you wear that necklace, you look just like your mother.

[Pocahontas] I miss her.

[CP] But she is still with us. Whenever the wind moves through the trees, I feel her presence. Our people look to her for wisdom and strength. Someday, they will look to you as well.

[P] I would be honoured by that.

The wind is established as the main force of nature in the film. It contrasts with Ratcliffe, who has previously been established as the main force of culture in the film. The leaves are a visualization of the wind. That way, it is easier for the viewer to recognize the wind's role and functions in the film.

The leaves serve three main functions. First, they are the link between humans and nature. As Preda points out: "In the scene of the rescue it is only after feeling the wind that Powhatan consents to let Smith live" (334). The same thing happens to Smith, who is not a full part of Pocahontas's reality in scene 15 before he has been caressed by the wind on a cliff. Pocahontas appears in a similar situation in scene 4. The wind seems to have the power to open one's eyes to the beauty of the natural world, as in Smith's case, and to make one feel its serenity and clarity, as in Powhatan's case. Second, the leaves have a general connecting function in terms of love and language. In scene 12 Pocahontas and Smith's hands reaching for each other are surrounded by a knot of leaves. It seems as if the wind expresses the validity of the connection. It also seems to initiate the sudden and inexplicable codeswitching of Pocahontas and all the other characters. In the next shot we see Pocahontas and Smith standing face to face surrounded by a helix of leaves. As the leaves appear from Pocahontas's side and only in her presence and connect Smith to her a view seeing culture as an integral part of nature is supported. The last scene of the film gives a very strong impression of this connecting power. As Pocahontas is standing on a cliff looking at the *Susan Constant* in the distance, a powerful stream of leaves appears from behind her; it unerringly bears down on the ship and reaches Smith. It creates a last and powerful link between the settlers and the Indians, between Smith and Pocahontas, between nature and culture and between two worlds. It points to a final synthesis in the dualism between nature and culture. Third, the leaves accompany the movements of the heroine and underline her spirituality and permanent connection with the natural world. They lead us to her in scene 4. They appear and follow her in scene 15. They symbolize the transport of her feelings to Smith in the last scene. But the most important point is that they indicate the connection with nature beginning in scene 8 and the renaissance of this connection in scene 24 when Pocahontas eventually recognizes the meaning of the compass and her path.

The wind and the leaves it carries are the most frequent and striking appearance of nature in the film. They are conspicuous and their function is always clear to the viewer. Moreover, they fulfill most of the functions of nature in the film. However, they always serve to illustrate human issues. Whether they guide our gaze, build up a connection with nature, or underline a relationship, the link with humans is always given. The leaves are the force of nature with the strongest anthropocentric potential in the film.

2.4 Animals

The following section will investigate the trope of animals as introduced by Garrard in his book on ecocriticism (136–59). Some of the ideas Garrard discusses in his chapter on animals, especially the idea of anthropomorphism, shall be applied to the representation of animals in *Pocahontas*. The most noticeable representatives of animals in the film are Meeko the raccoon and Flit

the hummingbird, who accompany Pocahontas. The principle of anthropomorphism can be demonstrated in a vivid way using these two characters. Anthropomorphism means “that we mistakenly ascribe human attributes … to the animals involved” (Garrard 137). With regard to Meeko and Flit this process already began in their creation. Nik Ranieri, the supervising animator for Meeko, drew his inspiration in creating the raccoon from himself. He used his acting talent to make Meeko come to life. This requires, of course, that Meeko’s character and movements are basically human. Dave Pruiksma, the supervising animator for Flit, studied hummingbirds to come up with all the right moves and create Flit’s character. This seems a good starting point to examine how anthropomorphism shows in these animals. To begin with, Meeko and Flit seem to relate to each other through a kind of friendship in which they tease each other constantly. Meeko is more of the funny and clumsy type, open to everyone and every new situation and always in search of food. Flit is shown as wary, careful, and as Pocahontas points out, “very stubborn.” In many situations the two of them behave like their human models and show human attributes as certain feelings, character traits, and behavior. Moreover, they are in possession of fully developed facial expressions and can show joy, uncertainty, and even sullenness.

The anthropomorphic representations of Meeko and Flit in the film are countless. Let us have a look at some of them. In scene 5 Flit shows obvious satisfaction with Kocoum’s wedding proposal by nodding. Meeko, on the other hand, links an obvious sound with a gesture as if he has to vomit. Hereafter he imitates Kocoum’s appearance. Flit, obviously dissatisfied with Meeko’s rejection, stabs the raccoon, posing as Kocoum, in his stomach (scene 5). In scene 18 Meeko braids Pocahontas’s hair. In scene 24 Meeko seems to understand Pocahontas’s problem and offers her the compass. In addition to these examples, there are many other instances in the film where Meeko and Flit show human behavior and facial expressions. Meeko and Flit are not only able to understand human language, but also empathize with Pocahontas and her situation, demonstrate agreement or rejection, and find solutions for human problems. At times it seems more likely to regard them as humans in animal shape than as authentic animals.

Percy, governor Ratcliffe’s dog, is another example of anthropomorphism. He seems to be a miniature version of Ratcliffe, equipped with a preference for luxury and British manners. This may be best demonstrated by a test animation in which Percy talked to Redfeather, a deleted character.

[Redfeather] Wow. Ha! I mean, that was close. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

[Percy] I take it you’re some sort of… bird.

[R] That’s the understatement of the year.

[P] Egad! It speaks…

[R] Please don’t let me stand in your way. Last thing I wanna do…

[P] Yes, well, I’d love to continue this scintillating conversation, but really, I have to run. Goodbye.

[R] Ha, ha, ha, ha. (Gabriel and Goldberg)

Percy’s parlance clearly shows stereotypical British idiosyncrasies. The lightly nasal intonation of his original speaker underlines this. His face always carries a slight expression of aristocratic arrogance and disapproval. Wiggins, Ratcliffe’s manservant, rather seems to serve Percy than Ratcliffe. In scene 1 he carries Percy to the ship on a cushion while the dog is patronizingly waving at the crowd. In scene 10 Percy is sitting in a miniature bathtub wearing a bathing cap and eating cherries, and in scene 16 he is eating dog biscuits that are hung on a little carousel. Percy seems to be the caricature of an animal that has been shaped by culture so much that it has lost its wild status. Grandmother Willow hints at this when she says “That’s the strangest creature I’ve ever seen” (scene 21). Percy also is the only animal that is scared by Grandmother Willow’s appearance. Another strongly anthropomorphic feature of Percy is that his character makes a personal development over the course of the film. The initially arrogant dog that constantly conflicts with Meeko eventually befriends the raccoon and the hummingbird. In scene 21 Meeko shows his sympathy for the frightened dog by placing his paw on Percy’s shoulder. At this point Percy quasi becomes a part of the “gang.”

As animals in a film about humans, Meeko and Flit, as well as Percy, are unusually present and are virtually equipped with their own plot line. Unfortunately, this strong presence is at the expense of their authenticity. As Garrard points out, “the pet is just a mirror, reflecting back our gaze with no autonomy” (139). Meeko, Flit, and Percy are perfect examples of what Baker calls “disnification” and what is based on neoteny and a cutesy relation to nature (Garrard 141). Their function is to serve as a funny counterpart to the relatively serious main plot line. Their strong human attributes ridicule them. The boundary between the human and other creatures blurs.

Meeko, Flit, and Percy are the most obvious examples of anthropomorphism in the film, but there are also other animals showing similar behavior. The animals living around Grandmother Willow, for instance, start to twitter, squeak, and croak excitedly when Pocahontas talks about her dream. It seems as if they are talking before Grandmother Willow calls them to order. The anxious look of the frog in scene 7 and the ironic look the two owls exchange in scene 12 are further examples. Again, these cases of anthropomorphism serve as a funny counterpart to the main plot line.

But animals are not only humanized; they also fulfill other functions. They appear, for example, as a parallel to human counterparts or relations. In scene 6 a pair of otters symbolizes the relationship that Pocahontas may enter into. As she sings, “for a handsome, sturdy husband who builds handsome, sturdy walls,” a beaver building his lodge is shown. In scene 15 Pocahontas and John Smith are accompanied by a doe and a stag while running through the forest. In the same scene an artful cutting technique embeds Pocahontas and John Smith into nature and nature back into them. Lying on the floor they turn into the eye of an eagle. In the next shot the bird and its hen are shown sitting next to each other and looking leftwards. This shot then turns back into Pocahontas and Smith in the very same pose. Moreover, animals appear wherever Pocahontas appears and escort her. This is supposed to show her closeness and connection to nature. Take the otters, birds, and fish in scene 6 as an example. With regard to anthropomorphism, the opposite can also be found. The terms the Indians and settlers have for each other are clear cases of theriomorphism. Garrard refers to theriomorphism as “the reverse of anthropomorphism [which] is often used in contexts of national or racial stereotyping” (141). Kekata, the shaman of the village, calls the settlers “strange beasts” and likens them to “ravenous wolves” (scene 10). Ratcliffe, on the other hand, calls the Indians “vermin” (scene 23). A last noticeable point is the close association of animals with the spiritual world in the film. This association seems to be the complete reverse of the anthropomorphic tendency I described above. It depicts the spiritual world in the form of animals. If we remember that Grandmother Willow built a close relation between nature and spirits in scene 7, this relation is thus also build between nature and animals. We find two examples for this in the film: First, the herd of deer appearing in the wind in scene 15 and second, the great eagle flying over Pocahontas in scene 25 when she sings, “eagle help my feet to fly.” This mechanism moves the animals, which are pulled into the direction of culture by anthropomorphism close to nature and deeply embeds them into nature.

We have seen that animals are put to several functions in *Pocahontas*. We find many examples of strong anthropomorphism and also examples for theriomorphism. Animals parallel humans and their relations or visualize the spiritual world. However, they are never there for their own sake. They always fulfill a certain function, which mostly contradicts biological reality. A friendship between a raccoon, a hummingbird, and a pug seems as unlikely as animals showing complex facial expressions or fully understanding human language.

3 Conclusion

The previous analysis has shown that nature plays an important part in Disney’s *Pocahontas*. It can, however, not find entrance into the movie in an authentic form as it is a cultural construct and functions as a filter. Nature in the film serves certain functions. It moves humans into the center of attention and is used to symbolize their inner conflicts, their relations, and their situations. Some forms of nature—for example, the leaves—are more dominant than others and fulfill more than one function. Nature in general appears as a set of effects that is switched on or off at the right time to make its contribution to the atmosphere and the plot of the film. The same is true of animals, which are an integral part of nature. In the film animals are strongly anthropomorphized and serve as a funny counterpart to the main plot. They reflect human relations or are visualizations of the spiritual world.

The dualism between nature and culture, anthropocentrism, and the trope of “animal” are far from being all representations of nature in the film. Moreover, this work is far from an exhausting analysis in terms of these points. We only gained a brief insight into them. The film has to offer much more material for further analyses. Future works may also further investigate the dualism of nature and culture as is shows in the dualism between the Indians and the settlers. Roxana Preda broke ground with her distinction between *societas* and *communitas* (325) The question in how far a synthesis between nature and culture is reached is a further starting point for interesting investigations. Lastly, a close analysis of the cultural mechanisms behind the film needs to be achieved.

This analysis shows that nature cannot be there for its own sake in Disney’s *Pocahontas*. It has to serve certain functions and is embedded into cultural practice. The status that ecocritics seek for nature thus cannot be achieved. To use nature for our cultural issues may, however, not be that bad at all. I pointed out that nature and culture have their own picture areas and that a concept that exists in one area can be applied to the other area if a matching concept is found. Sails can be turned into strange clouds and become a part of nature. Vice versa, natural phenomena can be applied to the picture area of culture as in the film and nature

becomes a part of culture. Perhaps this is exactly what we need to do to gain a deeper insight into nature and achieve a better understanding of it. “We need to sing with all the voices of the mountains. We need to paint with all the colors of the wind” (*Pocahontas* scene 15).

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As you probably noticed while reading Jens’s paper, he packs lots of engaging ideas into his discussion of *Pocahontas*. However, you may have felt like each bold heading introduced a brand-new paper, each with an argument that, while related to the other arguments presented here, could nonetheless be developed into a compelling paper in its own right. Jens writes about nature and culture, he writes about representations of animals, he writes about images of leaves—and each of these seems like a brand-new idea.

After Jens submitted this draft to his instructor, she pointed out that by trying to pack every single one of his ideas into a single paper, Jens was actually making it harder for his readers to fully understand any of those ideas. The paper seems oversaturated and dense. She recommended that Jens pick one or two questions and revise his paper to fully answer them. This might mean, of course, that Jens cannot say everything he would like to say about *Pocahontas* in this paper, but his readers will benefit (and writing is, ultimately, about readers). In a peer-review workshop, Jens’s classmates help him sort through the many threads of his argument and find an engaging focus. Indeed, they point out that a relatively minor theme of Jens’s first draft—consumerism—is perhaps the most surprising and rewarding aspect of his argument.

When literature teachers ask you to revise your writing, they usually don’t want you to simply correct typographical errors, spelling, and the like. Simple corrections are better called **proofreading** than **revision**. Instead, professors want you to reconsider your argument—to evaluate how your claims and evidence fit together, to move elements around so your reader can more easily follow your ideas, to add transitional phrases and passages, to delete unnecessary information, and to add new research that clarifies or strengthens your claims.

This page titled 8.5: Student Writer at Work- Jens Paasen’s Ecocritical Paper in Development is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Anonymous via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

8.6: Student Sample Paper- Jens Paasen's "If You Want to Belong, You Have to Buy- Disney's Pocahontas and Consumerism in a Natural Disguise"

While Jens's revised paper builds on the work he did in his first draft, it modifies it significantly, expanding on relatively minor points about consumerism and drawing in new research. While this kind of deep revision requires significant effort, such effort can give stellar results. Jens presented the following version of his paper at an undergraduate literary conference, and it won an essay prize at his college. You should note as you read that a longer paper isn't necessarily a better paper—Jens's first draft was much longer than his award-winning draft you see here.

Jens Paasen

Professor Laurie MacDiarmid

Introduction to Literature

May 4, 20–

If You Want to Belong, You Have to Buy:

Disney's *Pocahontas* and Consumerism in a Natural Disguise

One of my earliest childhood memories is how my godmother took me to the movies to watch Disney's *Pocahontas* in 1995, when I was seven years old. I remember vividly how much I desired to have the spinning arrow compass from the movie afterwards, and a couple of days later my godmother bought it for me. Back then, I thought it was the coolest thing ever. Today, I realize how my purchase contributed to a mechanism that grossed more than $346 million for that single movie, sequels and merchandise not included, and I ask myself how Disney managed to arouse such a strong need for a compass in a seven-year-old boy. Jack Zipes answers that question, claiming: "the quality of the film is incidental to the routine of attendance and production of consumptive desires based on ideological sameness" (14). That compass was about preserving the good feelings I connected to watching the movie for a short time, spending time with my aunt, buying popcorn and soda, joining a community of viewers and having something exciting to talk about in school, at least before *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was released, and I suddenly felt an irresistible desire for a stuffed version of a gargoyle.

In the *Iliad*, the Greeks construct a huge wooden horse and hide a select force of men inside. The Trojans pull the horse into their city as a trophy, thereby letting in the Greek soldiers unnoticed. In *Pocahontas*, Disney seems to use a similar stratagem. I believe that the movie uses nature as a Trojan horse to plant messages of consumerism in the viewers' minds. The Walt Disney Company wants to sell families their movies, as well as a whole range of products related to them. Their overall strategy appears to be to make parents believe that their movies are suitable for their children and offer good, moral messages. The Disney emblem serves as a promise for child-oriented entertainment, providing simplified messages and a happy ending. In *Pocahontas*, that happy end is missing, as Smith does not get the girl in the end. Half of the Disney promise is not kept. In an attempt to balance this omission, Disney appears to include notions of environmentalism to substitute for the absence of a happy ending. However, true environmentalism is contradictory to a disposable consumerist culture. Disney follows Greg Garrard's definition of environmentalists as "the very broad range of people who are concerned about environmental issues such as global warming and pollution, but who wish to maintain or improve their standard of living as conventionally defined, and who would not welcome radical social change" (18). This definition ensures the message of environmentalism, but does not exclude conventional consumerism. To instill environmentally sexy consumerism in children, *Pocahontas* proceeds in three steps. First, the notion of a nature-culture dichotomy is reinforced. Then, the idea of human dominance over nature is suggested in order to justify human exploitation of nature. Eventually a consumerist culture is strengthened.

The idea of a nature-culture dichotomy is the first introduced in the movie through the juxtaposition of the English settlers and the Powhatan Indians. The first two scenes focus on the settlers, the third scene presents the Native American community. Roxana Preda refers to their respective social structure as a *societas* for the settlers and a *communitas* for the Powhatans. While the *societas* is marked by a strong hierarchical structure and interests in individual profit, the *communitas* emphasizes closeness to nature in living in a rhythm attuned to the natural one of the seasons. Preda writes: "The Powhatans live in an ecological paradise in which there is no separation between the human and the natural world" (326). Although young viewers' culture is likely to be closer to that of the settlers, Disney presents the settlers as intruders to the ecological paradise of the Powhatans. This becomes apparent in

scene 11, when the settlers begin to dig up the land, fell the trees and use explosives in their search for gold. The viewing child will probably side with the Indians and their seemingly perfect world. For the course of the upcoming conflict, Disney has created a nature-culture dichotomy, establishing the Powhatans as the "good" side, ensuring that the young audience sides with them.

In the next step, the movie introduces the idea of human dominance over nature; i.e., there exists a hierarchical order between nature and culture. The movie achieves this ordering through depictions of anthropocentrism using nature as special effect. In scene 2, the settlers' ship, the *Susan Constant*, is shown in a violent storm. The power of culture is suggested in this scene. Shortly before governor Ratcliffe comes on deck, the former storm promptly turns into a mild shower. Ratcliffe's very presence seems to coerce the forces of nature to retreat, thus demonstrating the dominance of culture. In scene 12, we find a similar case. Smith, scouting the terrain, perceives the presence of a stranger and hides behind a waterfall, ready to shoot. As he notices Pocahontas's shape through the falling water, he jumps out and points his gun at her. The situation is, then, strongly dramatized. Pocahontas's body appears from out of the mist. The wind softly plays in her hair. She looks at Smith with a mixture of innocence and vulnerability. He looks deep into her eyes and wades through the water to reach her—and then she runs off. Here, two details can be easily overlooked. First, the mist virtually appears within a second, and second, the roar of the waterfall suddenly stops. These seemingly circumstantial details appear in a new light when considering the role of cultural supremacy. The mist only serves to provide the moment with more pathos. The waterfall appears analogous to the storm in scene 2. Natural phenomena are simply subordinated in human presence, or seem to appear and disappear, in order to accentuate a situation where humans are in the center of attention. In other words, the mist and the waterfall are not independent natural phenomena in this scene. They are mere effects, switched on or off in the right moment to contribute to the anthropocentrism. Through moments like these, Disney exposes the young viewers to a notion of human dominance over nature through the message that nature is a vehicle for human expression.

Finally, a consumerist culture has to be introduced to the child. Two examples from the movie illustrate this culture in a vivid way. On three occasions in the movie, Pocahontas acts as a translator between the settlers' culture and her own. In scene 7, she tells Grandmother Willow how she dreamed about a spinning arrow. Later in the movie, we learn that the spinning arrow is actually a compass. In this scene, Pocahontas approaches the alien culture for the first time and translates the unknown concept of the compass into the realm of her own people. The compass becomes a spinning arrow. In scene 8, she climbs up a tree and, glancing over the landscape, notices the sails of the *Susan Constant*, which seem to glide slowly over the treetops. Answering Grandmother Willow's question about what she is seeing, she says: "Clouds. Strange clouds." In scene 18, John Smith and Pocahontas talk about gold. To her question as to what gold is, Smith explains that it is yellow, comes out of the ground and is really valuable. Pocahontas, then, shows him corn. These translations—compass to arrow, sails to clouds, and gold to corn—and the sequence in which they occur are more than a coincidence. All the items with which Pocahontas is confronted are essential to the upcoming transatlantic trade, marking the beginning of modern capitalism. Pocahontas defangs this complex idea by translating it into concepts from the realm of her tribe which are suitable for children. In doing so, she embeds consumerism into the world of nature with which the Powhatans are associated, thus subliminally exposing the young viewers to ideas of consumerism.

Pocahontas's individualist nature, referred to as "her mother's spirit" in scene 3, brings her even closer to this culture. In scene 5, Chief Powhatan wants Pocahontas to accept Kocoum's hand in marriage and illustrates the situation through nature by saying, "You are the daughter of the chief. It is time to take your place among your people. Even the wild mountain stream must someday join the big river." The analogy between Pocahontas and her people and the big river and the wild mountain stream is obvious. Joining the community is naturalized. But Pocahontas does not want to join the big river. Her struggle for independence and individuality appears as antithetical to the mass culture she is supposed to join. John Smith emerges as an alternative to Kocoum's proposal. He fosters her independence through his own and uses it to separate her further from her tribe and father. She sides with the settlers. This becomes apparent through her attempts to convince her father to talk to the settlers and the heroic saving of Smith forming the climax of the movie. When Grandmother Willow says, "You know your path, child. Now follow it!" she actually means, you chose a side, now support it. Her siding with Smith and the other colonists over her tribe smoothes out the settlers' invasion.

To present the proto-American settlers as individualists is somewhat counterintuitive as the Western culture is very conformist in the ways it is socialized into expressing individuality. We are taught to buy different clothes, phones, cars, etc. to express our individuality in order to be special and loveable and in order to be accepted as a member of our society. We have to buy to be individual so we can fit in. Consumerism thrives on the ideas of individuality Pocahontas is representing.

At the end of the movie, Pocahontas and John Smith have to separate. Seeing her standing on the cliff facing the *Susan Constant*, the viewer is left with the feeling that she became a stronger and more independent and individual woman through meeting Smith and that she is "going to make it," though there is no happy ending. Looking seaward, a powerful gust of wind carrying colorful leaves appears from behind her, unerringly bearing down on the ship and reaches Smith. It creates a last, powerful link between her and Smith, emphasizing her new relation to the settlers, rather than the tie to her tribe. By making her a translator and fostering her individualist nature through the meeting with Smith, Disney seems to embed the proto-consumerist culture of the settlers into the world of nature Pocahontas has been associated with throughout the movie. To come back to my initial anecdote: I did not want the compass because I was so interested in navigation at the time. I somehow wanted to stay part of the environmental Indian community I sided with and paradoxically I felt like I could only achieve this through buying something related to the movie. My compass was a label that brought me close to that world and made me like the movie character I admired for a short time and gave me a feeling of being as strong and individual as her. Carrying around my compass showed people that I had been part of that movie and still was, that I was an individual and, in being so, a part of society. As an adult, I still think that *Pocahontas* is a wonderful movie. However, I question whether we really want our children to believe that they can buy their individuality and whether we want them depend on consumerism in order to feel as individuals.

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8.7: Student Sample Paper- Allison Shakelton's "Separation from Nature in 'The Light Princess'"

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 George MacDonald's fairy tale, "The Light Princess," which you can find in full as an e-text provided by Project Gutenberg (http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/697) and as a free audiobook provided by Librivox (http://librivox.org/the-light-princess-by-george-macdonald/).

"The Light Princess," written in 1864, follows a classic fairy-tale convention: a king and queen have a daughter, plan a baptism, but forget to invite a wicked witch, who then casts an evil spell at the ceremony.George MacDonald, "The Light Princess" (1864; Project Gutenberg, 1996), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/697/697-h/697-h.htm. Then George MacDonald adds a unique twist: the spell prevents the infant from having any gravity. She floats in the air and must be tethered to a string at all times, and she is never serious or grave about life concerns, only laughing at any encounter. The fairy tale, as you might expect, moves toward a climax where the Light Princess will hopefully find her gravity. Allison, a geography major, was intrigued by MacDonald's use of nature and geological time in his fairy tales and wrote a paper on "The Light Princess" using an ecocritical approach.

George MacDonald (1824–1905) was a Scottish writer and a close friend of Lewis Carroll. In fact, Carroll brought a draft of *Alice in Wonderland* to MacDonald so that his children could read it. They loved it! MacDonald and Carroll found in the fairy tale not only an outlet for their literary imagination but also a form for expressing central thematic concerns. Carroll, for example, was critiquing the moral and didactic nature of children's literature that children were expected to read (or to have parents read to them in the nursery). MacDonald grappled with many issues, but one in particular was the relationship between humans and their environment, particularly in light of Darwin's propositions in *Origin of Species*, which presented the theory of evolution. In two of his longer fairy tales—*The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1881)—MacDonald gives a young miner boy, Curdie, magical powers that allow him to see whether a person is evolving to become a better person or devolving back to a beastly state. In other words, MacDonald was using the theory of evolution to create a fairy-tale world that also encompasses a kind of spiritual evolution. While Allison's paper is not directly related to Darwin or Darwinian literary criticism, she does focus on the importance of nature in MacDonald and the disastrous results that can happen when one is separated from nature, a concern central to writers and readers in the nineteenth century who were being asked to reconsider the environment, not only in terms of the effects of the Industrial Revolution but also in regard to Darwin's quite subversive theory of evolution.

Allison Shackelton

Dr. John Pennington

Classic and Contemporary Fairy Tales

6 March 20–

Separation From Nature in "The Light Princess"

Estrangement from nature is an extremely important theme of the fairy tale "The Light Princess" by George MacDonald. In the kingdom the story takes place in, people, or at least those described in the story, are very alienated from the natural world. The characters that are most separated from nature are the princess; the king, the princess's father; Princess Makemnoit, a witch and the princess's aunt; and Hum-Drum and Kopy-Keck, two philosophers who work for the king. Their separation from nature is bad for them; people are supposed to live connected to the natural world.

In "The Light Princess," George MacDonald stresses the importance of a connection between humanity and nature. In the article "Traveling Beastward: An Ecocritical Reading of George MacDonald's Fairy Tales," Björn Sundmark calls the fairy tales written by MacDonald pastorals, claiming, "pastoral implies a contrast between urban and countryside, between culture and nature" (9). The characters in "The Light Princess" that are overly concerned with culture are too separated from nature, which, from the way it is treated in the story, appears to be superior to culture. Nature is shown to be good, as "nature is a powerful presence in George MacDonald's work, encountered in many moods but always as a force for good" (Pridmore 1), and culture is portrayed as isolating. A description of nature's goodness in "The Light Princess" is the princess's reaction to the lake: "the passion of her life was to get

into the water, and she was always the better behaved and the more beautiful the more she had of it" (MacDonald 29). The idea that culture is isolating is shown by the behavior of the king, Hum-Drum, and Kopy-Keck. The king spends his time shut up in a room with his money, "where it was all but a capital crime to disturb him" (MacDonald 45). The money can be seen as a symbol of culture, if culture is defined as the human part of the world. Hum-Drum and Kopy-Keck, with their outlandish medical advice, must have been well-educated to get a position working for the king, but they probably have never closely observed or experienced the way nature works, or they would have been able to give advice that was not at odds with nature. For example, when thinking of one cure for the princess's lack of gravity, they "agreed in recommending the king to bury her alive for three years" (MacDonald 30). Hum-Drum and Kopy-Keck are so distanced from nature that they are unable to create useful, sensible recommendations for medical treatments.

Of all of the characters in "The Light Princess," the princess is the most alienated from nature. She lacks gravity, an important connection between humanity and the natural world, in two ways: physically and psychologically. In the physical sense of not having gravity, she is not affected by Earth's gravitational pull. She has no physical weight. In the psychological sense, she lacks the ability to be serious or to really love anyone. A symptom of her lack of gravity is "laughter at everybody and everything that came in her way" (MacDonald 23). She cannot feel the full range of human emotions. Sundmark says that "she is unable to form any attachments to other people" (11) and "her laugh is missing something—the possibility of sorrow" (11). This leads up to what John Pridmore says in his article "Nature and Fantasy." Pridmore claims "the love of nature leads at last to the love of man" (1). In the princess's case, the situation is similar but reversed; her love of the prince allows her to connect with nature. Only after she falls in love with the prince does she regain her gravity. Besides becoming affected by Earth's gravitational pull, she becomes able to be serious and actually care about things, as demonstrated when she saves the prince's life at the risk of draining her beloved lake away again.

Sundmark, when he writes about George MacDonald's fairy tales being pastorals, says "pastoral is concerned with beginnings, or rather, the notion of a better, more natural way of being in and with nature" (8). The princess experiences a new beginning in her life when she gains gravity and is able to live a superior kind of life in connection with the natural world. Princess Makemnoit's magic that had forced her to remain separated from nature is now gone. The princess is no longer separated from the natural world, but she has still been alienated from it for so long that she still must learn to stand on her own two feet in this new way of living. The prince teaches her about how to live in the world with gravity. He has to teach her how to walk, because "she could walk no more than a baby" (MacDonald 52). Like a baby, the princess must learn to cope with living in the world. The comparison of the princess to a baby reflects the fact that she is at a new beginning in her life. Once she gains her gravity, her connection with the natural world, she must learn how to live in a new way.

Even before she regains her gravity, the princess is not completely devoid of any sort of connection with nature, though. She has gravity while she is in the water; she comes to enjoy being in the lake and swimming, showing us that she enjoys and wants a connection with the natural world. The princess still has a tenuous connection with nature before Princess Makemnoit's spell is broken. "Nature shapes us long before we are aware of her presence, more deeply as we come to accept Her formative role" (Pridmore 4); this is shown by the fact that nature has a small role in shaping the princess's character and by the way it affects her even more when she is finally able to regain her long-absent gravity. During the time when the princess does not have gravity, she feels a connection with the lake, because "the moment she got into it, she recovered the natural right of which she had been so wickedly deprived—namely, gravity" (MacDonald 28). The lake comes to be one of the few, if not the only, exceptions to the rule that the princess is unable to genuinely care about anything. Later, when she has recovered her gravity, she is able to feel affection for more than just the lake; she can care about other people, such as the prince.

Another character separated from the natural world is the king. In the beginning of "The Light Princess," an example of the king's alienation from nature is the way he apparently spends much of his time in his counting-house with his money. He greatly values the aspects of the world created by human civilization, the manmade benefits of wealth, and rejects the far greater value found in the natural world. This goes along with what Björn Sundmark writes about in "Traveling Beastward," although in this instance he is talking about *The Princess and Curdie*, not "The Light Princess." He says that after the characters Irene and Curdie die, the new king "undermines the city in his hunt for gold" (Sundmark 7); his actions lead to disaster. In the case of *The Princess and Curdie*, the disaster is the city's destruction. The disaster occurs because, when people "look only to profit, civilization and mankind is doomed" (Sundmark 7). The king from "The Light Princess," like the king from *The Princess and Curdie*, is more concerned with wealth than he should be. His love of money does not lead to his kingdom's downfall, but he is so disconnected from the natural

world that he spends his time in his counting-house while taking very few actions personally to attempt to stop the lake from draining away. After his daughter regains her gravity, however, the king “divided the money in his box” (MacDonald 52), showing that he, like the princess, may be becoming more connected to nature.

Hum-Drum and Kopy-Keck, the philosophers, are also characters estranged from nature. They are tasked with the undertaking of diagnosing and finding a cure for the princess’s lack of gravity. Their diagnoses are exceedingly unusual, to say the least. Besides coming up with diagnoses, they do think of some potential cures, but those cures are vile, useless, or both. Kopy-Keck thinks the princess “should therefore be taught, by the sternest compulsion, to take an interest in the history of the earth” (MacDonald 27) and “study every department of its history” (MacDonald 27) because he believes that her soul is from Mercury and “there is no relation between her world and this world” (MacDonald 27). Hum-Drum thinks “the motion of her heart has been reversed” (MacDonald 27) and recommends a complicated, painful-sounding process that involves draining the princess of quite a bit of her blood (MacDonald 28). The cures that Hum-Drum and Kopy-Keck think of to try out on the princess could never work, but nature, along with love, does help her regain her gravity. In accordance with what John Pridmore says in “Nature and Fantasy,” “nature, co-operating with the love of family and friends, is seen by MacDonald to work for our healing” (2). When the princess cries after the prince almost drowns, nature and love restore her gravity.

Princess Makemnoit, the one who causes the princess to lose her gravity, is another character that is separated from the natural world. The rift between her and nature is entirely of her own doing, the result of her conscious actions. Her use of magic to control aspects of nature separates her from it. She understands natural laws, such as the laws of gravitation, as things she can use, judging by the fact that MacDonald says “she could abrogate those laws in a moment; or at least so clog their wheels and rust their bearings, that they would not work at all” (17). As Sundmark says, “Human industry and civilization inevitably change the face of the earth, affect nature violently and noisily” (8). Princess Makemnoit’s magic is “human industry and civilization” (Sundmark 8) harming the natural world, and thereby separating Princess Makemnoit from nature. Her magic disrupts the earth and the natural order of things by taking away her niece’s gravity, draining the lake, and making the streams stop flowing.

The separation between nature and the characters of “The Light Princess” could reflect views on human interaction with the natural world that came about in the nineteenth century. As Björn Sundmark says, reading MacDonald’s fairy tales from an environmental standpoint helps us understand how some people of MacDonald’s time thought about nature and “provides a perspective on the ways in which the relationship between man and nature is expressed today” (2). Sundmark writes about symbolism, which can help us understand what the author means in his stories or hint at what the author values. While describing MacDonald’s use of symbols in his writing, he says “the force of the symbol is diminished if its function as referent is over-emphasized” (Sundmark 2). Sundmark means that things in the stories should be what they are written to be, but they may also have other meanings (2). The symbolism may lead us to see an environmental theme. For example, the princess’s lack of gravity is an important symbol in “The Light Princess.” Her lack of gravity is exactly what MacDonald says it is, but it can also symbolize something else: her lack of a connection with the natural world. Another symbol is the lake, which represents the possibility of the princess becoming connected to nature. Before the princess gets her gravity, it is the only place where she is has a connection to the natural world. A third symbol is the princess’s tears. They are a symbol of unity with nature. When the princess lacked gravity, “to make the princess cry was as impossible as to make her weigh” (MacDonald 30). She was finally able to cry after she gained gravity.

The separation between the characters and the natural world is an important idea in George MacDonald’s “The Light Princess.” The princess, the king, Princess Makemnoit, Hum-Drum, and Kopy-Keck are all disconnected from nature. At the end of the story, the princess and the king become more connected to the natural world, which is shown to be good for their characters. Princess Makemnoit stays alienated from nature and dies at the end of the story, killed in a disaster that would never have occurred if she had not spurned nature and turned solely to the human part of the world. Hum-Drum and Kopy-Keck are not main characters, so MacDonald does not tell us their fates. MacDonald uses symbolism in “The Light Princess” to convey the message that people should live connected with nature and not just with culture. Humanity must live as part of the world instead of attempting to isolate ourselves in an impenetrable fortress of human culture. If we distance ourselves from the natural world too much, we cannot live good, fulfilling lives.

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8.8: End-of-Chapter Assessment

Key Takeaways

- While literature often portrays nature, it also reflects human attitudes toward nature. Those attitudes can spring from historical, political, and/or social causes, but they can provide useful insight into the relationship between society and the natural world.
- You can understand a text's ecological implications by paying particular attention to the way that natural features, animals, ecosystems, and the like are described within a given story, poem, play, or essay.
- When writing ecocritical arguments about literature, you should avoid anachronistic claims that impute modern understandings of the environment to works written in previous periods. You can, however, discuss the ways that historical texts convey ideas that prefigure, echo, or run contrary to modern environmentalist thought.
- When revising a paper for a literature class, you should think more broadly than simply proofreading. The process of revision should lead to significant changes and improvements in your transitions, claims, and evidence, as well as to the mechanics of your prose.

WRITING EXERCISE

1. Freewriting exercise. Make a list of all the "natural" words and/or phrases in a work of literature that you've read for class. These might include animal names, plant names, descriptions of natural features, or accounts of natural phenomena. Look over this list—what relationships do you see among the words you identified? How might these words help you craft an ecocritical research question?

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS EXERCISE

1. It can be difficult for students to see the environmental nuances in works that are not explicitly about nature. To help students see the ways that literature about, say, the industrial city can be read through an ecocritical lens, ask them to rewrite a passage from such a work in the mode of a Romantic writer. For instance, you might ask them to rewrite a passage from *Life in the Iron Mills*as a poem in the style of Walt Whitman. Such "mashups" can help expose the hidden elements of a work they might not otherwise notice. For more on this idea, see Ryan Cordell's *ProfHacker* post on the subject (http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacke...lassroom/29252).Ryan Cordell, "Mashups in the Literature Classroom," *ProfHacker* (blog), *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 9, 2010, http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacke...lassroom/29252.

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS PEER REVIEW

1. Have students conduct peer review on one of the sample papers using the organizational peer-review guide found in Chapter 10, Section 10.7:
    1. Place students in groups of three to four and have them reread the paper for peer review and fill out the guide sheet
    2. Have students discuss their feedback responses to the sample paper.
    3. Have students list the major feedback they discussed.
    4. Put the major issues on the blackboard or whiteboard.
    5. Discuss these responses. Make certain that you let students know that any paper can be improved.
2. Plan to have your students conduct peer review on the drafts of their papers that they are writing in your class. Use the peer-review guide from Chapter 10, Section 10.7 and have them work in groups of three and do the following:
    1. Bring two hard copies of their paper so that each member can read the paper, OR work in a computer lab where students can share their papers on line. You may want to use the educational software that your campus supports—for example, Blackboard or Moodle—or you can have students use Google Drive to set up their peer-review groups.
    2. Have two students focus on the first paper in the group. While these students are reading, have the other student read the other two student papers.
    3. The two students should quickly fill out the peer-review sheet and then have a brief conversation about the strengths of the paper and ways the paper could be improved.
    4. Move to the next student and follow the same process. Depending on the length of your class, you may have to reduce the peer-review groups to two students.

5. If time permits, ask the students to provide general comments—or ask questions—about the specific papers or the assignment overall.
6. You may want to use peer review for each paper in your class.

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8.9: Suggestions for Further Reading

Sources on Ecocriticism

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Sources on Darwinian Literary Criticism

Boyd, Brian. *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.

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Gottschall, Jonathan, and David Sloan Wilson, eds. *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Reading and Writing in the Digital Age

Learning Objectives

- Examine the ways literary scholars are using new technologies to investigate literary works.
- Contrast the conventions of writing for the web with the conventions of typical research-paper writing.
- Review the process of creating a thematic research collection.
- Explore the uses of geospatial technology in understanding literary works.
- Develop a plan for a digital research project focusing on a specific literary work.

9.1: Literary Snapshot- "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"
9.2: Digital Literary Studies- An Overview
9.3: Writing for the Web- A Process Approach
9.4: Creating a Thematic Research Collection
9.5: Creating a Digital Timeline
9.6: Mapping a Text
9.7: Student Sample Paper- Maria Slusarek's "'Mapping Melville' Reflection"
9.8: Student Sample Digital Project- Maria Dzurik's St. Augustine's Confessions
9.9: End-of-Chapter Assessment
9.10: Suggestions for Further Reading

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9.1: Literary Snapshot- "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"

Lewis Carroll, as we found out in previous chapters, is most famous for two books: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872). These books follow the adventures of a seven-year-old, Alice, who tumbles down a rabbit hole (*Wonderland*) and enters a magic mirror (*Looking-Glass*), entering a nonsensical world of the imagination. If you have not already read these classic books—or wish to reread them—you can access them at the following links:

http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html

etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/CarGlas.html

In the first paragraph of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, we learn that "Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, 'and what is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?'"Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), chap. 1, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html. Alice's question, which perhaps seemed an absurd, childish question when *Wonderland* was written in 1865, seems especially prescient for a world of electronic books, literary apps, and hypertexts. Take a minute to watch the following video, an advertisement for an iPad app based on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

(click to see video)

What does it mean to turn a book into an app? Writing about "*Alice* for the iPad," the *Huffington Post*gushed, "The developers have created the pop-up book of the 21st-century. With this creative update to *Alice in Wonderland*, users don't just flip the 'pages' of the eBook—they're meant to shake it, turn it, twist it, jiggle it, and watch the characters and settings in the book react."'"Alice," Atomic Antelope, http://www.atomicantelope.com/alice/; "Alice in Wonderland iPad App Reinvents Reading (VIDEO)," *Huffington Post*, June 14, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/04/14/alice-in-wonderland-ipad_n_537122.html. How does this kind of reading—interactive and visual—change our ideas of "reading" itself? John Brownlee admits that the iPad edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* "is certainly plenty frabjous" (an allusion to the nonsense poem, "Jabberwocky," that appears in the sequel to *Wonderland*, *Through the Looking-Glass*), but wonders if the iPad "changes the reading game when it comes to drier books…how will people use the iPad's capability to expand upon the text of a book like Mervyn Peake's *Titus Groan* or Nabokov's *Ada, or Adror*, or Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, or other less playful and anarchic works?"John Brownlee, "Callooh! Callay! 'Alice in Wonderland' for iPad," *Cult of Mac* (blog), April 13, 2010, http://www.cultofmac.com/37800/kalloo-kallayalice-in-wonderland-for-ipad. Fortunately, many literary scholars and students are working to answer these and many other questions confronting literary studies in the digital age.

Your Process

1. Have you ever experienced a "literary" app? Had you read the book, story, or poem beforehand? How did the app edition change your ideas about the work? Jot down your ideas.

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9.2: Digital Literary Studies- An Overview

In recent years, digital technologies—and in particular the Internet—have transformed nearly every aspect of our lives. Think of all the things we do every day that were impossible a decade ago. We keep in constant touch with friends through Facebook, we manage our bank accounts anywhere with our mobile phones, and we stream movies at will through Netflix. The same is true of literary studies. The rise of the digital age has transformed teaching and research. In today's networked world, information is easy to come by: facts are cheap. For instance, digital archives such as Google Books (http://books.google.com) contain far more books than any human being could read in a lifetime. This proliferation of data is sometimes called **information overload**. The term "information overload" conveys worry that human beings cannot possibly process the sheer volume of information now available to them. Many literary scholars wonder, can we still read closely in this new world of 24-hour news feeds, constant status updates, and near-infinite electronic libraries?

Scholars in the field of **digital humanities** (http://digitalhumanities.org/answers...tal-humanities)—or, more specifically, digital literary studies—engage actively with these new technologies."What Is Digital Humanities?," Digital Humanities Questions & Answers, Association for Computers and the Humanities, http://digitalhumanities.org/answers...tal-humanities. Digital humanists see opportunities for technology to help us understand the literature of the past, and they believe that scholars of subjects such as history and literature can help our culture better understand how we should engage with technology. This scholarly engagement can take many forms. Some digital literary critics use computational methods to analyze texts (or large groups of texts) in new ways. Others use **geospatial** technology to map literary or historical events. Still others "read" technology itself, seeking to understand the way that electronic texts work and to explain how new media are reshaping readers' relationships to knowledge.

Digital humanities scholars also value **public or open-access scholarship**. Public scholarship is made widely (and freely) available to interested readers rather than being restricted to the subscribers of particular journals or databases. In his article "What Is Digital Humanities and What's It Doing in English Departments?" Matthew Kirschenbaum says, "The digital humanities today is about a scholarship (and a pedagogy) that is publicly visible in ways to which we are generally unaccustomed."Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, "What Is Digital Humanities and What's It Doing in English Departments?" *ADE Bulletin* 150 (2010): 1–7. When students work on public digital humanities projects, their work often improves because they know it will be seen by students and professors outside of their classes. When you write in public, the pressure increases, but so do the potential rewards from doing good work.

Your Process

1. Have you used digital resources when doing research for a literary paper? Have you ever written *about* a particular technology? Jot down two or three examples from previous classes.

Because digital humanities is such a new and evolving field, this chapter unfolds differently than the previous chapters. Instead of focusing on one type of student assignment that develops through the entire chapter, this chapter highlights several kinds of digital assignments that literature professors might require. Each section will describe the methodologies that underlie each kind of assignment and link to real student projects that make use of those methodologies. First, however, the chapter helps you think about writing for the web, which can be markedly different from writing a long-form term paper.

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9.3: Writing for the Web- A Process Approach

Writing for an online project can be very different from writing a standard five-page literary paper. Visitors to websites expect a different kind of experience than they get when reading a book or magazine. Websites are more visual, for one thing, and can use images and video to convey complex ideas. Readers bring different expectations to online writing than they do to printed articles or books. They expect to identify the salient points of a page quickly. They expect links to deeper information to be easily discovered. In short, the web is a faster, more dynamic medium than print, and writers must take those differences into account when writing for digital projects.

Web publications are also much easier to edit than printed papers, articles, or books. Writers can draft more quickly, with the understanding that they can always edit, revise, and fine-tune their writing even after it's published on a website. This changes the process of writing. Drafts become more public, as both writer and reader understand that web-based writing is always subject to improvement.

Your Process

1. What do you value when reading online? Have you ever read a book online? How about a long-form article (say, more than ten printed pages)? How do your expectations differ between print and online reading? Jot down two to three principles of good online writing.

Of course, what you write for the web will vary from assignment to assignment. With that said, here are a few general guidelines that should help you write for the web more effectively:

1. Readers expect web content to be **concise**. Concise writing focuses on the most salient details that the writer wishes to convey and omits flowery language or extraneous details. Readers do not expect long paragraphs of text on any given web page. Think of how this electronic textbook is presented. Though denser than much web-based writing, this textbook presents only a few ideas on each page. Writers often enhance the concision of web-based documents by organizing their thoughts into **bulleted** or **numbered lists**, which help readers cognitively organize the information they read online.
2. Concise writing only works if it's also precise—writing for the web should be specific and make a clear point. While most teachers don't like filler in student papers, they are paid to read that filler. Visitors to a website are not required to read it and will quickly surf to another site if they cannot discern the site's purpose. If you are tracing the journey of the crew in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* using Google Earth, the front page of your website should say (a) precisely what your project does and (b) why it's interesting. Don't leave your reader to figure these things out. For example, "This project maps the locations visited by the crew of the *Pequod* in Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick*. Mapping this voyage helps us appreciate the breadth of the crew's journey and better understand the realities of whaling in 19th-century America."
3. Readers also expect web content to include **hyperlinks** where appropriate. Think about this textbook. When we reference another chapter in the book, an outside article, or an electronic literary text, we link directly to it so you can follow up on ideas you find interesting. Much as scholarly readers expect you to cite the sources you quote or paraphrase, readers on the web expect you to link directly to any content that informs your writing. If your writing builds on the ideas of others—whether that's a scholarly website, a blog, or a Twitter feed—you should include links to those foundational works as often as you can. You should also provide links that will allow your reader to dig deeper into a topic you discuss. While readers on the web expect the writing to be concise and precise, they also expect that they will be able to further explore things they find interesting. In the preceding example, you might link to other resources on the web where readers could learn more about the *Pequod*, Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, or the nineteenth-century whaling industry.
4. In English classes, we don't often talk about whether a work is **skimmable**. Instead, we value writing that can be read closely, as we learn in Chapter 2. However, readers on the web do want writing to be skimmable. You should highlight key words, phrases, and hyperlinks in your text. You should also use headings to separate different parts of your document. If appropriate, you might also begin each segment of writing with a short, one to two sentence summary of the section. Your goal should be a document that readers can quickly understand, at least in its broad strokes, before delving into a more careful reading.
5. Readers on the web also care about a site's **aesthetic appeal**. In other words, they care how the site's fonts, colors, layout, and images contribute to their overall experience of the site's content. The web is a highly visual medium. When writing for the web, you should consider not only the content of your writing but also its presentation. Is the font easy to read? Do the colors

you've chosen enhance the reading experience or do they distract from it? Very bright colors, for instance, might force readers to strain their eyes while reading. Pick a font and color scheme that you can read easily for an extended period of time.

Your Process

1. Find a traditional paper you've written for a class. How might you restructure that paper if you wanted to present your research online? Try to identify places where headlines, summaries, or lists might help your readers skim your ideas and understand the basic outlines of your argument.

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9.4: Creating a Thematic Research Collection

One of the easiest and most rewarding ways to begin engaging with digital research is to build what Carole Palmer calls a **thematic research collection**. In her article in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, Palmer describes a thematic research collection as "digital aggregations of primary sources and related materials that support research on a theme."Carole L. Palmer, "Thematic Research Collections," in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), under "Introduction," http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/view?docId=blackwell/9781405103213/9781405103213.xml&chunk.id=ss1-4-5. For a review of **primary sources**, please see Chapter 7. A thematic research collection is distinct from an archive because it does more than simply collect materials. A thematic research collection also includes the researcher's commentary on those materials. In other words, the researcher composes text that will guide visitors through the collection, explaining connections among and interpreting the materials within the collection. In many ways, thematic research collections are like museum exhibits in that they contextualize primary materials for visitors.

Compiling thematic research collections gives students a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with professors. In fact, digital projects are often more amenable to undergraduate research than other kinds of literary research since they require many hands gathering, digitizing, organizing, and explaining project materials. For instance, the *North Wind Archive*(www.snc.edu/northwind/archvie.html)John Pennington, ed., "The *North Wind* Online Digital Archive," St. Norbert College, http://www.snc.edu/english/nwarchive.html. represents a true collaboration between John Pennington, a professor and coauthor of this textbook, and his student Gretchen Panzer (www.snc.edu/collaborative/pro...en.panzer.html)."Editorial Intern for *North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies*," The Collaborative: The Center for Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities, St. Norbert College, www.snc.edu/collaborative/pro...en.panzer.html. The two worked to digitize the entire collection of back issues of *North Wind*, a scholarly journal dedicated to George MacDonald (a friend of Lewis Carroll). Gretchen and Pennington eventually copublished an article about their experiences working on the digital archive (www.snc.edu/northwind/documen...Pennington.pdf).Gretchen Panzer and John Pennington, "George MacDonald in the Virtual Library: The *North Wind* Digital Archive and the Evolution of MacDonald Scholarship," *North Wind* 29 (2010): 1–10, http://www.snc.edu/english/documents/North_Wind/By_contributor/Panzer,_Gretchen/sk001_George_MacDonald_in_the_Virtual_Library=_The_North_Wind_Digital_Archive_and_the_Evolution_of_MacDonald_Scholarship.pdf.

One excellent tool for compiling a thematic research collection is **Omeka** (http://www.omeka.net), a freely available "web-publishing platform that allows anyone with an account to create or collaborate on a website to display collections and build digital exhibitions.""About," Omeka.net, http://info.omeka.net/about. Using Omeka, you can collect various items—scans of historical documents, photographs, sound files, and videos—and organize them into exhibits that include explanatory text. The *James Monroe Papers* is an Omeka collection designed by students at the University of Mary Washington (http://projects.umwhistory.org/jmp).Alexandra deGraffenreid, Seth Mintzer, MacKenzie Murphy, and Chris Wright, eds., "James Monroe Papers," University of Mary Washington, http://projects.umwhistory.org/jmp. These students digitized the letters of President James Monroe using scans of the original letters. They then organized exhibits that collect letters between Monroe and specific correspondents. If you click on one of the entries for Monroe's letters to Edmund Randolf (http://projects.umwhistory.org/jmp/exhibits/show/edmund-randolf), for instance, you will find a brief description of the letter's content, a link to a transcription of the letter's text, and images of the scanned original letter.

As you can see, thematic research collections don't look much like traditional literary research papers. For one thing, they can include more visual elements, such as images, photographs, or even videos. The text in such a collection is composed in brief, skimmable sections rather than in long pages. However, thematic research collections like this one give students the opportunity to do real, substantial research and to actively contribute to the body of scholarly knowledge within literary studies. When published on the web, student research collections can be of use to other students and even accomplished scholars.

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9.5: Creating a Digital Timeline

Another easy way to use digital technologies to enhance your research is to build a digital timeline around a particular historical period or literary work. You've probably drawn a timeline in a class before, but digital timelines allow you to include much richer information than you typically can when working on paper. As with a thematic research collection, gathering information about your research and organizing it chronologically will help you understand it more deeply and spot relationships between events you might not have spotted otherwise. There are other uses for timelines in literature classes. In his detailed "Build Your Own Interactive Timeline" article (http://briancroxall.net/TimelineTutorial/TimelineTutorial.html),Brian Croxall, "Build Your Own Interactive Timeline," http://briancroxall.net/TimelineTutorial/TimelineTutorial.html. Brian Croxall argues that building timelines can help students untangle the complex chronology of novels such as Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* or Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (and of short stories such as William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," which you can read at xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/wf_rose.html).

Fortunately there are free tools available online for building basic interactive timelines. Dipity (http://www.dipity.com) allows users to enter new events through a very simple interface. Users can even integrate content from a range of other web services such as YouTube and Flickr, which would allow you to include images and videos related to your research into your timeline. Dipity's one major limitation for some literature classrooms is that it cannot yet accept events dated before 100 AD/CE. If you're working with classical sources—Greek tragedy, for instance—then Dipity may not be your best choice. For a greater challenge but more flexibility, you might try Brian Croxall's previously mentioned "Timeline Tutorial" (http://briancroxall.net/TimelineTutorial/TimelineTutorial.html). Croxall walks users through building timelines using MIT's SIMILE Project (http://simile.mit.edu). As he notes, there's a greater learning curve with SIMILE, but users have far more control over the timelines it produces.

Timelines can even be used to build arguments about the relationships among historical events and/or events in a literary work. To return briefly to Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," you could construct a timeline of events related to the Civil War, Reconstruction, and other events of the novel. Within those events, you could make claims and cite evidence explaining to your readers precisely how those events help us understand the story's protagonist, Emily Grierson. When you correlate the details the story tells us about Emily with those historical events, what new understanding(s) of Emily emerge?

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9.6: Mapping a Text

Many digital literary scholars focus on geospatial technologies to look at literature in new ways enabled by new technologies. In his work *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, Franco Moretti argues that creating maps of the spaces described in literary texts can give scholars insight into those texts in a way that their words alone cannot: "**Literary maps**…are a good way to prepare a text for analysis," Moretti argues, "You choose a unit—walks, lawsuits, luxury goods, whatever—find its occurrences, place them in space…with a little luck, these maps will be *more than the sum of their parts*: they will possess 'emerging' qualities, which were not visible at the lower level."Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005), 53. In other words, by mapping specific elements within texts, critics can gain a new perspective on how those elements relate to one another and to other textual elements. If, for instance, we map the locations that characters visit in Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, we might spot interesting relationships between the inner lives of the characters (as revealed in the text of the novel) and the exterior world of the modern, urban London they travel through (as revealed on the map).

Maria is a student in a sophomore-level literature class that has just finished Melville's voluminous novel *Moby-Dick* (http://www.melville.org/diCurcio/bib.htm).Robert A. diCurcio, ed., *Nantucket's Tried-Out* Moby-Dick*: Robert A. diCurcio's Companion Reader to Melville's Masterpiece* (Nantucket, MA: Aeternium, 1996), http://www.melville.org/diCurcio/bib.htm. Maria has already written one paper about *Moby-Dick*—a psychological analysis of the monomaniacal captain in the novel, Ahab—and wants to do something different for her final class project. Maria is very interested in the scope of the *Pequod's* voyage, and so she decides to map the ship's journey through the novel. She hopes that mapping the ship's journey might illuminate other aspects of the novel that she had not previously considered. Fortunately, the free **Google Earth** software makes it easy to create detailed maps—even literary maps like the one Maria envisions.

MARIA'S PROCESS

1. After speaking with her professor about how to start such a project, Maria downloads the free Google Earth software (http://www.google.com/earth/index.html), which will give her a platform to plotting spatial data and visualizing the voyage on an accurate, interactive globe.
2. Maria then combs through the novel, looking for places where Melville specifically names the *Pequod*'s location. Maria uses a map hand-drawn by Everett Henry in 1956 (and available online at www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/tri064.html) to double-check her findings from the text.Everett Henry, *The Voyage of the* Pequod *from the Book* Moby-Dick *by Herman Melville*(1956), map, American Treasures of the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/tri064.html.
3. Maria then begins adding place markers in Google Earth for each of these locations from the novel. She adds some descriptive text to each place marker describing what event from the novel happened there. For a tutorial on adding place markers in Google Earth, see the following video: http://support.google.com/earth/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=148142&topic=2376990&ctx=topic."Creating a New Placemark," Google Earth, http://support.google.com/earth/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=148142&topic=2376990&ctx=topic.
4. Maria also draws paths between the place markers she has created, so that the events in the novel can be followed in chronological order. For a tutorial on drawing paths, see the following video: http://support.google.com/earth/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=148072."Drawing Paths and Polygons," Google Earth, http://support.google.com/earth/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=148072.

Your Process

1. Pick a work that you've read in class recently. Download Google Earth and begin adding place markers from that work. What new ideas about the work begin to emerge as you create these place markers? Does working with the text in this way change the kinds of questions you ask about it? Jot down your thoughts.

After Maria adds her place markers, she can move from location to location in Google Earth and trace the *Pequod*'s voyage. She's not entirely satisfied with her map, however. By default, Google Earth includes modern geographic information, and the events of Melville's novel, published in 1852, look anachronistic on a twenty-first-century map. Maria brings her concern to her professor, who recommends she look at the *David Rumsey Map Collection* (http://www.davidrumsey.com), a freely distributed collection of

scanned historical maps. The *Rumsey Collection* even makes many of their historical maps available as a **KMZ** file that can be easily opened in Google Earth (http://www.davidrumsey.com/view/google-earth).David Rumsey, David Rumsey Map Collection, http://www.davidrumsey.com/view/google-earth.

MARIA'S PROCESS

1. Maria downloads the *Rumsey Map Collection* into Google Earth. Now she can turn on map layers that depict the globe as it was drawn during the nineteenth century, the time of *Moby Dick*'s composition. These historical maps give her project a greater visual punch and ground her map in the time and place of the literature she's working with.
2. Maria puts her work—the place markers and historical map—together in a KMZ file that she can upload to her website, share with her peers, and submit to her professor (for a basic tutorial on creating a KMZ file, see the following instructions: http://support.google.com/earth/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=148150)."Saving Places Data," Google Earth, July 16, 2012, http://support.google.com/earth/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=148150.
3. Finally, Maria considered what new insights she has gained on Melville's novel by mapping it and writes a short reflection paper describing those insights. That reflection paper is included here.

Your Process

1. Download the *Rumsey Collection*'s KMZ file and open it in Google Earth. Explore the historical maps in the file. Do any of them strike you as applicable to particular literary works you've read in class? Which ones and why? Add your thoughts.

Figure 9.1 Maria's Final Map



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Maria's final map, which you can see in Figure 9.1, allows other students and scholars to follow the *Pequod's* voyage for themselves, and even (if they wish) to layer different historical maps under it. You can download Maria's KMZ yourself (http://www.flatworldknowledge.com/sites/all/files/pennington-mobydickvoyage.kmz) and experiment with the work she did. Now let's look at Maria's reflection paper, in which she explains what building this map taught her about Melville's novel and the nineteenth-century whaling industry.

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9.7: Student Sample Paper- Maria Slusarek's "'Mapping Melville' Reflection"

Maria Slusarek

Professor Ryan Cordell

Introduction to Literature

April 4, 20–

"Mapping Melville" Reflection

The world in the 1850s looked much different than today. Countries had different borders, islands had different names, and the navigation technology of the 1850s seemed archaic to the technology used in the 21st century. Whaling is not a common occupation or practice today, which made reading *Moby-Dick* difficult. I could not wrap my mind around the idea of being at sea for three or more years without stopping for food or supplies. I also underestimated how far the *Pequod*traveled. I knew the crew started in Nantucket, sailed around Cape of Good Hope, and traveled through the Japan Sea. However, those locations seemed random and insignificant because the narrators of the story did not provide a definite timeline or path for the voyage. Traditional students and scholars would analyze the text and write many papers about the various themes, plot, and motifs within the novel. However, this digital humanities project looks at the text in a more practical, tangible, and realistic manner, for students can manipulate the voyage in their own way to create a deeper understanding of *Moby-Dick*.

Mapping out the significant points of the voyage through this digital humanities project showed how extensive the trip was for Ahab and the crew. The crew traveled thousands of miles without encountering anyone or anything, but after rounding the Cape of Good Hope the *Pequod*encountered the Albatross, the Town-Ho, and the Virgin one right after the other. The transition from the lack of excitement for months, to constantly encountering whales, ships, and landmarks must have taken a great emotional toll on the crew members. The novel minimally mentioned the downtime the crew had, and what they did to occupy their time outside of killing whales. The boredom must have been excruciating, but the camaraderie on the ship, despite the obstacles, is a testament to Ahab's leadership and the crew's unity.

The importance and significance of Ahab's immense knowledge and skills for navigating the ship did not occur to me until after I constructed the digital map of the voyage. He kept the ship on track for more than three years, and navigated immensely long distances with minimal benchmarks to guide him, especially from the Arroz Islands in the Atlantic Ocean to the Cape of Good Hope; however, after the cape, Ahab carefully navigated through the many small islands in Indonesia. During their travels through Indonesia the crew encountered the Samuel Enderby and the Great Armada. Ahab also knew where Moby Dick would be to ensure a definite encounter with the whale based on his previous experience with the whale and his knowledge of common whale patterns.

The visual representation of the voyage clearly exemplifies the efficiency and reality of Ahab's route. Visually seeing the route gives the reader confidence in the story by making the adventure more realistic. If the route seemed illogical or did not use pertinent landmarks, the novel would lose some of its value. To me, the novel's value and significance come from its realistic depictions of the *Pequod*'s course and the obstacles encountered by the whalers. The realism of the text continues in Ahab's cabin when he "[brings] out a large wrinkled roll of yellowish sea charts … you would have seen him intently study the various lines and shading … and with slow but steady pencil trace additional courses over spaces that before were blank … some invisible pen was also tracing lines and courses upon the deadly marked chart on his forehead" (Melville 187). The wrinkled and yellowed charts signify years of use, and the lines on Ahab's forehead symbolize his years of stress and focus over the charts. A captain who did not know the sea, ship, or crew as well as Ahab could not have drawn his own routes or navigated the ship off course without losing sight of their destination. Ahab's strong and confident demeanor aboard the *Pequod* also helped the crew feel that they traveled in the right direction.

The longevity and distance the *Pequod* covered greatly surprised me. I knew the voyage traveled an excruciatingly long distance, but I did not think the crew almost circumnavigated the globe. The time needed to almost circumnavigate the globe in 1850 was much longer than the time needed today, due to the rapid advances in technology. In this regard, the very idea of whaling seems ridiculous to me. I related traveling in a car with my family to traveling aboard the ship with the crew. Traveling with my family can be difficult at times, since our moods and dynamics change constantly. However, our trips are much shorter than the voyage of

the *Pequod*, and we do not face the same challenges that the crew did—for example, racial tensions. I can better appreciate the difficulties of the crew's voyage now that I have seen it take on a visual form.

The transfer of points and locations from a flat map to a spherical map posed the greatest difficulty as I completed my project. A flat version of the globe visually distorts the longitude and latitudinal points, which makes the continents and oceans seem closer together than they actually are. By putting the points on a map from the text, I demonstrated the varying distances between the points. The challenges the crew faced due to the distance or land masses can further be investigated with greater accuracy based on this digital map.

The actual text of the novel did not provide all the concrete points for the voyage. The start of the voyage in Nantucket was easily identified, for the text read, "I stuffed a shirt or two into my old carpet-bag, tucked it under my arm, and started for Cape Horn and the Pacific. Quitting the good city of old Manhatto, I duly arrived in New Bedford. It was on a Saturday night in December" (Melville 26). By knowing the specific location of New Bedford, I knew exactly that the start of the voyage occurred of America's east coast in Nantucket, Massachusetts. Other points Ishmael, Ahab, or other crew members mentioned included the Cape of Good Hope, The Indonesian Islands, and the Japan Sea. However, generally the points of the voyage were not explicitly stated, but rather embedded in the text.

The length and expense of the voyage would not have been as realistic or important with only the few points stated in the novel. The reader may become lost in the text and events of the story due to its complexity, but by plotting each event and landmark, the text became clearer. With each discovered point, I felt closer to the capture of Moby Dick and felt a part of the voyage in a way that I was not able to by simple reading the text. The map resource in the back of the novel helped me to plot the other, less explicitly stated points. I carefully looked at the specific longitudes and latitudes of the points on the flat map in order to correlate a given position with the landmarks associated with the point on the globe. I carefully selected and placed each point to ensure accuracy and precision while constructing the digital map of the voyage.

Most people, including students and researchers, learn most effectively by looking at visuals. Therefore, a visual representation of the *Pequod* voyage would greatly benefit the majority of readers. The reader or scholar clearly knows the chronological order of events, the route used, and the distance covered by the ship and crew by looking at this digital map. The density and style structure of the novel can confuse the reader, for Melville incorporates many detailed chapters about the ship, the whale, or the sea that do not directly pertain to the voyage. The reader may become lost and forget where the ship is; however, with this digital map, the reader can clearly see the pertinent events that occurred in a specific area of the world, as well as give a greater clarity to the ship's next destination. The points labeled on the globe also correlate with its corresponding chapter title, which helps the reader understand the voyage more quickly and efficiently.

An interesting function of the Google Earth application allows a scholar to apply different maps to the same voyage path. The legitimacy of the route taken, the events, or encounters with other ships may be validated or dismissed depending on the formation of the earth at different time periods. A scholar could use the path I made along with other maps to plot a modern day voyage of the *Pequod* and assess which types of obstacles or differences a ship today would encounter, compared to the 1850 representation.

An idea discussed in class encompassed the making of a virtual *Pequod* voyage, similar to the Oregon Trail game. A game programmer could use the path to make a template for the route and areas of the voyage. Based on the path, the game programmer could determine possible outcomes, dangers, or scenarios. This virtual game could be an interactive and fun way to motivate the younger generation to read *Moby-Dick* and experience the novel in a modern day context. The digital humanities field for literature opens up a less traditional approach to looking at a text. The applications, modifications, and tools used to create and adapt Google Earth to simulate the *Pequod* voyage will greatly help any reader.

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9.8: Student Sample Digital Project- Maria Dzurik's St. Augustine's Confessions

Maria (yes, another Maria!) is a student in an interdivision course taught by Ryan Cordell, an English professor at St. Norbert College and one of the authors of this textbook. In this course, "Technologies of Text," students built digital projects as their final assignment. These projects made use of materials available in St. Norbert College Library's special collections, which primarily hold texts related to St. Norbert's Catholic and Norbertine heritage. For her project, Maria chose to digitize several rare translations of St. Augustine's classic text, *Confessions*.St. Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. John Fabian (Commodius Vicus, 2010). These editions were published over several hundred years, from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. Maria made high-quality scans of each book's cover and introduction. She then used Omeka (discussed in more detail in Section 9.4) to publish her images and create interpretive exhibits to help visitors to her site better understand the nine translations she digitized.

Maria's project provides a wonderful example of how digital projects enable students to find and make significant use of materials unique to their schools. Not only does this result in interesting projects for students, but those projects can also prove useful to other scholars who do not have access to those local resources. You probably don't have materials quite like these at your college or university, but you may have other resources that would be perfect for digital archival projects like this one. You can find Maria's work at http://mariadzurik.omeka.net.Maria Dzurik, ed., "St. Augustine's *Confessions*," St. Norbert College, http://mariadzurik.omeka.net.

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9.9: End-of-Chapter Assessment

Key Takeaways

- New technologies, and in particular the Internet, are reshaping readers' relationships to literary texts. Literary scholars should be actively working to understand these changes.
- Writing for the web can differ dramatically from writing standard literary research papers. Writing on the web is usually more concise, precise, and skimmable. Online writing links to other resources whenever appropriate and attends to the aesthetic appeal of texts.
- Digital projects offer new opportunities for collaboration between students and professors. Compiling thematic research collections gives students the opportunity to work directly with primary sources and publish scholarship available to other scholars and students around the world.
- Mapping texts can give literary scholars a new perspective on texts, highlighting aspects of place that are less apparent in prose.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Visit Wordpress.org and create a new blog where you can write your ideas about the texts you are reading in your class. Commit yourself to writing at least one post per week, and invite your classmates to comment on your posts. See if their questions help you hone your ideas for development in later, more formal papers and projects: Does writing "in public" change the way you approach what is, in essence, a journal of your evolving classroom experiences?
2. Visit Google Lit trips (http://www.googlelittrips.org), a site that hosts "free downloadable files that mark the journeys of characters from famous literature on the surface of Google Earth.""About Google Lit Trips," http://www.googlelittrips.org. Find a map of a book with which you are familiar, perhaps James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*(www.googlelittrips.com/Google...mes_Joyce.html) or Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*(www.googlelittrips.com/Google..._McCarthy.html).James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Urban Romantics, 2011); Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (New York: Knopf, 2006). Then start writing: How do these maps flesh out your understanding of the literary work? What do they highlight? What do they obscure?

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS EXERCISES

1. One digital humanities methodology not discussed in this chapter is *textual analysis*, which is the use of computational tools to discover patterns in textual data. On the *ProfHacker*blog, Julie Meloni described Wordle (www.wordle.net) as "the gateway drug to textual analysis" (http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacke...analysis/22781).Julie Meloni, "Wordles, or the Gateway Drug to Textual Analysis," *ProfHacker* (blog), *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 21, 2009, http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacke...analysis/22781. Wordle allows users to generate word clouds from blocks of text. In these word clouds, the most frequently used words in the text block are represented the largest. For this exercise, bring your class into a computer lab (or have them use laptops) and point them to Wordle.net. Ask them to copy and paste the full text of a poem, short story, or novel you're reading in class into Wordle's text field. You can find the raw text of many literary works on the web on sites like Project Gutenberg (http://www.gutenberg.org). Once they've generated their word clouds, ask them to brainstorm ideas about what those word clouds might tell us about the text:
    1. Do the clouds highlight key words or ideas they didn't notice before?
    2. Do the clouds deemphasize words or ideas they think are central to the text?
    3. Are there any interesting relationships they spot in the clouds—related words of similar (or very divergent) size? Do character names appear, and what do their sizes indicate about the importance of particular characters to the text?
    4. What important ideas do the word clouds seem to miss about the text?

    These discussions can serve as useful "jumping off" points into the richer details of the text itself.

    Bonus idea: You can use word clouds to brainstorm ideas for close readings of texts (see Chapter 2). Words that show up in large fonts in the word cloud might make good subjects for detailed analysis.
2. As we suggested in the section on digital timelines, timeline projects can help students make sense of literary works with complex chronologies—particularly works that jumble the order of events, such as Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/wf_rose.html). Introductory students often struggle to understand precisely when events happened in

relation to one another. Untangling those stories' chronologies can help students understand the work as a whole. You can then move on to talk about *why* the author may have chosen to reorder events, which can lead to higher-order discussions. In short, you can move from "What happened in this story?" to "Why is the story structured in this way?"—which is a more satisfying conversation for most literature teachers!

For this assignment, reserve a computer lab. Put students into groups of two or three and spend a few minutes explaining how to build a timeline in a program such as Dipity (http://www.dipity.com). You should, of course, familiarize yourself with the software in advance of this class. Once students understand how to use the software, set them loose: ask them to create a timeline of events from the work under study *in the order they occurred in the world of the work*, not in the order in which they are presented to the reader. Depending on what work you are studying, give students significant time to tease out their timelines from the work—a story like "A Rose for Emily" can take an entire class period.

You can, of course, ask students to create these timelines using paper and pencil, though if you plan to assign a larger timeline assignment then this in-class work can help train students to use the timeline software. You might consider compiling the class' best work into one master timeline that you can share with the class for later reference.

Bonus idea: On his blog, Brian Croxall describes building a collaborative timeline of American history as a cumulative project with students in his American Literature classes (http://www.briancroxall.net/2010/02/03/assignment-the-american-century-geospatial-timeline). Building a timeline as a class allows students to benefit from their colleagues' work and helps hold all students to a higher standard. Rather than individual timeline assignments, you might consider a distributed, collaborative timeline assignment.

3. Using Maria's project as a model, divide your class into groups and ask them to use Google Earth (and perhaps *Rumsey's Map Collection*) to plot the events in a text you are reading in class. This can be a large scale map (as is Maria's, which spans the globe), or a very local map (see Brian Croxall's assignment to map the events of Virginia Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*: http://www.briancroxall.net/dh/assignments/mapping-mrs-dalloway.Brian Croxall, "Mapping *Mrs. Dalloway*," Introduction to Digital Humanities, Emory University, http://www.briancroxall.net/dh/assignments/mapping-mrs-dalloway. The maps Brian's class created are available here: http://www.briancroxall.net/dh/2011/10/03/maps-of-mrs-dalloway).Brian Croxall, "Maps of *Mrs. Dalloway*," Introduction to Digital Humanities, Emory University, http://www.briancroxall.net/dh/2011/10/03/maps-of-mrs-dalloway. You should ask them to annotate each location with information from the text. You could also ask them to add historical information about the location itself. After they've worked on this project, you could ask them to reflect on their experiences—in particular, you might ask them to reflect on how plotting the events of text spatially shifted their understanding of the text itself.

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS PEER REVIEW

1. Have students conduct peer review on one of the sample papers using the organizational peer-review guide found in Chapter 10, Section 10.8:
    1. Place students in groups of three to four and have them reread the paper for peer review and fill out the guide sheet
    2. Have students discuss their feedback responses to the sample paper.
    3. Have students list the major feedback they discussed.
    4. Put the major issues on the blackboard or whiteboard.
    5. Discuss these responses. Make certain that you let students know that any paper can be improved.
2. Plan to have your students conduct peer review on the drafts of their papers that they are writing in your class. Use the peer-review guide from Chapter 10, Section 10.8 and have them work in groups of three and do the following:
    1. Bring two hard copies of their paper so that each member can read the paper, OR work in a computer lab where students can share their papers on line. You may want to use the educational software that your campus supports—for example, Blackboard or Moodle—or you can have students use Google Drive to set up their peer-review groups.
    2. Have two students focus on the first paper in the group. While these students are reading, have the other student read the other two student papers.
    3. The two students should quickly fill out the peer-review sheet and then have a brief conversation about the strengths of the paper and ways the paper could be improved.

4. Move to the next student and follow the same process. Depending on the length of your class, you may have to reduce the peer-review groups to two students.
5. If time permits, ask the students to provide general comments—or ask questions—about the specific papers or the assignment overall.
6. You may want to use peer review for each paper in your class.

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9.10: Suggestions for Further Reading

Sources on Digital Humanities and Digital Literary Studies

Berry, David M., ed. *Understanding Digital Humanities*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Cohen, Dan, Joan Fragaszy Troyano, Sasha Hoffman, and Jeri Wieringa, eds. Digital Humanities Now. http://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/.

Earhart, Amy E., and Andrew Jewell, eds. *The American Literature Scholar in the Digital Age*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Gold, Matthew K., ed. *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Landlow, George P., ed. *Hyper/Text/Theory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Lunenfeld, Peter, Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Todd Presner, and Jeffrey Schnapp. *Digital_Humanities*. Cambridge: Massachussets Institute of Technology Press, 2012.

O'Gorman, Marcel. *E-Crit: Digital Media, Critical Theory and the Humanities*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

Ramsay, Stephen. *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

Schreibman, Susan, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth, eds. *A Companion to Digital Humanities*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion.

Siemens, Ray, and Susan Schreibman, eds. *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companionDLS.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Appendix - Peer Review Sheets

A key guiding principle of *Writing about Literature through Theory* is that peer review is central to the writing process. As you compose your papers, you will want to receive feedback from your fellow students. The benefits of peer review are twofold: (1) peer view provides you with feedback on your paper, which will help you as you revise your paper; and (2) as a peer reviewer of others' papers, you develop the skills of an editor, which will help you with the revision of your own papers. In other words, participating in peer review will help you become a stronger, more confident writer.

The following peer-review guides are inspired by the work of Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff in *Sharing and Responding*: http://academic.evergreen.edu/s/stilsonr/Academic%20Research/Readings/elbow.htm.

Elbow and Belanoff provide a variety of peer-review guides that you might want to consider for your class. We have chosen the organizational peer-review guide (what they call "skeleton" peer review) for each chapter in this book, but you may find other peer-review approaches work better in your class. We have added a "warrant" section to each guide to help you articulate the connections between supporting claims and overall thesis for each paper.Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff, eds., "Summary of Ways of Responding," in *Sharing and Responding* (New York: Random House, 1989), http://academic.evergreen.edu/s/stilsonr/Academic%20Research/Readings/elbow.htm.

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10.2: Chapter 3- Psychoanalysis
10.3: Chapter 4- Feminist and Gender
10.4: Chapter 5- Race and Ethnicity
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10.7: Chapter 8- Ecocritical
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10.1: Chapter 2- Close Reading

Organization Feedback: Outline of a Close-Reading Paper

Paper Writer's Name: _____

Peer Reviewer's Name: _____

If you are still unsure of the paper's direction (or feel the paper isn't well organized), you may want your classmates to use *organization feedback* to give you some structural/organizational ideas. By using organization feedback, the peer reviewer looks for the general overall structure of your paper.

The key to such peer review centers on the paper having clear organization and support: (1) the writer must present a clear thesis that makes a thematic claim about the literary work, and (2) the paper must then provide support for that thesis by demonstrating how the work artistically achieves that theme using psychoanalytic theory.

Guidelines

1. Read the paper carefully to gain a **general impression**.
2. Reread the paper, concentrating on the **overall structure/organization**.
3. Create an **outline** or **"skeleton"** of the paper by doing the following:

Thesis

Restate the writer's thesis:

Evaluate the thesis:

Describe the close-reading approach the writer uses:

Support

Outline the points made to support the thesis by restating the main idea of each paragraph, listing the examples the writer uses in each paragraph, and describing how each paragraph relates to the thesis (i.e., supports the thesis).

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support (from Chapter 1):

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

General Comments

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10.2: Chapter 3- Psychoanalysis

Organization Feedback: Outline of a Psychoanalytic Paper

Paper Writer's Name: _____

Peer Reviewer's Name: _____

If you are still unsure of the paper's direction (or feel the paper isn't well organized), you may want your classmates to use *organization feedback* to give you some structural/organizational ideas. By using organization feedback, the peer reviewer looks for the general overall structure of your paper.

The key to such peer review centers on the paper having clear organization and support: (1) the writer must present a clear thesis that makes a thematic claim about the literary work, and (2) the paper must then provide support for that thesis by demonstrating how the work artistically achieves that theme. In other words, the writer must show how the literary work under examination is an artistic and thematic well-wrought urn.

Guidelines

1. Read the paper carefully to gain a **general impression**.
2. Reread the paper, concentrating on the **overall structure/organization**.
3. Create an **outline** or **"skeleton"** of the paper by doing the following:

Thesis

Restate the writer's thesis:

Evaluate the thesis:

Describe the psychoanalytic approach the writer uses:

Support

Outline the points made to support the thesis by restating the main idea of each paragraph, listing the examples the writer uses in each paragraph, and describing how each paragraph relates to the thesis (i.e., supports the thesis).

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support (from Chapter 1):

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

General Comments

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10.3: Chapter 4- Feminist and Gender

Organization Feedback: Outline of a Feminist and Gender Paper

Paper Writer's Name: _____

Peer Reviewer's Name: _____

If you are still unsure of the paper's direction (or feel the paper isn't well organized), you may want your classmates to use *organization feedback* to give you some structural/organizational ideas. By using organization feedback, the peer reviewer looks for the general overall structure of your paper.

The key to such peer review centers on the paper having clear organization and support: (1) the writer must present a clear thesis that makes a thematic claim about the literary work. and (2) the paper must then provide support for that thesis by demonstrating how the work artistically achieves that theme using feminist and/or gender theory.

Guidelines

1. Read the paper carefully to gain a **general impression**.
2. Reread the paper, concentrating on the **overall structure/organization**.
3. Create an **outline** or **"skeleton"** of the paper by doing the following:

Thesis

Restate the writer's thesis:

Evaluate the thesis:

Describe the feminist or gender approach the writer uses:

Support

Outline the points made to support the thesis by restating the main idea of each paragraph, listing the examples the writer uses in each paragraph, and describing how each paragraph relates to the thesis (i.e., supports the thesis).

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support (from Chapter 1):

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

General Comments

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10.4: Chapter 5- Race and Ethnicity

Organization Feedback: Outline of a Race and Ethnicity Paper

Paper Writer's Name: _____

Peer Reviewer's Name: _____

If you are still unsure of the paper's direction (or feel the paper isn't well organized), you may want your classmates to use *organization feedback* to give you some structural/organizational ideas. By using organization feedback, the peer reviewer looks for the general overall structure of your paper.

The key to such peer review centers on the paper having clear organization and support: (1) the writer must present a clear thesis that makes a thematic claim about the literary work, and (2) the paper must then provide support for that thesis by demonstrating how the work artistically achieves that theme using race and ethnicity theory.

Guidelines

1. Read the paper carefully to gain a **general impression**.
2. Reread the paper, concentrating on the **overall structure/organization**.
3. Create an **outline** or **"skeleton"** of the paper by doing the following:

Thesis

Restate the writer's thesis:

Evaluate the thesis:

Describe the race or ethnicity approach the writer uses:

Support

Outline the points made to support the thesis by restating the main idea of each paragraph, listing the examples the writer uses in each paragraph, and describing how each paragraph relates to the thesis (i.e., supports the thesis).

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support (from Chapter 1):

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

General Comments

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10.5: Chapter 6- Reader Response

Organization Feedback: Outline of a Reader-Response Paper

Paper Writer's Name: _____

Peer Reviewer's Name: _____

If you are still unsure of the paper's direction (or feel the paper isn't well organized), you may want your classmates to use *organization feedback* to give you some structural/organizational ideas using reader-response theory.

The key to such peer review centers on the paper having clear organization and support: (1) the writer must present a clear thesis that makes a thematic claim about the literary work, and (2) the paper must then provide support for that thesis by demonstrating how the work artistically achieves that theme. In other words, the writer must show how the literary work under examination is an artistic and thematic well-wrought urn.

Guidelines

1. Read the paper carefully to gain a **general impression**.
2. Reread the paper, concentrating on the **overall structure/organization**.
3. Create an **outline** or **"skeleton"** of the paper by doing the following:

Thesis

Restate the writer's thesis:

Evaluate the thesis:

Describe the reader-response approach the writer uses:

Support

Outline the points made to support the thesis by restating the main idea of each paragraph, listing the examples the writer uses in each paragraph, and describing how each paragraph relates to the thesis (i.e., supports the thesis).

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support (from Chapter 1):

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

General Comments

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10.6: Chapter 7- New Historical

Organization Feedback: Outline of a New Historical or Cultural Paper

Paper Writer's Name: _____

Peer Reviewer's Name: _____

If you are still unsure of the paper's direction (or feel the paper isn't well organized), you may want your classmates to use *organization feedback* to give you some structural/organizational ideas. By using organization feedback, the peer reviewer looks for the general overall structure of your paper.

The key to such peer review centers on the paper having clear organization and support: (1) the writer must present a clear thesis that makes a thematic claim about the literary work, and (2) the paper must then provide support for that thesis by demonstrating how the work artistically achieves that theme using historical or cultural theory.

Guidelines

1. Read the paper carefully to gain a **general impression**.
2. Reread the paper, concentrating on the **overall structure/organization**.
3. Create an **outline** or **"skeleton"** of the paper by doing the following:

Thesis

Restate the writer's thesis:

Evaluate the thesis:

Describe the historical or cultural approach the writer uses:

Support

Outline the points made to support the thesis by restating the main idea of each paragraph, listing the examples the writer uses in each paragraph, and describing how each paragraph relates to the thesis (i.e., supports the thesis).

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support (from Chapter 1):

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

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- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

General Comments

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10.7: Chapter 8- Ecocritical

Organization Feedback: Outline of an Ecocritical Paper

Paper Writer's Name: _____

Peer Reviewer's Name: _____

If you are still unsure of the paper's direction (or feel the paper isn't well organized), you may want your classmates to use *organization feedback* to give you some structural/organizational ideas. By using organization feedback, the peer reviewer looks for the general overall structure of your paper.

The key to such peer review centers on the paper having clear organization and support: (1) the writer must present a clear thesis that makes a thematic claim about the literary work, and (2) the paper must then provide support for that thesis by demonstrating how the work artistically achieves that theme using ecocritical theory.

Guidelines

1. Read the paper carefully to gain a **general impression**.
2. Reread the paper, concentrating on the **overall structure/organization**.
3. Create an **outline** or **"skeleton"** of the paper by doing the following:

Thesis

Restate the writer's thesis:

Evaluate the thesis:

Describe the ecocritical approach the writer uses:

Support

Outline the points made to support the thesis by restating the main idea of each paragraph, listing the examples the writer uses in each paragraph, and describing how each paragraph relates to the thesis (i.e., supports the thesis).

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support (from Chapter 1):

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

    _____
- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

_____

- Main Idea:
  - Examples:
  - Support for thesis:
  - Warrant for support:

General Comments

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10.8: Chapter 9- Digital Project

Organization Feedback: Outline of a Digital Project

Paper Writer's Name: _____

Peer Reviewer's Name: _____

Digital projects can take on a variety of forms, so peer review will be somewhat different for this unit since you will be providing feedback on a website, for example, and not a traditional paper.

Guidelines

1. View the digital project to gain a **general impression**.
2. Now view the project again, concentrating on the **overall structure/organization**.
3. Create an **outline** or **"skeleton"** of the digital project by doing the following:

Project's Purpose

Describe the digital project (i.e., website, research collection/archive, digital timeline, mapping of text [geospatial], other):

Describe the purpose of the digital project:

Evaluate the clarity of purpose in the project itself:

Project's Structure

List the sections of the digital project:

- Section 1:
  - Examples:
  - Warrant for section's purpose in project:

    _____
- Section 2:
  - Examples:
  - Warrant for section's purpose in project:

    _____
- Section 3:
  - Examples:
  - Warrant for section's purpose in project:

    _____
- Section 4:
  - Examples:
  - Warrant for section's purpose in project:

    _____
- Section 5:
  - Examples:
  - Warrant for section's purpose in project:

    _____

General Comments

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Glossary

absence or lack | That which is created by language since no word can capture the essence of the sign or thing named.

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actual reader | The real person who reads the literary work; he or she may not resemble the text's implied reader.

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aesthetic appeal | The overall attractiveness of a web page. On the web, we usually focus on visual aesthetics such as the colors, fonts, and layout of a given page. However, audio and video can also influence a site's aesthetic appeal.

aesthetic appeal | The overall attractiveness of a web page. On the web, we usually focus on visual aesthetics such as the colors, fonts, and layout of a given page. However, audio and video can also influence a site's aesthetic appeal.

aesthetic reading | What the reader actually experiences while reading a text (in contrast to the efferent reading).

aesthetic reading | What the reader actually experiences while reading a text (in contrast to the efferent reading).

affective fallacy | A reading fallacy produced when a critic brings in his or her personal feelings about how a literary work moves them. Reader-response theory of this book, is a direct challenge to this tenet of New Criticism.

affective fallacy fallacy | Term coined by Stanley Fish to express reader-response critics' rejection of the New Critics' affective fallacy. Reader-response critics believe that we should not repress our personal responses to literature but rather explore them in our writing.

affective fallacy fallacy | Term coined by Stanley Fish to express reader-response critics' rejection of the New Critics' affective fallacy. Reader-response critics believe that we should not repress our personal responses to literature but rather explore them in our writing.

affective stylistics | A form of experiential reader-response criticism in which readers first surrender themselves to the text, then concentrate on their reading responses while reading, and ultimately describe the reading experience by structuring their reading responses.

affective stylistics | A form of experiential reader-response criticism in which readers first surrender themselves to the text, then concentrate on their reading responses while reading, and ultimately describe the reading experience by structuring their reading responses.

anachronism | Something placed in an incorrect time period. In literature, anachronism often refers to objects, ideas, phrases, or the like placed in historically inappropriate scenes. For instance, if a character in a story set during the Civil War (1861–1865) was described driving a car, we would call the car anachronistic.

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animus | Archetype for the woman. The animus represents the paternal, Logos, and reason.

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archetypes | Particular images or symbols that are part of the collective unconscious. The major archetypes include the Self, the shadow, the anima, and the animus.

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biographical fallacy | Interpretation error committed when a critic uses an author's life as a frame of reference to interpret a work of literature.

biographical fallacy | Interpretation error committed when a critic uses an author's life as a frame of reference to interpret a work of literature.

canonical | The set of texts considered central to literary study: the books, poems, plays, and essays most frequently studied and taught. A canonical text, then, is a text that is frequently included in literary scholarship and in literature classes.

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catharsis | An emotional release. The Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that plays, or literature, should provide this experience for their audience.

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collective unconscious | The universal storehouse of images common to all humanity.

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compulsory heterosexuality | Term coined by Adrienne Rich that suggests that people are forced into traditional heterosexual roles.

compulsory heterosexuality | Term coined by Adrienne Rich that suggests that people are forced into traditional heterosexual roles.

constructionism | Belief that gender—and some would argue biological sex—are socially constructed and thus arbitrary markers to define one's identity.

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counterclaim | A specific, debatable, and reasonable statement that challenges, amends, or repurposes another scholar's claim about a work of literature.

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cultural | Type of criticism that focuses on the various personal backgrounds that readers bring to a text and how these backgrounds shape the readers' interpretations.

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cultural materialism | Cultural materialism views all texts—for example, literature, religious tracts, political polemics, or scientific discoveries—as artifacts of history that reflect larger cultural issues.

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Darwinian literary criticism | Literary method based on the belief that stories—that art in general—hold a key to human survival since storytelling or art making must provide an advantage for survival.

Darwinian literary criticism | Literary method based on the belief that stories—that art in general—hold a key to human survival since storytelling or art making must provide an advantage for survival.

DEFT | Critic Norman Holland's process for reading a text, which involves **defense, expectation, fantasy, and transformation.**

desire-of-the-mother | Found in the Imaginary and Mirror stages, where the mother is one with the child and satisfies all wants and desires.

desire-of-the-mother | Found in the Imaginary and Mirror stages, where the mother is one with the child and satisfies all wants and desires.

digital archives | Digital archives are collections of primary or secondary sources stored in electronic databases.

digital archives | Digital archives are collections of primary or secondary sources stored in electronic databases.

displacement | Placing desire onto another, safe object or outlet.

displacement | Placing desire onto another, safe object or outlet.

ecocriticism | A school of literary criticism that studies the depiction of the physical environment in works of literature. Ecocriticism often focuses on the way literary works depict human attitudes toward and interactions with the natural world.

ecocriticism | A school of literary criticism that studies the depiction of the physical environment in works of literature. Ecocriticism often focuses on the way literary works depict human attitudes toward and interactions with the natural world.

ecofeminism | Critical approach that focuses on the connections between human gender relations and humans' relationship to the natural world. Ecofeminists critique both the oppression of women by men and the oppression of nature by humans.

ecofeminism | Critical approach that focuses on the connections between human gender relations and humans' relationship to the natural world. Ecofeminists critique both the oppression of women by men and the oppression of nature by humans.

Feminine writing | Method that contemplates whether women write differently than men, creating a kind of "women's writing" that challenges the assumptions of men's writing.

Feminine writing | Method that contemplates whether women write differently than men, creating a kind of "women's writing" that challenges the assumptions of men's writing.

Feminism | Movement that strives for societal change to make women equal to men in the public and private spheres.

Feminism | Movement that strives for societal change to make women equal to men in the public and private spheres.

Fixed norms | The beliefs upon which a literary work depends. Unlike nonce beliefs, these are applicable to the real world outside the text.

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geospatial | A term that can describe a range of data and/or methodologies related to place. Geospatial research can include maps, census data, topographic data, and other layers that help describe a physical place and the people (or plants, animals, etc.) who live there.

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Google Earth | Free software that allows users to plot points on a globe, annotating them with contextual information. When combined with David Rumsey's *Historical Maps Collection*, Google Earth allows users to view the globe as it was described at previous points in history.

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Gynocriticism | Literary method that focuses on women writers and how they depict issues related to being a woman in a patriarchal culture.

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heresy of paraphrase | An interpretive error that happens when readers artificially separate meaning from the structure or form of the literary work.

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homosocial desire | Term used by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to define the relationships between men that are not explicitly sexual because society prevents that desire by privileging heterosexual desire.

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hyperlinks | Text in an online document that links to another resource on the web. Hyperlinks are often visually distinct from nonlinked text on a web page.

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identity analysis | A form of psychological reader-response criticism; it posits that we are drawn to literary works that speak to our psychological needs—and, conversely, we are repelled or troubled by works that do not meet our needs.

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implied author | The narrative voice an author creates in his or her work. The implied author guides or directs the reader's interpretation of the text.

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information overload | The idea that so much information is now available to human beings that we cannot process it effectively.

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intentional fallacy | Fallacy committed when readers equate meaning with the author's intended meaning. New Critics argue that since a literary work belongs to the readers, to the public, the work must be isolated from what the author may have intended in the work.

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interpretive communities | A group of readers who share common beliefs that cause them to read a text in a similar way. For example, feminist critics are trained to identify and analyze gender issues, so it's likely that two feminist critics who read the same text will have similar interpretations.

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Intersectionality | A theory frequently used in feminist analyses and in sociological studies that sees the various forms of oppression in a society—race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, and so on—as being interconnected. It holds that because our identities are made up of a variety of markers, we each experience the matrix of oppression in a unique way.

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irony | Irony happens when a reader recognizes a reality different from the appearance. For the New Critics, irony was a sophisticated literary technique that helped a writer bring complexity—and unity and harmony—to the work.

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je | "I," which in Lacanian thought is the actual speaking subject, the person.

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KMZ | A file format that allows users to share events plotted in Google Earth with other users.

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LGBTQ | Acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities.

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Literary maps | A map that traces spatial elements within a literary work, such as plotting the locations characters visit within a novel.

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man box | Term used by Jackson Katz to demonstrate how men are controlled by society's view of masculinity, thus forcing men to perform the stereotypes of what it means to be a man.

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mandala | ⊕; symbol for the unified Self—wholeness.

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meme | Pattern of narrative that is culturally inherited, modified, and adapted. Memes become core narratives for cultural bonding and thus survival.

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metaphor | When one object is equated with another, thus substituting for that object: "my love is a red red rose" (metaphor), rather than "my love is *like* a red red rose" (simile).

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Mirror stage | Stage where child passes from the Imaginary (believing in unity) to the Symbolic (which is a world of differences).

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misogynist | The hatred of men for women. Masculinity studies often points out how this supposed misogyny is created by accepted definitions of how men should act.

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myths | An archetypal story that mirrors the quest for the complete Self. Myths are part of the collective unconsciousness.

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New Criticism | The name for the literary theory movement that developed in the 1940s that demands that a critic concentrate on the literary work itself to find the harmony and unity of the work that reflects an ultimate truth.

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nonthreatening argument | A philosophy of argument developed by Carl Rogers that is based on the notion that strong statements lead to strong responses, thus creating conflict and decreasing the effectiveness of the debate or argument.

nonthreatening argument | A philosophy of argument developed by Carl Rogers that is based on the notion that strong statements lead to strong responses, thus creating conflict and decreasing the effectiveness of the debate or argument.

numbered lists | Lists in which the items are deliberately ordered and are prefaced by a number or letter that indicates sequence.

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objet petit a | "Little object 'a.'" The desire to find such an object, which provides temporary meaning, yet shifts since the sign system is only an approximation of meaning.

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Omeka | A web-publishing platform that allows anyone with an account to create or collaborate on a website to display collections and build digital exhibitions.

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Others | A term used by postcolonial theorists to describe groups of people who are denigrated and/or oppressed by those in positions of power. During colonial times, for instance, Indians were treated as Others by English colonizers, who saw their own culture as superior to Indian culture.

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Patriarchal criticism | Literary method that examines how writers—particularly male writers—depict women in literature; this criticism often highlights the sexist stereotypes that privilege men over women.

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patriarchy | Ideology, or belief system of a society, of male domination over women that pervades the public and private spheres.

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phallic stage | Stage in which a child discovers his or her sexual organs—specifically, the presence or lack of a penis—and begins sexual development.

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phallus | The privileged sign that represents the name-of-the-father.

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postcolonial | Postcolonial theories attempt to understand and explain the cultural, intellectual, and societal legacies of colonial rule.

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power structures | The political, religious, educational, or social institutions that control or attempt to control the discourse of a society and often control the way literature is published, read, and interpreted.

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prewriting | Short, informal activities that help writers generate ideas for longer projects (e.g., freewriting or journaling).

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primary sources | Primary sources are literary or nonliterary texts from the period under study. In literary studies, stories, poems, and plays are primary sources, as are other historical documents such as letters, essays, sermons, and autobiographies.

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public or open-access scholarship | Research and publication practices that are open to all interested readers, rather than being restricted to the subscribers of particular journals or databases. Public scholarship is often distributed online, through a scholar's personal website, or through an open-access journal or archive.

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revision | The stage of the writing process in which a writer reviews his or her work with an eye toward coherence of argument and elegance of expression. During revision, a writer will make often substantial changes to his or her writing that will help his or her readers follow the piece's claims. Often a writer will incorporate or respond to the suggestions of peer and expert reviewers during the revision stage.

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revision | Making significant improvements to a written work with a particular eye toward the strength of an argument and the clarity of its expression. Revision may include deleting unnecessary information, moving prose elements, adding new transitions between ideas, and enhancing research within the argument.

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Romanticism | A movement of artists, writers, and philosophers during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Continental Europe, England, and the United States. Romantic thinkers and writers idealized emotional experiences and the natural world, eschewing many of the scientific, industrial, and capitalistic ideals that had come to define their societies.

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secondary revision | The dream we remember, placed in a fable or story-form structure.

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secondary sources | A text—such as a book or an article—written by a scholar about a particular literary work, historical period, or other academic topic.

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secondary sources | Secondary sources are books and articles written by scholars about a particular literary work, historical period, or other academic topic.

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shadow | Key archetype that challenges the concept of self; the shadow is the dark side of the Self, or the moral problem that the Self must confront.

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signified | The second part of the sign system; the tangible object or "real" concept that is represented by the signifier.

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skimmable | A skimmable document is easy to understand quickly. It includes headings, summaries, and lists that help readers grasp the big ideas in the document without reading its details.

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soft-core | Theory that is based on questioning and predicting, leading to the mapping of ideas, not necessarily solutions. The foundation of the humanities, particularly literary studies.

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subjective criticism | A form of reader-response criticism that views a literary work as comprising both the concrete text and our interpretation of it. The text's meaning is ultimately created when readers compare their responses with each other to develop a communal interpretation.

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superego | The moral code that reflects a variety of authority—social, parental, religious.

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Thanatos | The driving force of death; humans have a simultaneous fear and fascination with this unknown.

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thick description | A thick description focuses on very specific textual details and explains those details by showing how they reflect, demonstrate, or challenge the text's culture.

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unconscious | The part of our mind that is buried deep within consciousness and seeks outlets.

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unreliable narrator | A narrator that cannot be trusted because he or she has a limited viewpoint (often this is a first-person narrator). An unreliable narrator forces the reader to respond to the text on a moral plane.

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warrants | Warrants are the (often unspoken) values and assumptions that shape how readers understand evidence and the claims they believe that evidence will support. Warrants will be discussed later in the chapter.

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well-wrought urn | An image that reflects the central tenet of New Critical close reading—to focus solely on the literary work as a self-contained artistic object.

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working thesis | A thesis is the major claim of your paper: a specific, debatable point that you seek to demonstrate about the work you are studying. Your working thesis is part of the writing process; it's your initial hunch about the work that allows you to begin the process of research and writing. The working thesis is usually revised and refined through the writing process.

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writing process | The series of steps (e.g., prewriting, researching, drafting, and revising) that contribute to a final, polished paper. This process is not linear but recursive, as writers shuttle back and forth in these steps as they compose.

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yonic symbol | Symbols that represent the female/feminine power, usually round objects.

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