# ENGLISH 002: INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE



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# English 002: Introduction to Literature

Dr. Jill Bonds

Coalinga College

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS


**Licensing**

**1: What is Literature?**

1.1: What is Literature?

1.2: Why Read and Write About Literature?

1.3: What is Literary Analysis?

1.4: The Literary Analysis Essay

1.5: Determining an Effective Essay Structure

1.6: Literary Analysis Arguments

1.7: Inferences in Literature

1.8: What Is Literary Theory?

1.9: What is Literary Criticism?

1.10: Why Study Literary Theory?

1.11: Literary Terms - A Guide

1.12: Conclusion to the Introduction

**2: Different Types of Literature**

2.1: About Creative Nonfiction

2.2: About Fiction - Short Stories and the Novel

**2.02: Front Matter**

Table of Contents

2.3: What is Fiction?

2.4: How to Read Fiction

2.5: Elements of Fiction

2.6: Character

2.7: Plot

2.8: Setting

2.9: Narration, Point of View, Dialogue

2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style

2.11: Rhetorical and Literary Devices

2.12: Theme

2.13: Naming the Unnameable - An Approach to Poetry for New Generations (Evory)

2.14: Introduction - Our Natural Right to Play

2.15: Getting Started - The Nine Muses

2.16: Welcome, Reader- Reading Poetry

2.17: Images

2.18: Voice

2.19: Architecture

2.20: Acoustics

2.21: Experimenting with Forms
2.22: Revision
2.23: About Drama
2.24: What is Drama?
2.25: Elements of Drama
2.26: Reading and Responding to Drama
2.27: About Literary Criticism
2.28: Literary Criticism
2.29: What is Literary Criticism?
2.30: Formalism
2.31: Psychoanalytic Criticism
2.32: Criticism and Gender
2.33: Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies Criticism
2.34: New Historicism
2.35: Ecocriticism

**3: Writing About Literature**

3.1: The Literary Landscape- Four Major Genres
3.2: The Writing Process for Literary Essays
3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays
3.4: Writing About Fiction and Creative Nonfiction
3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays
3.6: Literary Thesis Statements
3.7: Essay as Argument
3.8: Summarizing vs. Analyzing Literary Works
3.9: Essay Type - Literary Response
3.10: Essay Type - Literary Analysis
3.11: Essay Type - Comparing and Contrasting Literature
3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research
3.13: How to Perform Literary Research (Navigating Secondary Sources and Library Databases)
3.14: Writing About Poetry
3.15: Analyzing Poetry
3.16: Compare and Contrast Poetry Assignments
3.17: Writing About Drama
3.18: Literary Essay Titles
3.19: Research for Literary Analysis
3.20: Developing Analysis
3.21: Preparing for Research — Knowing Your Thesis
3.22: Discovering and Documenting Sources
3.23: Approaches to Literary Analysis
3.24: Writing as a Process - Breaking it Down

3.25: What Is the Writing Process?
3.26: Why Commit to the Writing Process?
3.27: What Is Academic Argument?
3.28: Introducing an Academic Argument
3.29: Student Writer at Work- Monica Platten's "'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'- An Allegory for a Young America"
3.30: Understanding the Body of Monica's Argument

**4: Writing about Gender and Sexuality**

4.1: Feminist Theory- An Overview
4.2: Gender Criticism and Queer Theory
4.3: Gender Criticism- Masculinity Studies
4.4: Week X Women Writers at the end of the 19th Century
4.5: Sarah Orne Jewett (1849 - 1909)
4.6: Kate Chopin (1850 - 1904)
4.7: Chopin, Kate "The Story of an Hour" (1894)
4.8: Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852 - 1930)
4.9: Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860 - 1935)

**5: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity**

5.1: Postcolonial, Racial, and Ethnic Theory- An Overview
5.2: Writing about Race, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity- A Process Approach
5.3: Strategies for Starting Your Cultural Identity Paper
5.4: Writing about History and Culture from a New Historical Perspective
5.5: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Exercises)
5.6: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Summary)

**6: Mexican American Literature**

**6.01: Front Matter**

Table of Contents
TitlePage
InfoPage
Licensing

6.1: Introduction to Chicano Literature- Mexican-American Narrative
6.2: Historical Antecedents
6.3: Literatura prehispánica
6.4: Hispanoamérica 1930-1969
6.5: Tomás Rivera
6.6: Sandra Cisneros
6.7: Richard Vásquez
6.8: Hispanoamérica 1970-2010
6.9: Mexican-American Poetry- Los Chicanos
6.10: Cómo leer la poesía

6.11: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales
6.12: Alurista
6.13: Francisco X. Alarcón
6.14: Historical Antecedents
6.15: El corrido mexicano
6.16: Poemas nahuas y quechuas
6.17: Literary Tendencies
6.18: Movimientos vanguardistas
6.19: Mexican-American Essayists
6.20: Rudolfo Anaya
6.21: Gloria Anzaldúa
6.22: Sergio Troncoso
6.23: Sandra Cisneros
Index
Glossary
Detailed Licensing

**7: Native American Literature**

**7.1: Catharine Maria Sedgwick**
7.1.1: From Hope Leslie (5000 words)
7.1.2: Reading and Review Questions

**7.2: William Apess**
7.2.1: “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (3500 words)
7.2.2: Reading and Review Questions

**7.3: James Fenimore Cooper**
7.3.1: from The Pioneers (10000 words)
7.3.2: Reading and Review Questions

7.4: The Peyote Cult (Plains)
7.5: Of the Girl who Married Mount Katahdin (Penobscot)
7.6: How Glooskap went to England and France (Passamaquoddy)
7.7: The Origin of Disease and Medicine
7.8: Viracocha and The Coming of the Incas
7.9: The Magic Feather
7.10: The Island of Skeletons

**8: African-American Literature**

8.1: Key Writers
8.2: Understanding African American Authors
8.3: The Slavery Controversy and Abolitionist Literature
8.4: The Church in the Southern Black Community
8.5: Explore The Dispersal of Enslaved Africans Across the Atlantic World

8.6: What was the Harlem Renaissance?
8.7: Importance of the Harlem Renaissance
8.8: Video- Civil Rights and the 1950s
8.9: A Talk to Teachers
8.10: Video- Get Christie Love

**9: MLA Referencing**

9.1: MLA Documentation and Format
9.2: Introduction to MLA Documentation
9.3: MLA Signal Phrases
9.4: Citing in MLA
9.5: Outcome- Writing Ethically
9.6: Academic Integrity
9.7: Defining Plagiarism
9.8: Avoiding Plagiarism
9.9: Self Check- Writing Ethically
9.10: Readings by H. Morrison
9.11: Activity by H. Morrison

**Index**

**Glossary**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS


**Licensing**

**1: What is Literature?**

1.1: What is Literature?

1.2: Why Read and Write About Literature?

1.3: What is Literary Analysis?

1.4: The Literary Analysis Essay

1.5: Determining an Effective Essay Structure

1.6: Literary Analysis Arguments

1.7: Inferences in Literature

1.8: What Is Literary Theory?

1.9: What is Literary Criticism?

1.10: Why Study Literary Theory?

1.11: Literary Terms - A Guide

1.12: Conclusion to the Introduction

**2: Different Types of Literature**

2.1: About Creative Nonfiction

2.2: About Fiction - Short Stories and the Novel

**2.02: Front Matter**

Table of Contents

2.3: What is Fiction?

2.4: How to Read Fiction

2.5: Elements of Fiction

2.6: Character

2.7: Plot

2.8: Setting

2.9: Narration, Point of View, Dialogue

2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style

2.11: Rhetorical and Literary Devices

2.12: Theme

2.13: Naming the Unnameable - An Approach to Poetry for New Generations (Evory)

2.14: Introduction - Our Natural Right to Play

2.15: Getting Started - The Nine Muses

2.16: Welcome, Reader- Reading Poetry

2.17: Images

2.18: Voice

2.19: Architecture

2.20: Acoustics

2.21: Experimenting with Forms
2.22: Revision
2.23: About Drama
2.24: What is Drama?
2.25: Elements of Drama
2.26: Reading and Responding to Drama
2.27: About Literary Criticism
2.28: Literary Criticism
2.29: What is Literary Criticism?
2.30: Formalism
2.31: Psychoanalytic Criticism
2.32: Criticism and Gender
2.33: Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies Criticism
2.34: New Historicism
2.35: Ecocriticism

## 3: Writing About Literature

3.1: The Literary Landscape- Four Major Genres
3.2: The Writing Process for Literary Essays
3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays
3.4: Writing About Fiction and Creative Nonfiction
3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays
3.6: Literary Thesis Statements
3.7: Essay as Argument
3.8: Summarizing vs. Analyzing Literary Works
3.9: Essay Type - Literary Response
3.10: Essay Type - Literary Analysis
3.11: Essay Type - Comparing and Contrasting Literature
3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research
3.13: How to Perform Literary Research (Navigating Secondary Sources and Library Databases)
3.14: Writing About Poetry
3.15: Analyzing Poetry
3.16: Compare and Contrast Poetry Assignments
3.17: Writing About Drama
3.18: Literary Essay Titles
3.19: Research for Literary Analysis
3.20: Developing Analysis
3.21: Preparing for Research — Knowing Your Thesis
3.22: Discovering and Documenting Sources
3.23: Approaches to Literary Analysis
3.24: Writing as a Process - Breaking it Down

3.25: What Is the Writing Process?
3.26: Why Commit to the Writing Process?
3.27: What Is Academic Argument?
3.28: Introducing an Academic Argument
3.29: Student Writer at Work- Monica Platten's "'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'- An Allegory for a Young America"
3.30: Understanding the Body of Monica's Argument

**4: Writing about Gender and Sexuality**

4.1: Feminist Theory- An Overview
4.2: Gender Criticism and Queer Theory
4.3: Gender Criticism- Masculinity Studies
4.4: Week X Women Writers at the end of the 19th Century
4.5: Sarah Orne Jewett (1849 - 1909)
4.6: Kate Chopin (1850 - 1904)
4.7: Chopin, Kate "The Story of an Hour" (1894)
4.8: Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852 - 1930)
4.9: Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860 - 1935)

**5: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity**

5.1: Postcolonial, Racial, and Ethnic Theory- An Overview
5.2: Writing about Race, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity- A Process Approach
5.3: Strategies for Starting Your Cultural Identity Paper
5.4: Writing about History and Culture from a New Historical Perspective
5.5: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Exercises)
5.6: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Summary)

**6: Mexican American Literature**

**6.01: Front Matter**

Table of Contents
TitlePage
InfoPage
Licensing

6.1: Introduction to Chicano Literature- Mexican-American Narrative
6.2: Historical Antecedents
6.3: Literatura prehispánica
6.4: Hispanoamérica 1930-1969
6.5: Tomás Rivera
6.6: Sandra Cisneros
6.7: Richard Vásquez
6.8: Hispanoamérica 1970-2010
6.9: Mexican-American Poetry- Los Chicanos
6.10: Cómo leer la poesía

6.11: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales
6.12: Alurista
6.13: Francisco X. Alarcón
6.14: Historical Antecedents
6.15: El corrido mexicano
6.16: Poemas nahuas y quechuas
6.17: Literary Tendencies
6.18: Movimientos vanguardistas
6.19: Mexican-American Essayists
6.20: Rudolfo Anaya
6.21: Gloria Anzaldúa
6.22: Sergio Troncoso
6.23: Sandra Cisneros
Index
Glossary
Detailed Licensing

**7: Native American Literature**

**7.1: Catharine Maria Sedgwick**
7.1.1: From Hope Leslie (5000 words)
7.1.2: Reading and Review Questions

**7.2: William Apess**
7.2.1: “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (3500 words)
7.2.2: Reading and Review Questions

**7.3: James Fenimore Cooper**
7.3.1: from The Pioneers (10000 words)
7.3.2: Reading and Review Questions

7.4: The Peyote Cult (Plains)
7.5: Of the Girl who Married Mount Katahdin (Penobscot)
7.6: How Glooskap went to England and France (Passamaquoddy)
7.7: The Origin of Disease and Medicine
7.8: Viracocha and The Coming of the Incas
7.9: The Magic Feather
7.10: The Island of Skeletons

**8: African-American Literature**

8.1: Key Writers
8.2: Understanding African American Authors
8.3: The Slavery Controversy and Abolitionist Literature
8.4: The Church in the Southern Black Community
8.5: Explore The Dispersal of Enslaved Africans Across the Atlantic World

8.6: What was the Harlem Renaissance?
8.7: Importance of the Harlem Renaissance
8.8: Video- Civil Rights and the 1950s
8.9: A Talk to Teachers
8.10: Video- Get Christie Love

**9: MLA Referencing**

9.1: MLA Documentation and Format
9.2: Introduction to MLA Documentation
9.3: MLA Signal Phrases
9.4: Citing in MLA
9.5: Outcome- Writing Ethically
9.6: Academic Integrity
9.7: Defining Plagiarism
9.8: Avoiding Plagiarism
9.9: Self Check- Writing Ethically
9.10: Readings by H. Morrison
9.11: Activity by H. Morrison

**Index**

**Glossary**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS


**Licensing**

**1: What is Literature?**

1.1: What is Literature?

1.2: Why Read and Write About Literature?

1.3: What is Literary Analysis?

1.4: The Literary Analysis Essay

1.5: Determining an Effective Essay Structure

1.6: Literary Analysis Arguments

1.7: Inferences in Literature

1.8: What Is Literary Theory?

1.9: What is Literary Criticism?

1.10: Why Study Literary Theory?

1.11: Literary Terms - A Guide

1.12: Conclusion to the Introduction

**2: Different Types of Literature**

2.1: About Creative Nonfiction

2.2: About Fiction - Short Stories and the Novel

**2.02: Front Matter**

Table of Contents

2.3: What is Fiction?

2.4: How to Read Fiction

2.5: Elements of Fiction

2.6: Character

2.7: Plot

2.8: Setting

2.9: Narration, Point of View, Dialogue

2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style

2.11: Rhetorical and Literary Devices

2.12: Theme

2.13: Naming the Unnameable - An Approach to Poetry for New Generations (Evory)

2.14: Introduction - Our Natural Right to Play

2.15: Getting Started - The Nine Muses

2.16: Welcome, Reader- Reading Poetry

2.17: Images

2.18: Voice

2.19: Architecture

2.20: Acoustics

2.21: Experimenting with Forms
2.22: Revision
2.23: About Drama
2.24: What is Drama?
2.25: Elements of Drama
2.26: Reading and Responding to Drama
2.27: About Literary Criticism
2.28: Literary Criticism
2.29: What is Literary Criticism?
2.30: Formalism
2.31: Psychoanalytic Criticism
2.32: Criticism and Gender
2.33: Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies Criticism
2.34: New Historicism
2.35: Ecocriticism

**3: Writing About Literature**

3.1: The Literary Landscape- Four Major Genres
3.2: The Writing Process for Literary Essays
3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays
3.4: Writing About Fiction and Creative Nonfiction
3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays
3.6: Literary Thesis Statements
3.7: Essay as Argument
3.8: Summarizing vs. Analyzing Literary Works
3.9: Essay Type - Literary Response
3.10: Essay Type - Literary Analysis
3.11: Essay Type - Comparing and Contrasting Literature
3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research
3.13: How to Perform Literary Research (Navigating Secondary Sources and Library Databases)
3.14: Writing About Poetry
3.15: Analyzing Poetry
3.16: Compare and Contrast Poetry Assignments
3.17: Writing About Drama
3.18: Literary Essay Titles
3.19: Research for Literary Analysis
3.20: Developing Analysis
3.21: Preparing for Research — Knowing Your Thesis
3.22: Discovering and Documenting Sources
3.23: Approaches to Literary Analysis
3.24: Writing as a Process - Breaking it Down

3.25: What Is the Writing Process?
3.26: Why Commit to the Writing Process?
3.27: What Is Academic Argument?
3.28: Introducing an Academic Argument
3.29: Student Writer at Work- Monica Platten's "'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'- An Allegory for a Young America"
3.30: Understanding the Body of Monica's Argument

**4: Writing about Gender and Sexuality**

4.1: Feminist Theory- An Overview
4.2: Gender Criticism and Queer Theory
4.3: Gender Criticism- Masculinity Studies
4.4: Week X Women Writers at the end of the 19th Century
4.5: Sarah Orne Jewett (1849 - 1909)
4.6: Kate Chopin (1850 - 1904)
4.7: Chopin, Kate "The Story of an Hour" (1894)
4.8: Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852 - 1930)
4.9: Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860 - 1935)

**5: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity**

5.1: Postcolonial, Racial, and Ethnic Theory- An Overview
5.2: Writing about Race, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity- A Process Approach
5.3: Strategies for Starting Your Cultural Identity Paper
5.4: Writing about History and Culture from a New Historical Perspective
5.5: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Exercises)
5.6: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Summary)

**6: Mexican American Literature**

**6.01: Front Matter**

Table of Contents
TitlePage
InfoPage
Licensing

6.1: Introduction to Chicano Literature- Mexican-American Narrative
6.2: Historical Antecedents
6.3: Literatura prehispánica
6.4: Hispanoamérica 1930-1969
6.5: Tomás Rivera
6.6: Sandra Cisneros
6.7: Richard Vásquez
6.8: Hispanoamérica 1970-2010
6.9: Mexican-American Poetry- Los Chicanos
6.10: Cómo leer la poesía

6.11: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales
6.12: Alurista
6.13: Francisco X. Alarcón
6.14: Historical Antecedents
6.15: El corrido mexicano
6.16: Poemas nahuas y quechuas
6.17: Literary Tendencies
6.18: Movimientos vanguardistas
6.19: Mexican-American Essayists
6.20: Rudolfo Anaya
6.21: Gloria Anzaldúa
6.22: Sergio Troncoso
6.23: Sandra Cisneros
Index
Glossary
Detailed Licensing

**7: Native American Literature**

**7.1: Catharine Maria Sedgwick**
7.1.1: From Hope Leslie (5000 words)
7.1.2: Reading and Review Questions

**7.2: William Apess**
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7.3.1: from The Pioneers (10000 words)
7.3.2: Reading and Review Questions

7.4: The Peyote Cult (Plains)
7.5: Of the Girl who Married Mount Katahdin (Penobscot)
7.6: How Glooskap went to England and France (Passamaquoddy)
7.7: The Origin of Disease and Medicine
7.8: Viracocha and The Coming of the Incas
7.9: The Magic Feather
7.10: The Island of Skeletons

**8: African-American Literature**

8.1: Key Writers
8.2: Understanding African American Authors
8.3: The Slavery Controversy and Abolitionist Literature
8.4: The Church in the Southern Black Community
8.5: Explore The Dispersal of Enslaved Africans Across the Atlantic World

8.6: What was the Harlem Renaissance?
8.7: Importance of the Harlem Renaissance
8.8: Video- Civil Rights and the 1950s
8.9: A Talk to Teachers
8.10: Video- Get Christie Love

**9: MLA Referencing**

9.1: MLA Documentation and Format
9.2: Introduction to MLA Documentation
9.3: MLA Signal Phrases
9.4: Citing in MLA
9.5: Outcome- Writing Ethically
9.6: Academic Integrity
9.7: Defining Plagiarism
9.8: Avoiding Plagiarism
9.9: Self Check- Writing Ethically
9.10: Readings by H. Morrison
9.11: Activity by H. Morrison

**Index**

**Glossary**

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Rebecca Estes

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# 1: WHAT IS LITERATURE?

Learning Objectives

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

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


1.1: What is Literature?

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1.6: Literary Analysis Arguments

1.7: Inferences in Literature

1.8: What Is Literary Theory?

1.9: What is Literary Criticism?

1.10: Why Study Literary Theory?

1.11: Literary Terms - A Guide

1.12: Conclusion to the Introduction



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# 1.1: What is Literature?

## Defining Literature

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

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

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

### Literature vs. literature

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

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

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

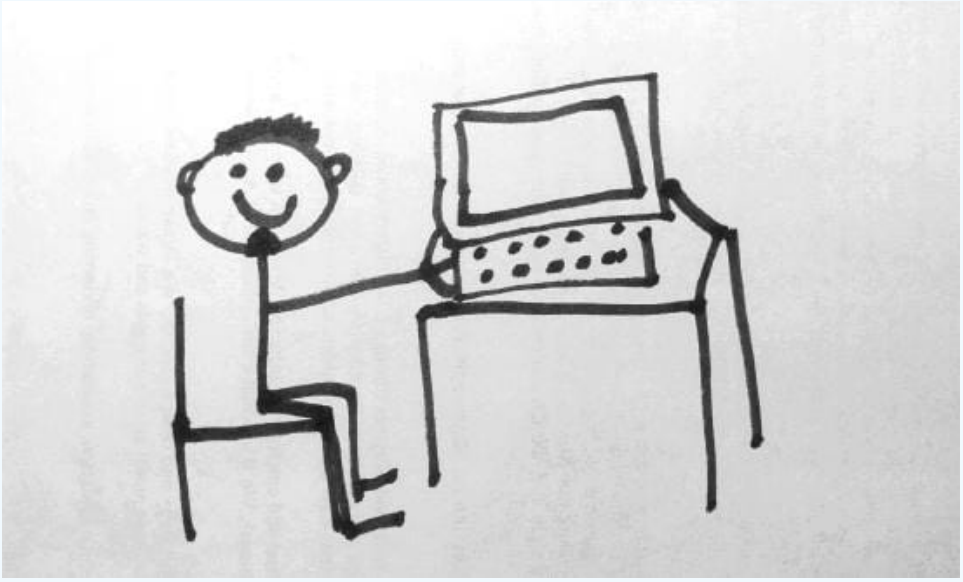
Let's break down some of the defining qualities of literature in a bit more detail, starting with the word "artistic."

Exercise 1.1.1

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



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



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

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

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

**Literature is art, but with words.**

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

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

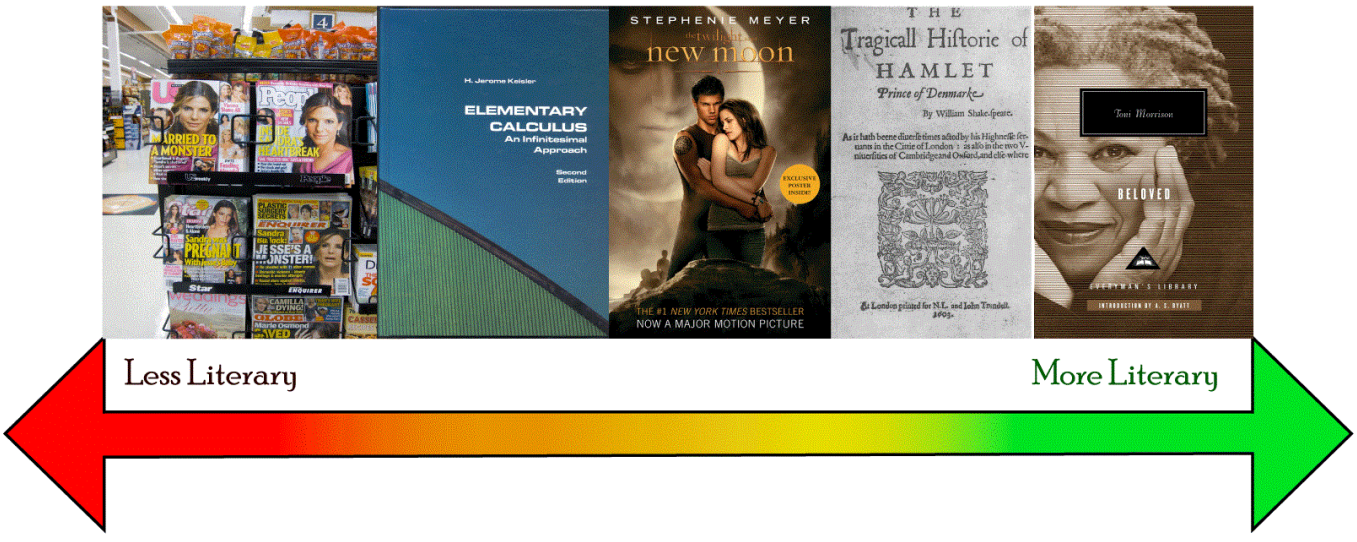
So, to use an example from earlier:

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

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

## The Literary Spectrum

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




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

## Who Decides What is Literature?

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

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

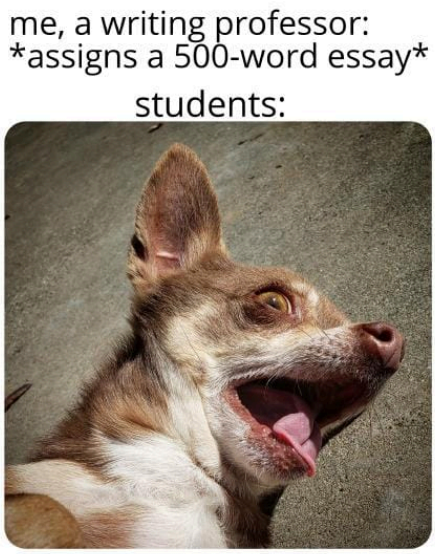
When a work is officially determined to constitute literature, it enters something called **the Canon.** Not to be confused with the large metal tube that shoots explosives (cannon), the Literary Canon is a collection of works that are considered by the powers that be to constitute literature worth reading,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

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

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

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

**Generative question: do you think memes can be literary?**




A **meme** is an image or video containing cultural values or ideas, often represented through **allusion** (implied reference to

another work, without naming that work or its author). Memes can spread rapidly spreads through social media. Why? Because the best ones are #relatable; that is, they speak to a common human experience.

Usually memes take the form of text superimposed on an image. For example, the meme above conveys the dramatic reaction students sometimes give when I assign an essay. This is done primarily through a literary device called **hyperbole**, or exaggeration for rhetorical effect. It conveys its message comically through certain conventions that come along with the meme genre, such as the syntactic structure "me, a [insert noun]" and asterisks, which convey action. Just like in the Shakespearean drama, the colon indicates what each character (me and the students, in this case) is saying or doing. My chihuahua's face looks silly and very dramatic. Through this use of image, text, format, and convention, the meaning I intended to convey was that I was making fun of my students for being over-dramatic about what to me seems like a fairly simple assignment. While some might dismiss memes as shallow, when you start to unravel the layers of meaning, they can actually be very complex and even, dare I say, literary!

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

## Not Literature

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

No!

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

## The Problem with the Canon

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

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

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

authors).

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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### Answers

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

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

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


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# 1.2: Why Read and Write About Literature?

## Why Read Literature?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Benefits of Literature

Studies show reading literature may help

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

These are just a few of the studied benefits of literature. As we continue to gain increasing complexity in terms of measuring

brain activity and developing other tools to measure brain function, scientists may find more benefits.

## Why Write About Literature?

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

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

### How Do I Start?

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

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

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

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

### Questions to consider when writing about literature

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

- Setting
- Characters
- Plot (story or play) or structure (poem)

- Tone/Mood
- Themes
- Symbolism and Figurative Language

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

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

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

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

[...]

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

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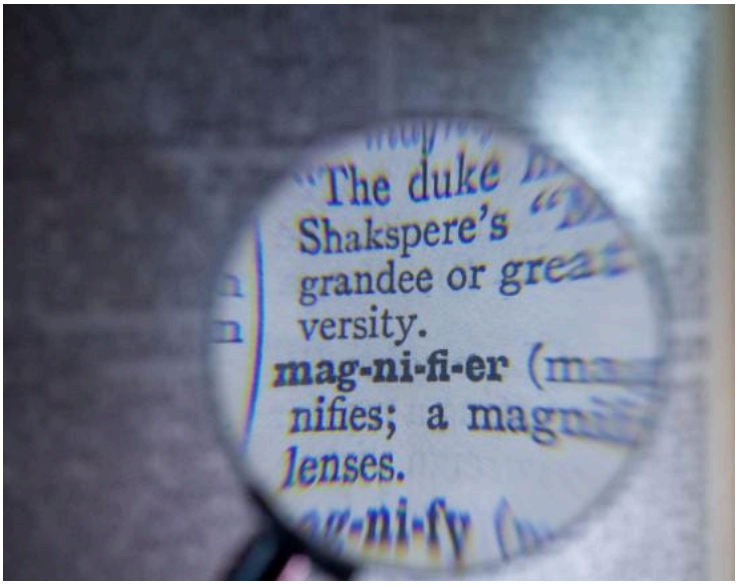
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# 1.3: What is Literary Analysis?

## What is Literary Analysis?




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

## Literary Analysis = Close Reading

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

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

- What is the theme or motif of this text?
- What patterns can I detect across this text, or what patterns can I detect across this genre of literature which are also present in this text? And what might these patterns indicate about the meaning or significance of this text?
- What literary devices are featured in this text? How might an analysis of these formal features deepen understandings of the text?
- What kinds of characters are featured in this text?
- What qualities make literature "good" or of "lasting artistic merit" ("literature 3b")?
- How might the language or diction of the text reflect cultural or historical meanings most common readers miss? How might such meanings deepen or illuminate our understanding of the text?
- What have previous scholars misinterpreted or missed about this work, and how can I bring neglected aspects of this text to light?

- In what ways does this text engage with or elucidate other works of literature, philosophical theories, historical events, or social movements?
- What might this text reveal about what it means to be human? How might it deepen my understanding of my place in the world?

## How to Perform Literary Analysis

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

1. **Read the text 3 times**: once, for enjoyment. Once, for deep understanding. And, lastly, once for deep analysis. Literary critics often read the same texts many more times! Don't be afraid to read as many times as you need.
2. **Engage with the text.** Highlight, annotate, mark pages with sticky notes or flags, and take notes as you read. Look for anything weird, surprising, confusing, or exciting that jumps out at you. Why do you think this formal feature exists in the text? Don't be afraid to write down any questions which bubble up as you read: it is likely other scholars/students have questions too, and sharing your questions with classmates or your professor might prompt a fascinating discussion! For example, an observant student once asked (his question is paraphrased here): "In *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, I noticed Hamlet and Horatio seem to think the ghost of Old Hamlet is actually a demon. But later Hamlet seems to think the ghost is an actual ghost. Gertrude does not see the ghost, making it seem like it is a figment of Hamlet's troubled mind. What are we as readers meant to believe?" This question prompted other students to share their cultural heritage's perspective on demons, the afterlife, and even to share ghost stories. Eventually, this discussion led students to research Elizabethan perspectives on ghosts and demons. This made for a lively class discussion and several strong essays all because one student dared to engage with the text by asking a question!
3. **Keep track of any patterns.** Does a certain image keep popping up, like a heart, a rose, or a color? This might be a symbol: a physical object signifying an abstract meaning. What might this repeated image mean in the context of the rest of the story? For example, in Ambrose Bierce's short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," the color gray repeats many times. Why? What might this indicate about the importance of the color gray to the story? What might the color gray have symbolized to Bierce, or to readers alive during the Civil War?
4. **Deeply examine and question literary features** such as titles, characters, settings, figurative language, and dialogue. Constantly ask yourself: why is this here? As readers, we should usually assume authors, as masters of their craft, make choices intentionally. And even if unintentional, what might subconscious slips indicate about meaning? In short, *how does the form or structure of this writing influence my understanding of its message?*

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

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# 1.4: The Literary Analysis Essay

Now that we have discussed the basic conventions and terminology associated with poetry, fiction, drama, and creative nonfiction, let's explore how one progresses from reading a piece of literature to producing a literary analysis paper on that work. It is important to note that the process of writing discussed in this chapter can be used in writing for any discipline. As stated in this book's Introduction, literature provides a fruitful context for development of writing skills, but the skills themselves are transferable into a multitude of communication situations.

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# 1.5: Determining an Effective Essay Structure

One common misconception students entertain when they approach literary analysis essays is the idea that the structure of the essay should follow the structure of the literary work. The events of short stories, novels, and plays are often related chronologically, in linear order from the moment when the first event occurs to the moment of the last. Yet, it can be awkward to write a literary analysis using the story's chronology as a basic structure for your own essay. Often, this approach leads to an essay that simply summarizes the literary work. Since a literary analysis paper should avoid summary for summary's sake, the writer should avoid an essay structure that results in that pattern: *And then Brett goes to San Sebastian with Robert Cohn, and then she returns in time to meet her fiancé Mike Campbell, and then….*

Note that in Bill's essay on *The Sun Also Rises*, he decided to focus on two significant metaphors and to dedicate a major section of his paper to each. He does not mention Brett's trip to San Sebastian at all since it does not pertain directly to the paper's discussion of the metaphors. How does he determine the paper's arrangement? Why does he discuss the metaphor of Jake's wound before that of the tainted bull fights? In the novel, we do learn of Jake's wound first, and according to Bill, this metaphor helps establish the theme of psychological wounds caused by the war. So, chronology does influence the arrangement of the paper to some extent, but it is not the primary factor in the paper's structure. Rather than beginning his paper with a description of Jake's wound and then moving on to relate Brett's trip to San Sebastian with Robert, the ensuing antics of the group in Paris, their journey to Spain, etc., on through the list of the novel's plot events, Bill only includes the plot details supportive to his point, first illustrating the irreversible wounds of the group, represented by Jake's war-wound, and second examining the spoiled bull fights representing the group's irreparable loss of faith and hope. The arrangement of the paper does not reject chronological order simply for the sake of doing so—Bill relates the events in the sequence of their occurrence when it is reasonable. However, it is his focus on the two metaphors that provides the basic structure for his paper.

Similarly, in Katherine Jones's essay arguing that Brett Ashley is not a monster but a woman caught between two ideologies, she structures the paper this way:

I. Brett Ashley as sympathetic character in spite of some readers' disapproval of her behavior
   a. Description of Brett's unconventional ways
   b. Signs that her rebellion takes its toll on her
      i. Alcohol
      ii. Promiscuity
      iii. Alienation and despair

II. Conclusion: Her behavior is understandable given her challenging circumstances

Like Bill, Katherine structures her paper by arranging the major points logically: The description of Brett's nontraditional behavior comes first in the essay's body because it helps set up the points that follow, points supporting Katherine's argument that Brett's struggles illuminate her very human, and thus understandable, reactions to her challenges.

If chronology is not the primary structural factor in setting up a literary analysis paper, what is? You might consider the following hints in arranging the points of your own essay:

1. What *are* your major points? In Bill's essay, he explores two *important metaphors*; in Katherine's she examines (a) Brett's unconventionality and then (b) evidence that her nontraditional behavior is more than simple pleasure-seeking, seen in (i) her alcoholism, (ii) her *promiscuity*, and (iii) her *expressions of despair*. In Marion Velis's essay "Clinging to Love: Theodore Roethke's 'My Papa's Waltz'," printed in Chapter 2, her major points focus on Roethke's use of rhythm, the poem's point of view, and its controlling metaphor. These major points should form the main organizing components of the essay.
2. What order will *most effectively lead the reader* to your perspective on this subject? In each of the essays mentioned above, the first point of discussion helps to set up the paper. These writers work to *draw in* and *orient* the reader, first with the introduction and then, further, in the second body paragraph. Conversely, the final point of the paper's body should be one that helps to "clinch" the paper's argument or end it "with a bang" just before the conclusion reiterates the overarching argument in the essay's final lines.
3. Paragraph breaks should (a) cue the reader regarding shifts in focus (hence Bill begins a new paragraph when he finishes discussion of Jake's wound and starts his exploration of the spoiled bull fights) and (b) break down ideas into small enough chunks that the reader does not lose sight of the currently emphasized point (thus Katherine breaks her discussion of Brett's need to cope into separate paragraphs on alcohol abuse, promiscuity, and expressions of Brett's despair). On the other hand, in an academic essay, the paragraphs should not seem "choppy." Rather each should be long enough to develop its point

thoroughly before shifting to the next.

The literary analysis paper can be written with examination of only the primary source, or, as we will discuss in the next chapter, you may integrate into your argument the perspectives of other scholars (secondary sources). Regardless, your own findings from your analysis of the primary text should be a priority in your interpretation of the work. Analytical skills are invaluable as you explore any subject, investigating the subject by breaking it down and looking closely at how it functions. Finding patterns in your observations, then, helps you to interpret your analysis and communicate to others how you came to your conclusions about the subject's meaning and/or effect. As you make your case to the readers, it is crucial that you make it clear how your perspective is relevant to them. Ideally, they will come away from your argument intrigued by the new insights you have revealed about the subject.

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# 1.6: Literary Analysis Arguments

**Analysis** means to break something down in order to better understand how it works. To analyze a literary work is to pull it apart and look at its discrete components to see how those components contribute to the meaning and/or effect of the whole. Thus, a literary analysis argument considers what has been learned in analyzing a work (What do the parts look like and how do they function?) and forwards a particular perspective on their contribution to the whole (In light of the author's use of diction, for example, what meaning does the novel, as a whole, yield?).

Consider, once again, the literary analysis arguments presented in this book so far:

> Marion Velis (Chapter 2): "At first glance, Theodore Roethke's poem 'My Papa's Waltz' may seem like a poem about a boy's fear of his controlling, abusive, alcoholic father. But the poem goes much deeper than that. Roethke uses specific rhythm, word choice, and a controlling metaphor to give the poem a reminiscent tone that looks back on the father in love."
>
> Bill Day (Chapter 5): "Through the metaphors of Jake's wound and the tainted Pamplona fiesta, the novel [The Sun Also Rises] conveys the possibility that we can dangerously disrupt the cycle of renewal."
>
> Katherine Jones (Chapter 5): "Brett, as she is developed in the novel [The Sun Also Rises], has been painted in different lights, depending on the interpreter, ranging from a sympathetic view to one of condemnation. The portrait of her that I will attempt to show is one of a human being, caught between the ideologies of two eras."

Each of these essays engages in analysis of the text in question, pointing to and considering plot events, images, character traits, dialogue, and other components of the work to understand the meaning of the text as a whole. Although in her thesis, Katherine does not list the "parts" that her paper investigates, she goes on to focus on Brett's specific behaviors and expressions that support the essay's interpretation of The Sun Also Rises.

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# 1.7: Inferences in Literature

## Inference vs. Guess

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise 1.5.1

Write a conclusion you could infer from the following:

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

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

## Making Inferences from Reading Material

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

are not told what exactly happened to the Lone Star, but you can infer that it was wrecked in a storm based on the other details provided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise 1.5.2

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

Which of the following can you infer from the passage?

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

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

Exercise 1.5.3

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

Which of the following can you infer from the passage:

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

Paragraph 2:

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

Which of the following can you infer from the passage:

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

## Building on Your Knowledge of Inferences

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

For example:

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

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

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

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

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

**Exercise 1.5.4**

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

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

---

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

**Exercise 1.5.5**

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

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

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

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## Answers

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

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

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

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

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

From here, there are dozens of conclusions you could infer. For example, if you were asked why Star A appears smaller than Star B, you would know it might be

because it is actually smaller. Then again, it might also be smaller because it is farther away. The if-then statement is a useful strategy that can help you make inferences and increase your reading comprehension.

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

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

Example 1:

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

Example 2

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

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# 1.8: 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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# 1.9: What is Literary Criticism?

By reading and discussing literature, we expand our imagination, our sense of what is possible, and our ability to empathize with others. Improve your ability to read critically and interpret texts while gaining appreciation for different literary genres and theories of interpretation. Read samples of literary interpretation. Write a critique of a literary work.

Texts that interpret literary works are usually persuasive texts. Literary critics may conduct a close reading of a literary work, critique a literary work from the stance of a particular literary theory, or debate the soundness of other critics' interpretations. The work of literary critics is similar to the work of authors writing evaluative texts. For example, the skills required to critique films, interpret laws, or evaluate artistic trends are similar to those skills required by literary critics.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: http://pb.libretexts.org/al/?p=42

## Why Write Literary Criticism?

People have been telling stories and sharing responses to stories since the beginning of time. By reading and discussing literature, we expand our imagination, our sense of what is possible, and our ability to empathize with others. Reading and discussing literature can enhance our ability to write. It can sharpen our critical faculties, enabling us to assess works and better understand why literature can have such a powerful effect on our lives.

"Literary texts" include works of fiction and poetry. In school, English instructors ask students to critique literary texts, or works. Literary criticism refers to a genre of writing whereby an author critiques a literary text, either a work of fiction, a play, or poetry. Alternatively, some works of literary criticism address how a particular theory of interpretation informs a reading of a work or refutes some other critics' reading of a work.

## Diverse Rhetorical Situations

The genre of literary interpretation is more specialized than most of the other genres addressed in this section, as suggested by the table below. People may discuss their reactions to literary works informally (at coffee houses, book clubs, or the gym) but the lion's share of literary criticism takes place more formally: in college classrooms, professional journals, academic magazines, and Web sites.

Students interpret literary works for English instructors or for students enrolled in English classes. In their interpretations, students may argue for a particular interpretation or they may dispute other critics' interpretations. Alternatively, students may read a text with a particular literary theory in mind, using the theory to explicate a particular point of view. For example, writers could critique The Story of an Hour by Kate Chopin from a feminist theoretical perspective. Thanks to the Internet, some English classes are now publishing students' interpretations on Web sites. In turn, some students and English faculty publish their work in academic literary criticism journals.

Over the years, literary critics have argued about the best ways to interpret literature. Accordingly, many "schools" or "theories of criticism" have emerged. As you can imagine–given that they were developed by sophisticated specialists–some of these theoretical approaches are quite sophisticated and abstract.

Below is a summary of some of the more popular literary theories. Because it is a summary, the following tends to oversimplify the theories. In any case, unless you are enrolled in a literary criticism course, you won't need to learn the particulars of all of these approaches. Instead, your teacher may ask you to take an eclectic approach, pulling interpretative questions from multiple literary theories.

**Note**: If you are interested in learning more about these theories, review either Skylar Hamilton Burris' Literary Criticism: An Overview of Approaches or Dino F. Felluga's Undergraduate Guide to Critical Theory

- Schools of Literary Criticism
- New Criticism: Focuses on "objectively" evaluating the text, identifying its underlying form. May study, for example, a text's use of imagery, metaphor, or symbolism. Isn't concerned with matters outside the text, such as biographical or contextual information. Online Examples: A Formalist Reading of Sandra Cisneros's "Woman Hollering Creek" , Sound in William

Shakespeare's The Tempest by Skylar Hamilton Burris
- Reader-Respons: Criticism Focuses on each reader's personal reactions to a text, assuming meaning is created by a reader's or interpretive community's personal interaction with a text. Assumes no single, correct, universal meaning exists because meaning resides in the minds of readers. Online Examples:Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz": A Reader's Response (PDF)
- Feminism: Criticism Focuses on understanding ways gender roles are reflected or contradicted by texts, how dominance and submission play out in texts, and how gender roles evolve in texts. Online Example: "The Yellow Wall-Paper": A Twist on Conventional Symbols, Subverting the French Androcentric Influence by Jane Le Marquand
- New Historicism Focuses on understanding texts by viewing texts in the context of other texts. Seeks to understand economic, social, and political influences on texts. Tend to broadly define the term "text," so, for example, the Catholic Church could be defined as a "text." May adopt the perspectives of other interpretive communities–particularly reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, and Marxist approaches–to interpret texts. Online Example Monstrous Acts by Jonathan Lethem
- Media Criticism Focuses on writers' use of multimedia and hypertexts. Online Examples The Electronic Labyrinth by Christopher Keep, Tim McLaughlin, and Robin Parmar
- Psychoanalytical Criticism Focuses on psychological dimensions of the work. Online Examples: A Freudian Approach to Erin McGraw's "A Thief" by Skylar Hamilton Burris
- Marxist Criticism Focuses on ways texts reflect, reinforce, or challenge the effects of class, power relations, and social roles. Online Example: A Reading of Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" by Peter Kosenko
- Archetypal Criticism Focuses on identifying the underlying myths in stories and archetypes, which reflect what the psychologist Carl Jung called the "collective unconsciousness." Online Example: A Catalogue of Symbols in The Awakening by Kate Chopin by Skylar Hamilton Burris
- Postcolonial Criticism Focuses on how Western culture's (mis)representation of third-world countries and peoples in stories, myths, and stereotypical images encourages repression and domination. Online Example: Other Voices
- Structuralism/Semiotics Focuses on literature as a system of signs where meaning is constructed in a context, where words are inscribed with meaning by being compared to other words and structures. Online Example: Applied Semiotics [Online journal with many samples]
- Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction Focuses, along with Structuralism, on viewing literature as a system of signs, yet rejects the Structuralist view that a critic can identify the inherent meaning of a text, suggesting, instead that literature has no center, no single interpretation, that literary language is inherently ambiguous

Powerful works of literature invoke multiple readings. In other words, we can all read the same story or poem (or watch the same movie or listen to the same song) and come up with different, even conflicting, interpretations about what the work means. Who we are reflects how we read texts. Our experiences inspire us to relate to and sympathize with characters and difficult situations. Have we read similar stories? Have we actually faced some of the same challenges the characters in the story face?

In addition, literary theories have unique ways to develop and substantiate arguments. Some theories draw extensively on the work of other critics, while others concentrate on the reader's thoughts and feelings. Some theories analyze a work from an historical perspective, while others focus solely on a close reading of a text.

Accordingly, as with other genres, the following key features need to be read as points of departure as opposed to a comprehensive blueprint:

## Focus

Examine a subject from a rhetorical perspective. Identify the intended audience, purpose, context, media, voice, tone, and persona. Distinguish between summarizing the literary work and presenting your argument. Many students fall into the trap of spending too much time summarizing the literature being analyzed as opposed to critiquing it. As a result, it would be wise to check with your teacher regarding how much plot summary is expected. As you approach this project, remember to keep your eye on the ball: What, exactly (in one sentence) is the gist of your interpretation?

## Development

You can develop your ideas by researching the work of other literary critics. How do other critics evaluate an author's work? What literary theories do literary critics use to interpret texts or particular moments in history? Reading sample proposals can help you find and adopt an appropriate voice and persona. By reading samples, you can learn how others have prioritized particular criteria.

Below are some of the questions invoked by popular literary theories. Consider these questions as you read a work, perhaps

taking notes on your thoughts as you reread. You may focus on using one theory to “read and interpret” text or, more commonly, you may compare the critical concerns of different theories.

## New Criticism/Formalism

- Character: How does the character evolve during the story? What is unique or interesting about a character? Is the character a stereotypical action hero, a patriarchal father figure, or Madonna? How does a character interact with other characters?
- Setting: How does the setting enhance tension within the work? Do any elements in the setting foreshadow the conclusion of the piece?
- Plot: What is the conflict? How do scenes lead to a suspenseful resolution? What scenes make the plot unusual, unexpected, suspenseful?
- Point of View: Who is telling the story? Is the narrator omniscient (all-knowing) or does the narrator have limited understanding?

## Reader-Response Criticism

How does the text make you feel? What memories or experiences come to mind when you read? If you were the central protagonist, would you have behaved differently? Why? What values or ethics do you believe are suggested by the story? As your reading of a text progresses, what surprises you, inspires you?

## Feminist Criticism

How does the story re-inscribe or contradict traditional gender roles? For example, are the male characters in “power positions” while the women are “dominated”? Are the men prone to action, decisiveness, and leadership while the female characters are passive, subordinate? Do gender roles create tension within the story? Do characters’ gender roles evolve over the course of the narrative?

## New Historicism Cristicism

How does the story reflect the aspirations and conditions of the lower classes or upper classes? Is tension created by juxtaposing privileged, powerful positions to subordinated, dominated positions? What information about the historical context of the story helps explain the character’s motivations? Who benefits from the outcome of the story or from a given character’s motivation?

## Media Criticism

How does the medium alter readers’ interactions with the text? Has the reader employed multimedia or hypertext? What traditions from print and page design have shaped the structure of the text? In what ways has the author deviated from traditional, deductively organized linear texts?

## Cite from the Work

Literary criticism involves close reading of a literary work, regardless of whether you are arguing about a particular interpretation, comparing stories or poems, or using a theory to interpret literature.Do not summarize the story. The purpose of the document is not to inform the readers, but to argue a particular interpretation. You only need to cite parts of the work that support or relate to your argument and follow the citation format required by your instructor (see Using and Citing Sources).

Below is an example from Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction, Professor Matthew Hurt. Note how the writer uses block quotes to highlight key elements and paraphrase and summarizes the original works, using quotation marks where necessary.

...Twain offers a long descriptive passage of Huck and Jim’s life on the raft that seems, at first glance, to celebrate the idyllic freedom symbolized by the river and nature. . . A close reading of this passage, however, shows that the river is not a privileged natural space outside of and uncontaminated by society, but is inextricably linked to the social world on the shore, which itself

has positive value for Huck. Instead of seeking to escape society, Huck wants to escape the dull routines of life.

The passage abounds with lyrical descriptions of the river's natural beauty. For example, Huck's long description of the sunrise over the river captures the peaceful stillness and the visual beauty of the scene:

The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line — that was the woods on t'other side — you couldn't make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness, spreading around; then the river softened up, away off, and warn't black any more, but gray; . . . sometimes you could hear a sweep screaking; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by-and-by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there's a snag there in the swift current which breaks on it and makes the streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t'other side of the river, . . . then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh, and sweet to smell, on account of the woods and the flowers; . . . and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going at it! (129-130)

Here Huck celebrates the beauty of the natural world coming to life at the beginning of a new day. The "paleness" gradually spreading across the sky makes new objects visible which he describes in loving detail for the reader. The "nice breeze" is "cool and fresh" and "sweet to smell," and the world seems to be "smiling in the sun" as the song-birds welcome the new day.

However, Huck includes a number of details within this passage that would seem to work against the language of natural beauty. After describing the gradually brightening sky, Huck notes that "you could see little dark spots drifting along, ever so far away — trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks — rafts." The sun rise reveals not only natural objects (the brightening sky, the "snag," the "mist"), but also brings into view man-made objects ("trading scows" and "rafts") that signify human society's presence in this natural environment. Similarly, Huck speculates that the picturesque "log cabin" on the distant shore is a "woodyard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres." Here the marker of human society takes on a sinister tone of corruption as Huck describes how unscrupulous wood sellers stack wood loosely to cheat their customers. Finally, although the breeze is "sweet to smell," Huck assures the reader that this isn't always the case: "but sometimes not that way, because they've left dead fish laying around, gars, and such, and they do get pretty rank."

These signs of society's presence on the river are largely negative. The woodyard is "piled by cheats" and the stacked fish pollute the "sweet" smell of the breeze. At this point, the opposition between "good nature" and "bad society" remains intact. The signs of human presence suggest a corruption of nature's beauty. In the paragraphs that follow, however, this opposition is subtly reversed. After Huck's account of the sunrise over the river, he describes how he and Jim watch the steamboats "coughing along up stream." But when there are no steamboats or rafts to watch, he describes the scene as "solid lonesomeness" (130). No songbirds, no sweet breezes. Without human activities to watch, the scene suddenly becomes empty and "lonesome," and nothing captures Huck's attention until more rafts and boats pass by and he can watch them chopping wood or listen to them beating pans in the fog.

## Cite Other Critics' Interpretations of the Work

Criticism written by advanced English majors, graduate students, and literary critics may be more about what other critics have said than about the actual text. Indeed, many critics spend more time reading criticism and arguing about critical approaches than actually reading original works. However, unless you are enrolled in a literary theory course, your instructor probably wants you to focus more on interpreting the work than discussing other critical interpretations. This does not mean, however, that you should write about a literary work "blindly." Instead, you are wise to find out what other students and critics have said about the work.

Below is a sample passage that illustrates how other critics' works can inspire an author and guide him or her in constructing a counter-argument, support an author's interpretation, and provide helpful biographical information.

In her critical biography of Shirley Jackson, Lenemaja Friedman notes that when Shirley Jackson's story "The Lottery" was published in the June 28, 1948 issue of the New Yorker it received a response that "no New Yorker story had ever received": hundreds of letters poured in that were characterized by "bewilderment, speculation, and old-fashioned abuse."1 It is not hard to account for this response: Jackson's story portrays an "average" New England village with "average" citizens engaged in a deadly rite, the annual selection of a sacrificial victim by means of a public lottery, and does so quite deviously: not until well along in the story do we suspect that the "winner" will be stoned to death by the rest of the villagers.

# Organization

The format for literary critiques is fairly standard:

- State your claim(s).
- Forecast your organization.
- Marshal evidence for your claim.
- Reiterate argument and elaborate on its significance.

In English classes, you may be able to assume that your readers are familiar with the work you are critiquing. Perhaps, for example, the entire class is responding to one particular work after some class discussions about it. However, if your instructor asks you to address a broader audience, you may need to provide bibliographical information for the work. In other words, you may need to cite the title, publisher, date, and pages of the work (see Citing Sources).

Literary critiques are arguments. As such, your instructors expect you to state a claim in your introduction and then provide quotes and paraphrased statements from the text to serve as evidence for your claim. Ideally, your critique will be insightful and interesting. You'll want to come up with an interpretation that isn't immediately obvious. Below are some examples of "thesis statements" or "claims" from literary critiques:

- In "The Yellow Wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the protagonist is oppressed and represents the effect of the oppression of women in society. This effect is created by the use of complex symbols such as the house, the window, and the wall-paper which facilitate her oppression as well as her self expression. ["'The Yellow Wall-Paper': A Twist on Conventional Symbols" by Liselle Sant]
- "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Gilman is a sad story of the repression that women face in the days of the late 1800's as well as being representative of the turmoil that women face today. [Critique of "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Brandi Mahon]
- "The Yellow Wallpaper," written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a story of a woman, her psychological difficulties and her husband's so-called therapeutic treatment of her aliments during the late 1800s. . . Gilman does well throughout the story to show with descriptive phrases just how easily and effectively the man "seemingly" wields his "maleness" to control the woman. But, with further interpretation and insight I believe Gilman succeeds in nothing more than showing the weakness of women, of the day, as active persons in their own as well as society's decision-making processes instead of the strength of men as women dominating machines. "The View from the Inside" by Timothy J. Decker
- In Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain creates a strong opposition between the freedom of Huck and Jim's life on the raft drifting down the Mississippi River, which represents "nature," and the confining and restrictive life on the shore, which represents "society." [ "'All I wanted was a change': Positive Images of Nature and Society in Chapter 19 of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" from Professor Matthew Hurt's "Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction"]
- In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's short story, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," an unexpected visitor comes down from the sky, and seems to test the faith of a community. The villagers have a difficult time figuring out just how the very old man with enormous wings fits into their lives. Because this character does not agree with their conception of what an angel should look like, they try to determine if the aged man could actually be an angel. In trying to prove the origin of their visitor, the villagers lose faith in the possibility of him being an angel because he does not adhere to their ordered world. Marquez keeps the identity of the very old man with enormous wings ambiguous to critique the villagers and, more generally, organized religion for having a lack of faith to believe in miracles that do not comply with their master narrative. ["Prove It: A Critique of the Villagers' Faith in 'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings'" from Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction, Professor Matthew Hurt]

# Style

Literary criticism is a fairly specialized kind of writing. Instead of writing to a general lay audience, you are writing to members of a literary community who have read a work and who developed opinions about the work–as well as a vocabulary of interpretation.

Following are some common words used by literary critics. More specialized terms can be learned by reading criticism or by referring to a good encyclopedia for criticism or writing, including the Writer's Encyclopedia:

- Protagonist: The protagonist is the major character of the story; typically the character must overcome significant challenges.
- Antagonist: The protagonist's chief nemesis; in other words, the character whom the protagonist must overcome.
- Symbols: Metaphoric language; see A Catalogue of Symbols in The Awakening by Kate Chopin
- Viewpoint: Stories are told either in the first person or third person point of view. The first person is limited to a single

character, although dialog can let you guess at other characters' intentions. The third person allows readers inside the character's mind so you know what the character feels and thinks. Viewpoint can be "limited," where the character knows less than the reader, or "omniscient," where the reader can hear the thoughts and feelings of all characters. Occasionally writers will use multiple character viewpoint, which takes you from one character's perspective to another.

- Plot: Plots are a series of scenes, typically moving from a conflict situation to a resolution. To surprise readers, authors will foreshadow "false plants," which lead readers to anticipate other resolutions. The term "denouement" refers to the unraveling of the plot in the conclusion.

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# 1.10: 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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# 1.11: Literary Terms - A Guide

## Metre

**Metre** refers to the rhythmic structure of lines of verse. The majority of English verse since Chaucer is in**accentual-syllabic metre**, which consists of alternating stressed and unstressed syllables within a fixed total number of syllables in each line. The metrical rhythm is thus the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in each line. Groups of syllables are known as metrical **feet**; each line of verse is made up of a set number of feet. Thus:

> **Monometer**: one foot per line
> **Dimeter**: two feet per line
> **Trimeter**: three feet per line
> **Tetrameter**: four feet per line
> **Pentameter**: five feet per line
> **Hexameter**: six feet per line
> **Heptameter**: seven feet per line
> **Octameter**: eight feet per line

Each foot usually consists of a single stressed syllable—though there are some important variations—therefore these patterns correspond to the number of stressed syllables in a line; thus tetrameter has four, pentameter five, etc.

There are two types of metrical feet in English accentual-syllabic metre: **duple metre**, consisting of disyllabic (2-syllable) feet, in which stressed syllables (**x**) and unstressed syllables (**o**) alternate in pairs; and **triple metre**, consisting of trisyllabic (3-syllable) feet, in which single stressed syllables are grouped with a pair of unstressed syllables. Duple metre is the metre most commonly found in English verse.

The following metrical feet make up the most common rhythmical patterns:

> **Duple metre**:
>
> **Iamb** (iambic foot): **o x**
> **Trochee** (trochaic foot): **x o**
> **Spondee** (spondaic foot): **x x**
> **Pyrrhus** / dibrach (pyrrhic foot): **o o**
>
> **Triple metre**:
>
> **Dactyl** (dactylic foot): **x o o**
> **Anapaest** (anapaestic foot): **o o x**
> **Amphibrach**: **o x o**
> **Molossus**: **x x x**

Note that the spondee, pyrrhus and molossus do not usually form the basis for whole lines of verse, but are considered forms of **substitution**: that is, when a foot required by the metrical pattern being used is replaced by a different sort of foot. A frequently-found example of substitution is the replacement of the initial iamb in an iambic line by a trochee, e.g. (underlined syllables represent stressed syllables):

> In me thou seest the twilight of such day
> As after sunset fadeth in the west,
> Which by and by black night doth take away,
> Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
>
> —Shakespeare, Sonnet 73

(The first three lines of this quatrain are perfectly iambic; the initial foot of the fourth line is an example of trochaic substitution, also known as **inversion**.)

Other variations in metrical rhythm include **acephalexis**, in which the first syllable of a line that would be expected according to the regular metre of the line, is lacking; and **catalexis**, in which a line lacks the final syllable expected by its metrical pattern. A**masculine ending** is a line that ends on a stressed syllable, while a **feminine ending** is a line that ends on an unstressed syllable.

**Freeverse** is poetry that does not conform to any regular metre.

**Examples of different meters and metrical substitutions:**

Iambic pentameter:

> We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.
> For he today that sheds his blood with me
> Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
> This day shall gentle his condition.
> Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
> And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
> That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.
>
> —Shakespeare, *Henry V*, IV.iii

An example of perfect iambic pentameter. Note the feminine ending in l.1 (in iambic metre a feminine ending adds an extra syllable to the line), and how the stresses follow the sense of the lines.

Trochaic tetrameter:

> In what distant deeps or skies
> Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
> On what wings dare he aspire?
> What the hand dare seize the fire?
>
> —Blake, "The Tyger"

The first two lines exhibit masculine endings, and thus are catalectic according to the regular pattern of trochaic metre; that is, they lack their final syllable. Arguably, the second foot in l.4 could be read as a spondaic substitution (if *dare* is stressed).

Spondaic substitution in iambic pentameter (l.3):

> Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
> Em prison her soft hand, and let her rave,
> And feeddeep, deep upon her peerless eyes.
>
> —Keats, "Ode on Melancholy"

Pyrrhic substitution in iambic tetrameter (l.2):

> The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
> But I have promises to keep,
> And miles to go before I sleep,
> And miles to go before I sleep.
>
> —Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

Dactylic dimeter:

> Theirs not to make reply,
> Theirs not to reason why,
> Theirs but to do and die
>
> —Tennyson, "The Charge of the Light Brigade"

Anapaestic metre:

> There was an Old Lady of Chertsey,
> Who made a remarkable curtsey;
> She twirled round and round,
> Till she sunk underground,
> Which distressed all the people of Chertsey.
>
> —Edward Lear, “There Was an Old Lady of Chertsey”

As is common in limericks, this example includes multiple iambic substitutions, here in the initial syllables of lines 1-3.

Amphibrach:

> And now comes an act of enormous enormance!
> No former performer’s performed this performance!
>
> —Dr. Seuss, *If I Ran the Circus*

Molossus:

> Break, break, break,
> On thy coldgraystones, O Sea!
> And I would that my tongue could utter
> The thoughts that arise in me.
>
> —Tennyson, “Break, Break, Break”

The first line is an example of a molossus; it is also an example of epizeuxis (see below).

## Stanzas

When a poem is divided into sections, each section is known as a stanza. Stanzas usually share the same structure as the other stanzas within the poem.

> **Tercet**: a unit or stanza of three verse lines
> **Quatrain**: a unit or stanza of four verse lines
> **Quintain**: a stanza of five verse lines
> **Sestet**: a unit or stanza of six verse lines
> **Septet** or **heptastich**: a stanza of seven lines
> **Octave**: a unit or stanza of eight verse lines
> **Decastich**: a stanza or poem of ten lines

Note that many of these terms refer to a unit of this number of lines within a larger stanza or within a poem not divided into stanzas (e.g. a Shakespearean sonnet, which consists of three quatrains followed by a couplet).

**Refrain**: a line or lines regularly repeated throughout a poem, traditionally at the end of each stanza. Very often found in ballads; it was also used to great effect by Yeats (see for example ‘The Withering of the Boughs’ or ‘The Black Tower’). Usually nowadays printed in *italic* to distinguish it from the main body of the poem.

**Enjambment**: when the sense of a verse line runs over into the next line with no punctuated pause. The opposite is known as an **end-stopped** line. An example of enjambment in iambic pentameter:

> A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
>
> As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
>
> No light, but rather darkness visible

Served only to discover sights of woe

—Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I

## Rhyme

**End rhyme**: rhyme occurring on stressed syllables at the ends of verse lines. The most common form of rhyme. Couplet: a pair of end-rhyming verse lines, usually of the same length. E.g.:

Had we but World enough, and Time,

This coyness Lady were no crime.

We would sit down, and think which way

To walk, and pass our long Loves Day.

—Marvell, “To his Coy Mistress”

**Internal rhyme**: rhyme occurring within a single verse line.

**Crossed rhyme**: the rhyming of one word in the middle of a verse line with a word in the middle of the following line.

**Half rhyme**: also known as **slant rhyme**; an incomplete form of rhyme in which final consonants match but vowel sounds do not. E.g.:

I have heard that hysterical women say

They are sick of the palette and fiddle-bow.

Of poets that are always gay,

For everybody knows or else should know

That if nothing drastic is done

Aeroplane and Zeppelin will come out.

Pitch like King Billy bomb-balls in

Until the town lie beaten flat.

—Yeats, “Lapis Lazuli”

The first quatrain is an example of full end rhyme; the second quatrain an example of half rhyme.

**Para-rhyme**: a form of half rhymel; when all the consonants of the relevant words match, not just the final consonants. E.g.:

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall, –
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.

—Wilfred Owen, “Strange Meeting”

**Eye rhyme**: a visual-only rhyme; i.e. when spellings match but in pronunciation there is no rhyme, e.g. want/pant, five/give.

**Double rhyme**: a rhyme on two syllables, the first stressed, the second unstressed. E.g.

> I want a hero: —an uncommon want,
>
> When every year and month sends forth a new one,
>
> Till, after cloying the gazettes with can't,
>
> The age discovers he is not the true one
>
> —Byron, *Don Juan*, I.i

The second and fourth lines are double rhymes; the first and third lines are examples of half rhyme/eye rhyme.

**Assonance**: the recurrence of similar vowel sounds in neighbouring words where the consonants do not match. E.g.:

> For the r**a**re and r**a**diant m**ai**den whom the **a**ngels n**a**me Lenore—
> N**a**meless here for evermore.
>
> —Poe, "The Raven"

**Consonance**: the recurrence of similar consonants in neighbouring words where the vowel sounds do not match. The most commonly found forms of consonance, other than half rhyme and para-rhyme, are alliteration and sibilance.

Alliteration: the repetition of initial consonants in a sequence of neighbouring words. E.g.:

> Hear the loud alarum bells—
>
> **B**razen **B**ells!
>
> What a **t**ale of **t**error, now, their **t**urbulency **t**ells!
>
> —Poe, "The Bells"

**Sibilance**: the repetition of sibilants, i.e. consonants producing a hissing sound. E.g.:

> Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing;
>
> Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness
>
> —Longfellow, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*

**Blank verse**: metrical verse that does not rhyme. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is an example; the majority of Shakespeare is also in blank verse.

## Figurative, rhetorical, and structural devices

**Metaphor**: when one thing is said to be another thing, or is described in terms normally connected to another thing, in order to suggest a quality shared by both. E.g.:

> Love, fame, ambition, avarice—'tis the same,
>
> Each idle, and all ill, and none the worst—
>
> For all are meteors with a different name,
>
> And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame.

—Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, IV

**Simile**: when one thing is directly compared with another thing; indicated by use of the words "as" or "like." E.g.:

I wandered lonely as a cloud

—Wordsworth, "Daffodils"

**Metonymy**: when something is referred to by an aspect or attribute of it, or by something associated with it. E.g.:

Now is the winter of our discontent

Made glorious summer by this son of York . . .

—Shakespeare, *Richard III*, I.i

Here "winter" and "summer" are examples of metaphor; "son of York" is an example of metonymy, being an attribute of Richard's brother, Edward IV, here the person being referred to.

**Synecdoche**: a form of metonymy in which something is referred to by a specific part of its whole. "All hands on deck" is an example, in which the crew are being referred to by one specific part—their hands. E.g.:

Take thy face hence.

—Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V.iii

**Personification** or **prosopopoeia**: when inanimate objects, animals or ideas are referred to as if they were human. Similar terms are anthropomorphism, when human form is ascribed to something not human, e.g., a deity; and the pathetic fallacy, when natural phenomena are described as if they could feel as humans do. Shelley's 'Invocation to Misery' is an example.

**Onomatopoeia**: a word that imitates the sound to which it refers. E.g. "clang," "crackle," "bang," etc.

**Synaesthesia**: the application of terms relating to one sense to a different one, e.g., "a warm sound." For example:

Odours there are . . . green as meadow grass

—Baudelaire, "Correspondences"

**Oxymoron**: the combination of two contradictory terms. E.g.:

Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,

Still-waking sleep that is not what it is!

—Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, I.i

**Hendiadys**: when a single idea is expressed by two nouns, used in conjunction. E.g. "house and home" or Hamlet's "Angels and ministers of grace" (*Hamlet*, I.iv).

**Anaphora**: the repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginnings of successive lines or clauses. E.g.:

Is **this** the region, **this** the soil, the clime,

Said then the lost archangel, **this** the seat

That we must change for heaven . . .

—Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I

**Epistrophe**: the repetition of the same word or group of words at the ends of successive lines or clauses. E.g.:

I know **thee**, I have found **thee**, & I will not let **thee** go

—Blake, “America—a Prophecy”

**Epizeuxis**: the repetition of a word with no intervening words. E.g., Tennyson’s “Break, break, break,” quoted above.

**Polysyndeton**: use of more than the required amount of conjunctions. E.g.:

Havoc and spoil and ruin are my gain.

—Milton, *Paradise Lost*, II

The opposite of asyndeton, which refers to the deliberate omission of conjunctions.

**Anachronism**: when an object, custom or idea is misplaced outside of its proper historical time. A famous example is the clock in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*.

**Apostrophe**: an address to an inanimate object, abstraction, or a dead or absent person. E.g.:

Busie old foole, unruly Sunne,

Why dost thou thus,

Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?

—Donne, “The Sunne Rising”

**Hyperbole**: extreme exaggeration, not intended literally. E.g.:

Since Hero’s time hath half the world been black.

—Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*

**Adynaton**: a form of hyperbole—a figure of speech that stresses the inexpressibility of something, usually by stating that words cannot describe it. H. P. Lovecraft’s short story “The Unnamable” is essentially a riff on this figure of speech, satirizing Lovecraft’s own regular use of it in his work.

**Meiosis**: an intentional understatement in which something is described as less significant than it really is. A well-known example is found in *Romeo and Juliet* when Mercutio describes his death-wound as ‘a scratch’ (III.iii).

**Litotes**: a form of meiosis; the affirmation of something by the denial of its opposite, e.g. “not uncommon,” “not bad.” Erotesis (rhetorical question): asking a question without requiring an answer, in order to assert or deny a statement. E.g.:

What though the field be lost? All is not lost . . .

—*Paradise Lost*, I

***In medias res***: the technique of beginning a narrative in the middle of the action, before relating preceding events at a later point. *Paradise Lost* is an example (following the convention of epic poetry).

**Leitmotif**: a phrase, image or situation frequently repeated throughout a work, supporting a central theme. An example is the personification of the mine shaft lift as a devouring creature in Zola’s
*Germinal*, repeated throughout the novel. Remember! Simply being able to identify the devices and knowing the terms is not enough. They are only a means to an end. You must always consider: why they are being used, what effect they have, and how they affect meaning(s).

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# 1.12: 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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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

This text offers instruction in analytical, critical, and argumentative writing, critical thinking, research strategies, information literacy, and proper documentation through the study of literary works from major genres, while developing students' close reading skills and promoting an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of literature.


Composition and Literature – Open Textbook

2.1: About Creative Nonfiction

2.2: About Fiction - Short Stories and the Novel

**2.02: Front Matter**

Table of Contents

2.3: What is Fiction?

2.4: How to Read Fiction

2.5: Elements of Fiction

2.6: Character

2.7: Plot

2.8: Setting

2.9: Narration, Point of View, Dialogue

2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style

2.11: Rhetorical and Literary Devices

2.12: Theme

2.13: Naming the Unnameable - An Approach to Poetry for New Generations (Evory)

2.14: Introduction - Our Natural Right to Play

2.15: Getting Started - The Nine Muses

2.16: Welcome, Reader- Reading Poetry

2.17: Images

2.18: Voice

2.19: Architecture

2.20: Acoustics

2.21: Experimenting with Forms

2.22: Revision

2.23: About Drama

2.24: What is Drama?

2.25: Elements of Drama

2.26: Reading and Responding to Drama

2.27: About Literary Criticism

2.28: Literary Criticism

2.29: What is Literary Criticism?
2.30: Formalism
2.31: Psychoanalytic Criticism
2.32: Criticism and Gender
2.33: Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies Criticism
2.34: New Historicism
2.35: Ecocriticism

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# 2.1: About Creative Nonfiction

**Learning Objectives**

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

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

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# 2.2: About Fiction - Short Stories and the Novel

Learning Objectives

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

- explain the difference between fiction and non-fiction, short stories and novels.
- describe the key elements of fiction.
- discuss the meanings of “tone,” “diction,” and “syntax."
- identify the major elements of a plot.
- identify character, setting, and theme.
- differentiate between internal and external conflict.

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# 2.3: What is Fiction?

## Overview



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Fiction refers to literature created from the imagination. Mysteries, science fiction, romance, fantasy, chick lit, and crime thrillers are all fiction genres. Whether or not all of these genres should be considered “literature” is a matter of opinion. Some of these fiction genres are taught in literature classrooms and some are not usually taught, considered more to be reading for entertainment. Works often taught in literature classrooms are referred to as “literary fiction” including classics by Dickens, Austen, Twain, and Poe, for example. We will be studying primarily literary fiction in our readings, unless your instructor decides otherwise.

## Difference Between Fiction and Nonfiction

While nonfiction and creative nonfiction are true, fiction is **not true**. Fiction may chronicle real events that happened in a convincing way using **verisimilitude**, but for categorization purposes the literature is still fiction. For example, historical fiction adapts real events and historical figures into a compelling narrative. But even if 95% of the story is true, the 5% of imagination renders the narrative into fiction. Meanwhile, nonfiction and creative nonfiction must tell the truth. The flexibility in creative nonfiction comes in how the story is told. Fiction writers are not constrained by the truth in this way.

If an author presents untrue events as nonfiction, they are at risk of losing their reputation as writers or falling prey to lawsuits. For example, James Frey's "memoir" *A Million Little Pieces* is an example of what can happen when an author presents fictional events as nonfiction. His career was tanked. He was even kicked out of Oprah Winfrey's book club (Wyatt)! As creative nonfiction expert Lee Gutkind writes, "by virtue of the fact that some of the stuff in Frey’s book never happened, it should be catalogued as fiction—not creative nonfiction" (Gutkind).

Fiction writers are not constrained by reality in the same way that creative nonfiction authors might be. They are only bound by the limits of their imaginations.

## Why Should We Read Fiction?

Prose fiction, whether in the form of the novel or the short story, is one of the most popular and widely consumed literary **genres**.

One only has to see the proliferation of bookstalls at railway stations and airports, for example, and the predominance of novels over other forms of writing made available in such locations, to realize the appeal of fiction.

Take a few moments to think about *Why* we read fiction. *What* do we hope to gain from reading stories about imagined events that happen to imaginary people?

Robert DiYanni begins his impressively wide-ranging study *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and the Essay* (1997) with the following assertion about why we read:

> We read stories for pleasure; they entertain us. And we read them for profit; they enlighten us. Stories draw us into their imaginative worlds and engage us with the power of their invention. They provide us with more than the immediate interest of narrative – of something happening – and more than the pleasures of imagination: they enlarge our understanding of ourselves and deepen our appreciation of life. (p. 27)

Did your own answers to the question of why we read touch on any of the reasons DiYanni gives? I wouldn't be at all surprised if they did. It is, I think, true for all of us that there is an element of sheer escapism in our desire to read stories, to imaginatively engage with the incidents and events that befall the characters we read about. We often come to identify with these fictional characters, and think perhaps about how we would react and respond to the situations they find themselves in.

We can immerse ourselves in a fictional world in this way without necessarily applying a great deal of critical or intellectual effort, of course. But if fictional narratives are, as DiYanni puts it, to "enlarge our understanding of ourselves and deepen our appreciation of life," we need, perhaps, to read them in a more objective way, to subject them to a more critical scrutiny to see if they reinforce or challenge our existing ideas about the world around us. Close attention to the texts we read can only enhance our understanding, and this in turn can increase our pleasure in reading. In this section we will concentrate largely on the various elements that make up a fictional **narrative**; the events that make up a **story** and how they are arranged (the **plot**); the perspectives from which stories can be narrated; the act of **characterisation**; the importance of **setting**, both in terms of time and place; and the actual language and style which writers adopt to tell their narratives. Above all, in what follows, and in your own readings of fictional narratives, you need to always keep in mind the question of *why* you think writers use particular narrative strategies. There are an infinite number of ways in which stories can be told; the choices made by individual writers of individual texts are not randomly made. We need to think about why those choices might have been made. There is no single authoritative answer to such questions. How we read is dictated largely by the experiences and contexts we each of us bring to a particular text, and for that reason no two readings are likely to be the same, even though we may be applying the same critical processes to our reading.

YouTube Video

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Video 4.1.1 : Introduction to Fiction

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# 2.4: How to Read Fiction

## How to Read and Analyze Fiction




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> *Novels are exciting machines (verbal machines) which transport their readers in space and time. They challenge us to meet the unfamiliar. They offer us a share in the pleasure*

The above quote by Dr. Milligan shows us the pleasure a reader can get not only by reading a novel, but also analyzing it. The ultimate reading experience comes as a result of the collaboration between the writer and the reader; they both will have to contribute for the reading experience to be a success. So, once the writer has completed his task, the reader must do his bit for the literary universe to unfold. What happens in this process has occupied writers and scholars over the years. Many authors, including Virginia Woolf, have written extensive essays on the nature of literature, and how a literary text should be read. It is of course hard to define which basic elements are essential for the "correct" perception of a text, firstly because reading is a very private and individual experience. Secondly, writers are different and have their individual literary approach and style. But here lies the essence of a complete understanding of a literary text – the symbiotic unity of writing and reading.

### The Act of Reading

The act of reading has been characterized by Robert DiYanni as involving three interrelated processes: experience, interpretation, and evaluation. The first thing we do when we read a novel is to experience it, that is to say, we respond to the development of the narrative and the characters presented to us. The story we read if it does its job effectively affects us on certain levels. We become involved in the events and incidents that befall the characters. The language of the narrative forces us to respond to it, maybe with pleasure or admiration, or sometimes with confusion. If we are engaged by the story on any level we will have feelings one way or the other about the outcome; we will all respond in different ways. That response is shaped by our reaction to the interplay of various narrative elements, which will be outlined now and discussed in detail later.

To read and appreciate a short story fully, you need to read it at least twice, especially if you are going to analyze it. You can follow the steps below:

1. Read the story in its entirety for enjoyment.
2. Read the story again, pausing often to reflect on what the description/events/language is trying to tell you.

3. Once you reach the end on the second read, you can reflect on the story as a whole based on your interpretations.

## How to Read a Novel: Advice from Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf's essay, "How Should One Read a Book?" is still useful today to understand one reads a novel.



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## About the Author: Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

Until she was 13, Adeline Virginia Stephen led a happy and carefree life in a harmonious Victorian family. Then a series of events threw her life into an accelerating downward spiral. Her mother died, which for her was “the greatest tragedy that could ever happen”. But there was more to come. After this her father despaired and was unable to take care of his three children, so Virginia and her sister had to be looked after by their half-sister Stella. In this new family setting the Stephen sisters were exposed to sexual advances by both Stella’s husband and their half-brother, George Duckworth. Virginia withdrew into a state of “frozen and defensive panic” and became a shy individual, feeling that the next shock would drive her mad. This came when her father soon after died of cancer, and Virginia had her first of a series of nervous breakdowns. She was on the brink of madness, wandering in and out of hallucinations and fighting with self-destructive thoughts.

Literature became her refuge. She and her sister Vanessa became the leading figures of the so-called Bloomsbury Group, an avant-garde circle based at their home in Bloomsbury, London. It was a group of intellectuals discussing social, cultural and political issues of the time – anti-imperialism, modernist literature and art, and feminism. She later married another member of the group, Leonard Woolf.

Her first writing was fairly conventional and straightforward, but gradually she developed a more experimental style influenced by modernist writers, such as James Joyce. She wanted to challenge the conventional concept of a novel and traditional narrative style. Some of her most famous works include *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), and *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

Virginia Woolf published two volumes of literary essays, *The Common Reader* (1925) and *The Second Common Reader* (1932), which are, as the titles indicate, written to encourage reading among common people as opposed to critics and literary scholars. She reflects on the style and approach of different writers, the criteria of literary quality, and most importantly, as in this excerpt from *The Second Common Reader* – the role of the reader.

## How Should One Read a Book?: *An Essay by Virginia Woolf*

In the first place, I want to emphasize the note of interrogation at the end of my title. Even if I could answer the question for

myself, the answer would apply only to me and not to you. The only advice, indeed, that one person can give another about reading is to take no advice, to follow your own instincts, to use your own reason, to come to your own conclusions. If this is agreed between us, then I feel at liberty to put forward a few ideas and suggestions because you will not allow them to fetter that independence which is the most important quality that a reader can possess. After all, what laws can be laid down about books? The battle of Waterloo was certainly fought on a certain day; but is Hamlet a better play than Lear? Nobody can say. To admit authorities, however heavily furred and gowned, into our libraries and let them tell us how to read, what value to place upon what we read, is to destroy the spirit of freedom which is the breath of these sanctuaries. Everywhere else we may be bound by laws and conventions, there we have none.

(...)

Yet few people ask from books what books can give us. Most commonly we come to books with blurred and divided minds, asking of fiction that it shall be true, of poetry that it shall be false, of biography that it shall be flattering, of history that it shall enforce our own prejudices. If we could banish all such preconceptions when we read, that would be an admirable beginning. Do not dictate to your author; try to become him. Be his fellow-worker and accomplice. If you hang back, and reserve and criticize at first, you are preventing yourself from getting the fullest possible value from what you read. But if you open your mind as widely as possible, then signs and hints of almost imperceptible fineness, from the twist and turn of sentences, will bring you into the presence of a human being unlike any other. Steep yourself in this, acquaint yourself with this, and soon you will find that your author is giving you, attempting to give you something far more definite. The thirty-two chapters of a novel – if we consider how to read a novel first – are an attempt to make something as formed and controlled as a building: But words are more impalpable than bricks; reading is a longer and more complicated process than seeing. Perhaps the quickest way to understand the elements of what a novelist is doing is not to read, but to write; to make your own experiment with the dangers and difficulties of words. Recall, then, some event that has left a distinct impression on you – how at the corner of a street, you passed two people talking. A tree shook; an electric light danced; the tone of the talk was comic, but also tragic; a whole vision, an entire conception contained in that moment.

But when you attempt to reconstruct it in words, you will find that it breaks into a thousand conflicting impressions. Some must be subdued; others emphasized; in the process you will lose, probably, all grasp upon the emotion itself. Then turn from your blurred and littered pages to the opening pages of some great novelist – Defoe, Jane Austen, Hardy. Now you will be better able to appreciate their mastery. It is not merely that we are in the presence of a different person – Defoe, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy – but we are living a different world. Here in Robinson Crusoe, we are trudging a plain highroad; one thing happens after another; the fact and the order of the fact is enough. But if the open air and adventure mean everything to Defoe they mean nothing to Jane Austen. Here is the drawing-room, and people talking, and by the many mirrors of their talk revealing their characters. And if, when we have accustomed ourselves to the drawing-room and its reflections, we turn to Hardy, we are once more spun round. The moors are round us and the stars are above out heads. The other side of the mind is now exposed – the dark side that comes uppermost in solitude, not the light side that shows in company. Our relations are not towards people, but towards Nature and Destiny. Yet different as these worlds are, each is consistent with itself. The maker of each is careful to observe the laws of his own perspective, and however great a strain they may put upon you they will never confuse us, as lesser writers so frequently do, by introducing two different kinds of reality into the same book.

Exercise 4.4.1

- What does Virginia Woolf say about the relation between reader and writer?
- What is her advice about what to read?
- What does she say about defining "good" literature?
- What does she mean by saying that “few people ask from books what books can give us”?
- How is “reading a more complicated process than seeing”?
- In addition to an open mind, what does she suggest as a good starting point if we want to appreciate good literature?
- She mentions three famous English novelists; how does she describe their different styles?
- Explain the last sentence of the essay.

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# 2.5: Elements of Fiction

## Elements of Literature

Before you dive straight into your analysis of symbolism, diction, imagery, or any other rhetorical device, you need to have a grasp of the basic elements of what you're reading. When we read critically or analytically, we might disregard character, plot, setting, and theme as surface elements of a text. Aside from noting what they are and how they drive a story, we sometimes don't pay much attention to these elements. However, characters and their interactions can reveal a great deal about the story's themes. Plot can act as a stand-in for real-world events just as setting can represent our world or an allegorical one. Theme is the heart of literature, exploring everything from love and war to childhood and aging.

With this in mind, you can begin your examination of literature with a “who, what, when, where, how?” approach. Ask yourself “Who are the characters?” “What is happening?” “When and where is it happening?” and “How does it happen?” The answers will give you character (who), plot (what and how), and setting (when and where). When you put these answers together, you can begin to figure out theme, and you will have a solid foundation on which to base your analysis.

We will be exploring several of the following literary elements in the following pages so that we can have a common vocabulary to talk about fiction:

- Tone
- Character
- Plot
- Setting
- Narration
- Rhetorical Devices
- Theme
- Imagery
- Symbolism

Here are a few questions to ask when looking at some of the main elements of fiction. We will be looking at each of these in more detail in the following pages.

## Setting

*Setting* is a description of where and when the story takes place.

- What aspects make up the setting?
  - Geography, weather, time of day, social conditions?
- What role does setting play in the story? Is it an important part of the plot or theme? Or is it just a backdrop against which the action takes place?
- Study the time period which is also part of the setting
- When was the story written?
  - Does it take place in the present, the past, or the future?
  - How does the time period affect the language, atmosphere, or social circumstances of the novel?

## Characterization

*Characterization* deals with how the characters are described.

- through dialogue?
- by the way they speak?
- physical appearance? thoughts and feelings?
- interaction – the way they act towards other characters?
- Are they static characters who do not change?

- Do they develop by the end of the story?
- What type of characters are they?
- What qualities stand out?
- Are they stereotypes?
- Are the characters believable?

## Plot and structure

The *plot* is the main sequence of events that make up the story.

- What are the most important events?
- How is the plot structured? Is it linear and chronological or does it move back and forth?
- Are there turning points, a climax, and/or an anticlimax?
- Is the plot believable?

## Narrator and Point of View

The *narrator* is the person telling the story.
*Point of view*: whose eyes the story is being told through.

- Who is the narrator or speaker in the story?
- Is the narrator the main character?
- Does the author speak through one of the characters?
- Is the story written in the first person “I” point of view?
- Is the story written in a detached third person “he/she/they” point of view?
- Is the story written in an “all-knowing” third person who can reveal what all the characters are thinking and doing at all times and in all places?

## Conflict

*Conflict* or tension is usually the heart of the novel and is related to the main character.

- How would you describe the main conflict?
  - Is it internal where the character suffers inwardly?
  - Is it external, caused by the surroundings or environment the main character finds themself in?

## Theme

The *theme* is the main idea, lesson, or message in the novel. It is usually an abstract, universal idea about the human condition, society or life, to name a few.

- How does the theme shine through in the story?
- Are any elements repeated that may suggest a theme?
- What other themes are there?

## Style

The author’s style has to do with the author’s vocabulary, use of imagery, tone, or feeling of the story. It has to do with his attitude towards the subject. In some novels the tone can be ironic, humorous, cold, or dramatic.

- Is the text full of figurative language?
- Does the author use a lot of symbolism? Metaphors, similes?
  An example of a metaphor is when someone says, "My love, you *are* a rose." An example of a simile is "My darling, you are *like* a rose."
- What images are used?

Your literary analysis of a novel will often be in the form of an essay or book report where you will be asked to give your opinions of the novel at the end. To conclude, choose the elements that made the greatest impression on you. Point out which characters you liked best or least and always support your arguments. Try to view the novel as a whole and try to give a balanced analysis.

These are the Elements of Literature, the things that make up every story. This is the first of two videos.

YouTube Video

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Video 4.5.1 : Elements of literature with Mr. Taylor: Part I

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Video 4.5.2 Elements of literature with Mr. Taylor: Part II

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# 2.6: Character

## Characters and Characterization

How do writers of prose fiction make us respond to the imaginary people they create? In order to encourage us to continue reading, writers must force us to react in some way to their characters, whether it is to identify, empathise, or sympathise with them; to dislike or disapprove of them; or to pass judgement on their actions, behaviour and values. As we have already seen, the fundamental question we repeatedly ask when we read a story is what happened next. Equally importantly we want to know to whom it happened, and we will only want to know this if we feel strongly one way or another about the characters in the story. In this respect the author's skill at characterisation is crucial.

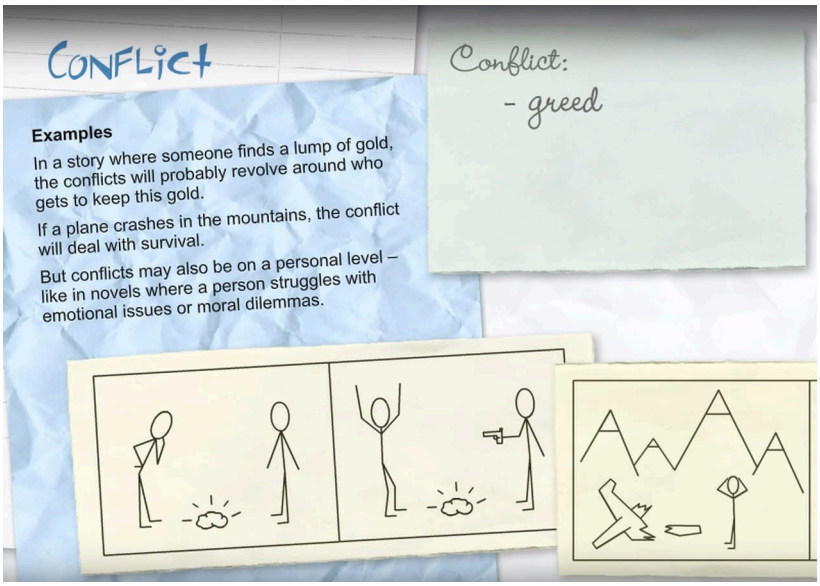
We use the term characterisation to describe the strategies that an author uses to present and develop the characters in a narrative. This use of descriptive techniques will vary from character to character. Some characters are central to a story; often there will be one main character around whom the narrative revolves: Pip in *Great Expectations*, for example, or, we may reasonably surmise from the opening paragraph we looked at earlier, Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*. We expect that such characters, and others close to the heart of narrative events, will be presented to us in great detail; we may be allowed access to their consciousness, either by the use of first-person narration or third-person **focalisation**, and it is extremely likely that they will undergo some sort of significant personal change (for better or worse) as a result of their experiences. These kinds of characters are sometimes known as *dynamic*. Other characters, often described as *static*, may be much less thoroughly-drawn; they may be introduced to the narrative primarily to perform a particular narrative or thematic function, and will probably undergo little or no change in the course of the story.

## Terms Related to Characterization

You are probably already adept at identifying the characters of a story, but there are some terms that will be helpful in your literary analysis. Keep in mind that characters aren't necessarily people. They can be animals, divine beings, personifications, etc.

One of the most important terms you will use is **conflict.** Conflict occurs between two opposing sides in a story, usually centering on characters' values, needs, or interests. A conflict can be internal or external. **Internal conflict** takes place within an individual, such as when a character is torn between duty to his family and duty to the state. **External conflict** occurs when two individuals or groups of individuals clash. A struggle between a character and his best friend is an example of an external conflict.

## Video




Click for video to discuss that conflict is a struggle between opposing forces.

By examining the conflict, we can determine the **protagonist** and **antagonist.** The protagonist is the focal point of the conflict, meaning that he or she is the main character of the story. All the action in a story will revolve around its protagonist. In addition, a story that contains a series of conflicts can contain several protagonists – no story is limited to just one. The antagonist is the character who stands in opposition of the protagonist. The antagonist is the other half of the conflict. Remember that an antagonist doesn't have to be a person – it can be a nation, a group, or even a set of ideas.

Sometimes, the protagonist can take the form of the **antihero.** The antihero is a protagonist who does not embody traditional "heroic" values. However, the reader will still sympathize with an antihero. For instance, a protagonist who is a scoundrel is an antihero, as a traditional hero would embody virtue.

In addition to the protagonist and antagonist, most stories have **secondary** or **minor characters.** These are the other characters in the story. They sometimes support the protagonist or antagonist in their struggles, and they sometimes never come into contact with the main characters.

Authors use minor characters for a variety of reasons. For instance, they can illustrate a different side of the main conflict, or they can highlight the traits of the main characters. One important type of minor character is called a **foil.** This character emphasizes the traits of a main character (usually the protagonist) through contrast. Thus, a foil will often be the polar opposite of the main character he or she highlights. Sometimes, the foil can take the form of a sidekick or friend. Other times, he or she might be someone who contends against the protagonist. For example, an author might use a decisive and determined foil to draw attention to a protagonist's lack of resolve and motivation.

Finally, any character in a story can be an **archetype.** We can define archetype as an original model for a type of character, but that doesn't fully explain the term. One way to think of an archetype is to think of how a bronze statue is made. First, the sculptor creates his design out of wax or clay. Next, he creates a fireproof mold around the original. After this is done, the sculptor can make as many of the same sculpture as he pleases. The original model is the equivalent to the archetype. Some popular archetypes are the trickster figure, such as Coyote in Native American myth or Brer Rabbit in African American folklore, and the femme fatale, like Pandora in Greek myth. Keep in mind that archetype simply means original pattern and does not always apply to characters. It can come in the form of an object, a narrative, etc. For instance, the apple in the Garden of Eden provides the object-based forbidden fruit archetype, and Odysseus's voyage gives us the narrative-based journey home archetype.

## Flat and Round Characters

Another useful distinction between types of characters was proposed by E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel*. "We may divide characters into flat and round," Forster suggested (1927, p. 65). What do you think he meant by these terms?

I expect you found this rather straightforward. The word "flat" suggests a one-dimensional figure, and what Forster meant by "flat" characters were those who are largely taken to represent a particular idea, human trait, or set of values, much like the static characters described above. They are caricatures who can be easily and quickly summarised; Forster gives an example:

> The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence such as “I will never desert Mr Micawber.” There is Mrs Micawber – she says she won't desert Mr Micawber; she doesn't, and there she is.
>
> (ibid.)

The reference is to a character in Dickens' *David Copperfield* who does not change in any significant way in spite of the varied experiences she and her family encounter. "Round" characters, by contrast, are described and developed in such a way as to achieve three-dimensionality, a physical and psychological complexity that mimics that of the real people we come to know in our everyday lives.

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* provides some interesting examples of "flat" and "round" characters. Note, however, that identifying those examples will largely depend on the reader's response to Austen's characters, but we might well place figures such as Mrs. Bennett in the former category, and the central character, her daughter Elizabeth, in the latter. As you may know, Austen sums up Mrs. Bennet in three short, direct sentences at the end of the opening chapter of the novel:

> She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.
>
> (Austen, 1813, p. 3)

Compare this with the opening of the final chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*:

> Happy for all her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters. With what delighted pride she afterwards visited Mrs. Bingley and talked of Mrs. Darcy may be guessed. I wish I could say, for the sake of her family, that the accomplishment of her earnest desire in the establishment of so many of her children, produced so happy an effect as to make her a sensible, amiable woman for the rest of her life; though perhaps it was lucky for her husband, who might not have relished domestic felicity in so unusual a form, that she still was occasionally nervous and invariably silly.
>
> (ibid., p. 295)

These two descriptions of Mrs. Bennet, at the beginning and end of the novel are rare examples of Austen "telling" us about this particular character. More often, she "shows" us Mrs. Bennett by reporting her speech directly and allowing us to draw our own conclusions about Mrs. Bennet's attitudes and values. We are never given access to Mrs. Bennett's consciousness; events are never "focalised" through her. Why do you think this is?

It is probably because Mrs. Bennet's main function in the story is to represent a particular attitude of the period in which the novel is set, that the best, or only chance for women's social advancement and financial security was through marriage. By representing this view from the outside, as it were, Austen leads us to scrutinise it in a more rigorous way. To describe Mrs. Bennet as "flat" or "static" is not to imply that she is necessarily a negligible character. She may perform only one function in the novel, but it is a function that draws attention to the constrained position of women in the society Austen depicts.

That Elizabeth is a "round," or "dynamic," character is surely not in doubt. The entire novel revolves around her and we perceive much of the action through her eyes. The changes she experiences conform to Forster's template of "roundness," and the contrast with Mrs. Bennet demonstrates the necessity for combinations of "flat" and "round" that Forster sees as necessary for the successful creation of fictional narrative:

> The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is a flat pretending to be round. It has the incalculability of life about it – life within the pages of a book. And by using it sometimes alone, more often in combination with the other kind, the novelist achieves his task of acclimatization, and harmonizes the human race with the other aspects of his work.
>
> (Forster, 1927, p. 75)

Activity: Character Analysis

Most novels will have a hero, a good guy. There is no doubt that Harry Potter is the hero and protagonist, and he has a lot of good friends. How do we know that they are good? We have to depend on information about looks, behavior, and speech.

Study the extracts and then answer the questions which follow.

Extracts from the first chapter of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* used in the analysis.

EXTRACT 1

If the motorcycle was huge, it was nothing to the man sitting astride it. He was almost twice as tall as a normal man and at least five times as wide. He looked simply too big to be allowed, and so wild – long tangles of bushy black hair and beard hid most of his face, he had hands the size of trash can lids, and his feet in their leather boots were like baby dolphins. In his vast, muscular arms he was holding a bundle of blankets. (Description of Hagrid)

EXTRACT 2

"S-s-sorry," sobbed Hagrid, taking out a large, spotted handkerchief and burying his face in it. "But I c-c-can't stand it – Lily and James dead – an' poor little Harry off ter live with Muggles–" (Hagrid talks about Harry's dead parents and how he has to stay with the humans, the Muggles)

EXTRACT 3

"Yes, yes, it's all very sad, but get a grip on yourself, Hagrid, or we'll be found," Professor McGonagall whispered, patting Hagrid gingerly on the arm as Dumbledore stepped over the low garden wall and walked to the front door. He laid Harry gently on the doorstep, took a letter out of his cloak, tucked it inside Harry's blankets, and then came back to the other two. For a full minute the three of them stood and looked at the little bundle; Hagrid's shoulders shook, Professor McGonagall blinked furiously, and the twinkling light that usually shone from Dumbledore's eyes seemed to have gone out. (From the delivery of the orphan Harry at the Dursleys' doorstep)

EXTRACT 4

"Look"– he murmured, holding out his arm to stop Malfoy. Something bright white was gleaming on the ground. They inched closer. It was the unicorn, all right, and it was dead. Harry had never seen anything so beautiful and sad. Its long, slender legs were stuck out at odd angles where it had fallen and its mane was spread pearly white on the dark leaves. Harry had taken one step toward it when a slithering sound made him freeze where he stood. A bush on the edge of the clearing quivered... Then, out of the shadows, a hooded figure came crawling across the ground like some stalking beast. Harry, Malfoy, and Fang stood transfixed. The cloaked figure reached the unicorn, lowered its head over the wound in the animal's side, and began to drink its blood. (From the first time Harry meets Voldemort)

**EXERCISES**

**Study Extracts 1, 2, and 3**

1. How does the author introduce us to Hagrid and Professor Dumbledore? What kind of impression do you get? Do you like them? Why?
2. Describe in your own words Hagrid's looks.
3. How is speech used to describe the characters?

**Villains/Antagonists**

In most novels we will also meet some "bad guys." They are often called villains or antagonists. How do we know that they are evil? Study **Extract 4** above.

1. Describe in your own words Voldemort's looks and behavior.
2. How does the author tell us that Voldemort is an evil character (an antagonist)?

**Character Development**

Throughout the story Harry changes a lot. He develops from a loner into a sociable, more mature guy, and he also has to admit that he is mistaken. One of the characters that he thinks is “a bad guy” is actually “a good guy”! In most reports you will be asked to write a characterization of one of the main characters and to comment if they have changed or not.

YouTube Video

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Video 4.6.1 : Character

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# 2.7: Plot

## Plot



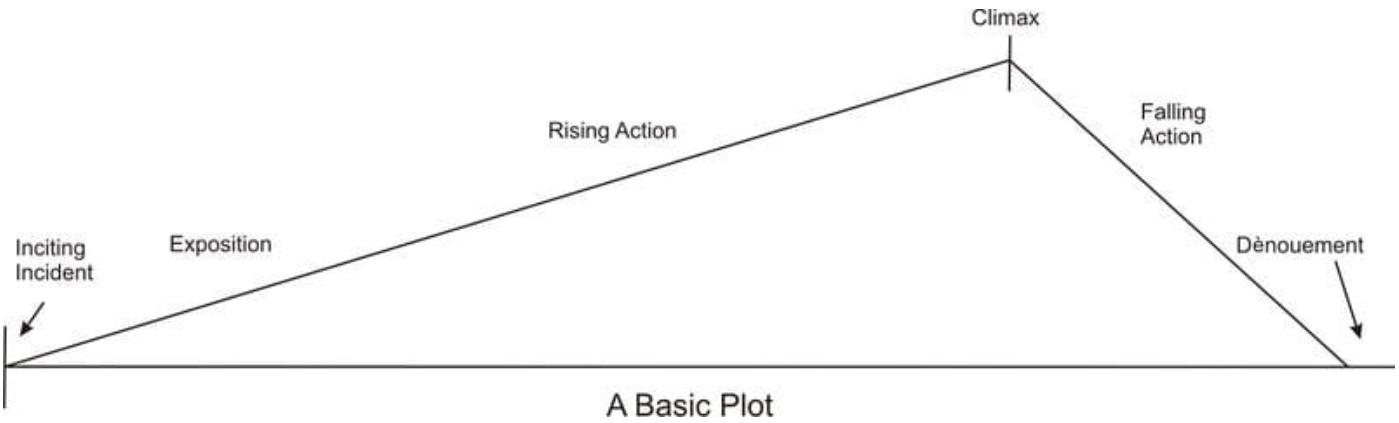
Image from Pixabay

Before you can write an in-depth explanation of the themes, motives, or diction of a book, you need to be able to discuss one of its most basic elements: the story. If you can't identify what has happened in a story, your writing will lack context. Writing your paper will be like trying to put together a complex puzzle without looking at the picture you're supposed to create. Each piece is important, but without the bigger picture for reference, you and anyone watching will have a hard time understanding what is being assembled. Thus, you should look for “the bigger picture” in a book, poem, or play by reading for plot.

A plot is a storyline. We can define plot as the main events of a book, short story, play, poem, etc. and the way those events connect to one another. Conflicts act as the driving forces behind a plot.

A plot has several main elements: **inciting incident, exposition, rising action, climax, falling action,** and **dénouement.** These elements often appear in the order listed here, but you should be aware that some works deviate from this form.

## A Diagram of the Components of a Basic Plot



**Inciting Incident:** This is the event that sets the main conflict into motion. Without it, we could have no plot, as all the characters would already be living "happily ever after," so to speak. Most stories contain many conflicts, so you will have to identify the main conflict before you can identify the inciting incident. Remember, the inciting incident and conflict are two separate things – the inciting incident is a moment in a story that starts the main conflict. For instance, a person throwing the first punch can be considered the inciting incident to the conflict of a long fistfight. In addition, the inciting incident can happen before a story takes place, in which case it is related to the reader as a past event.

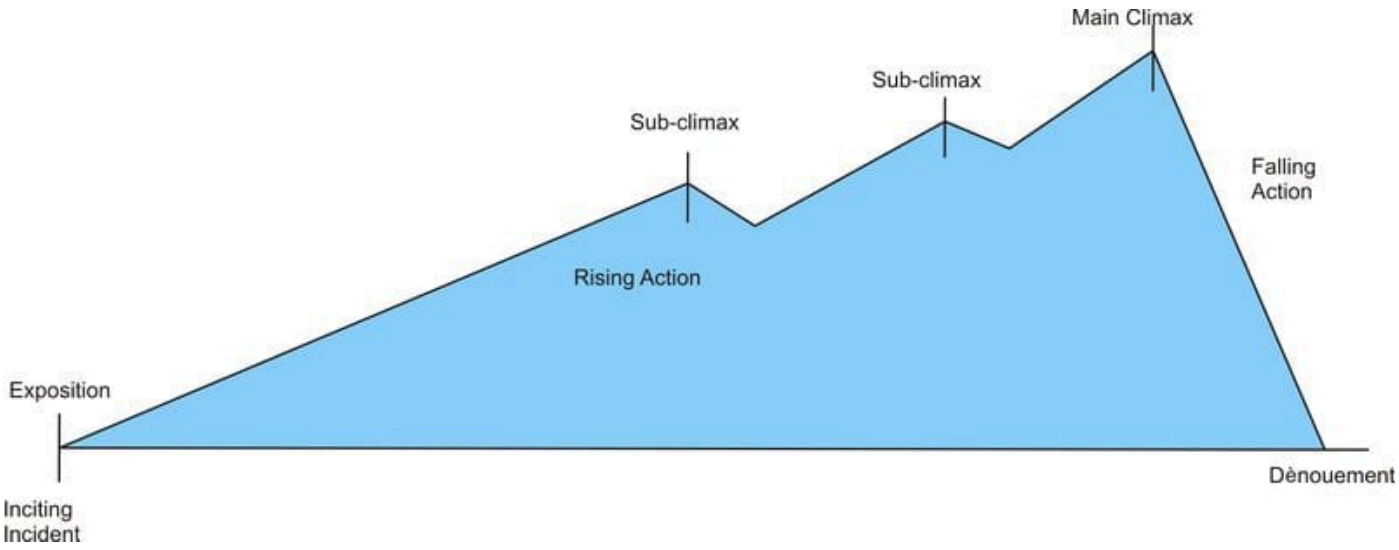
**Exposition:** This is the part of the story that tells us the setting. We find out who the main characters are and where the story takes place. The exposition also hints at the themes and conflicts that will develop later in the story. Exposition can take place throughout a story as characters reveal more about themselves.

**Rising Action:** The rising action is comprised of a series of events that build up to the climax of the story. It introduces us to secondary conflicts and creates tension in the story. You can think of the rising action as the series of events that make the climax of the story possible.

**Climax:** The climax has often been described as the "turning point" of a story. A good way to think of it is the incident that allows the main conflict of a story to resolve. The climax allows characters to solve a problem. It take many forms, such as an epiphany the protagonist has about himself, a battle between the protagonist and antagonist, or the culmination of an internal struggle.

Many stories actually have smaller climaxes before the main one. Like the main climax, these are turning points in the story. These sub-climaxes can be minor turning points in the main conflict that help build and release suspense during the rising action. They can also be the main turning points for secondary conflicts within a story. You might diagram a plot containing sub-climaxes and a main climax like this:

## A Diagram of a Complex Plot, or a Plot that Contains Sub-climaxes




**Falling Action:** The events that take place after the climax are called the falling action. These events show the results of the climax, and they act as a bridge between the climax and the dénouement.

**Dénouement:** The word dénouement comes from the French "to untie" and the Latin "knot," which gives us an indication of its purpose. It serves as the unraveling of a plot – a resolution to a story. In the dénouement, the central conflict is resolved. However, conflicts aren't always resolved. Some stories leave secondary conflicts unsettled, and a rare few even leave doubt about the resolution of the main conflict. The dénouement can also leave the story and characters in the same state they were in before the story began. This often occurs when an epilogue tells the reader that all the conflicts in the story have been resolved. Thus, we can see the dénouement as a kind of mirror to the exposition, showing us the same situation at both the beginning and end of a story.

A **flashback** (not shown in the diagram) is a device used to give the reader background information that happened in the past.

The first video below gives an overview about plot:

Video 4.7.1 : Plot

YouTube Video

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The second video talks about climax and turning point:

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Video 4.7.2 : Climax and Turning Point

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# 2.8: Setting

## Setting in Fiction



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If a story has characters and a plot, these elements must exist within some context. The frame of reference in which the story occurs is known as **setting**. The most basic definition of setting is one of place and time. You want to ask yourself, “Where and when does the story take place?” *Gone With the Wind,* for example, takes place in Georgia during the American Civil War. Setting can be very important in discovering and highlighting the **mood**, or the general feeling we get from a story. (Note: Be careful not to mix up mood and tone, as they are not the same thing. Mood is the feeling we get from a story; tone is a way of getting that feeling across.) For instance, Edgar Allan Poe portrays a very dark, oppressive setting in “The Fall of the House of Usher,” which makes the reader share the narrator's feelings of confinement and depression. In addition, the house in Poe's story can be seen as a kind of **internalized setting.** In this kind of setting, an aspect of the story external to a character represents the character's internal development. For instance, the cracked face of the house can be said to represent the cracked minds of the Usher siblings.

## Setting as Geographical Entity

We can define the "setting" of a story as the geographical location or locations in which the events of the narrative takes place, as well as the time in which those events are set. Location can refer to wider geographical entities such as countries or cities as well as to smaller entities such as households or domestic interiors. Time can refer to a general historical period or to the chronological boundaries of the story's events.

Let's look again at the beginning of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. How important is setting in this case? How does Rushdie's narrative style help us to evaluate the significance of the setting?

> I was born in the city of Bombay ... once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more ... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds. A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe; but his accident was a mere trifle when set beside what had befallen me in that benighted moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history,

> my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape. Soothsayers had prophesied me, newspapers celebrated my arrival, politicos ratified my authenticity.
>
> (1981, p. 9)

Did you feel that setting was clearly very important here? We may not know exactly *why* at this stage, but the implication is that the time and place at which the narrator's story begins is of great significance. He describes himself as "handcuffed to history" by the circumstances of his birth, and, as I suggested earlier, we are alerted to the possibility of a story to come which will have historical and political associations, reinforced by the assertion that the narrator's "destinies" were "indissolubly chained" to the future of his country. Location is surely important here; the place of the narrator's birth is the first thing we are told. You might further have noticed that the specific cultural environment is suggested by the image of "Clock-hands join(ing) palms in respectful greeting," mimicking the Indian gesture of *namaste*. The references to "soothsayers," "newspapers," and "politicos" further enhances our sense of a culturally significant environment, where traditional and modern values interact. The American writer Eudora Welty has claimed that "every story would be another story, and unrecognizable as art, if it took up its characters and plot and happened somewhere else" (quoted in DiYanni, 1997, p. 67). Rushdie's use of place and time in this extract from *Midnight's Children* seems to bear this out; the narrative's entire meaning and significance rests on its setting, I hope you'll agree.

## Setting as Time and Place

The surroundings in which characters are placed and in which narrative events take place can have other, more subtle effects on how we read and interpret stories. Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1862) is another novel rooted very specifically in time and place. Much of the action takes place in various country house settings, which represent different aspects of Russian society at the time. Into that environment comes the anarchist Bazarov, influenced by the ideas he has absorbed in the very different settings of the city and the university. As you will see from your study of the novel, the various settings come to represent different values, ideas and attitudes. This is equally true of smaller scale settings. We associate particular characters with the environments in which we encounter them, and the values associated with those places; characters often seem "at home" in specific places, but not elsewhere. In *Great Expectations*, Joe Gargery is uncomfortable when visiting Miss Havisham at Statis House, and awkward in Pip's London dwelling. Other characters, like Turgenev's Bazarov, are **characterized** by their failure to "belong" in any of the locations they inhabit in the course of the story. Pavel Petrovich, seemingly the antithesis of Bazarov, also often seems ill-at-ease in his surroundings. He lives on the estate of his brother Nikolai, but is not originally from this sort of rural background.

Exercise 4.8.1

Read the following description of Pavel's room and try to decide what the setting tells us about him.

> But Pavel Petrovich returned to his elegant room, hung with fine dark-grey wallpaper and decorated with guns fixed on a colourful Persian rug, with walnut furniture upholstered in dark-green velveteen, a Renaissance-style bookcase in old dark oak, bronze statuettes on a magnificent desk and a fireplace. He flung himself on his sofa, folded his hands behind his head and remained there motionless, gazing almost with despair at the ceiling. Whether it was that he wanted to hide from the very walls themselves what was happening to his face, or for some other reason, he stood up, undid the loops holding the heavy window curtains and once again flung himself down on the sofa.
>
> (1862, pp. 40-1)

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

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Video 4.8.1 : Setting in fiction

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## Answers

The overall impression given by the very detailed inventory of Pavel's room is one of a bewildering array of cultural styles and influences, from different times and places. It is undoubtedly the room of someone with a well-developed aesthetic sense, but does it appear at all comfortable or inviting? The very diversity of the décor seems to suggest a sense of rootlessness, reinforced by Pavel's behaviour here; the possibility that he is trying to "hide from the very walls themselves what was happening to his face." Even in the sanctuary of his own rooms on his brother's estate he seems to find himself alienated amongst the no doubt impressive, yet strangely soulless artefacts he has gathered around him.

The significance of setting will vary from novel to novel, or from story to story, of course, and one of the questions you should continually ask yourself as you read is *how* important to the narrative events and characterisation are the dual factors of time and place.

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# 2.9: Narration, Point of View, Dialogue

## Narration



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When doing a close reading, you also need to keep the big picture in mind. You already know how to look for major plot points, identify the setting, and list possible themes, but you should also keep in mind who is telling you the story. The **narrator**, or the person telling the story, is one of the most important aspects of a text. A narrator can be a character in the story, or he or she might not appear in the story at all. In addition, a text can have multiple narrators, providing the reader with a variety of viewpoints on the text. And finally, a story can be related by an **unreliable narrator** – a narrator the reader cannot trust to tell the facts of a story correctly or in an unbiased manner.

**Note:** One thing you should always keep in mind is that the narrator and author are different. The narrator exists within the context of the text and only exists in the story. However, in most non-fiction and some fiction, the author can model the narrator after him or her self; in this case, the author and narrator are different people sharing the same viewpoint.



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## Unreliable Narrators

In reading a first-person narration we encounter a potential problem that we do not have when we encounter an omniscient third-person narrative such as Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. Can you think what that might be?

The factor I was hoping you would identify is that of the degree of reliability we can attach to a first-person narrative. As we read and discover more about a narrator we receive more and more indications that determine the extent to which we can trust the voice telling us the story. Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989) is narrated by its central character, an English butler called Stevens, who recalls various events and incidents from the past in such a way as to constantly cast doubt on the dependability of his narration. At one point we are presented with a prolonged and heated argument between Stevens and the housekeeper Miss Kenton about the butler's ailing father, also a member of the staff of the same country house. The argument is narrated in direct speech, suggesting an authentic recreation of the actual incident, but is followed by a piece of narration by Stevens that immediately undermines our trust in his version of events:

> But now that I think further about it, I am not sure Miss Kenton spoke quite so boldly that day. We did, of course, over the years of working closely together come to have some very frank exchanges, but the afternoon I am recalling was still early in our relationship and I cannot see even Miss Kenton having been so forward. I am not sure she could actually have gone so far as to say things like: 'these errors may be trivial in themselves, but you must yourself realise their larger significance'. In fact, now that I come to think of it, I have a feeling it may have been Lord Darlington himself who made that particular remark to me that time he called me into his study some two months after that exchange with Miss Kenton outside the billiard room. By that time, the situation as regards my father had changed significantly following his fall. (p. 60)

There are numerous such examples of Stevens' "unreliability" throughout the novel. These become more significant when placed against the wider historical and political backdrop of the story. Stevens had been butler to Lord Darlington, devoting his life to the service of someone he saw as a "great man." However, as the narrative unfolds, and in spite of Stevens' selective and constantly revised memory, Darlington is revealed as an unwitting pawn of Nazism. The unreliability of Stevens' narration draws an implicit parallel between memory and history and shows both to be liable to distortion and manipulation, whether consciously or unconsciously.

## Fragmented Narration

We can see, then, that even when the identity of the narrator of a prose fiction is made clear to us, there are possibilities for uncertainty and ambiguity. So what are we to make of the next extract?

Exercise 4.9.1

Please read the extract from **A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man** by James Joyce now and consider what the narrative is describing, and try to characterize the narrative voice and perspective.

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

## Narrative Organization

The way a story unfolds is as important as who tells it. Even though prose is just "regular writing," there are many different kinds of prose. Some prose is written as short stories, while other prose is written as novels and novellas. Each type of prose has its own organizational scheme as well. For instance, some stories are organized into large sections, while others are organized into chapters. Some prose is even organized into sections of journal entries or letters between characters.

It is important to note how an author divides a story. Ask yourself why a chapter ends where it does. Does the chapter ending add suspense to the story, or does it just provide a place to transition to another character's point of view? Does each section of a story have its own theme, or is there only one overarching theme? If you are reading an epistolary novel, why do you think one character chose to reveal certain information to another? Paying attention to how a text is organized, divided, and sub-divided will provide you insight into the plot and theme.

# Points of View

All prose is written in one of three points of view: first-person narration, third-person limited narration, and third-person omniscient narration.

## First Person

First-person narration is written in the first person mode, meaning that that story is told from the viewpoint of one person who often uses language like "I," "you," or "we." A first-person narrator can even be a character in the story she is narrating. Furthermore, the narrator will have a limited perspective; he cannot tell what the other characters are thinking or doing, and his telling of the story is influenced by his feelings about the other characters, the setting of the story, and the plot. When you read prose related by a first-person narrator, pay attention to the narrator's biases – they can tell you a great deal about the other elements of the story. For instance, here's an example of first-person narration:

As I walked home from the store, I could feel the cool spring breeze stir my hair. It was getting warm, and I had been looking forward to the end of snow, sleet, and rain for the past few months. I saw Charley coming down the sidewalk towards me. He was a nice guy, that Charley, but I always thought he was a few bulbs short of a chandelier. He waved at me, and I nodded in return.

As you can see, in the first-person mode, the narrator tells the story directly from his point-of-view. He has the ability to influence the reader's opinions of characters through his narration – here the narrator explains Charley is not a very intelligent person. However, for all the reader knows, this could just be the narrator's bias, not fact. Thus, when you read a story written in the first-person mode, look for evidence to support the narrator's claims.

Exercise 4.9.1

How would you describe the narrative voice and perspective of this extract?

Click to read the opening of **Great Expectations by Charles Dickens**.

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

## Third-Person Limited and Omniscient

Third-person narration is related by someone who does not refer to him or her self and does not use “I,” “you,” or “we” when addressing the reader. Here's the same story as above, told in third-person narration:

As Bill walked home from the store, he could feel the cool spring breeze stir his hair. It was getting warm, and he had been looking forward to the end of snow, sleet, and rain for the past few months. He saw Charley coming down the sidewalk towards him. Charley was a nice guy, but he was a few bulbs short of a chandelier. Charley waved at Bill, and he nodded in return.

In this example, the story is told by someone looking at the characters from an outside perspective. A third-person narrator will not be a character in a story, but an outside entity relating the story's events. Third-person narrators rarely give biased accounts of events, but sometimes you will encounter an unreliable third-person narrator.

Some third-person narrators tell from a limited perspective. These narrators relate a story from one point of view, which is often the main character's point of view. Because readers can only tell what that character is thinking and feeling, they have a limited perspective of what other characters are thinking and feeling. In addition, since only one character's perspective is narrated, the audience gets to see the world through that character's eyes; this can be good for revealing certain facts about setting and character, but it can also present a slightly biased story.

The other type of third-person narration is told from an omniscient perspective. This means that the narrator relates the story in third person but has access to all information in the story. The third-person omniscient mode is often used when an author wants to relate a text through the viewpoints of several characters. Third-person omniscient narrators tend to be the most reliable narrators, as they can present all the facts of a story.

Finally, you will sometimes encounter a story that is told in first-person narration by multiple narrators. When reading a multi-narrator text, you must always be aware of who is speaking. Multi-narrator prose provides the reader with as much insight about the characters as third-person omniscient narration does. However, because the reader only receives first-person accounts from each character, this kind of narration tends to be very biased. Thus, it is up to the reader to analyze the information provided by the narrators to reach conclusions about the story.

## Omniscient Narrators

This would perhaps be a good point at which to say a little more about third-person narrators. These are often known as an "**omniscient**" narrators. An omniscient narrator is one that exhibits full knowledge of the actions, thoughts and feelings of each of the characters in the story. Austen invariably used this omniscient perspective, and it remains a popular means of narration amongst contemporary writers. Indeed, more recent authors have made great play of drawing attention to the narrator's role as an all-powerful figure, an embodiment of the author who has full control of the characters at his or her mercy. The beginning of Martin Amis' novel *London Fields* demonstrates this well:

> This is a true story but I can't believe it's really happening.
>
> It's a murder story, too. I can't believe my luck.
>
> And a love story (I think), of all strange things, so late in the century, so late in the goddamned day.
>
> This is the story of a murder. It hasn't happened yet. But it will. (It had better.) I know the murderer, I know the murderee. I know the time, I know the place. I know the motive *(her* motive) and I know the means. I know who will be the foil, the fool, the poor foal, also utterly destroyed. And I couldn't stop them, I don't think, even if I wanted to. The girl will die. It's what she always wanted. You can't stop people, once they *start creating*.
>
> What a gift. This page is briefly stained by my tears of gratitude. Novelists don't usually have it so good, do they, when something real happens (something unified, dramatic and pretty saleable), and they just write it down? (1989, p. 1)

We might be forgiven for thinking that this is the direct voice of Martin Amis himself. After all, he is the author of the novel, the manipulator of events and characters. But as we read on we realise that this narrator is another character, an American writer called Samson Young, who is living in London in the flat of yet another fictional writer, Mark Asprey (note the initials). To further confuse matters a writer called Martin Amis also makes a cameo appearance in the novel! *London Fields* uses a variety of narrative perspectives. When Samson Young is actually present at the events described first-person narration is used; when he

is not we have something akin to the omniscient narrator of the Austen extract in Activity 2, but we also have the sense that that narrator has a name and a role in the novel.

YouTube Video

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Video 4.9.1 : Point of view/narrator

## Dialogue/Dialog

Dialogue is defined as a conversation between two or more people in a movie. In addition, a fictional piece could have a monologue where a character is speaking out loud when he or she is alone. A character, for example, may contemplate the pros and cons of taking some form of action in a monologue. Dialogue, monologue, and narration progresses the story in literature.

When analyzing **character** , the terms **dialogue**, **monologue**, and **soliloquy** take on increased importance. Conversation between two or more characters is referred to as **dialogue** (usually the majority of speech in plays consists of dialogue). A **monologue** is when one character delivers a speech to convey his or her thoughts, although other characters may remain on stage in scene. Similar to a monologue, a **soliloquy** is a speech made by one character but delivered when he or she is alone on stage. Knowing the root words of each term can help clarify the distinction. Monologue comes from the Greek words *monos* (single) and *legein* (to speak); soliloquy comes from the Latin words *solus* (alone) and *Ioqui* (to speak).

What would fiction be without dialogue? Take a look at the following example of a scene with and without dialogue.

Jack, Suzie and Alec are walking home after work. Jack begins the conversation, as he always does. Suzie speaks, as she is always the first one to respond. Alec is silent for a moment and the other two stop walking. Alec notices that they stopped so he stops walking too. Bewildered, Alec mumbles. Jack retorts. Alec looks at them both. Suzie interjects. Alec returns a comment. After a brief moment of silence where all three look at one another, they shrug their shoulders and begin to walk again.

Suzie questions. Alec comments again. There is silence again and Suzie stops the other two. Suzie speaks. Jack interjects again. Alec calmly states. Jack and Suzie look at each other stunned.

The above scene, with no dialogue but just a description, is only a group of actions with no meaning. They could refer to almost any type of situation. As a viewer, after watching the above scene, would you be interested enough in watching the rest of the movie with no dialogue?

Now read the scene with dialogue.

Jack, Suzie and Alec are walking home after work.

Jack begins a conversation as he always does, “How was the work day?”

“All right,” Suzie says as she is always the first one to respond.

Looking at Alec, Jack asks, “How was your day, Alec?”

Alec is silent for a moment as the other two stop walking. Alec notices that they stopped walking so he stops. Bewildered, Alec mumbles, “What?”

“How was your day?” Jack retorts.

“Fine, fine.” Alec looks at them both. “How do you think it was?”

“I don’t know. That’s why I asked.”

Suzie interjects, “That’s why we asked. We like to know how your day was.”

“Oh,” Alec returns.

After a brief moment of silence, where all three look at one another, they shrug their shoulders and begin to walk again.

“Wait a minute! You never did tell us how your day was,” Suzie questions. “Yeah!” agrees Jack.

“Oh,” Alec comments again. There is silence again and Suzie stops the other two.

“Well…” Suzie says. “Yeah,” interjects Jack again.

“I quit my job,” Alec calmly states. Jack and Suzie look at each other stunned.

The dialogue gives the viewer an understanding of what is going on. If the above scene was at a beginning of the fiction piece, the viewer would have an idea what the conflict in the story was going to be.

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## Answers

This is not at all an easy narrative voice to characterise. Indeed, it is difficult to define who is narrating at various points in the opening section of this novel. However, I hope you realised at least that, as with the other two extracts, this is an account of childhood experience. It even begins with the time-honoured phrase used for telling stories to children – "Once upon a time." The diction of the remainder of the opening sentence seems very childlike, an excited-sounding unpunctuated flow with repetitions of childish terms such as "moocow" and nonsense words like "nicens." We are a long way from narrative "**realism**" here. As the novelist Anthony Burgess has implied, a more conventional representation of the child's impressions–"My first memories are of my father, a monocled hirsute man who told me stories"–would have a very different effect on us as readers. Burgess described the beginning of *Portrait* as "the first big technical breakthrough of twentieth-century prose-writing" (1965, p. 50) and I hope you were able to identify aspects of the extract that might warrant such a description.

The narrative seems to be made up of fragmented, unrelated associations; the father's "hairy face"; the mysterious Betty Byrne and her even more mysterious "lemon platt"; the random and sometimes distorted snatches of song and the sinister nursery-rhyme-like refrain "Pull out his eyes /Apologise"; and the unexpected reference to Michael Davitt and Parnell, which we need some knowledge of Irish politics to understand fully.

But can we detect some sort of order or pattern here? I think we can, though it is by no means obvious. The passage gives me the impression of an attempt to replicate a child's growing awareness of his world, the relationships between those who populate it, and the development of his facility for language. The novel begins with an episode of storytelling as we have seen, though we can't be sure whether the child or the father is the actual speaker at that point. The child's stumbling attempts at language are suggested by the nonsensical line of song–"O, the green wothe botheth"–which seems to be a corruption of the two lines quoted prior to that. A world of sensations, sight, sound, touch, smell, and movement is invoked and gradually the wider world begins to impinge and we can see the child beginning to categorise and impose order on his growing knowledge, recognising different smells and the ages of the adults around him. The family unit is then transcended as mention is made of the Vances and the "different father and mother," again implying a developing awareness on the part of the child-narrator. The sense of fragmentation remains strong, however, with the unexplained incident of the child hiding under the table (we are not told why he is there or why he must apologise). The critic Hugh Kenner has described the opening of *Portrait* as "contrapuntal," and there are certainly at least two contrasting perspectives revealed in this extract: what Kenner calls "an Aristotelian catalogue of senses, faculties, and mental activities" combined with "the unfolding of the infant conscience" (quoted in Beja, 1973, p. 126).

This is an example of first-person narration. The story is told by a character who is also a protagonist in the narrative. In *Great Expectations*, as in most **first person** narratives, the narrator is also the central character. The opening paragraph, with its emphasis on the narrator's family background, and the repetitions of his name – "So I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip" – are an immediate suggestion that the character telling us the story is likely to be at the heart of it. This is further reinforced as we are then given more information about his family and his circumstances.

The story begins, then, with the narrator giving us an introduction to his own childhood, moving rapidly from the general to the particular and his meeting with the "fearful man" he met in the churchyard. Again, the relation of this incident at the start of the novel leads us to attach some significance to the episode and its participants, raising expectations that are not fulfilled until much later in the narrative.

Here, and throughout *Great Expectations*, there is in a sense a dual narrative perspective, presenting events narrated by the adult Pip which are at times mediated through the perceptions of the child Pip. The opening encounter in the churchyard, for instance, is enacted with a vivid immediacy. Look again at the point at which the narrative shifts from description to direct speech. The rapidity of the exchanges, with further repetitions of the main character's name and the allusion to his feelings of terror, engage us much more directly with the boy's feelings of horror and dismay.

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# 2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style

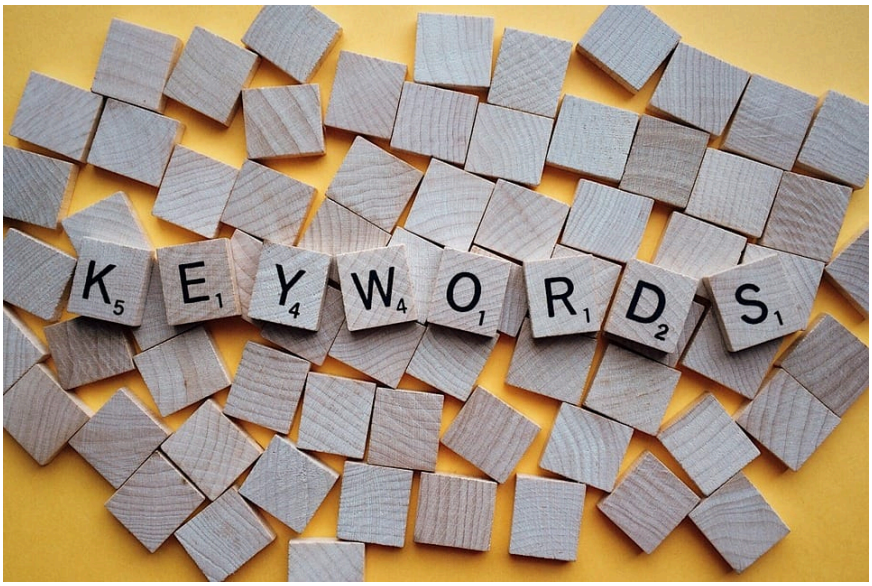



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## Word Choice

### Connotation Versus Denotation

When we read something, we first understand it at its most basic, literal level. This is called **denotation.** You can think of the denotation of a word as its dictionary definition. For instance, when you read the word “cow,” you think of a four-legged herbivorous mammal. However, every word carries a **connotation** as well as a denotation. A connotation is the non-literal meaning we associate with words. To continue our example, “cow” might connotate farm life, the countryside, or a glass of fresh milk.

### Examples

Here are a few more examples of connotations and their possible denotations.

| Word(s) | Denotation | Connotation |
|---|---|---|
| George Washington | First U.S. President | Never told a lie, cut down a cherry tree, wooden teeth, crossed the Delaware |
| Rose | A flower | Love, affection, romance, sensuality, beauty, the color red |
| New York City | A major U.S. city | Crowded, center of art and culture, night life, traffic, Statue of Liberty |
| Green | A color | Vegetation, fertility, growth, envy, money, life, springtime, prosperity |

As you can see, words have many connotations. Every person will find different connotations for a word, as connotation depends on a person's background, cultural setting, emotions, and subjective opinions. For instance, while the color green often represents prosperity to Western cultures, Eastern cultures associate the color red with wealth and good fortune. However, there are often a number of connotations that are widely accepted as connected to a word. People from all over the world, for example, associate snow with winter and heat waves with summer.

So, how do we apply this to reading? Well, when people read, certain words often stand out to them. This is usually because those

words carry strong connotations for the reader. Thus, when you read, look for words whose meanings stand out, especially if they relate to a recurring theme in the text. As an example, read through the following excerpt from Edgar Allan Poe's “The Fall of the House of Usher.” Some words that stand out have been italicized.

I looked upon the scene before me–upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain–upon the bleak walls–upon the *vacant eye-like* windows–upon a few *rank* sedges–and upon a few *white trunks of decayed trees*–with an *utter depression* of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the *reveller upon opium*–the *bitter lapse* into everyday life–the *hideous dropping off* of the veil.

When reading a passage like this, you might get a general impression that its mood is gloomy and depressing. Certain key words in the passage are what create that impression, and if we look at the italicized text, we can see a pattern. The narrator is describing a house, but “vacant eye-like windows” has a denotation of dark or empty windows, but it also brings up the connotation of corpses. “Rank” means overgrown, but it brings up connotations of abandonment and possible decay. Continue looking at the connotations behind each word, and see if you can detect any patterns. For instance, do the italicized words in this passage make you think of death, decline, and decay? Does the comparison to “the after-dream of the reveller upon opium” make you question the narrator's state of mind? By asking these kinds of questions, you're on your way to doing a close reading.

# Tone

You will also want to keep an author's **tone** in mind as you read. Tone is the attitude writing can take towards its subject or audience. For instance, writing can be informal, formal, sarcastic, or playful. These are just a few examples of tone. When trying to figure out a story's tone, ask yourself how the writing is actually put together. Does the author use **diction**, or the overall word choice, to convey a specific tone? For instance, is there any reason to say “joyful” instead of “happy” or “seething” instead of “angry”?

## Table

The following table provides examples of the same scene written in different tones. Pay special attention to the italicized words.

| Joyful | Unhappy |
|---|---|
| The sound of their *revelry rang* throughout the town. The sun *gleamed brightly* on the parade, and colorful streamers *floated* through the air like *dazzling rainbows*. | The noise of the *cacophony shrilled* throughout the town. The sun *glared harshly* on the parade, and colorful streamers *rained* through the air like *falling debris*. |

In addition, ask yourself if the author uses unusual **syntax** – the order in which the sentence is put together grammatically. (Look at “money is the root of all evil” versus “the root of all evil is money.” Does each sentence imply something different to you?) Keeping tone, diction, and syntax in mind will help in your analysis of literature.

With that said, we should always look at every aspect of these elements, from the most basic to the most complex when we read. Thus, this chapter will begin by giving you a broad overview of character, plot, setting, and theme then provide some examples of how you can use these elements to illustrate some of the more complex ideas in a story.

# Narrative Voice

Two of the most fundamental choices that face the author of a fictional narrative is to decide *who* is to be the narrator and *how* the story is to be narrated. Along with tone, the authorial "voice" is one of the key distinguishing factors of a piece of writing and can range from aloof and distant to warm and personable.

Exercise 4.10.1

Click to read the attached extract from the opening of **Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey** (1818). Who is the narrator? How would you characterize the narrative "voice"?

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

## Style and language

What do we mean when we talk of a particular writer's style? It might help us to think of style as a way of organising and expressing narrative unique to the writer, as distinctive and personal a characteristic as the writer's handwriting or the prints on the fingers holding the pen. Just as no two sets of fingerprints are alike, so no two writers are alike. Writers write in a style that reflects their individual view of the world.

The word "style" can generally be used to encompass the various literary devices that authors combine to convey their themes and the content of their narratives. Some of those devices, such as narrative perspectives and the representation of character, have already been discussed, so I want to focus here on the language writers use and the effects of that language.

Exercise 4.10.1

Please read the attached extract from a short story, "**Kew Gardens**" (1919), by Virginia Woolf. How would you characterise the descriptive language Woolf uses here and the way in which she presents the thoughts and speech of her characters?

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

Exercise 4.10.1

Now look at another extract, the closing section of a much more recent work, a short story, "**Gazebo**," by the American writer Raymond Carver. Think again about the questions I asked you to consider in Activity 7 before reading the Woolf extract. How does Carver's style differ from that of Woolf?

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

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### Answers

This is what is known as third-person narration. The voice does not belong to a particular character in the novel, and in the extract it does not assume the perspective of any of the characters, merely describing their physical appearance, social status and relationships, and, in Catherine's case, her likes and dislikes, her accomplishments and pastimes. You will probably have noticed that this extract comprises a single, extremely long paragraph and is mostly concerned with describing the young Catherine Morland. This amount of detail at the start of the novel suggests to us that Catherine is likely to be the central character, and so it proves.

At first sight the narrative voice seems to be fairly neutral and undemonstrative, like that at the beginning of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* above. But a closer inspection reveals greater subtleties. Indeed, it appears that the narrative voice is doing everything in its power to undermine our possible interest, while also drawing our attention to the kinds of expectations and conventions that often attend the process of reading particular kinds of fiction. Everything about Catherine seems to militate against the possibility of her being an interesting central character. According to the narrator, she was no one's idea of a heroine, and her social and family connections are of little assistance in this respect too. Austen is poking fun here at the idea of the tragic heroine. The narrator sounds almost disappointed at the fact that Catherine is not a motherless waif whose plight can tug at our heartstrings:

> Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on – lived to have six children more – to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself.

Neither does Catherine have the classical beauty of the novelistic heroine, her unprepossessing looks in themselves rendering her "unpropitious" for such a role. Furthermore, she clearly lacks aptitude and enthusiasm for the kind of accomplishments which young girls of this time were expected to acquire.

The overriding tone of this extract could perhaps be best described as coolly detached and above all ironic. As you will discover from reading further in Austen, irony was invariably the main feature of her narrative voices. In the case of the opening to *Northanger Abbey*, would you agree that this ironic strategy of seeming to deflate our enthusiasm is in fact a subtle device to heighten the reader's interest? If Catherine is such unlikely heroine material, what kind of narrative will it be

that can feature her as its central character?

The descriptive language of the first and final paragraphs is intensely detailed. Various human figures pass by and butterflies flit from flower bed to flower bed – a scene we can easily visualize. But Woolf's use of terms such as "curiously irregular" to describe the movement of the humans and "zig-zag" to depict the flight of the butterflies suggests a sense of vagueness and randomness. The change of focus, from the general scene to the positioning and attitudes of a man, a woman–he "strolling carelessly," she moving "with greater purpose"–alerts us to anticipate that they will be the subject of what is to follow. Would you agree that there is almost a filmic quality to this narrative description? When I read this I imagine a camera panning across a wide screen before closing in on the two characters. The final paragraph of the extract, which describes how the husband and wife and their children "diminished in size [...] as the sunlight and shade swam over their backs in large trembling irregular patches" seems to me to suggest a gradually dissolving image, such as we might see when a film deliberately loses focus. In spite of the plethora of detail and description, then, I feel there is nevertheless a somewhat impressionistic feel to Woolf's scene-setting.

Did you notice how a similar "blurring" effect seems to result from the second paragraph's shifts, first to the man's internal consciousness, as we are given access to his thoughts, and then to direct speech right at the end of the paragraph with "Tell me, Eleanor, d'you ever think of the past?" There is only a dash to denote this second shift; on a first reading we may not even notice that Woolf has moved from a depiction of thoughts to the representation of speech.

And what of the conversation between the man and woman? Does this strike you as a naturalistic representation of dialogue? Probably not, I would suggest. There is something artificial and heightened about the woman's speech in particular:

> 'Doesn't one always think of the past, in a garden with men and women lying under the trees? Aren't they one's past, all that remains of it, those men and women, those ghosts lying under the trees ... one's happiness, one's reality?'

We might think that no one would really speak like this, or relate a memory of "the mother of all my kisses all my life" in quite such a mannered fashion. Only with the brisk command to her children – "Come Caroline, come Hubert" – does the woman's speech appear naturalistic. I think it's safe to assume that this is not merely bad writing on Woolf's part; she has chosen her language and her means of representing it for a reason. Indeed, it may seem as though the language itself, rather than the actual narrative, is the main focus of this piece of writing. Woolf was one of a number of authors in the early twentieth-century who sought new ways of writing, challenging the conventions of previous generations that gave a primacy to realistic and naturalistic representation and foregrounded narrative events; stories that had a beginning, middle and end, a strong sense of closure, and a fixed authorial point of view. The narrative, such as it is, of Woolf's story 'Kew Gardens' is episodic rather than linear, and is a good early example of a style of writing that later came to be labeled 'Modernist' (James Joyce, whose opening to *Portrait of the Artist* we looked at earlier was another dominant figure in this movement). We could say, then, that "style" seems to take precedence over subject matter in writing such as this, and I hope you can see how Woolf's particular use of language contributes to this.

The language is minimalist, pared down to the absolute basics, and heavily dialogue-led. We are given no indication of speech intonation; the only verb used to describe the dialogue is the verb "to go," which gives us no clue as to how the words are spoken. This breeds a sense of uncertainty in the reader, I think, and as with Woolf's elevated tone and language this strategy is deliberate, I would suggest. Although the story is narrated in the first person I get a strong impression that the narrator, Duane, does not fully understand the situation he is describing: "I pray for a sign from Holly. I pray for Holly to show me." Similarly, the sparseness of Carver's writing leaves the reader in a state of uncertainty. Although the dialogue is, I think you'll agree, much more colloquial and naturalistic than that of Woolf's characters, there seems to me to be a great deal left unsaid, and a sense that the two characters, while conversing, are not communicating. This is, I would argue, a direct consequence of Carver's choice of style and language.

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# 2.11: Rhetorical and Literary Devices



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## Rhetorical Devices

Now you know how to search for connotation and denotation in a text, but how do you tell which words you should examine closely? If you were to spend time doing a close reading of every word in a story, you would never finish. Thus, you want to look for **rhetorical devices** when you read. Rhetorical devices are words that serve a special function in the text. Authors include them in order to convey a meaning to the reader. Listed below are some of the most common rhetorical devices.

## Metaphors and Similes

Two of the most common rhetorical devices are **metaphors** and **similes.** These are both means of comparison. A metaphor compares two things by saying they are the same, while a simile uses the words “like” or “as.”

### Table

*The following table contains a list of examples.*

| Metaphor | Simile |
|---|---|
| My Great Dane is a vacuum. | My Great Dane is like a vacuum. |
| That linebacker is a wall. | That linebacker is like a wall. |
| She is a cheetah. | She runs as fast as a cheetah. |

In the first example, we know that the Great Dane isn't really a vacuum. Both the metaphor and simile, however, imply that the dog consumes a large amount. The main difference is that the metaphor creates a stronger comparison. However, in the last example, only the context will tell you that the metaphor is not talking about a real cheetah. If we were talking about a runner, saying “she is a cheetah” would carry the denotations of speed, grace, agility, litheness, et cetera. But if we are looking at the simile, we only see that the runner is fast.

## Repetition

Repetition is another powerful rhetorical device. When you read, you should always keep your eyes open for repeated words and phrases. This can be tricky, as sometimes the repeated words appear close together and other times they are spread out in a text as a motif. For instance, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, a green light is mentioned repeatedly; however, these references are spread throughout the text, never appearing more than once or twice per chapter. Therefore, you will need to keep your eyes open for repetition while reading a story. If you see a word or phrase appear more than once, make a note of it – it is likely that the author included the repetition intentionally.

# Literary Devices

## Imagery

Imagery is language that makes an appeal to the senses. It can apply to any of the five senses or a combination of multiple senses. Although imagery often comes in phrases or complete sentences, a word can evoke the senses.

### Here are some examples.

| Touch | The dog's fur was smooth and silky, as though it had just been brushed. |
|---|---|
| Smell | The delicious scent of freshly-baked cookies wafted out of the window. |
| Taste | Dinner was mouthwatering! We ate buttery rolls and a savory chicken dish with a side of rich gravy. |
| Sound | 1st Street was a cacophony of car horns, people on cell phones, and police sirens. |
| Sight | The apple was a deep red, like the sky moments before the sun comes up. |

Every time you find imagery in a text, it brings up a set of connotations. For instance, the scent of freshly-baked cookies might bring up connotations of childhood, comfort, or home. When you see a particularly striking image in a text, think of what it denotes to you. Ask yourself, “Why describe *this* thing in detail instead of describing something else?” An author often uses imagery to call attention to a particular idea, character, setting, or plot point. Imagery can also be used to create the mood of a text. For instance, a story that includes a great deal of rain imagery might have a very dark, dreary mood.



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## Symbolism

Symbolism is a practice of using symbols, or anything that represents something larger than itself. Common examples of symbols are a country's flag and a heart symbol, which represent the country and love. Each has suggestive meanings – the flag brings up thoughts of patriotism and a unified country while a heart symbol indicates care and affection.

What is the value of using symbols in a literary text? Symbols in literature allow a writer to express a lot in a condensed manner. The meaning of a symbol is connotative or suggestive rather than definitive which allows for multiple interpretations.

## Allegory

An allegory, on the other hand, has a fixed meaning. According to Dictionary.com, an allegory is "a representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning through concrete or material forms; figurative treatment of one subject under the guise of another."

Exercise 4.11.1

Ralph Waldo Ellison was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Ellison's father, Lewis, a manual laborer who delivered ice and coal, was an avid reader who named his son after Ralph Waldo Emerson and who hoped that his son would grow up to be a poet. Unfortunately he died of a work-related accident when Ellison was three, which left the two brothers, Robert and Herbert, to be raised by their single mother, Ida. The absence of his father would remain a recurring theme in Ellison's work.

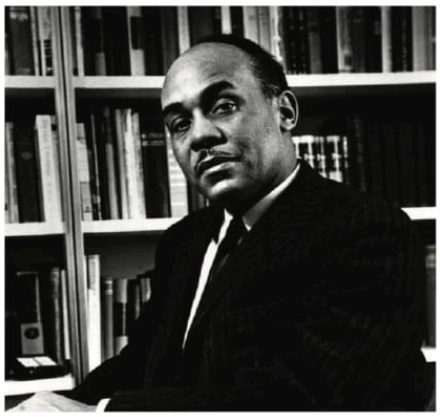


**Image 6.5 | Ralph Ellison, 1961**
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*Answer available at the end of this section.*

Read the first chapter of Invisible Man, "Battle Royale," by Ralph Ellison.

**Questions**

1.What is the significance of the protagonist's dream? What does his grandfather's appearance symbolize?

2. Why do you think the protagonist still gives his speech even after he's been humiliated?

Video 4.11.1 : Symbols in Literature

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## Answers

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# 2.12: Theme



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## Theme

Finally, you must examine theme in your basic analysis of literature. **Theme** is the unifying idea behind a story. It connects the plot points, conflicts, and characters to a major idea. It usually provides a broad statement about humanity, life, or our universe. We can think of theme, in its most basic definition, as the message the author tries to send their readers.

One thing you should remember about theme is that it must be expressed in a complete sentence. For instance, “discrimination” is not a theme; however, “genetic modification in humans is dangerous because it can result in discrimination” is a complete theme.

A story can have more than one theme, and it is often useful to question and analyze how the themes interact. For instance, does the story have conflicting themes? Or do a number of slightly different themes point the reader toward one conclusion? Sometimes the themes don't have to connect – many stories use multiple themes in order to bring multiple ideas to the readers' attention.

So how do we find theme in a work? One way is to examine **motifs,** or recurring elements in a story. If something appears a number of times within a story, it is likely of significance. A motif can be a statement, a place, an object, or even a sound. Motifs often lead us to discern a theme by drawing attention to it through repetition. In addition, motifs are often symbolic. They can represent any number of things, from a character's childhood to the loss of a loved one. By examining what a motif symbolizes, you can extrapolate a story's possible themes. For instance, a story might use a park to represent a character's childhood. If the author makes constant references to the park, but we later see it replaced by a housing complex, we might draw conclusions about what the story is saying about childhood and the transition to adulthood.

YouTube Video

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Video 4.12.1 : Introduction to theme in fiction

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# 2.13: Naming the Unnameable - An Approach to Poetry for New Generations (Evory)

Informed by a writing philosophy that values both spontaneity and discipline, Michelle Bonczek Evory's *Naming the Unnameable: An Approach to Poetry for New Generations* offers practical advice and strategies for developing a writing process that is centered on play and supported by an understanding of America's rich literary traditions. With consideration to the psychology of invention, Bonczek Evory provides students with exercises aimed to make writing in its early stages a form of play that gives way to more enriching insights through revision, embracing the writing of poetry as both a love of language and a tool that enables us to explore ourselves and better understand the world. The volume includes resources for students seeking to publish and build a writing-centered lifestyle or career. Poets featured range in age, subject, and style, and many are connected to colleges in the State University of New York system. Naming the Unnameable promotes an understanding of poetry as a living art of which students are a part, and provides ways for students to involve themselves in the growing contemporary poetry community that thrives in America today.

Thumbnail: pixabay.com/photos/book-poem-poetry-read-paper-text-4257405/

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# 2.14: Introduction - Our Natural Right to Play

When the poet William Stafford was asked when he first realized that he wanted to be a poet, he responded:

My question is “When did other people give up the idea of being a poet?” You know, when we are kids we make up things, we write, and for me the puzzle is not that some people are still writing, the real question is why did the other people stop?

Other artists have asked similar questions, and made similar assertions. “Every child is an artist,” said the dramatist and poet Percy Mackaye, “with imagination and the artistic instinct. Life stamps these out—and in only a few cases, those we call geniuses, do they rise, and become sculptors, artists, poets—great creators.”

## Discussion

What kind of artist were you when you were young? Did you paint, color with crayons, build things with blocks? What kind of creative acts did you enjoy? When did you write your first poem? What was it about? How did you come to poetry?

What both Stafford and Mackaye observe is the fact that we all naturally possess the ability to be expressive, to give free rein to our imaginations, to invent, to bring into the world something new. As Stafford notes, as children we naturally enjoy “making up things”; we delight in imagining, in creating, in *playing* with colors, shapes, with words—so why then do many of us stop playing, or stop being, as Mackaye says, “an artist”?

Answering this question is actually quite useful for us as practicing poets. If we can understand the barriers to writing poetry, then we can avoid writer’s block and stagnant periods by finding ways to avoid the barriers or bring them down. One of the obstacles to being creative, whether through painting or writing poetry, is our tendency to be critical and judgmental of ourselves and our art—especially while in the process of writing. If we are in the middle of writing a poem and begin to doubt ourselves or tell ourselves that what we are writing is silly or just not good, then we are standing in the way of our creative act of play and our growth as a writer. We are, in a sense, becoming our own obstacle. Think about what it means to play. The Merriam-Webster dictionary provides the following definition of “play”:

**a :** recreational activity; *especially* **:** the spontaneous activity of children

**b :** absence of serious or harmful intent **:** jest play>

**c :** the act or an instance of playing on words or speech sounds

When we play we are spontaneous. When we play we do not aim to harm ourselves—physically or with harsh criticism that stops us from playing. And when we play, we pay attention to words and sounds.

Imagine children playing. See two girls in a pink bedroom sitting at a tea table surrounded by stuffed animals. One of them wears a tiara. The other has wrapped a scarf around her head pretending to be a unicorn. The princess sips her tea and speaks of how warm the sun is on her shoulders, how the warmth turns everything blue into diamonds. The unicorn responds, “This scarf isn’t working. I don’t look enough like a unicorn.”

In this example, the girl with the scarf has broken the spell of imagination necessary for play. It is no different than when we criticize our own writing while in a state of creating—of playing—only in this case we are saying, “This line/image/word isn’t working. This isn’t good enough to be a poem.” In order to write poetry, we must be willing to indulge the creative state, to forgive ourselves as we write, to enjoy and appreciate what we have in front of us—especially in the early stages of a drafting a poem.

In poetry, there is always the opportunity to revise. The great poet Walt Whitman revised his book *Leaves of Grass* throughout his entire life, even after it was published. A poem has its own life, and for some, a poem may never be finished. And this is okay. The creative process can be expressed in a literally endless variety of ways. For as many people as there are living on this planet, there are as many, if not more, ways of expressing creative impulses. It is my hope that in your journey through this course, this book will act as a guide to nurturing your own natural creativity.

# Essential Tools

In this book, I share with you what I have seen work for myself, for other poets, and for our students. The chapters will provide you with approaches to writing and reading poetry, suggestions for discussions and prompts for poems, explanations of key terms associated with poetry, some poetry history, and many poems to explore. To excel, you will need the following tools:

## Something on Which to Write

Whether you write by hand in a notebook or type on a computer, you will need a space dedicated to writing. If you write on a computer, then I recommend purchasing a notebook for in-class exercises and note-taking, as many professors do not permit laptops or tablets in the classroom on a daily basis.

## Something with Which to Write

Some poets prefer blue pens, some black. Some pencils. Whatever your choice, just be sure to bring it with you to every class.

## A Folder

You will need to purchase a folder or binder for this class in order to keep yourself organized, to collect handouts, and to store pages of poems printed out from this book to discuss in class.

## Crayons

Several of the writing exercises ask you to draw with crayons. So, if you don't have any, consider purchasing a small set. Coloring is making a major comeback—for adults—as it has been shown to be a practice that fosters relaxation, focus, and creativity.

# Forgiveness

In her essay "The Getaway Car: A Practical Memoir About Writing and Life," from her collection of essays *This Is the Story of a Happy Marriage*, Ann Patchett lists forgiveness as being one of the essential skills necessary in order to write successfully:

Forgiveness. The ability to forgive oneself. Stop here for a few breaths and think about this because it is the key to making art, and very possibly the key to finding any semblance of happiness in life. Every time I have set out to translate the book (or story, or hopelessly long essay) that exists in such brilliant detail on the big screen of my limbic system onto a piece of paper (which, let's face it, was once a towering tree crowned with leaves and a home to birds), I grieve for my own lack of talent and intelligence. Every. Single. Time. Were I smarter, more gifted, I could pin down a closer facsimile of the wonders I see. I believe, more than anything, that this grief of constantly having to face down our own inadequacies is what keeps people from being writers. Forgiveness, therefore, is key. I can't write the book I want to write, but I can and will write the book I am capable of writing. Again and again throughout the course of my life I will forgive myself.

Patchett's advice is simple yet insightful. Even more, she is totally right that writers experience the feeling of failure almost "Every. Single. Time." we write. One of my students recently asked me, "Once you have a master's degree and extensive experience, does writing becomes easier?" Oh how I broke his heart I'm sure when I said, well, not really. Of course mechanics become easier. And you find ways to organize yourself and develop habits—some good, some bad—that can advance (or hinder) the process. And of course the more you read, the more aware you become of different ways to write. But there are some struggles that never go away. These struggles can be different for each person. For me, I shudder at the blank page, am overtaken by waves of anxiety. I feel physically uncomfortable, like my skin is crawling with ants, and it's hard to focus and sit still at first. All I want to do is check my Facebook page. But if I commit myself to the mode of writing, lighten my inherent self-criticism, and permit myself to try to find "flow," it becomes pleasurable.

Not only is forgiveness a necessary part of the writing process in the sense that we cannot translate exactly what we hope to from our minds to a page, but also in the sense that good writing deals with sensitive, hard-to-describe, difficult-to-face subjects, and I therefore find forgiving myself for past actions, thoughts, and desires—for feeling the way I actually do—necessary to write well. This doesn't just happen in personal poems that expose our memories and feelings directly; it can occur in more indirect ways, too. Such as when you are freewriting and an image forms itself in the process that calls up a difficult memory. Or when

you experience an insight into how you truly feel about a parent or sibling or friend. Or when you realize how you may have hurt someone in your past or neglected someone you love. We all mistakes. And mistakes make good subject matter for poems. So, start forgiving yourself and move onward.

## Receptivity

The mindset of forgiveness that Patchett describes is similar to what William Stafford writes in his little essay "A Way of Writing" when he recommends that a writer must "be willing to fail" in order to be successful. As with Patchett's essay, Stafford's advice is all about giving yourself over to the writing *process*. One cannot expect a poem or any piece of writing to be perfect, or as Patchett says, to translate the "brilliant detail" one imagines and feels onto a page. As Stafford explains, you have to listen to what occurs to you in your mind and let the ideas "string out." The process relies upon trust—you must trust that what you are doing *will* go somewhere. Here is an excerpt from Stafford's essay (a link to which can be found in the resource section of this book):

One implication is the importance of just plain receptivity. When I write, I like to have an interval before me when I am not likely to be interrupted. For me, this means usually the early morning, before others are awake. I get pen and paper, take a glance out of the window (often it is dark out there), and wait. It is like fishing. But I do not wait very long, for there is always a nibble–and this is where receptivity comes in. To get started I will accept anything that occurs to me. Something always occurs, of course, to any of us. We can't keep from thinking. Maybe I have to settle for an immediate impression: it's cold, or hot, or dark, or bright, or in between! Or well, the possibilities are endless. If I put down something, that thing will help the next thing come, and I'm off. If I let the process go on, things will occur to me that were not at all in my mind when I started. These things, odd or trivial as they may be, are somehow connected. And if I let them string out, surprising things will happen. . . .

So, receptive, careless of failure, I spin out things on the page. And a wonderful freedom comes. If something occurs to me, it is all right to accept it. It has one justification: it occurs to me. No one else can guide me. I must follow my own weak, wandering, diffident impulses.

I am not sure if being "careless of failure," as Stafford says, is a rule to apply to all aspects of life, but in creative acts such as writing, it is a necessity.

## Silliness

The poet Richard Hugo has said that he wrote his book *The Triggering Town* in order to help the writer "with that silly, absurd, maddening, futile, enormously rewarding activity: writing poems." And so, as he did then, I do so now.

Why prescribe silliness? For possibility. For new ways of thinking and writing. For fun. If you're worried that you may not have it in you, don't. According to Hugo, the fact that you are even taking a course in poetry already means that this quality, this playfulness, is already inherent in you. After all, as Hugo so eloquently puts it in *The Triggering Town,* "You have to be silly to write poems at all."

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# 2.15: Getting Started - The Nine Muses

## Chapter One: Getting Started: The Nine Muses

Throughout history, humans have credited poems and other forms of art as coming from somewhere mystical, mysterious, and divine. We've envisioned angels, muses, embodiments of inspiration who have been gracious enough to bestow upon us the moments of clarity and imagination from which our poems have crystalized. In Greek mythology, the god Apollo was recognized as the God of poetry and music. In Norse mythology, Bragi fills this role. Aengus is the Irish god of poetry to whom William Butler Yeats devotes his poem "The Song of Wandering Aengus." And if you had a very specific type of poem you wished to write, you could call upon the Nine Greek Muses (Calliope for epic poetry, Clio for history, Erato for music, and so on) for inspiration. In his 1933 essay "Theory and Function of the *Duende*," poet Federico Garcia Lorca articulated the source of poetry as coming not from without, as from angels and muses, but from within—it "has to be roused in the very cells of the blood." He called this force *duende*, "an Andalusian word used to describe the particular quality of deep song," as Michelle Kwansy explains. Throughout the essay, Lorca describes *duende* as a power, "the spirit of the earth," as a force that breaks old structures, as "authentic emotion," and he describes her, as she is linked so closely with surrealist images, death, and passion, as "dragging her wings of rusty knives along the ground."

Should you ever call out to one of these gods and receive no answer or struggle to tap into *duende*, however, I'd like to introduce you to nine alternative muses who have been known to grant poems:

1. Journaling
2. Collecting
3. Reading
4. Freewriting
5. Meditating
6. Moving
7. Keeping a Writing Routine
8. Creating a Ritual
9. Dreaming

## Journaling

For many of us, a poem starts with an idea, a memory, a sound, an image. Or it starts when we finally take a pen to paper or sit at our computers and begin to type. But, actually, a poem begins way before we begin to compose that first line. As we move through our day, our mind sorts through experiences, sensations, feelings, images, and ideas and files them in our memory. And as time passes, we forget many of the memories we hold onto in the short term. Something we experience today and remember tomorrow may be lost in a year. It is one of the many reasons writers keep journals—to take notes, pay attention and observe, collect images, sounds, ideas, and experiences as they happen before they are stowed away in the basement of our brains.

Although we only remember a small percentage with our conscious minds, research shows amazingly that our brains retain every single thing we do, say, hear, taste, touch, and feel. There are some people, in fact, who have what's called hyperthymesia who consciously retain a much higher percentage of memories than is normal, and for whom the condition poses difficulties. These people are able to recall specific details of a day in their life by simply looking at or hearing a date. They cannot forget even the minutest detail. Imagine being able to tell me what you ate for lunch on a random day, say February 8, 2002. Or what you wore on July 23, 2011. Our brain is an amazing organ. But it is not perfect. And it is not under our control. We cannot always make it do what we want.

Perhaps when you were younger you kept a diary. One with a tiny gold key or an attached ribbon to tie around it. I remember writing in one first when I was in fifth grade. It was blue and came with a tiny lock. I used to keep a record of the weather and what I did every day. Then I formed a crush on an eighth-grader and I began to record our encounters in the cafeteria and in the hallway. I became an observer, and began to feel desire. Later, maybe in seventh grade, the purpose of my diary grew. I began to record not only my observations, but also my feelings and thoughts, and eventually I wrote my first poem. Who knows how this happens. We begin to indulge in writing and expression and soon we fine-tune our ears to the music, to the **prosody**, of language. We become ever more aware of the sensual power of language and tighten the connection between how we feel and how we place

these feelings in words; between what we see in our mind's eye and what we describe through words on a page; between what words on a page describe and what we see in our mind's eye.

As we grow into adulthood, journaling takes on different uses than tracking weather and crushes—especially if we are writers, thinkers, creators. We might start our day writing as the poet William Heyen has done for decades; it is such a necessary habit, he has said to me, that he cannot go a day without it. We might write down our dreams or initial thoughts for the day, our plans. We might reflect on yesterday's events or expound on our ideas for our next series of poems.

## Discussion

Keeping a personal journal is a basic practice encouraged in all sorts of writing and art classes. Why do you think that is? Have you ever kept a journal? For what purpose? Did it have an effect on your creative writing?

Keeping a journal works to encourage poems in mainly two ways. First, it provides us time to practice writing and to play with words, while at the same time it uncovers potential material to bring to our poems. The poet William Wordsworth famously defined poetry as "a spontaneous overflow of feelings" recollected in tranquility. Keeping a journal encourages time for the second half of this equation. When we make time to sit with and explore our thoughts and feelings in writing, we edge closer to those memories created during intense moments of experience. The practice, and I'd venture so far as to say *learned skill,* of making time to write can sometimes be the hardest obstacle to overcome in our daily lives of work, school, and family responsibilities. Keeping a journal produces a routine that becomes easier to keep the more we do it, and it gives us a way to uncover material to write about.

Secondly, in many circumstances, keeping a journal can clear our heads of everyday concerns and frustrations—we can vent in our journals, unload our thoughts and memories that may be standing in the way of our imagination's flow. If we use the journal to essentially dump the itty-bitty concerns eating away at us, we clear the path for new thoughts and relax enough to forget our worries and play.

If you are a lover of objects, one of the joys of keeping a journal is being able to purchase an attractive book in which to write. I find the feel of the journal, the smell of its cover and its colors to be enjoyable. It makes me feel special. Perhaps it's the ten-year-old me still dazzled by my first diary, but perhaps you, too, will discover this pleasure as you begin to keep your own. Of course, today, it may be more practical for you to type on a screen. And if that works for you, then by all means let it. I have actually experimented with both and found each to have its own advantages.

## Activity

Purchase a journal or notebook and commit to writing in it every day for one week. It might help to schedule this activity for the same time each day. If you would like to experiment with typing a journal instead, create a document folder for your journal and save your writing there. Either way, try to write in a place that is quiet and pleasing—a coffee shop, a library, a comfy chair on the front porch. At the end of the week assess how your journal is working for you. Are you writing with the intention to create poems? Or are you venting? Either way, how has journaling affected your imaginative flow? Your thoughts? Your actions?

# Collecting

A journal can be very useful in helping us to collect material for when we have time to and are ready to actually write. But collecting does not only come in the form of prose writing. Remember, the brain works in fragmented and non-sensible ways. Memories are subjective and often unreliable. In our contemporary technological world of multi-tasking, our attention spans have been shortened. Sometimes, in order to maintain a writing lifestyle, it is more practical to work in bursts. And this is where we can remain attentive and we can, like fishing, catch moments—images, ideas, phrases—that we come across and write them down. Keeping a "collection notebook" helps us to remember the gems of images and sounds that spark poetry before we forget them. When you hear, see, or think something that sings, write it down.

As mentioned earlier, many writers keep notebooks or scraps of paper on their night tables, in their cars, in pockets and purses. As long as you have a pen and some form of paper—oh how many poets are surprised by pockets of words they find on napkins and pieces of envelopes!—you are equipped and can consider yourself to be a writer in the act of hunting. Then, when you sit down to write, you will not start from nothing; you can flip through what you've collected and build from there.

If carrying around a pen and paper is awkward, another way to collect ideas and tidbits is to send yourself text messages or

emails. I have found recording myself on my iPod or cell phone also handy.

### Activity

Carry around a small notebook and jot down musical or odd phrases or pieces of conversation you overhear throughout your day. Write down a new word you learn in biology class, or a funny sentence out of context you overhear while waiting in line at the dining hall. Write down a phrase you like from a poem or a story you read, or capture an image you see while you're driving or on a walk: a bird's shattered blue egg, the greasy fingerprints of a child in a display window, a squirrel towing an apple down a neighbor's porch stairs. If you remember a strong memory write it down: a hawk that screamed then dove into a river for a fish, the first time you met your significant other. While having coffee, take your earbuds out and engage the world, mine it for language and images. When you write, pull out your collection and begin a poem from one of the phrases or images, or insert one into a revision.

Many beginning writers make the mistake of trying to compose poems entirely in their heads, forgetting that as soon as we actually start writing the direction our words take are guaranteed to change. Keeping a collection notebook helps with these obstacles. Therefore, I encourage you to write little things down and to not think too much about them. Do not try to write poems in your head—this is not *writing* poems; it is thinking poems. Allow your full imaginative process to come forth when you can actually write.

## Reading

For many, the act of writing is wed to the act of reading. When I can't seem to get a groove on while writing, I read. Reading poetry re-patterns the rhythms in my mind and refocuses my attention on the craft of poetry. There are poets I turn to again and again, but I also read literary journals, magazines, new books of poetry, and essays on craft—anything to engage me in the contemplation of writing or inspire me to write. Usually it doesn't take long for me to be moved to write. Sometimes it does, and that's okay, too.

The poet Richard Hugo and I differ on the matter of reading. In his introduction to *The Triggering Town* he writes:

Many writers and many writing teachers believe reading and writing have a close and important relationship. Over the years I have come to doubt this. Like many others, I once believed that by study one could discover and ingest some secret ingredient of literature that later would find its way into one's own work. I've come to believe that one learns to write only by writing.

I do grant him the point that that one cannot simply become a good writer by reading and not writing. But, of course, one wouldn't be much of a *writer* if one wasn't writ*ing*. He continues:

I'm not trying to undermine the study and teaching of literature. Far from it. I think literature should be studied for the most serious of all reasons: it is fun. For a young writer it should be exciting as well.

I believe that a writer learns from reading possibilities of technique, ways of execution, phrasing, rhythm, tonality, pace. Otherwise, reading is important if it excites the imagination, but what excites the imagination may be found in any number of experiences (or in a lack of them). Reading may or may not be one.

Oh, pshaw, Mr. Hugo. I am here to tell you, dear students, that reading is, in fact, important to learning to become a good poet. It introduces you to approaches and moves that you otherwise would not have imagined or made. It introduces you to a wider world of the poetic imagination. And it introduces you to the standards of good writing. It saves you time by giving you your predecessors' experiences to build upon. Imagine trying to learn any art with no knowledge of what came before. Imagine playing the drums or piano and aiming to compose a symphony, or being handed a pot and fork with the aspirations of cooking a soufflé but without ever having seen or tasted a soufflé before. We build upon the achievements of our predecessors and when you write poetry, you write on the shoulders of such poets as Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Shakespeare and you add pages to our *BIG BOOK*. You, of course, will not necessarily enjoy all the poets you read, or agree with their writing philosophies, but it certainly helps you as a writer to be aware of them and to consider them. It helps you to learn to know your poetic self.

### Activity

Begin to assemble your own anthology of poems that interest you. Either poems you enjoy or ones that puzzle you. Anything that stimulates your capacity to think, feel, or inspires you to write. You may include poems you do not like, too—it all adds up to your

own poetic persona. How can you tell someone who you are as a poet and imaginative individual by simply allowing them to read your anthology? What poems will you pick to represent you?

As an added more in-depth assignment, write a 100-300 word response to each poem explaining what it is about the poem that represents you. What have you learned about writing from these poems?

When we read in this way, we say we are "reading like a writer." What does it mean to read like a writer? Well, for starters, it means we are *actively* reading, paying close attention to the decisions the poet made when composing and revising the poem as though we ourselves were the poet who wrote it. We consider the choices made concerning line, tone, image, diction, metaphor, form. We ask questions about its composition:

- Why did the poet choose this word instead of another **synonym**?
- Why is this written in **quatrains** instead of **couplets**?
- Why choose to end on an **image** rather than a statement?
- Why choose to write this in **third person** rather than **first**?
- What does this title do for the reader's experience of the poem?

Asking questions such as these makes us think like writers rather than just readers. The hope is that we will learn some tricks to bring back to our own poems.

An exercise that can help us to delve even deeper into the processes of other writers is to write an imitation poem in which you mimic a poem's form and moves to create a new poem. The purpose of the exercise is to immerse yourself deeply and attentively into a poem and, following its style, produce a poem modeled after its characteristics. By unfolding a poem step by step and repeating its poetic moves you will see what it is like to actually make the mental decisions and leaps that the poet did. Some of the elements you will want to pay attention to include the following:

- Form and line length
- Syntax and sentence structure
- **Tone**, voice, and mood
- Frequency of **metaphor** and images
- Use of punctuation

Here is an example of an imitation poem. After reading it and the imitation, discuss what similarities you see between the two poems line by line. The original poem is [1]William Heyen's "The Tooth":

## The Tooth

After the beheading, they found
the one gold tooth in Custer's mouth.
They propped open his jaws,

cut away his upper lip,
& looked into the tooth in firelight.
It was like a small television

tuned to the news, & a white man
in a white suit was already
stepping down onto the moon.

*Copyright ©William Heyen. "The Tooth" is licensed CC-BY-NC-SA.*

## The Bullet

After the hanging, they felt
a hard object in John Brown's arm.
They sliced open his shoulder,

dug into his flesh,

& looked at the bullet under torchlight.
It was like a zeppelin

crashing into the earth, & a black man
dressed as a King was already
rising from the flames.

## Activity

Using the above poem by William Heyen and my imitation as an example, browse the Academy of American Poets online collection for a poem you like and compose your own imitation of it. Moving line by line, note the syntax of each one—perhaps take notes in the margins—and then transcribe these moves into your own poem.

Now, reading need not be limited to poetry or literature. In fact, it must not be. When we write poetry we don't write about poetry (usually). We write from experiences either real or imagined and, therefore, reading books of all kinds benefits you by expanding the possibility of the experience and knowledge you bring to a poem. Personally, in addition to poetry and literature, I read cooking magazines, *National Geographic*, books about gardening, non-fiction books about many, many things—insects, salt, American history, mythology, religion, anthropology, crop circles, the topography of Montana. These feed my writing by providing me with new images, words, ideas, metaphors. Knowledge and experiences are the imaginative fuel on which our poems' engines run.

## Activity

Go to the library and find a book on a subject that interests you but that you know little about. Horses, the human brain, gemstones, Aborignal Australians, astronomy, coral. Adopt this book into your writing life by committing to write a poem inspired by your new knowledge. Alternatively, you might collect images and words, phrases and ideas into your collection journal as described in the last section and integrate them into your poems.

# Freewriting

In Peter Elbow's classic text on creative writing, *Writing WithoutTeachers*, the first chapter opens with an explanation of freewriting. What is freewriting? It is as it sounds. It is writing for a certain amount of time without stopping—it is writing down whatever occurs to you without being charged with having to be correct grammatically or syntactically or factually; it is writing with no barriers or taboos: it is *free* writing. Sometimes it is referred to as automatic writing and it is incredibly helpful for both loosening the imagination, warming up our writing brains, and as was the case with the Surrealists who loved such activities, capturing what associations our minds are making unconsciously and bringing to light the unknown parts of ourselves.

When we freewrite we do not judge. We simply let what occurs to us in our minds come straight out to the page. If our minds go blank we may write, "I cannot think of anything to write my mind is blank," and so on until a new direction arises. The main point, however, is to not edit as we write—good advice for whenever we write anything, as writing and editing are two completely different steps in the process. If we edit while we write we set up blockages. Rarely does any good writing take shape on a first try. As Ernest Hemingway so elegantly phrased it, "The first draft of anything is shit." Instead, we must work our way through ideas and words and ways of explaining and showing, and then revise to find the best words in the best order. But first we must allow the seed to germinate in all that fertile soil to which Hemingway so eloquently refers, and tend to its sprouting and growth.

But I am already ahead of myself. Freewriting does not have to result in a poem. Rather, it is one step in the process of coming to a poem. You may do a freewrite exercise and simply feel more relaxed without any desire to sift back through what you wrote, like writing in a journal. And that's fine. As Elbow explains:

Practiced regularly, it undoes the ingrained habit of editing at the same time you are trying to produce. It will make writing less blocked because words will come more easily. You will use up more paper, but chew up fewer pencils.

It is, in a sense, an exercise. Like playing scales on the piano or running sprints. Freewriting readies us for writing without judgment, for writing without editing ourselves while in the beginning stages in which wild and raw energy, uncovering connections, and taking risks are more important than properly constructing sentences that are clear and cliché-free. To put it simply, it is a type of play.

I like to think of the results of freewriting as blocks of clay we can shape. A block of clay may become a beautiful sculpture, but much work need be done before it emerges and is smoothed into art. So it is with our writing. You can't give up or place the pressure of perfection on the beginning stages of creation. Give it time and attention and the poem will naturally evolve.

### Activity

Choose from one of the following prompts and write for fifteen minutes without stopping or editing yourself. No matter what, do not stop. Do not rest your hands. Do not under any circumstances worry about the subject of your writing changing. Just follow where your thoughts lead. Do not concern yourself with proper spelling or punctuation or even complete sentences. Just keep writing whatever comes to your mind. Just keep going, going, write, write, write.

- If you could spend your day doing anything what would that be?
- Describe your ideal vacation. Where would you go? What does it look like?
- From a dictionary, choose two words randomly and insert them into the following sentence:
  - Explaining_____to a _____.
  - Now, explain!
- What did you dream about recently?
- If I were any animal I'd be a _____.
- Are you more like a river or a lake?

## Meditating

Although writing results in an external object that can be shared, the formation of it depends and arises from a process that takes the inward life of a writer and delivers it outward. Because writing is an internal, solitary process, sometimes it can be frustrating, such as when you cannot seem to make language capture your exact feelings and thoughts. Your blood pressure rises, your body heats. You lose interest and excitement in your project and your patience and attention wane. Meditation can help to quiet the mind and give you the tenacity to keep trying. It can also clear your mind of distractions that may be keeping you from connecting with your poem. Meditation can help you focus and relax so new thoughts come easier into the mind and the body permits the mind to enter a flow state.

In a flow state, time evaporates. You begin to write and everything else falls away. It's just you and the page. When you stop it feels like you're returning from another dimension—and, in some sense, you are. Perhaps some of you have experienced this state as an athlete or performer. Some days you're just "in the zone." You're focused, measured, energetic, precise. On the field, on the court, on the stage you are exactly where you are supposed to be, doing exactly what you need to do—and doing it well. Unfortunately, we do not enter these states 100 percent of the time.

So, what can we do to improve our chances of finding flow? If you are a runner, you train daily. You run sprints, lift weights. You keep an encouraging voice in your head and a positive attitude. Not only do you prepare your body when you are exercising on the trail or at the gym, but you also prepare at rest, at home, at work. You regulate your diet watching what you eat and drink. You monitor your stress. You track how long and well you sleep. Well, what if you don't want to be better runner, but a better writer? How do you train? Like with any sport, instrument, or art, you train not only on the field, but off of it, as well. Meditation, yoga, prayer are all ways that we can quiet our minds and make focusing easier when we write.

In order to meditate, you do not need to join a class or buy a yoga mat. You do not need to join a church. But you can do any and all of these things if you wish. Whatever works for you. In its simplest form, meditation is focused attention. Conscious movement, conscious stillness. Awareness of your thoughts and acceptance of them. It is, according to Wikipedia, "an internal effort to self-regulate the mind in some way." It may be done sitting, standing, reciting a mantra, practicing silence, or it may include rituals and objects like prayer beads. In short, "there are dozens of specific styles of meditation practice, and many different types of activity commonly referred to as meditative practices."

### Activity

Quiet the room and dim the lights. Sit on the floor cross-legged or lie comfortably back on the floor with a pillow under your head and a pillow under your knees. Close your eyes. Breathe deeply in through your nose and into your belly. Your belly should feel relaxed and puff out with your breath. Now, hold the breath in for three seconds, and release the breath slowly as you exhale through your mouth. Repeat five times.

Return to a more relaxed breath: in through your nose, out through your nose. Picture a place of peace you know well. Somewhere where you have felt relaxed and whole. Perhaps it is on top of a mountain or beside a river. Perhaps it is on a towel at a beach. Imagine yourself there. Feel the air, the sun. Smell the water, the trees.

Starting with your forehead, tense your muscles, hold for a count of five, and release. Next, your eyelids. Move down your body like this all the way to your toes. Keep breathing deeply. Move to the cheeks, mouth, neck, shoulders, and so forth. Stay focused on your breath, your body, your peaceful place.

If your mind wanders or nags, it's fine. Let it, but listen from a distance. You are not attending to that now. Attend to your breath, your body, your peaceful place. Those other thoughts will be there later; you can let them go for now. Only your breath, your body, your place. Stay here for a while, 5-10 minutes.

Then, begin to wiggle your toes, flex your feet. Move your muscles slowly up from the soles of your feet to the crown of your head. Open your eyes. Take your time rising. When you stand, reach your arms to the sky, stretch. Refocus.

You can perform this basic meditation exercise whenever you feel the need to refocus, relax, or you can perform it upon waking. For a more in-depth exploration, I recommend visiting your local bookstore or library, or checking out a site like Wikipedia and surfing the net for meditation web sites that interest you and provide you with ideas for practice.

# Moving

For some poets, it's not so much going in that helps them to write; it is going out. Wallace Stevens famously composed poems in his head on his daily two-mile walks to and from work in Hartford, Connecticut, where he was employed at the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. It is reported that he liked to match the sounds and rhythms in his poems to his steps. Edward Hirsch shared similar feelings in a 2008 *Washington Post* article. As he sums up, "Poetry is written from the body as well as the mind, and the rhythm and pace of a walk can get you going and keep you grounded."

In addition to keeping words in rhythm with your steps, walking is also useful for observing. Simply carry a notebook with you to collect images or ideas. Given the power of rhythm as observed by Stevens and Hirsch, it is no surprise that in my own experience I tend to leave hiking trails with ideas for poems. Surrounded by the trees, mountains, rocks, and mosses, by the river and birdsong, the skitter of small mammals, my mind consistently falls into a writing rhythm on the trail.

I'm not sure if this is due to the new heightened awareness to health in this country, but I know many writers who run 5Ks, 10Ks, half, and even full marathons. Maybe we naturally like to punish ourselves (writing can be so hard!) or maybe all of the oxygen in the brain is good for the imagination. Either way, creating opportunities for your mind and body to speak with one another is a proven way to inspire writing, and it's good for your health.

## Activity

Go for a walk around your neighborhood and observe the day. What is happening outside your home? What are the neighbors doing? What is newly sprouted or drooping? Dictate what you are seeing in your mind and imagine it in rhythm with your steps. If you are a runner, do the same when you go for a jog in the park. If you mutter something of interest do not be afraid to stop and jot it down.

# Keeping a Writing Routine

In order to be a good writer you should follow these rules:

- Always write at night.
- Always write in the morning.
- Always write in the afternoon.
- Write everyday for 15 minutes.
- Write everyday for three hours.
- Write on weekends all day long.
- Write only with blue pens.
- Write only with black pens.
- Always type your first drafts.

- Use only pencils.

Whatever your preference, whenever you write, it can be helpful to you as a writer to have a routine. Like physically training your quadriceps for a marathon, routine trains us as writers to write well, to be prepared and ready to catch and develop ideas. Routine readies our mind to write.

## Early Birds

When it comes to creating a routine, the poet William Stafford and many others will argue that writing in the morning is best. In his *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* essay, Stafford explains that in the early morning hours "something is offering you a guidance available only to those undistracted by anything else." And he should know, as it is a practice he's kept for over fifty years.

I remember when I was a graduate student at Eastern Washington University and the poet Jonathan Johnson committed himself to working in the morning. He was a full-time professor with a young daughter and wife. I remember him explaining that it was the only time when he could devote himself fully to the process, before the other things in his life asked for his time and attention. The morning has its advantages. It's before one is bogged down with responsibilities and also a time when the subconscious mind is closest to the conscious: upon waking. Writing in the morning might offer you deeper images and surreal subject matter.

Like Jonathan Johnson, Henry David Thoreau would also cast a vote for writing in the morning. In his book *Walden*, Thoreau praises and expounds on the high qualities of mornings and being *awake* both physically and spiritually.

## Lunch Poems

In 1964, Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights published Frank O'Hara's collection of poems entitled *Lunch Poems*. Many of the poems were composed during O'Hara's lunch hour while sitting in Times Square. Many were written in the moment and were focused on events happening in those moments. The tone of the poems is conversational and easy-going. Use this link to read an example of one.

I don't think O'Hara only wrote during his lunch hour, but here it makes a point—write when you can, regularly. O'Hara built a collection of poems; maybe you can, too.

Another New Yorker who thrived creatively during the afternoon is Walt Whitman. He would extend his own lunch hour, often not returning to the newspapers where he worked (there are multiple because he was frequently fired, perhaps for taking too many lunch breaks). Instead, he took notes for images of things he observed in the busy streets of Manhattan and all of its diversity and bustle.

## Activity

Write your own series of lunch poems. Every day for a week, break out pen and paper or a keyboard and write a poem or notes toward a poem about what's happening around you. Describe the people and what they do. Zoom in on the scents and sounds. Recreate what you're eating on the page through language. Make your readers' mouths water. Yum!

## Night Owls

Still, for others, it is easier to write at night, despite W. H. Auden's claim that "Only the 'Hitlers of the world' work at night; no honest artist does." And if you choose to give this a try, you will be joining Bob Dylan, Franz Kafka, and Ann Beattie. Similar to morning, the night can be quiet and solitary. The rest of the world asleep, you feel focused on your poetry, your job and responsibilities for the day done. Maybe you collect ideas throughout the day and pour them into your poems at night. It all depends on you and what works best for your schedule and for your senses—people's bodies are different and run on different schedules. For more on the issue, check out Kathryn Schulz who extrapolates on her own experience as a night owl in her essay "Writing in the Dark" originally published in *New York Magazine*.

## Discussion

When do you find yourself writing? Are you a night owl, early bird, or neither? What do think the advantages might be to writing at

these different times? Include in this discussion your professor's experience. When does he/she write and how did he/she come to do so?

# Create a Ritual

Mason Currey's book *Daily Rituals: How Artists Work* chronicles the habits of 400 writers and their quirky rituals, many of which include partaking in coffee, tea, sherry, wine, and tobacco. It is well-known but not known to what degree that Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote poems while on opium. The poet William Heyen lights a candle before he writes. Whatever the ritual, the purpose of it is to instill a certain mindset that arises from the act. As you may know, many athletes have rituals, too. Boston Red Sox third-basemen Wade Boggs ate chicken before each game. Among his many eccentricities, pitcher Turk Wendell insisted on chewing four pieces of black licorice whenever he started a game. According to David K. Israel, "At the end of each inning, he'd spit them out, return to the dugout, and brush his teeth, but only after taking a flying leap over the baseline." We need not be that elaborate, but of course, if it works. . .

## Discussion

What type of rituals, if any, have you used for writing, sports, or performing? Do you have any ideas for some you might consider adopting for writing?

## Activity

Create a writing space, or visit multiple coffee shops, changing what you write by where you write. For example, work on a series of poems about your travels at the kitchen table but write only about your relationships in the student union. Try this for a short period of time and note how the setting and ritual affect your mindset and focus.

# Dream

Whether it's staring out a window and daydreaming or keeping a dream journal, exploring the strange images in our mind can also inspire writing, especially, if you're an avid dreamer, those images we experience at night. When we dream, our brains make connections that our conscious mind does not make while we're awake. And sometimes these connections lead to eureka moments and new discoveries. For example, did you know that all of the following scientific discoveries were made in dreams: the periodic table; evolution by natural selection; and the scientific method? (You can read about these and others at the website Famous Scientists.) Or did you know that Paul McCartney reportedly composed the melody of "Yesterday" in a dream? According to an article by Jennifer King Lindley, "Stephanie Meyer awoke from sleep with the idea for the *Twilight*series." And just imagine what effect dreams had on *The Twilight Zone*writer Rod Serling?!

Throughout human history, cultures have relied on dreams for knowledge and insight. Some Native Americans, for instance, believed that their ancestors visited them in their dreams. The Greeks and Romans believed that gods and goddesses visited them in their dreams. Many religions connected dreams with supernatural or divine intervention. And Sigmund Freud famously understood dreams to be an expression of our inner-most desires and fears.

In recent times, scientific research and experiments have shown that while our bodies sleep, our dreaming mind sorts through the day's stimuli not only organizing them, but developing them. In the article "While You Were Sleeping," Jennifer King Lindley explains how sleeping heals the body, enhances memory, reduces stress, and boosts creativity. Good news for poets!

John Steinbeck was right when he wrote, "It is a common experience that a problem difficult at night is resolved in the morning after the committee of sleep has worked on it." That "committee," explains Dr. Jessica Payne, director of the Sleep, Stress, and Memory Lab at the University of Notre Dame, consists "of billions of busy neurons examining patterns between existing knowledge and new memories to develop innovative solutions." She continues, "When you dream in REM sleep, the rational control center of the brain is deactivated. This produces an amazingly creative state, and you are able to come up with ideas that you would not be able to when you are awake."

This knowledge must have been known to the group of French writers and artists who, in the 1920s, began the Surrealist Movement. Interested in turning away from logic and reason, the Surrealists turned toward the subconscious and the inexplicable. They were interested in dreams, freewriting, random selections of images and phrases from various places that when juxtaposed would evoke a strange, unfamiliar sense of knowing that could not be explained rationally. Their work is surprising, startling,

captivating and contemporary poetry has been very much influenced by their approaches and aesthetic. The poem “The Painted Couple” by Matthew Rohrer is a good example of a recent use of surrealistic technique:

### The Painted Couple

A couple paints themselves like the sky so no one will see them.
In this way they hope to stay in bed all day.
In the evenings, they walk as if invisible.
They are overjoyed.
No eyes to either meet or avoid on the sidewalk,
perhaps perfect solitude at last.

Everyone stares. A couple, naked and painted like the sky,
walk down the street holding hands.
They stop to look in the windows of stores.
They point at the shoes. They point at old beads.
The birds rouse themselves from their roosts
and fly at the couple.
Dozens of drowsy birds moving as one,
diving at the couple painted like the sky.

The postman stares from his left-handed truck
and the tavern proprietor stares from behind his stack of matchbooks
and their friends stare from a passing Volkswagen
and a teacher stares from a copy shop, over the lid of a copier,
and the policeman stares from his flashing car.

The couple who painted themselves like the sky
stand before the magistrate, in clothes.
He is speaking. His mouth opens and closes
under his wig.

Wisps of cirrus clouds slip out from under the man’s cuffs.
the Pleiades rise and fall under her dress.

*“The Painted Couple”, from A HUMMOCK IN THE MALOOKAS: Poems by Matthew Rohrer. Copyright ©1995 by Matthew Rohrer. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.*

A couple painting themselves like the sky is, well, impossible in real life, but not impossible in a poem. It evokes the painting of Rene Magritte, himself a surrealist, and known for painting people who look like the sky. It is easy to imagine this leap of the imagination arising from a dream. Note the strangeness of the image of the magistrate in the **penultimate** stanza**:** “He is speaking. His mouth open and closes / under his wig.” This description is strange. The magistrate is described in a mechanical way that makes him feel distant, foreign. Rather than saying he “talks” or “speaks,” we are given the image of his mouth opening and closing like an inanimate object “under his wig,” which adds a further sense of fakeness or artificiality. These details create a surreal image in our mind’s eye and make the magistrate feel cool and far away in the poem. Rohrer is a contemporary writer, but you can learn more about surrealism by researching writers at the roots of the movement such as Andre Breton, Stéphane Mallarme, and Guillaumé Apollinaire.

In addition to examining poems that use surrealistic techniques, you might also consider checking out art. One example of a piece of art, housed at the MOMA in New York, that strikes me personally was crafted by Meret Oppenheim after a conversation she had at a Paris cafe with Pablo Picasso and Dora Maar, when Oppenheim was wearing a bracelet covered with fur. The result was a teacup covered with gazelle fur. The MOMA web site is a great source for viewing surrealist and Modern art.

## Activity

Keep a dream journal on the side of your bed and write down your dreams every morning before you rise for one week. At the end of the week, read through and select the best material to start a poem. Keep this practice up and when you need images or material, flip through your dream journal for ideas.

## Activity

Consult a dream dictionary and look up some of the images catalogued in your dream journal. Blending the meaning and the images together, compose a poem in which your dream becomes reality.

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# 2.16: Welcome, Reader- Reading Poetry

## Chapter Two: Welcome, Reader: Reading Poetry

Muriel Rukeyser says in *The Life of Poetry* that in order to successfully read a poem, we must give a poem "a total response." This means giving it all of our attention, taking it in slowly, reading it several times. It means listening to the poem openly, without judgment, and without projecting our own assumed meanings onto it, but rather as Ruykeyser writes, coming "to the emotional meanings at every moment." As she explains, "That is one reason for the high concentration of music, in poetry."

To come to emotional meanings at every moment means to adjust and react to the way a poem takes shape with every word, every line, every sentence, every stanza. Each poem creates its own universe as it moves from line to line. It is a universe that Ruykeyser describes as the "universe of emotional truth." So how exactly does one listen with his or her emotions?

Reading is one of the most intimate forms of connection we can have with someone. We take their words—their breath—into ourselves. We shape the words with our own bodies and, too, give them life with our own breath. Reading poetry, we breathe in what a poet breathes out. We share breath. The words and their meanings become part of our body as they move through our mind, triggering sensations in our bodies that lead to thoughts. And through this process, we have experiences that are new and that change us as much as any other experience can.

Poetry is a condensed art form that produces an experience in a reader through words. And though words may appear visually as symbols on the page, the experience that poems produce in us is much more physical and direct. The elements of poetry permit a poet to control many aspects of language—tone, pace, rhythm, sound—as well as language's effects: images, ideas, sensations. These elements give power to the poet to shape a reader's physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual experience of the poem. Because form and function are so closely intertwined, it is impossible to paraphrase a poem. When I was an undergraduate at SUNY Brockport, my first poetry teacher Anthony Piccione used to say, "A poem is what a poem does." This is why we must read poems with full concentration and focus more than once. It is why we must read them out loud. It is why we must be attentive to every aspect of the poem on both ends: as a writer, and as a reader.

Readers come to the page with different backgrounds and a range of different experiences with poetry, but it is how we read a poem that determines our experience of it. By "read" I do not mean understand or analyze, but rather, the actual process of coming to the poem, ingesting its lines, and responding emotionally.

## Be a Good Listener

### Discussion

I'm willing to bet that all of us have heard someone described as a "a good listener" in our lifetimes. Well, what is it that makes someone a good listener? List the qualities we associate with good listening skills and share your experiences of people who demonstrate these skills. In contrast, what makes someone a "bad listener"? How can we relate these concepts to reading a poem?

Being a good listener requires many of the same traits as being a good reader. When we listen to someone speak, we listen to their emotions and ideas through meaning and tone, body gestures, and emphasized words. We do not judge. We do not interrupt. We may touch the speaker's arm to express care. We certainly use facial expressions and gestures to let the speaker know we are listening and understanding, that we are advancing emotionally alongside them with each turn of the story. Before offering advice, condolences, or other reactions, we as listeners try to see their perspective and its complexities from their side. We take our identities out of the equation and place their concerns in the middle of our attention.

Every poem has a speaker that seeks connection with a listener. A poet seeks to create an emotional experience in the reader through the poem's process, just as if a friend—or stranger—were telling an intense story. Unlike a person speaking, who can use the entire body to gesture, poetry has only a voice to rely on to speak. Yet the poem seeks to speak to a reader as if it had a body. The poem uses rhythm, pauses, stresses, inflections, and different speeds to engage the listener's body. As readers, it is our role to listen to the speaker of the poem and to *em*body the words the speaker speaks with our own self as if we are the ones who've spoken. We as readers identify with the speaker, with the voice of the poem. We listen with what John Keats called a "negative

capability," meaning we are capable of erasing our own identity and ego in order to imagine what it is like to take on another. Although Keats used the term to apply to the writing side of poetry, it is useful to consider the concept in terms of the reading side of the equation, as well.

Like individuals, each poem's speaker speaks from a place of perspective, a place which can be physical and/or psychological. As we as readers move word to word, line to line, we must allow the universe of the poem to take root in our imaginations as if it is the only universe that exists. When we are open to the words' music and meaning, the poem has the potential to envelop our entire being and body, as poet Emily Dickinson expresses in one of her letters:

If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me I know *that* is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry. These are the only way I know. Is there any other way.

Dickinson speaks of the poem affecting her entire body and being. Great poetry does this, as Rukeyser explains, because of the musical language, one the most important properties of poetry. Music is seductive. Music is instinctual beyond language. Music is a universal language. When accompanied by language, it has the power to affect our **senses** and our sensibility in intense ways.

# How to Conduct a Close Reading of a Poem

## The Title Matters

Reading a poem, we start at the beginning—the title, which we allow to set up an expectation for the poem in us. A title can set a mood or tone, or ground us in a setting, persona, or time. It is the doorway into the poem. It prepares us for what follows. How would you describe the tone of each of the following titles?

## Discussion

Look at the following titles and discuss the reactions and expectations they create:

- Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening
- Happiness
- Wishes for Sons
- Riot Act, April 29, 1992
- Reckless Sonnet
- Pissing Off the Back of the Boat into the Nivernais Canal
- How Much Is This Poem Going to Cost Me?
- The Turtle
- A Blessing
- Girl Friend Poem #3
- Sex at Noon Taxes
- The Tree of Personal Effort

## The First Time Through

Upon a first reading, it's important to get an idea of what it is you are entering. *Read* the poem out loud. *Listen* for the general, larger qualities of the poem like tone, mood, and style. *Look up* any words you cannot define. *Circle* any phrases that you don't understand and *mark* any that stand out to you. Some questions we may ask ourselves include:

1. What is my first emotional reaction to the poem?
2. Is this poem telling a story? Sharing thoughts? Playing with language experimentally? Is it exploring one's feelings or perceptions? Is it describing something?
3. Is the tone serious? Funny? Meditative? Inquisitive? Confessional? Here is a list of tonal descriptors that may help you pin down what you're hearing:
    - Abrasive, accepting, admiring, adoring, angry, anxious, apologetic, apprehensive, argumentative, awe-struck
    - Biting, bitter, blissful, boastful
    - Candid, childish, child-like, clipped, cold, complimentary, condescending, critical
    - Despairing, detached, didactic, direct, discouraged, doubtful, dramatic

- Fearful, forceful, frightened
- Happy, heavy-hearted, horrified, humorous
- Indifferent, ironic, irreverent
- Loving
- Melancholic, mysterious
- Naïve, nostalgic
- Objective, optimistic, peaceful, pessimistic, playful, proud
- Questioning
- Reflective, reminiscent
- Sad, sarcastic, satirical, satisfied, seductive, self-critical, self-mocking, sexy, shocked, silly, sly, solemn, somber, stunned, subdued, sweet, sympathetic
- Thoughtful, threatening
- Uncertain, urgent
- Whimsical

These initial questions will emotionally prepare you to be a good listener. When we come to a text, though we release ourselves of any preconceived judgments, we do come prepared emotionally. Picking up a book of fiction is different than opening a book of nonfiction essays. Within us there is an ever-so-slight yet important preparation. Think about it. Although both nonfiction and fiction share similar writing tropes, how would you feel if someone told you that the nonfiction book you are reading—the one that brought you to tears—is not nonfiction, but actually fiction? Most people become upset. It feels like you've been lied to. To put it another way, think about how differently you prepare to engage with a performance depending on its genre. How do you set yourself up differently for a stand-up comic as opposed to an opera? Not only are the effects of the performance different, but the way we emotionally prepare ourselves to receive them is also different.

Let's begin to apply our approaches to the following poem by Stephen Dunn:

## The Insistence of Beauty

The day before those silver planes
came out of the perfect blue, I was struck
by the beauty of pollution rising
from smokestacks near Newark,
gray and white ribbons of it
on their way to evanescence.

And at impact, no doubt, certain beholders
and believers from another part of the world
must have seen what appeared gorgeous—
the flames of something theirs being born.

I watched for hours—mesmerized—
that willful collision replayed,
the better man in me not yielding,
then yielding to revenge's sweet surge.

The next day there was a photograph
of dust and smoke ghosting a street,
and another of a man you couldn't be sure
was fear-frozen or dead or made of stone,

and for a while I was pleased
to admire the intensity—or was it the coldness?—
of each photographer's good eye.
For years I'd taken pride in resisting

the obvious—sunsets, snowy peaks,
a starlet's face—yet had come to realize
even those, seen just right, can have

their edgy place. And the sentimental,

beauty's sloppy cousin, that enemy,
can't it have a place too?
Doesn't a tear deserve a close-up?
When word came of a fireman

who hid in the rubble
so his dispirited search dog
could have someone to find, I repeated it
to everyone I knew. I did this for myself,
not for community or beauty's sake,
yet soon it had a rhythm and a frame.

*"The Insistence of Beauty", from THE INSISTENCE OF BEAUTY: POEMS by Stephen Dunn. Copyright © 2004 by Stepehen Dunn. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.*

Begin with the title: "The Insistence of Beauty." What does this title do to you? What kind of expectations and tone does it set up?

Perhaps you expect a poem about beauty, or because it is the "insistence of" you may feel determination, or like beauty is up against some other force. Or maybe you expect a poem about art.

Then ask and begin to answer these questions:

1. What is my first emotional reaction to the poem?
    - There is no one answer to this, obviously. But maybe you feel loss. Or hope. Or desperation. Or sadness. Or admiration. Maybe you're confused or feel a combination of these.
2. Is this poem telling a story? Sharing thoughts? Playing with language experimentally?
    - This poem seems to be telling a story. The poem contains a sequence of events: "The day before"; "I watched for hours"; "the next day." The speaker is sharing emotional reactions to something, as well as his actions to an event.
3. Is the tone serious? Funny? Meditative?
    - It seems serious, inquisitive, and confessional. It's not humorous and isn't experimental.

## Images and Tone

After an initial introduction to the poem, read slowly and allow the meanings to emerge as you move from line to line, paying attention next to images and tone. Before moving ahead, ask what your emotional response is at the end of each line, as lines can create different meanings and give the poem complexity. For instance, in the following stanza, we respond one way to the first two lines' image, and another way after its turn to the third line:

> The day before those silver planes
> came out of the perfect blue, I was struck
> by the beauty of pollution rising
> from smokestacks near Newark

In the second line, the phrase "I was struck" forms an image with what precedes before it can form an image with what follows. This second line leaves us with the image of the speaker being struck by something. It might be different for you, but because I am holding the image of a plane in my mind, a plane being a large and physical object, I immediately imagine the speaker being "struck" physically by an object. Therefore, we momentarily hold the image of being struck physically: "The day before those silver planes / came out of the perfect blue, I was struck."

But when we move to the third line, the image changes. The speaker is no longer struck by an object , but by an emotion or idea: the "beauty of pollution rising." Although we may think of pollution as ugly, here we are being told that it is beautiful. The word reverses our assumptions; maybe we see in our mind's eye the clichéd image of smog rising from smokestacks and ask, "How is that beautiful?" Or maybe we think about how smog makes the colors of sunsets more intense. Either way, the speaker is telling us that he sees pollution as beautiful even with all of its complications (it's harmful, smelly, ugly, etc.). Rather than leave us with only the speaker's judgement of pollution, the next lines create for us an image of that "beauty" so we can see it, too: "gray and white ribbons of it / on their way to evanescence." These last two lines help us make sense of the idea that pollution is beautiful.

The ribbons evaporating maybe *are* somehow beautiful. If we disconnect our knowledge from the image so we do not think about how the ribbons are smoke, if we simply see the visual the smoke makes: "ribbons...on their way to evanescence," we experience what the speaker experiences: beauty. Or, perhaps, what the speaker sees as beautiful is the pollution disappearing. From this persective, the speaker would see not the gray and white ribbons as beautiful, but the gray and white ribbons *disappearing* as beautiful.

Tonally, the words "perfect" and "struck" stand out for different reasons in the first two lines—one for meaning, one for sound. When something is "perfect" we feel admiration, maybe the need to protect it. Since nothing really is perfect, it also sounds a little romantic, subjective, or too good to be true, which may also produce tension as we know perfection isn't real, or doesn't last. The word "struck" is a harsh, violent, physical word. And ending the line on it emphasizes it even more. To be struck by something suggests shock, surprise, immediacy, and change.

In addition to these two words, the first phrase sets a tone, too, of expectation. We know something significant is being made of the planes because they are marking a day: "The day before those silver planes." The event is important enough to refer to it in such a way. This is how we speak of big events. The day we were married. The day we went swimming. The day those silver planes came out of the blue.

The tone in the first stanza immediately produces a connection between the speaker and reader. We feel the speaker is disclosing something to us, or divulging something important. As we continue through the poem the speaker's tone becomes inquisitive as he asks questions:

> —or was it the coldness?—
>
> that enemy,
> can't it have a place too?
>
> Doesn't a tear deserve a close-up?

Is he asking questions of the reader? To himself? A bit of both? We journey with him on his seeking.

## Discussion

Read through Dunn's poem and identify the rest of the images. Discuss how each image makes you feel. To what words or images is your attention drawn? What associations do you make from them?

## Find Connections and Ask Questions

After moving through the poem and noting images, their effects, and the tone or places where tone changes, the next question that is helpful to ask is: What does *x* remind me of? Or, what associations am I making? Usually the connections I would suggest making would be within the poem itself and the patterns it creates—between lines, images, repetitive words or themes, **diction** (word choice)—but in Dunn's poem, before we can make connections within the poem, we are actually reminded of something outside of the poem. In the first stanza, the two planes near Newark and two ribbons evaporating may remind you of the iconic image of the September 11th attacks on The World Trade Center in New York City. This an **allusion** (an indirect reference) to that event, as suggested by the second stanza: "believers from another part of the world / must have seen what appeared to be gorgeous." Making this connection provides us with a context for the poem's occasion. Maybe we begin to ask, "How can the attacks on the World Trade Center and its subsequent collapse be seen as gorgeous?"

You may be wondering what happens if you didn't make that connection. Will you misread Dunn's poem? In a poem, allusions like this usually aren't usually necessary if the poem makes use of all the other elements of poetry successfully. And in Dunn's poem we are actually given enough, I would say, to have a sufficient experience if the allusion isn't made. In the poem the planes cause an "impact," believers elsewhere watch the "flames of something of theirs being born," the speaker watches "mesmerized," the media posts photographs of the fearful and "dead or made of stone" watching the events; then the poem focuses on the speaker's emotional reactions and thoughts regarding the event, and what thoughts it evokes within him in regard to beauty. The poem closes with the story of the fireman and his dog and the speaker's insights. Looking at it this way, maybe 9/11 is secondary in experiencing the poem. It's hard to be certain since I cannot *not*make the connection to the event personally, but perhaps it is possible that the allusion is not central to the poem's experience, since it is all of the other poetic techniques of the poem that create the sensual reaction in the reader.

Let's for a moment pretend that the poem isn't alluding to these events. This will leave us to focus on the private and unique universe of the poem and make connections within it. If we begin to make connections within the poem itself, one of the first connections we might make is how the ribbons in the first stanza appear beautiful to the speaker even though they are pollution, and how the flames in the second stanza appear "gorgeous" to the believers even though they are destructive. What does that suggest? The connection bridges the distance between the speaker and the believers, as they both have the capacity to see beauty in something harmful, in something that others see as ugly. This further suggests that beauty is subjective, though the ability to see it is universal.

You can see how making connections like this and asking questions about those connections can lead to insight into the poem's experience, as well as insight into the experience of being human. Here, Dunn's speaker has found similarities between himself and people who might be considered enemies. Beauty, we see, may be received and interpreted by our senses and not rely on context.

What other connections and patterns can we see? And what questions can these patterns raise in us? In the third stanza the speaker watches the collision "replayed"—be it on a television screen or in his mind—and admits to a desire for revenge. Later, in the last stanza, the speaker repeats the story of the fireman: "I repeated it / to everyone I knew." What does this suggest? He says "I did this for myself, / not for community or beauty's sake, / yet soon it had a rhythm and a frame." How are we to understand the impact of his repeating his story? If it is told "for myself," then what exactly is the speaker getting from this and how is it connected to the replaying of the collision? What might be meant by rhythm and frame?

In the fourth and fifth stanza the speaker makes a connection between himself admiring "the intensity" of the people in the photographs and between the photographers taking the photographs:

> The next day there was a photograph
> of dust and smoke ghosting a street,
> and another of a man you couldn't be sure
> was fear-frozen or dead or made of stone,
>
> and for a while I was pleased
> to admire the intensity—or was it the coldness?—
> of each photographer's good eye.

The speaker asks, "Was it the coldness?" This seems to suggest a distance, or emotional coldness, in the voyeuristic qualities he is experiencing and the way photographers act as objective eyes for the audience. The photographers cannot act on their emotions or empathies, but instead to succeed, photographers in intense situations must shut down their responses and capture the moment visually, detached from their emotions. The speaker says that he admires this, "the intensity—or was it the coldness?— / of each photographer's good eye." Perhaps he sees courage in the act of taking these photographs, or maybe he sees something admirable in the way a person can detach himself from an event in order to focus only on the image, the visual, the camera's eye with a "good eye" that can see art and capture it.

In the fifth and sixth stanzas, the speaker muses on how he's reacted to beautiful things in the past just as coldly as these photographers: "For years I'd taken pride in resisting / the obvious—sunsets, snowy peaks, / a starlet's face." The pattern of "coldness" is established by several word choices here: "fear-frozen," "coldness," "snowy." The words are used as physical description and emotional description. They are literal, and they are figurative. Our speaker then tells us how he discovered that images of "sunsets, snowy peaks, / a starlet's face," too, have their "edgy" place. This is a little mysterious. Does "edgy" refer to the destructive, ugly yet mesmerizing collision and photographs he's been viewing? Is this suggesting that serene beauty and edginess are somehow closely related?

The speaker then introduces the idea of "the sentimental," which he refers to as "beauty's sloppy cousin, the enemy," and asks if it can have a place to also be appreciated. The word choice of "enemy" is interesting, as it echoes the relationship between the speaker and the believers from the beginning of the poem. What does this suggest about the relationship between enemies, and between the roles they play? The speaker ends the stanza with another question: "Doesn't a tear deserve a close-up?" The image represents sentimentality, beauty's "sloppy cousin," but it actually could be another allusion, this time to a commercial by the Keep America Beautiful campaign, made in the 1970s at the start of the environmental movement. It is another reference that will not diminish the poem's effect on a reader if he or she doesn't know it, but it can add another layer of complexity if it is understood. In the commercial, a Native American witnesses the pollution of a river as he paddles a canoe up the river, and as he turns to the camera, we zoom in on a tear slipping from his eye. The allusion echoes the pollution that the speaker found beautiful in the first stanza.

In the last part of the poem, the speaker confesses that he retells the story about the fireman hiding in the rubble "so his dispirited search dog / could have someone to find." And that he retells it not "for community or beauty's sake," but for himself. Why would he do that? Why does it matter that he does? The story is moving. Who isn't moved by the relationship between a man and his dog? Our focus shifts from all of the people who perished in the rubble whom the fireman and his dog cannot help, to the "dispirited" feelings of the dog that the fireman tries to help. It is almost as if all the devastating emotion we feel thinking about those people and their families, empathizing with them, transfers to the emotion we feel thinking about the dog, empathizing with the fireman who feels such empathy and emotion for the dog that he hides in the rubble so the dog can find someone. In this moment, the feelings the dog has become as important and as worthy as our own—a dog's emotions equate with a human's. If we can feel such strong empathy toward the dog, as the fireman clearly does, can we not also feel it toward our enemies? And are these feelings in any way similar to "revenge's sweet surge," referred to earlier in the poem? Are they maybe one side and the other, sloppy cousins of each other like beauty and sentimentality? Or is the dog and fireman story too sentimental to fall in love with? And if it is, doesn't it "deserve a close-up" too?

## Look Closely at Diction

When reading a poem, you should always look up words you do not know, but sometimes it can help to look up words that you do know when they have more than one meaning, too. The last line of the poem may seem a bit mysterious: "I did this for myself, / not for community or beauty's sake, / yet soon it had a rhythm and a frame." A rhythm and a frame? What on earth does that have to do with anything? Is the speaker suggesting that beauty relies somehow on rhythm and a frame? We can begin by looking in the poem for other things that have rhythm and a frame. The poem itself, does, for starters. Poetry has rhythm. Speech has rhythm. And the images of the building collapsing repetitively have a rhythm too, as well as a frame if they are being shown on television, captured through a camera lens. But "frame" is a word with many meanings. If we look at the word "frame," we find that it is a noun defined as:

1. a border or case for enclosing a picture, mirror, etc.
2. a rigid structure formed of relatively slender pieces, joined so as to surround sizable empty spaces or nonstructural panels, and generally used as a major support in building or engineering works, machinery, furniture, etc.
3. a body, especially a human body, with reference to its size or build; physique: *He has a large frame*.
4. a structure for admitting or enclosing something: *a window frame*.
5. usually, frames. (*used with a plural verb*) the framework for a pair of eyeglasses.
6. form, constitution, or structure in general; system; order.
7. a particular state, as of the mind: *an unhappy frame of mind*.

In looking at the above definitions, there are several that have resonance in relation to this poem.

1. a border or case for enclosing a picture, mirror, etc.
    - We frame art and other works of beauty, and the title of the poem is "The Insistence of Beauty." What is the purpose of a frame in this sense of the word?
2. a rigid structure formed of relatively slender pieces, joined so as to surround sizable empty spaces or nonstructural panels, and generally used as a major support in building or engineering works, machinery, furniture, etc.
    - The World Trade Center, like all buildings, had a frame, which was destroyed in the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Were the Twin Towers a piece of art that had beauty and a frame? What did they represent symbolically?
3. a body, especially a human body, with reference to its size or build; physique
    - All people—no matter what their culture or nationality—and other living beings have frames.
4. form, constitution, or structure in general; system; order
    1. Poems have form; society has systems; the United States has a Constitution; the 9/11 terrorist attacks were very orderly and systematic. How is beauty linked to order?
5. a particular state, as of the mind
    - A poem's speaker has a state of mind, as does the reader; the events of 9/11 place us in a certain "frame of mind." What frame of mind is the reader in? What frame of mind does the poem put the reader in?

The word "frame" adds layers of meaning that can contribute to our interpretations, reactions, and understandings of this poem, as the word relates to many of the poem's themes: beauty, violence, love, destruction, storytelling, the visual nature of art, to name a few. Considering these definitions, we might follow our thoughts to conclude something like this:

"Frame" can refer to the building's architecture, the human body, systems, and orders. We frame photographs—a single moment captured from time—and hang them on our walls. A frame lends support, gives something its shape. And rhythm? Our first rhythm: our mother's heartbeat—rhythm is elemental and basic. It is the basis of music and poetry. The human body finds rhythms

pleasing. Rhythms repeat themselves. The man telling the story of the fireman and his dog creates a rhythm through its repetition; it becomes artful, monumental. It becomes an experience shared rather than isolated. It stands as a symbol, an allegory for the wreckage of person, animal, and city. Perhaps the retelling becomes its own type of architecture that listeners can enter, or the bones within someone, like the fireman, who in retelling this story finds strength and support.

## Discussion

What is your experience of this poem? How do you interpret its meaning? After discussing your reactions to the poem, discuss the specific approaches you used to come to your interpretation. What do you think is the most powerful part of the poem? What, if anything, confused you in its reading? Did that change once you conducted a closer reading of the poem? Did your interpretation align with mine in some places? Or are there sections inwhihc it differed? Remember, there is no one way to interpret a poem. That's what makes discussing them so pleasing and rewarding.

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# 2.17: Images

## Chapter Three: Images

To put it simply and directly, creative writing is the language of images. Whereas other forms of writing like news articles, academic essays, and instruction manuals relay information from the writer to the speaker in order to *inform* or *instruct*, in fiction and poetry images are how we translate the world into a text so that a reader may *experience*. If you are a creative writer, then you are an image creator. And to be a master image creator, you need to be really good—really, really good—at finding ways to stimulate a reader's senses through significant, concrete detail. When poets write, they see through the speaker's eye, what we call *the mind's eye*. By writing through the mind's eye, you literally describe what the speaker *sees* in order to recreate the world of the speaker in words on a page so then the reader can translate those words back into images and experience the poem.

## Language is Physical

If we examine the words associated with the act of writing, we find that language is directly rooted in the physical world of the body. Let's consider the answers to the questions below.

Q. *Where does poetry come from?*

A. *It comes from the imagination—*

Imagination. Imagine. Image. This is the language of creative writing. What the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines as "a mental picture" which we as writers see through the mind's eye. When we read writing, our mind processes the words into mental images with our five senses—sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. When we are writing poetry we want to give our readers the world in its raw form, its physical, concrete existence. The more specific we can be, the better.

For example, note how the following descriptions affect your physical, emotional, and mental experience differently:

1. The child was sad because it was her first day of school.
2. Standing in the doorway between her classroom and the sunny sidewalk, four-year-old Meredith twisted her mother's flowered skirt in her hands, hid her face in its folds, and stained its red silk with the thick mucus of her nose.

The second example is much more detailed and imagistic than the first. It, therefore, engages our senses and sensibilities much more directly.

## Discussion

In example two above, vivid details invite your senses to take in the scene. But once a piece of creative writing contains specific images and details, those details begin to have an additional affect on the reader's intellect as the images resonate into symbols and create connections and suggestions. What affects do the images in the above example have on your intellect? What types of connections, contrasts, resonance, and suggestions do the images make? For example, notice the contrast between the shady classroom and the sunny sidewalk. What types of interpretations does this image invite? What others do you perceive?

Q. *How does poetry affect the reader?*

A. With sensations—

Sensation. Sensual. Sense. This is how we make sense of the writing. How we *make sense* of the words on the page. We do not understand through abstract thought. We understand mentally through what our eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin understand physically. Merriam-Webster defines "sense" as:

One of the five natural powers (touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing) through which you receive information about the world around you.

One of our five natural *powers*. The word “power” makes us sound supernatural; but these are not *super*natural—they’re natural to our bodies. Poetry enables us to use and sharpen them.

*Q. What do we do when we rework a piece of writing?*

A. We envision it differently through revision—

Envision. Revision. Vision. Again, a root word associated with sight. *Merriam-Webster* defines “vision” as:

**a :** something seen in a dream, trance, or ecstasy; *especially* **:** a supernatural appearance that conveys a revelation

**b :** a thought, concept, or object formed by the imagination

**c :** a manifestation to the senses of something immaterial visions, but at realities —Edith Wharton>

The second and third definitions reflect the impact of poetic images on a reader. These poetic images produce *vision* in the reader by manifesting “to the senses” “something immaterial.” In other words, a reader’s senses react to the vision, or images of an “object,” created by the poem as though that object were actually real. With poetry, those images give way to “a thought, concept,” or idea. In the above example describing Meredith’s first day of school, for instance, we are led to the thought or concept of how she is sad via the images.

# Types of Writing

## Activity

Relying only on your experience and intuition, take a look at the following passages of text and match each with its correct genre:

A. Poem

B. News article

C. Novel

D. Non-fiction essay

E. Diary entry

F. Text message

G. Advertisement

1.___ FYI, I’m running l8. ETA: 8:30.

2.___ Lately I’ve been feeling really depressed. I don’t know if it’s hormonal or the weather or what. I just want it to go away. Not sure how to act in front of Jack when I feel like this. I don’t want to lie or be a fake, but I don’t want him to think I’m not fun to be around. So I’ve just been avoiding him—which is so stupid because now he’s gonna think that I don’t like him, which is totally not true. But I can’t tell him. God if he ever read this I would die! Kate is of no help either. She just makes me worry even more.

3.___ In a speech on the Dartmouth campus in Hanover, N.H. to students, staff and alumni, Philip J. Hanlon, the president, said the college would create new spaces for social activity as alternatives to Greek houses, give faculty members more of a role in residential life and provide students more extensive training on preventing sexual assault. But much of his address was devoted to alcohol and the Greek system. “In the majority of alcohol-induced medical transports, it is hard alcohol — rather than just beer or wine — that lands students on a hospital gurney,” Dr. Hanlon said, and so “hard alcohol will not be served at events open to the public, whether the event is sponsored by the college or by student organizations.”

4.___ To the red country and part of the gray country of Oklahoma, the last rains came gently, and they did not cut the scarred earth. The plows crossed and recrossed the rivulet marks. The last rains lifted the corn quickly and scattered weed colonies and grass along the sides of the roads so that the gray country and the dark red country began to disappear under a green cover. In

the last part of May the sky grew pale and the clouds that had hung in high puffs for so long in the spring were dissipated. The sun flared down on the growing corn day after day until a line of brown spread along the edge of each green bayonet. The clouds appeared, and went away, and in a while they did not try any more. The weeds grew darker green to protect themselves, and they did not spread anymore. The surface of the earth crusted, a thin hard crust, and as the sky became pale, so the earth became pale, pink in the red country and white in the gray country.

5.___ Introducing the all-new 2015 Subaru Outback. At 33-mpg, it's the most fuel-efficient midsize crossover in America. Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive with X-Mode provides go-anywhere traction and stability. Being named a 2014 IIHS Top Safety Pick provides peace of mind. All to better help you explore the season. Love. It's what makes a Subaru, a Subaru.

6.___

> I erased you at mile 251.
> Just pushed the mile counter and Poof,
> you were gone. Like that. Zero. Not even a snowflake
> on the car's warm rug. Not even an eyelash
> mite. Earlier, we braked for a tabby
> crossing the road and laughed. We licked
> enchiladas from the crescent moons
> of each others' chins. I might miss the taste
> of your smoky breath, might think again of
> your pale blue eyes, an unsure December sky,
> your fingers, my waist, your thumb
> on my hip bone, your unshaven face. How you told me
> I was beautiful, how you told me you were willing
> to stick all the way to the coast.

7.___ My great-grandfather on my mother's side ran a drugstore in a small town in central Illinois. He sold pills and rubbing alcohol from behind the big cash register and creamy ice cream from the soda fountain. My mother remembers the counter's long polished sweep, its shining face. She swirled on stools. Dreamy fans. Wide summer afternoons and clinking nickels. He sold milkshakes, cherry cokes, old fashioned sandwiches, (what did an old-fashioned sandwich look like?). Dark wooden shelves. Silver spigots on chocolate dispensers.

There are, of course, numerous ways to identify which passage belongs to which genre. And I imagine that when you formulated your answers, you relied on multiple evaluations of tone, form, and diction. Clearly the use of lines—verse—indicates a poem. But now, go back through the passages and notice the use of images, or lack thereof. What do you notice? Where are images most prominent?

Here are the answers: 1.F, 2.E, 3.B, 4.C, 5.G, 6.A, 7.D.

Reviewing, you should see that the literary genres—poem, essay, novel, are replete with images. Whether it's the snowflake melting on a rug in the opening of my poem "The Hitchhiker" (6), or the sun glaring down "until a line of brown spread along the edge of each green bayonet" in John Steinbeck's opening paragraph to his novel *Grapes of Wrath* (4), or "the counter's long polished sweep, its shining face" in Naomi Shihab Nye's essay "Mint Snowball" (7), we as readers enter the world of the text through its images which evoke our senses.

Not so in the case of the text message, diary entry, news article, or advertisement. Why is that? To understand these ways of writing, we should consider their purposes. What is the purpose of a text message? A diary entry? A news article? An advertisement?

> **Text Message**. With the text message, its purpose is its one-time use of sharing information: In our above example, this person is going to be late and arrive around 8:30.
>
> **Diary Entry**. With the diary entry, the information is more complex. Remember the differences between journaling and keeping a diary discussed in chapter 1? A diary keeps track of something—experiences, feelings, observations, and is usually kept private. Since the only intended audience for a diary is the writer him/herself, there is little if no attention given to how the writing will affect an outside audience. In fact, in the above example, the writer hyperbolically states that if Jack were to read her diary she would *die*.

**News Article**. In the case of the news article and advertisement, the point is to provide information. The news article by Richard Pérez-Peña informs *New York Times* readers by objectively and authoritatively summarizing information and naming sources.

**Advertisement.** The advertisement persuades you to purchase something; in this case, a 2015 Subaru Outback, which gives an overview of its attractive features and establishes ethos through mentioning its awards: "Being named a 2014 IIHS Top Safety Pick provides peace of mind."

But when we look back at the novel, essay, and poem, among the most relevant things we see is the use of images and description. These genres immerse their readers in a different world, one which values and believes in the power of language to stimulate our senses and transport us somewhere new. And the most successful ones, the masters like John Steinbeck, are able to access our brains in the same way that real-life experiences do, producing in the reader feelings and thoughts and insights generated intelligently by the processing of sensory information.

## Discussion

Richard Hugo once wrote that in a poem, "I caution against communication because once language exists only to convey information, it is dying." What does Hugo mean by this? Does creative writing communicate? If so, how? If not, what does it do? Can this be phrased differently?

# The Purpose of Poetry

If you've taken a composition or freshmen writing course, you might recognize some familiar terms used above—summarizes, sources, persuades, ethos. All words you will rarely if ever use in reference to writing poetry. And why is that? Well, what's the purpose of poetry? Perhaps this is not an easy question to answer. In fact, the answer might depend on time and culture. Epics such as *Gilgamesh* aided in memorization and preserved stories meant to be passed down orally. The British Romantics valued the pleasure derived from hearing and reading poetry. In some cultures poetry is important in ritual and religious practice. In contemporary times, many describe poetry as being a tool for self-expression.

In the excellent glossary in his book *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*,poet Edward Hirsch provides the following definition for a poem:

Poem: A made thing, a verbal construct, an event in language. The word *poesis* means "making;" and the oldest term for the poet means "maker." The *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* points out that the medieval and Renaissance poets used the word *makers,* as in "courtly makers," as a precise equivalent for *poets*. (Hence William Dunbar's "Lament for the Makers.") The word *poem* came into English in the sixteenth century and has been with us ever since to denote a form of fabrication, a verbal composition, a made thing.

William Carlos Williams defined the poem as "a small (or large) machine made of words." (He added that there is nothing redundant about a machine.) Wallace Stevens characterized poetry as "a revelation of words by means of the words." In his helpful essay "What is Poetry?" linguist Roman Jakobson declared:

"Poeticity is present when the word is felt as a word and not a mere representation of the object being named or an outburst of emotion, when words and their composition, their meaning, their external and internal form, acquire a weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality."

Ben Johnson referred to the art of poetry as "the craft of making." The old Irish word *cerd,* meaning "people of the craft," was a designation for artisans, including poets. It is cognate with the Greek *kerdos*, meaning "craft, craftiness." Two basic metaphors for the art of poetry in the classical world were carpentry and weaving. "Whatsoever else it may be," W. H. Auden said, "a poem is a verbal artifact which must be as skillfully and solidly constructed as a table or a motorcycle."

The true poem has been crafted into a living entity. It has magical potency, ineffable spirit. There is always something mysterious and inexplicable in a poem. It is an act—an action—beyond paraphrase because what is said is always inseparable from the way it is being said. A poem creates an experience in the reader that cannot be reduced to anything else. Perhaps it exists in order to create that aesthetic experience. Octavio Paz maintained that the poet and the reader are two moments of a single reality.

Of the many ideas provided here in this definition, perhaps the one to emphasize most is that the poem is "an event in language." It is also one of the harder to understand concepts. "A poem creates an experience in the reader that cannot be reduced to

anything else," writes Hirsch. Especially not through paraphrase. This means that in order to "experience" a poem, a reader needs to read it as it is. The poem is itself a type of virtual reality.

Jeremy Arnold, a professor of Philosophy at the University of Woolamaloo in Canada, likens the poem to the "pensieve" device in the Harry Potter series: "A poem allows someone to preserve a mental experience so that an outsider can access it as if it were their own." When coming to poetry, there may be nothing more important to understand because nothing can shape your perspective more on how to write and for what purpose. Poetry requires a reader, an audience; therefore, the poet must learn how to best engage an audience. And this engagement doesn't happen by sharing ideas, feelings, or experiences, by telling the reader about *your* experiences—it happens by *creating* them on the page with words that evoke the senses. With *images*. These, then, are how the literary genres speak. Images are their muscles. Their heart. Images are poetry's body and soul.

## Activity

Choose a poem from the Poetry Foundation's featured poems and look again at Edward Hirsh's definition of poem. How does this poem typify his explanation? Are there any ways in which it does not? Write 300-word response paper explaining how you see your selected poem in relation to Hirsch's definition.

# "Show Don't Tell"

How many of you have heard this phrase before? Maybe you heard it in your high school creative writing or English classroom? Or maybe this is the first time you are hearing it. The phrase reminds me of the television show *Lassie* in which eleven-year-old Timmy's collie named Lassie would run to tell Timmy's family whenever Timmy was in trouble and needed rescuing. Timmy was curious and always getting into trouble. Timmy's family couldn't do anything to help him until Lassie did more than bark; Lassie had to show them exactly what was wrong by leading them directly to Timmy so they could s*ee precisely* what the matter was.

In this analogy, the language of your poem can either bark generally or lead specifically. And you do this with either general, abstract words that make a reader think, or you do this with specific, concrete words that allow a reader to see. The adage "Show don't tell" is shorthand for the most important tenet of creative writing. It asks you to create with an attention to the concrete, physical world rather than telling with abstract words which produce thoughts about the speaker's experience or ideas instead of feelings in the reader's body through the five senses.

In the following poems, images can not only be seen, but heard, tasted, smelled, and felt. Here are some examples of the different types of imagery we use in poetry. Many use more than one kind:

## Auditory Imagery

> She sinks her eight ball, drinks me under
> the table. I whimper for a date, a smooch,
> a slap. She hits the jukebox, that old song.
> (Mike Dockins, from "American Love Story")

> ...Oh
> prayer for the hat to be a puller
> for her even as it circles the city
> or enters someone else's flat, hat
> have an arm to keep her from his fist,
> moon and train, moon and train, moon
> and train: pull her, pull her, pull her.
> (Michael Burkard, from "Hat Angel")

## Gustatory Imagery

> I love saying the name. Each sweet syllable seems like there ought to be a crush of sugar on your tongue, a tiny reward just for saying the word. These milk-balls, fried golden and soaked in sugar syrup, are glassed up in a luxuriously oversized jar that my grandmother collects under her spice table to store homemade mango and spicy lime pickles.

(Aimee Nezhukumatathil, from “Gulabjamoon Jar”)

## Olfactory Imagery

I loved him most
when he came home from work,
his fingers still curled from fitting pipe,
his denim shirt ringed with sweat
and smelling of salt, the drying weeds
of the ocean.

(Dorianne Laux, from “The Shipfitter’s Wife”)

On things asleep: No balm :
A kingdom of stinks and sighs,
Fetor of cockroaches, dead fish, petroleum,
Worse than castoreum of mink or weasel,
Saliva dripping from warm microphones,
Agony of crucifixion on barstools.

(Theodore Roethke, from “The Longing”)

## Tactile Imagery

I am a man of many heads. Each one capable of loving you, each one unwrapping your paper delicately by hand, slipping my fingernail beneath your coating till I can feel the smooth skin of your nakedness.

(Robert Evory, from “Garlic”)

I love the sound of the bone against the plate
and the fortress-like look of it
lying before me in a moat of risotto,
the meat soft as the leg of an angel
who has lived a purely airborne existence.

(Billy Collins, from “Osso Bucco”)

## Visual Imagery

The fish rises with a red body in the green pond.
Under the arch of heaven
The fisherman travels smoothly in his blue skiff.

(Georg Trakl, from “The Sun,” translated by Robert Bly and James Wright)

They decide to exchange heads.
Barbie squeezes the small opening under her chin
over Ken’s bulging neck socket. His wide jaw line jostles
atop his girlfriend’s body, loosely,
like one of those nodding novelty dogs
destined to gaze from the back window of cars.

(Denise Duhamel, from “Kinky”)

Notice not only how imagistic these examples are, but how specific the details are, as well. In the poem “Hat Angel,” Michael Burkard recreates the sound that the train makes in the last two lines through his use of diction and line breaks. And in “Kinky,” Denise Duhamel attends to the small details of a Barbie doll—“the small opening under her chin” while Robert Evory in “Garlic” brings our eye to the meeting of the delicate paper of a garlic clove and a fingernail. These poems describe a pair of pants, a

Barbie doll, and a garlic clove the way we would see them if we were holding them in our hands. And with Billy Collins in his poem "Osso Bucco," we get the sense that we are looking closer and closer and closer at the meat on his (on our!) plate. In these examples, the reader must be—cannot avoid being—sensually immersed in these images, which trigger the five senses—sight, taste, smell, touch, and hearing—through memory and imagination to create an actual experience for the reader. We do not read about George Trakl's experience on the water in the poem "Sun"; we are there ourselves.

### Discussion

Click on the following link to read Gary Snyder's poem "The Bath." Lines 1-9 are a good example of how the senses may be activated in multiple ways from one image. For example, the line "steaming air and crackle of waterdrops" can be classified as auditory, visual, and tactile. We see the steam and drops, hear the crackle, feel the heat.

Can you identify any other images that engage more than one sense? After Snyder, return to the preceding examples and see if you can identify places where more than one sense is being used. How are your senses activated in the poems? What pictures do you see when you take the images in? Go through each poem and underline examples of objects you can touch—pants, waistband, snap, zipper, etc.

## Adjectives and Adverbs

In an effort to create sharper, clearer images, beginning writers tend to add adjectives and adverbs to their sentences:

> The sun shone brightly on the relaxing lake.
>
> The flower is beautiful.

In each of these sentences adjectives and adverbs make for vague, generalized images by presenting ideas rather than things. What does it mean that the lake is "relaxing"? It is an idea and therefore does not produce a specific image in your mind's eye. What image is brought to mind with the word "beautiful"?

Although it may seem counterintuitive, relying on adjectives and adverbs actually dulls an image rather than sharpening it. They tell a reader rather than show a reader by providing judgments made by the speaker. To remedy this, we need to sharpen the images through expansion or tightening:

> The sun shone on the flat surface of the lake reflecting the purple evening light and the white-capped mountains in the distance.
>
> The tulip spread its petals wide creating a circle yellow as the sun.

Sticking to concrete, specific details engages readers' senses and allows them to come to the conclusion of whether or not the lake is relaxing or the flower beautiful.

### Activity

Make the following images more concrete by replacing the adjectives and adverbs. You may also reconsider the verbs and their tense. Feel free to rewrite them using more than one sentence:

- Driving in the snowstorm was difficult.
- Our new puppy is so cute.
- Angela was thrilled to finally reach the top of the mountain.
- Grandpa gently planted this year's seedlings in his lovely garden.
- Mom frantically got the kids ready for school.

## Abstract vs. Concrete Words

The success of the above poems results in the poets' uses of concrete images, the images that refer to things you can actually touch in real life. In poetry, we work with two types of words: abstract and concrete. Ideally, the poem should re-create the

experience of a poem through concrete details so the reader isn't merely *told* about the experience through the speaker, but s*hown* the experience which the poet re-creates in a way that engages the reader's five senses. If the poets had used mostly abstract words, their poems may not be, well, poems. They might tell us more than show us. They might report or summarize. For example, if Gary Snyder relied more on abstractions than concretes, "The Bath" might tell us outright how he feels about washing a baby or how the baby feels about being washed rather than creating images of the baby being washed. The concrete images create a scene and allow us to come to our own conclusions through the images. Here is an example of what Snyder's poem might look like if it relied too heavily on abstractions:

> The baby was scared
> but we were happy
> in the sauna washing him
> and keeping him safe
> because we love him
> and his body so much.

The sentiment in these lines is intimate and warm, but as readers we struggle to see the event in our mind's eye. But note, even with the abstractions, the poem cannot escape using some concretes—baby, sauna, body. Rather than putting us in the room with the bath and allowing readers to feel the actions and be there themselves, the poem shifts its spotlight on the feelings of the speaker.

## Activity

To prove the usefulness of concrete, sensory detail, and the failings of being overly abstract in one's language, especially in one's descriptive language, the poet Mike Dockins works with his creative writing students to describe the scene of a motorcycle accident. As a class, make a list on the board of various concrete (and sensory) images that a witness would observe. Telling the story with only concretes, and literally no abstractions, does the emotional level come across? If they do, how do they accomplish chaos, panic, fear, shock, terror, death?

To better understand, let's look closer at abstract words. Here are some examples:

- Love
- Fear
- Happiness

These are what we call *abstract* words. They refer to ideas we think with our minds rather than specific, individual things we can feel with our five senses and that call an exact image into our mind's eye. Think of concrete words as something you can actually *touch*. You cannot touch "love" and "safe" but you can touch your son in "warm water / Soap all over the smooth of his thighs and stomach." Once you finely tune the images into specific, concrete details, the sentiment will come through naturally.

Sometimes this concept confuses my students. "But I can *feel* love," they say. "I can *feel* anger." And, yes, of course we can recall what those emotions feel like when they are referenced in a poem. And, in fact, we feel actual sensations brought on by these emotions when they happen. Our blood races when we're in love, our stomach jumps when our lover or someone we desire walks into sight. We feel our chests swell when we think about our mothers and our fathers, but when we read abstract words like "love" and "anger" we experience them in a vague, cloudy way, reliant more on our own individual memories that involved our five senses to make, rather than the poem itself using our five senses through imagery to create a new experience and memory.

Trying to avoid concretes is difficult. In fact, in order to even explain to you the sensations we feel when we experience love, as I just did, I had to use much more specific language that refers directly to physical things—chest, blood, stomach. Lover, mother, father. We read the word "love" and imagine love but it takes our brains on an extended voyage of neural connections; we do not have a specific image come immediately into our mind's eye. And immediacy is the poet's job and responsibility to the reader of poems—words should vanish. The walls between the experience created by the words and the reader's senses taking in that to which the words refer, should fall. When we read good writing, we get lost in the experience and in the images the words are creating in our minds. We are transported.

In contrast to abstractions, take in these words:

- Apple
- Blue
- Boat

What happened? What do you see?

## Discussion

Go around the room and have each class member share the image that comes to mind with the above words. How many different images are there for apple? Blue? Boat?

In a poem, we want readers to have a specific experience created by images. The above words bring images to our mind, but we can do better still by being even more specific.

## Use Specific, Significant Details

Now, what if we were to make these words even more specific:

- Apple ... Golden Delicious Apple
- Blue ... Turquoise blue
- Boat ... Sailboat

Now the brain is working more quickly. We see these things more immediately in our mind's eye.

## Activity

Begin with the following vague categories and narrow down the word making it more and more specific:

1. Food
2. Vehicle
3. Animal

In the poem "The Bath," Gary Snyder is very attentive to specific details. He names his son, Kai, places us in a sauna, describes the lantern as being kerosene and set on a box. There is not a window, but a *ground-level* window which the light from the lantern illuminates. The light also illuminates not the stove, but the *edge* of the *iron* stove. Kai's body stands not in water but *warm* water, and it's not his body that is soapy—but his *thigh*s and s*tomach*.

Snyder creates a concrete, physical world for his readers and places us in a very specific time and setting. The details feel like they are slowed down—in both the writing and reading process—so the event may be created on one side and taken in on another. Snyder slows down and looks closely so we may, too.

Once details become this specific, something magical begins to happen. The poem naturally begins to amass different levels of meaning; it grows in complexity. For example, what's the significance of the lantern being kerosene? What does that tell us about the setting? The speaker? What do we take away from the detail about the ground-level window? What ideas come to mind when we read "ground-level"? Once we attain a literal reading, a first reading, which creates the scene, we may look again only this time more closely at the words, the diction. We may notice that "ground-level" evokes a sense of simplicity in us, an idea about being closer to the earth, being grounded. If so, how then does this feeling and idea relate to the poem as a whole?

This symbolic way of reading of poetry happens naturally when images are concrete, and details specific, and significant. Snyder could have used any words in the poem, but he used these. Why? What do these words do inside their poetic space? What we do as writers affects the way readers read our poems. But when we write—here's the catch—we don't necessarily have to think of how a reader will interpret and read the poem. We just need to concentrate on making the words we choose be specific and significant so language—naturally symbolic—can do its thang. After all, Alexander Fleming didn't discover penicillin by setting out to cure disease—he saw some mold growing, tapped into his curiosity, and used his imagination.

Read the poem "What Came to Me" by Jane Kenyon and note how the poem thinks small but produces big feelings. The poem's use of line, sound, tone, and image creates a moment in which the speaker is overwhelmed with grief. And what causes this for both the speaker and the reader? Finding a drop of gravy on the porcelain lip of a gravy boat. One "hard, brown / drop." Why does this image have such power? It is a short poem—nine lines—and those lines are short, ranging from four syllables to one line that is seven syllables long. But although brief, it is compact and bursts with emotion. We are not told how the speaker feels. She does not say she felt sadness, pain, remorse, or loss. The first line describes action, simply, "I took." And the penultimate, the

second-to-last, line also describes an action: “I grieved.” Kenyon doesn’t write “I felt grief” (a filter) or “I thought of all the good times” (a cliché). Instead, we are there with her, lifting the gravy boat from the box, only to discover in line five, a “hard, brown” and in line six, “drop of gravy still.” The word “still” here doubly stops time and implies no movement while it also ends the line and hangs there, still on the sixth line’s edge just as the gravy drop is on the edge of the gravy boat’s lip.

As Hirsch writes, “A poem creates an experience in the reader that cannot be reduced to anything else.” The effect of Kenyon’s poem cannot be reduced only to the image of the gravy drop. As said, the diction, sound, form and tone do a lot of work. But it cannot be denied that the image is central to the poem’s effect. And when it is combined with all the other poem’s elements, it produces an experience that cannot be replicated any other way.

### Activity

Write a poem about an experience with an object that invokes emotions for you. Rather than tell the reader about this experience, show the reader by using concrete, specific words. You may wish to start by free writing about the memory and then forming it into a poem, especially if no specific object comes immediately to mind. Through writing about an emotional experience while paying close attention to specific details, a concrete object should emerge.

## Write What You See

...not what you think. Thoughts explain, report, conclude, reflect, and basically do the opposite of what images do. With images, readers are left to come to their own conclusions, reflections, ideas, analyses, and insights. And readers like it this way. They don’t want to be told what to think and feel. They don’t want to be told the ending to a movie that they haven’t yet seen. When we tell instead of show, when we use conclusions to inform a reader rather than evoke his or her senses, we steal the pleasures of literature from them. The pleasure of reading literature, and therefore poetry, comes from being able to reflect on what you experienced and form your own conclusions. When we read a story, we want to go along for the ride and lose ourselves with our imaginations. In writing, we say trust your reader. It means letting the images and actions exist without our interpretations. If a reader wants interpretations they will reach for a book of criticism, an essay, or the editorial section of a newspaper.

Often in creative writing classes, beginning writers rely heavily on saying how they feel and what they think rather than describing what they see. It is because beginning writers are used to being asked for their thoughts in classes like composition and courses in literature. But here we are *writing* the literature. Not interpreting it. It’s a different kind of writing.

When revising, try to change thoughts to images. It’s okay to have thoughts, what Ezra Pound called *logopoeia,* at any stage in the writing process. The trick, as poet Bruce Smith once so eloquently wrote to me, is “not getting rid of thought, but finding a way to realize and music the thought.” Note the word “music” being used as a verb—*music* your thought. When we revise, poets will sift through a poem over and over making images more succinct, diction more precise, lines more musical. The following is a sampling of words and phrases that indicate a thought that can be developed into an image:

*1. Transitions :*

- *in conclusion*
- *furthermore*
- *however*
- *in c ontrast*
- *either way*
- *for the purpose of*
- *in short*

Here’s an example followed by a revision:

- I was smart. In contrast, my brother was dumb.
- The same year I received straight A’s on my report card, my brother tried to get high licking frogs from our dad’s pond.

Reserve transitions like “in contrast” for expository writing classes. They cheat the reader by defining the relationships between things rather than letting the reader discover the relationships himself through details.

*2. The word “I” followed by:*

- *feel*
- *think/ thought*
- *kno w/ knew,*
- *consider*
- *suppose*
- *remember*
- *imagine*
- *wish*
- *wonder*

*3. The words:*

- *seem*
- *believe*
- *argue*
- *claim*

*4. The phrases:*

- *in my opinion*
- *in my mind's eye*
- *might have*

The above examples in 2, 3, and 4 are of what we call *filters*—because they filter the sensory experience of the poem through the speaker to the reader, rather than connecting the reader's senses directly to the experience of the poem. Look at the difference between the following:

- It seemed to me that the Northern Lights might have made the sky look on fire.
- The Northern Lights made the sky look on fire.

In addition to eliminating the middle man—the speaker—standing between the image and the reader, eliminating the phrases "It seemed to me that" and "might have" cuts unnecessary syllables, weak prepositions, and makes the voice sound more confident. It adds energy to the writing.

## Activity

Explore art books, or alternatively an online painting database or photograph database, and find an image that entices you. Translate this image into words that produce images. Do not interpret the art. Only try to capture exactly what you see with your eyes. Pretend you are describing the painting or photograph to a friend who has never seen it. Be as detailed as possible.

## Activity

Close your eyes and envision in your mind's eye your childhood bedroom. Look around the room, in the drawers, in the closet. Try to remember colors, smells, textures. Then, using a box of crayons, draw your room on a sheet of paper. What details do you remember when you are drawing that you didn't remember before you picked up the crayons? Once the room is drawn, remember an event that took place in your room and conduct a free write with the intention of crafting a poem from the exercise.

# Zoom In, Zoom Out

One way to enable yourself to see things more vividly when you write is to imagine that your mind's eye is a camera. And, like a movie camera, it can zoom in and out. It can move outside a house, inside a house. It can be on a roof, in a basement, and in orbit all in one poem. How boring would a film be if the camera stayed in one spot the entire time? Move your lens around. Change out the telescopic lens in one line for a microscopic lens. Use a wide angle in partner with a 50 mm, which captures things closest to their actual size. And, as any good photographer knows, when photographing a subject, try a different angle. Instead of taking shots from only above the bird's nest, move to the side, see what's below.

When taking pictures one cannot use a filter to make a photograph say, "*I thought* the blue egg looked like a sapphire." Nope.

Instead, the photograph can only show a sapphire-blue egg. The photographer's opinion doesn't exist in the picture; he stays behind the lens. So, too, with the poet. Stay behind the lens and let the images and their sequence speak for themselves. The fact that the poet points the camera in a specific direction already tells the reader that the speaker/cameraman/poet believes this is important to see.

Just as a cameraman must be present in her surroundings when filming, so too the poet must locate herself in the setting—be it time, place, or mood—of the poem. Pay attention to what your senses detect. What do you see, hear, smell? Who is with you? Who was here before? Look around. Orient yourself.

### Activity

Begin by locating yourself very specifically in a moment with your lens. Then, move out from there—through time, through space. Try not stay in one spot. Don't stagnate and bore your reader. You can go anywhere, any time. Think of chaos theory and the butterfly effect: if a butterfly flaps its wings halfway around the world, does it cause something else to happen on the other side? It doesn't matter. A butterfly flaps its wings on a dry stone at the edge of Otsego Lake's shore. In Seattle, a meteor lights the sky. Are these connected? It doesn't matter—they can both exist in a poem and, therefore, be connected. Or not. What else do you want to see? Pick up the camera and go.

### Activity

Using a place as a unifying principle, write a poem that creates a type of collage of events that happened in that place throughout time. For example, try a diner, a hospital room, a stage, a street corner, a schoolroom—a specific desk for that matter (third row back by the window) and create a series of moments that have taken place there using the zoom in, zoom out method.

## Use Active Verbs

Earlier I spoke about filters and how removing them can make your writing more energetic. Another way to add energy to your writing is to use active sentences and specific verbs. Verbs are amazing little things. They may be only one part of speech but they're the one that provides motion or stillness that define a subject or event. Verbs affect tension, energy, and pace. And just think about it: grammatically, a sentence cannot exist without one.

Of course, such is the way of the world: not all verbs are created equal. *To be* forms of verbs create passive sentences, which slow down the pace, zap energy from writing, and tend to create generalized images. They add unnecessary syllables to an art form whose purpose is to be concise and condensed. They appear as the following:

Present Tense

- I am, We are
- You are, You are
- He/She/It is, They are

Past Tense

- I was, We were
- You were, You were
- He/She/It was, They were

Progressive Form

- I am being, You are being, He/She/It is being

Perfect Form

- I have been, You have been, He/She/It has been

Here is an example of a sentence that uses the *tobe* forms of *wash* and v*acuum*:

*I was washing the dishes while my brother was vacuuming the carpet.*

And here is that sentence rewritten with active verbs:

*I washed the dishes while my brother vacuumed the carpet.*

Notice how the change creates a sentence with more stresses thereby creating more energy.

A passive sentence that places the emphasis on the milk:

*The milk was spilled by Hector.*

An active sentence that focuses our attention on the subject's action:

*Hector spilled the milk.*

Though passive sentences have their place and create their own effect by shifting emphasis from the subject to the object, generally they should be used sparingly.

## Discussion

Read Dorianne Laux's poem "The Shipfitter's Wife" and take note of her verbs. Make a list of them. What do you notice? What is the effect of these verbs on the poem's experience? Now, change those verbs to *tobe* forms. What else changes?

In addition to using the active forms of verbs, experienced poets use a wide variety of verbs in their writing. As you revise, don't settle on the first verb you think of; every verb can offer something different. For example, did the little girl *look* out the window at the deer? Or did she gaze, peer, stare, glance, glimpse, notice, or behold? All of these words produce a slightly different meaning and music.

When revising your poems, a thesaurus can be a useful tool when expanding your vocabulary.

## Anglo-Saxon vs. Latinate Diction

The English language is a combination of Latin and German. As you begin to expand your vocabulary by experimenting with different verbs that make your images more specific, keep in mind that for a poet, short and succinct Anglo-Saxon verbs work best rather than Latinate, multi-syllabic verbs. Though all words have their place, those Latinate, so-called "SAT words" or "ten-dollar words" slow down your reader. They are intellectual rather than physical; of the mind rather than of the body. Anglo-Saxon words tend to be shorter and more concrete, whereas Latinate words tend to be longer and more abstract:

| **Latinate** | **Anglo-Saxon** |
|---|---|
| Masticate | Eat |
| Abdomen | Tummy |
| Inquire | Ask |
| Disclose | Tell |
| Cognizant | Aware |
| Excrement | Shit |
| Precipitation | Rain |

Think about how and when you hear these words. If you stub your toe or slam your finger in a car door, I bet most of the words you say would be monosyllabic and Anglo-Saxon rather than multi-syllabic and Latinate. The shorter words are more immediately felt, whether exclaiming them or reading them. When people become excited, their words shorten and the pace of language quickens. There is more urgency and more energy—what we want in our poems.

I have, in the past, had students worry that their poems will be too remedial if they stick to shorter words. Though there is nothing

wrong with a reader having to use a dictionary on occasion, and I would never use the phrase “dumb-down” to describe the poetry writing process; remember that creative writing is the land of images. We want our readers to forget they are reading. We want them to experience a poem through their senses. Poems are condensed moments of an experience meant to be taken in as a whole; all at once, in a way, no matter the length of the poem. We want the words on the page to translate into images in the mind’s eye quickly; therefore, big, academic words are usually not the diction of choice in poetry.

### Activity

Choose a poem from this book or the Poetry Foundation and change Anglo-Saxon words into Latinate words. What difference do these new words make to how you experience the poem?

## Figures of Speech

Figurative language uses words or expressions not meant to be taken literally. Whether you realize it or not, we encounter them every day. When we exaggerate we use **hyperbole**: *I’m so hungry I can eat a horse*; when Rhianna sings about *stars like diamonds in the sky* she uses **simile**; when we say *opportunity knocked on my door* we are using **personification**. In addition to making our conversations interesting and capturing our intense feelings, figurative language is very important to the making of poetry. It is a tool that allows us to make connections, comparisons, and contrasts in ways that produce insight, raise questions, and add specificity. Earlier we worked to make words more specific. We changed *apple,blue* and *boat* into *goldendelicious*, *turquoise*, and *sailboat*. The changes made the images more immediate and sharper and offered the reader opportunities to understand the poem. Figures of speech are the next step to adding layers to your poems, to adding even more complexity and meaning.

### Types of Figurative Language

Figurative language, often the comparison made between two seemingly unlike things, is almost all image-based and, therefore, a good friend of poetry. In fact, some, like Owen Barfield in his essay on metaphor, would go so far as to say that poetry *is*metaphor:

The most conspicuous point of contact between meaning and poetry is *metaphor*. For one of the first things that a students of etymology—even quite an amateur student—discovers for himself is that every language, with its thousands of abstract terms, and its nuances of meaning and association, is *apparently* nothing, from beginning to end, but an unconscionable tissue of dead, or petrified, metaphors. If we trace the meaning of a great many words—or those of the elements of which they are composed—about as far back as etymology can take us, we are at once made to realize that an overwhelming proportion, if not all, of them referred in earlier days to one of these two things—a solid, sensible object, or some animal (probably human) activity. Examples abound on every page of the dictionary. Thus, an apparently objective scientific term like *elasticity,* on the one hand, and the metaphysical *abstract* on the other, are both traceable to verbs meaning “draw” or “drag.” *Centrifugal* and *centripetal* are composed of a noun meaning “a goad” and verbs signifying “to flee” and “to seek” respectively; epithet, theme, thesis, anathema, hypothesis, etc., go back to a Greek verb, “to put,” and even *right* and *wrong*, it seems, once had the meaning “stretched” and so “straight” and “wringing” or “sour.” Some philologists, looking still further back into the past, have resolved these two classes into one, but this is immaterial to the point at issue.

“*Nihil in intellectu quod non priusfueriotin sense*.”

“Nothing in the intellect that was not previously in the senses,” wrote philosopher John Locke. In short, the way we know *anything* is through the senses—even abstract idea originates through experience gained through our bodies. And in the case of language’s origin, as explained above, it appears that all words, at their invention, referred to something concrete—an object or a specific action that evoked the senses. As we continue to use words, they evolve, for they live their own life. And when we use a word, we invite its history and permutations into its meaning. Of course, this is all way too much to think about at once in the writing process. But it is why writers revise and cross-examine their diction, thinking out what meanings the word may suggest. Language is *naturally* symbolic in origin, in its fabric. And an art that uses words cannot help but also have more meanings than just the literal.

The following types of figurative language are used most often in poetry:

- **Metaphor**—A direct comparison between two unlike things, as in *Hope is the thing with feathers* (Emily Dickinson, “Hope”).
- **Simile**—A comparison that uses *like* or *as,* as in *something inside me / rising explosive as my parakeet bursting / from its cage* (Bruce Snider, “Chemistry”)
- **Personification**—Human characteristics being applied to non-human things, as in *irises, all / funnel & hood, papery tongues*

*whispering little / rumors in their mouths* (Laura Kasischke, “Hostess”).

- **Metonymy**—When one thing is represented by another thing associated with it, as in *Thepen is mightier than the sword* (where pen stands in for writing, and sword stands in for warfare or violence).
- **Synecdoche**—When a part of something symbolizes the whole, or the whole of something symbolizes the part, as in *All hands on deck* (where *hands* stands in for *men*), or *Thewhole world loves you* (where *wholeworld* represents only a small number of its human population).

When we read such literary devices, our mind lights up a new pathway between the two things and we discover new ways of thinking about the relationship between these two things. We wonder, how is his love a red, red rose? But before we wonder, our senses have already made a connection. As we look closer at the poem, we begin to explore the idea more.

The following is a poem by Laura Kasischke. It contains numerous metaphors and similes:

## Confections

Caramel is sugar burnt

to syrup in a pan. Chaos
is a pinch of joy, a bit of screaming. An infant sleeping’s
a milky sea. A star

is fire and flower. Divinity
is beaten out of egg whites

into cool white peaks. Friendship

begins and ends in suspicion, unless
it ends in death. Ignite

a glass of brandy in a pan, and you’ll

have cherries jubilee: sex
without love’s sodden nightgown

before your house burns down. Music’s

a bomb of feathers
in the air
inthe moment before it explodes
and settles itself whispering
onto the sleeves of a child’s choir robe. And

a candied apple’s
like a heartache—exactly

like a heartache—something
sweet and red tortured to death

with something sweeter, and more red.

*Laura Kasischke, “Confections” from* Fire & Flower. *Copyright © 1998 by Laura Kasischke. Reprinted with the permission of The Permissions Company, Inc., on behalf of Alice James Books, www.alicejamesbooks.org.*

The poem begins with a sentence that mimics a metaphor—stating something is something else: *carmelis sugar burnt / to syrup in a pan*. It sounds like a metaphor, but it actually isn’t. Carmel actually is sugar burnt to syrup. Rather than a metaphor, the first two lines function as a definition, which sets the stage (note my own figurative language) for understanding how metaphors work in our minds, for whether definition or metaphor, we use the same structure: x is y; our minds equate the one thing with the other. In the poem this happens with carmel to sugar burnt to syrup.

In “Confections,” the opening definition that looked like a metaphor is followed by a true metaphor (or is it?). *Chaos is a pinch of joy, a bit of screaming.* We take this as metaphor, but because we do, it brings us back to the first sentence. If sentence two is figurative why isn’t sentence one? And if sentence one is literal, why isn’t sentence two? Both are structured exactly the same. Kasischke’s poem exposes the slipperiness of language and syntax: how we use them and interpret them. The poem asks us to examine closely the line between imagination and reality and the role language plays in sorting them out, or not.

The next two metaphors are more imagistic that the previous: *An infant sleeping’s / a milky sea. A star / is fire and flower*. While we couldn’t “see” the abstraction *joy* and could only hear *screaming*, we certainly see a milky sea, and we certainly see a star flaring as fire, and flower. The parallel of fire and flower is interesting because they are so different. A flower would not survive if it were ablaze in flames. Yet, Kasischke’s comparison between the star and fire and flower makes sense to us. It plays not on the science of heat, but on the images associated with fire and flowers—they both spread outward. So, we equate the shape and motion of a star with both fire and flower. Of course, like the comparison of carmel to sugar burnt to syrup, a star actually is a fire. Again, the poem engages our ability to hold two things in the mind at once—just as a metaphor does—only with the poem as a whole, these two things are the literal and symbolic nature of language.

## Discussion

Read the poem “Confections” and continue to discuss the effect of the figurative language. Explore the comparisons deeper: how is an infant a milky sea? How is chaos a pinch of joy, a bit of screaming? Continue through the whole poem and rank the effectiveness of each figure of speech.

When we use figures of speech in our poetry, we have the opportunity to invite a whole new layer of meaning into the poem. For example, returning to our *apple, blue, boat* exercise, we can use a simile or metaphor to invite images that affect the mood, tone, and meaning of our poems.

> *Golden Delicious Apple . . . the size of a fist*

The image of the fist introduces an element of violence or determination into the poem. How would the effect of the metaphor be different if we changed it?

> *The Golden Delicious apple was one of Zeus’ coins in that child’s hands.*

What ideas does this metaphor bring to mind that is different from a fist?

Now let’s look at the next example:

> *Turquoise blue . . . like the sky on your wedding day*

We sense a happy mood with the mention of wedding, usually. The fact that it is the sky to which the color is being compared lends a cosmic quality, something larger than us, something natural and yet familiar. Let’s try something else:

> *Turquoise blue like a young widow’s eye shadow in winter.*

This description is sadder, chilling. The mention of widow and winter lends a clear coldness to the mood that a wedding day does not.

Lastly, let’s try the boat:

> *Sailboat . . . with ripped white sails waving in surrender.*

Similar to how Kasischke compared chaos to joy, one thing we can do is introduce abstract ideas like *surrender* when they are strongly supported by and partnered with concrete images that balance them out. In this case, the boat, sails, and waves are physical enough to hold up a word like *surrender*. If we didn’t want to use an abstraction but still wanted to introduce the idea of surrendering we could just build the image:

> *Sailboat with ripped white sails waving its shreds in the wind.*

Figurative language allows us to use concrete language to relate abstract ideas.

**Featured Poet and SUNY Brockport graduate Mike Dockins and his Favorite Metaphor Exercise**

THE FISHTANK OF RAGE

Goal: What we are essentially creating with this exercise are “implied” or “submerged” metaphors, where, in this case, the concrete object is never mentioned explicitly, but only implied by its descriptions.

PREP / MATERIALS

Prepare a whole bunch of little index cards: one pile consisting of concrete details (skyscraper, waterfall, volcano, etc.) and the other of abstractions (fear, loneliness, joy, etc.). Dockins says he uses emotions specifically rather than other abstract concepts such as capitalism or knowledge. For a quick list, see the appendix in the back of this book.

ROUND 1

In this first round, each student gets two index cards, one concrete and one abstract, and the first thing they do is “re-write” the name of their game. So now instead of “The Fishtank of Rage,” they have “The Dagger of Fate” or “The Cocoon of Grief.” At this point, do not worry about all the rules (see below), but, rather, describe the abstraction in terms of the qualities of the concrete object, not the other way around. For example, “A cocoon was sad because somebody died” is getting things backwards. The statement should actually be “Grief is somehow like a cocoon,” and the question for you to answer is, “How so?” How is grief like a cocoon? Well, grief is confined to a small space, but in time can break out of its shell. Something is alive inside of grief. Grief is fragile, etc. Take just a few minutes and brainstorm as many such short sentences as possible, and then we share a few. Be careful not to over-literalize: “When grief opens up, a moth flies out”— the idea in fact is to create metaphors. So, you should think imaginatively, creatively.

ROUNDS 2, 3, ETC.

In Round 2 and beyond (you can do as many rounds as you like), select new combinations of cards. Complete the steps described in Round 1 with your new words and share your work with each other.

Make sure that you consider *all* aspects of the concrete object. Make sure to not be too inflexible in your thinking — for example, if you only think of the object’s size and shape. Think about how your object changes, and what associations we have with it. For example, a balloon can be a certain color and size and shape, but it can also inflate, deflate, pop, and fly away from you. It can also symbolize celebration, birthdays, hospital visits, etc. Or, a volcano isn’t always erupting. It spends much of its “life” in dormancy, and should give us a feeling of awe of the passage of time. Plus, it can be dangerous but also beautiful.

THE RULES / GUIDELINES, IN SHORT

1. Write several separate sentences, as opposed to one long continuous little story.

2. Describe the abstraction in terms of the concrete object, not the other way around.

3. Do not mention the concrete object directly.

4. Do not be overly literal.

5. Consider any and all of the object’s qualities and associations.

6. You’re essentially creating metaphors, so be creative! Be imaginative! Be profound!

## Clichés

One of the reasons why Laura Kasishcke’s poem “Confections” is so successful is because of its originality. When we read about how a star is fire and flower, or how a “baby sleeping’s / a milky star,” we are taking things in through our senses that we have not before; we are forming new connections between things in our minds. One of the dangers of using figurative language in our writing is relying on **clichés**, or *word packages*, that have lost their evocative effect. Rather than startle our senses alive with new connections, clichés roll over us numbly, failing to spark an image in our minds. They are the walking dead of language.

One way to avoid clichés is to not use a phrase if you’ve hear it before. If you’ve heard it in a song, don’t use it. If you’ve heard it

on a television show, don't use it. The following is the first half of common clichés. See if you can complete the phrase:

Cold as_____.

Hot as_____.

Blind as a _____.

Faster than a _____.

You are the apple of _____.

It's likely you were able to fill all of these in. Here are the answers:

Cold as ice. Hot as hell. Blind as a bat. Faster than lightning. You are the apple of my eye.

Rather than bringing an image to mind, notice how the words stay distant. They do not succeed in engaging your senses. They have become conceptual instead of sensory. When you have a cliché in your writing, the reader disengages from the poem's experience. To fix clichés, there are two main remedies:

1. Say what you mean. Eliminate the figurative language and be literal, direct. Instead of saying *I'm at the end of my rope*, say *I am frustrated and impatient*.
2. Rewrite the expression by expanding descriptive language. Instead of *He took the bait*, explain in detail and images what the bait is and how he took it. For example:
    - When Marty's wife asked him to run to the store for milk, Marty said sure and pulled the keys to the truck out of his pocket. The trip would give her enough time to sneak the cake in from the garage and plant 45 candles into its sweetness.
3. Freshen up the figurative language by inventing a new metaphor. Instead of *quiet as a mouse*, why not find something else quiet that reflects the poem's original subject? *Quiet as a pitchfork on Easter morning*.

For a more complete list of clichés, see the following web sites:

- http://www.clichelist.net/
- https://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/figures-similes-list.htm

You may also wish to check out some "Chandlerisms" online. Chandlerisms are novelist and screenwriter Raymond Chandler's playful turns of phrase and spoofs on **clichés.**

## Activity

Go back to one of your poems and find places where the language is stale or clichéd. Apply each of the above remedies to each cliché to invent options for a fresher read.

## Activity

Write a poem composed entirely of clichés.

## Activity

Rewrite the following clichés into fresh figures of speech:

- Home is where the heart is.
- Only the good die young.
- An eye for an eye.
- He has his head in the clouds.
- Clean as a whistle.
- Tough as nails.

## Activity

Mix and match clichés:

- Home is where the good die young.
- Clean as the heart is.
- Tough as an eye.

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# 2.18: Voice

## Chapter Four: Voice

The speaker is the bridge between the poem's experience and the reader, and similar to language, when it works best, it becomes invisible, cemented to, part and particle of the poem's experience. Tone of voice is responsible for creating trust between the reader and the speaker, in seducing the reader to lose him or herself in the experience; it is responsible for letting a reader be enraptured by the poem.

In the introduction to the *2006 Best American Poetry* anthology, the judge for that year, poet Billy Collins, explains the key role that a poem's tone of voice played in determining which poems to place in the pile that left him "cold" and which poems to place in the pile that caught him "in their spell," those that he would eventually consider for inclusion in the collection. Collins begins by elucidating how the voice of a poem took on a bigger role once Modern poetry began to experiment with free verse:

> Once Walt Whitman demonstrated that poetry in English could get along without standard meter and end-rhyme, poetry began to lose that familiar gait and musical jauntiness that listeners and readers had come to identify with it. But poetry also lost something more: a trust system that had bound poet and reader together through the reliable recurrence of similar sounds and a steady dependable beat. Whatever emotional or intellectual demands a poem placed on the reader, at least the reader could put trust in the poet's implicit promise to keep up a tempo and maintain a sound pattern. It is the same promise that is made to the listeners of popular songs. What has come to replace that system of trust, if anything? However vague a substitute, the answer is probably tone of voice. As a reader, I come to trust or distrust the authority of the poem after reading just a few lines. Do I hear a voice that's making reasonable claims for itself—usually a first-person voice speaking fallibly but honestly—or does the poem begin with a grandiose pronouncement, a riddle, or an intimate confession foisted on me by a stranger? Tone may be the most elusive aspect of written language, but our ears instantly recognize words that sound authentic and words that ring false. The character of the speaker's voice played an indescribable but essential role in the making of those two piles I mentioned, one much taller than the other.

It is interesting that Collins refers negatively to the "voice of a stranger" as aren't all speakers of poems strangers to a reader? We do not know the poet, so how can we possibly know the speaker? Yet here, Collins suggests that there is something in us that does know something of the speaker, some credibility that "sounds authentic" rather than "ringing false," and this has more to do with tone of voice than subject matter. After all, who believes someone who doesn't sound trustworthy? It is like watching a play with bad acting—you can't lose yourself in the story or character, you cannot transport, you cannot release yourself to get "caught in its spell." We have trouble trusting our senses and giving our time to the speaker without suspicion, which acts as a barrier between the reader and the experience. It is similar to what poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge called a "suspension of disbelief," in a sense: We need to be willing to be wrapped up in a poem's experience and if we're untrusting than we're not willing. Tone of voice develops from the many moves a poem makes and can be considered, in another way, the *stance* the speaker takes, the relationship between the subject matter and the speaker.

## Trust vs. Truth

How do we gain someone's trust? We can build a reputation if we're, say, a journalist or reporter. We can create a history of trust with a friend or spouse by being reliable. We can plead and swear on a Bible like we do in courtrooms, but even then there's no guarantee someone is telling the truth. Maybe you remember from your childhood or teenage years what you needed to do to be believed even if you were fibbing. Much of it had to do with details. The more specific the details of a story, the more convincing the story. If we look at film and television, we see entire narratives based on deceit and maintaining a lie. The AMC hit series *Breaking Bad* followed the life of Walter White who had to constantly work to keep his family from discovering that he was involved in the world of crystal meth. In the 1998 film *Shakespeare in Love,* Gwyneth Paltrow's character dresses as "Thomas Kent" in order to audition for a performance in which women are prohibited to perform. And in *Ferris Beuller's Day Off*(1986), Ferris has to deceive his family and teachers in order to keep from being caught for skipping school—after deceiving his mom by convincing her he was too sick to go to school. Alternatively, in the 1979 Monty Python classic *The Life of Brian*, poor Brian Cohen, born on the same day as Jesus, cannot convince anyone he is not God's only holy son. We can ask how these characters convince other characters (or not) of their stories, but the real question in regard to creative writing is more along the lines of why are we *the audience* so lost in these characters lives and swept up in their stories? And how can we, as the speaker of a poem, make our audience feel with that same intensity when they read our poems?

Like the stories in these movies, poems do not have to be factual or even based on fact to earn the trust of a reader and ring true. The experience poems create can be either real or entirely made-up. The speaker must simply, as Billy Collins says, "sound authentic." The truth of a poem, like the truth in a short story or novel, need not be based on the author's experience; it simply need be an experience that convinces us to lose ourselves in it and the voice that tells it.

## Don't Try to Sound Poetic

One of the mistakes I see beginning writers make frequently is using archaic or unnatural **diction**, or word choice, in a poem. Words like *amongst, thou, thine, hath, thee, thyself,* or adding an *–eth* to a verb: *stoppeth, handeth,* etc. Archaic words like these standeth out as thy sore thumb. They are of a different time and generation. When we use them it feels to the reader as though we are putting on a cloak, disguising ourselves, creating a voice that is untrustworthy—again, not because the story may not be true, but because it sounds like the speaker isn't real. When we write, whether we write as ourselves or as someone we are pretending to be—like acting—we must sound like a real person.

Some of the thinking that is behind the use of archaic diction is that we feel that we need to sound poetic, so we use words that we are used to thinking of as being poetic. But the truth is that the reader comes to the poem wanting to be surprised by new uses of language, its music, its imagery, wanting to connect to a real speaker. Unfortunately, most high school English classes expose students only to writers who are no longer alive, who wrote at a time when poetry was expected to be formal in form and tone. We read Shakespeare, the British Romantics like Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Victorians like Robert Browning, and other writers from the 19th and 20th centuries neglecting the fact that today the United States is home to a thriving poetry scene and network of publishers. According to R.R. Bowker, over 10,000 new books of poetry were published in 2012. After the push by 19th-century poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge, and by 20th-century poet Walt Whitman to write poetry that reflects the "common man" and common experiences, contemporary poetry's dominant style shifted to a poetry that possesses a less formal, distant, or elitist tone. Pick up a literary journal or book of poems today and you will find poems that are conversational, friendly, confessional, reflective, meditative, or serious, but what they all contain is a speaker who is knowable, or as Collins explains, *authentic*. Of course, there are many schools and styles of poetry. Language poetry, for instance, isn't interested in a speaker's voice or expression, but rather places more of an emphasis on the reader's interpretation of how language is creating meaning in and of itself. A reference guide to schools of poetry can be found at The Poetry Foundation's fine web site.

Part of the advantage of writing poetry in college is being able to expose yourself to new poets, living poets, including most likely the professor teaching this class. Do yourself the favor of reading widely and generously and you will see how many more ways of speaking and writing there are. Expand your repertoire. Ask your professor and other poets you hear read to make recommendations. Who should you be reading? What's their newest favorite book of poems? Who are they excited about?

When you begin reading more poets, you will discover many ways of writing that you will want to experiment with. Don't worry about sounding like other poets or imitating someone else's style. This is another popular concern of beginning writers and it is, like worrying about finding your voice, completely unnecessary. Several writers and artists have said something akin to "Good writers borrow, great writers steal." This isn't implying you should plagiarize. Just that we build upon the shoulders of others and then we stand up tall ourselves. It's unavoidable for others to influence us and inspire us—in fact, this is what we want as artists. Take in as much as you can and let it roam around and settle in your brain like compost. You will change it unconsciously into what suits you, what you need, and you will grow from it. And then, when you sit down to write your own poems, to thine own voice you will be-eth true.

## Balance Sentimentality and Emotional Risk

Without emotional risk, a poem can lack tension, energy, and lose the chance of producing insight. If a speaker isn't risking something in a poem, then why is it being written? It's like getting into a car and driving nowhere. The poem is the vehicle we climb into as a reader and we want the driver to take us somewhere. Whenever we express ourselves and share our feelings, just as whenever we hop into a car and drive, we take a risk. A risk of being rejected, criticized, not believed. Expressing our true feelings makes us vulnerable and feel exposed just for that reason: because whether it's love, anger, confusion, or joy, expressing how we feel *exposes* us and opens us to other people's reactions. Being a feeling, thinking human is full of risk. In poetry, our aim is to bottle that risk in a condensed way and deliver it through a speaker to a reader.

William Wordsworth referred to a poem as "a spontaneous overflow of emotions … reflected upon in tranquility." His definition suggests that a poem contains two possible sources of tension: one triggered by the poetic event (either real or imagined) that caused a surge in sensual and emotional intensity almost like a chemical reaction; and a second source (either real or imagined) that transpires when the speaker applies reflection, thought, or ideas to the first event and the reaction. The second part takes

place after time distances an intellectual perspective from a frenzy of emotions. There is what we can call the first occasion for the poem—the event and the instantaneous reaction of the body—and then the second occasion: the speaker's reflection which aims to make meaning of it all. In the first part, tension is caused by what could be considered a chemical reaction between the event and the speaker's reaction; and in the second part it is a speaker's thoughts, ideas, reflections which can cause tension. At one of these two points of entry, there must be some form of duality or complexity. If the poem arises from the first part, the poem will tend to be dramatic or *narrative* and focused on the sequence of events. If the poem arises from the second part of the equation, the poem will tend to be *meditational* or *lyric*, focused on the poet's thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. Either way, the poem must still contain concrete, detailed images which anchor the sentiment of the speaker to an event, for if there isn't the anchor, the poet risks drifting off into a world of oversentimentality.

Beginning writers, attempting to instill intensity in a poem, often lapse into *oversentimentality,* exaggerated or overly simplistic emotions without just cause for them. As Oscar Wilde wrote, "A sentimentalist is one who desires to have the luxury of an emotion without paying for it." Oversentimentality results in sappy, clichéd writing, and an inauthentic voice. *Sentiment,* a speaker's emotional state, is not the same thing as oversentimentality. All speakers have some sort of emotional stance, or sentiment, in a poem—in fact, sentiment is required to produce a knowable speaker to whom a reader can relate. And this sentiment—this abstraction we as readers will be made to feel—must arise from the concrete particulars that justify the level of emotion produced.

In the following examples, the poem falls victim to oversentimentality:

1. When I found out about Charlie's new girlfriend, it felt like my heart exploded into a billion pieces. I cried so much I thought my tears would drown me. I would never love again.
2. The poor, innocent, homeless boy tugged at my skirt. It wasn't his fault he had no shelter, but the cruel winter and its roaring wind didn't care about the fragile boy's body or soul. It howled like a demonic coyote about to devour a frail fawn smelling delicate flowers for the first time.

Many times oversentimentality results from a focus on telling rather than showing, as is the case with the first example which tells us what the speaker was feeling rather than show us through actions or descriptions. The image of the heart bursting into a billion pieces is cliché and is used in place of a fresh image. The word "never" is extreme and unbelievable. In fact, when we write we want to avoid words with ultimatums as such—final, never, always, all, none. Usually they are simply not true and difficult to imagine.

In the second example, the writer uses extensive images to play on the reader's emotions. Note the use of adjectives—small, innocent, cruel, poor, demonic, fragile, delicate. Remember adjectives tell instead of show. The example is so over the top that as readers we begin to feel emotionally bullied by the writer.

So, what to do? You cannot have a poem dodge sentimentality entirely; otherwise, your speaker will be robotic. But, one must be careful not to indulge in extremities and exaggeration either. There is a balance between the solipsistic rant, complaint, or laud and the raw, sarcastic, angry expression: for example, "Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb" (Ginsberg); "Boy, do I love America" (Dockins); "I hate them as I hate sex" (Gluck). It's all about balance and anchoring the sentiment in concrete images and daring to expose a speaker or character's vulnerability, their humanity.

## Use Contrasts

To balance oversentimentality and emotional risk, take a cue from fiction technique and try to work in contrasts to maintain balance. If a character is a mean, selfish person, try to find or invent an occasion in his life when he was vulnerable. If a character is generous and giving, try to find or invent a time when she wasn't. The contrasts will add tension and complication and make the character or speaker seem more human. You can see this contrasting and complicating approach made successful in film, television, and fiction where sometimes the main character may be despicable, but we readers or viewers can't help but feel pity, empathy, or some sort of hope for him or her. In *Breaking Bad* Walter White is a selfish liar whose drug-making causes the deaths of numerous people, but when we see him hold his newborn, share a touching moment with his disabled son, undergo chemotherapy, or express over and over his reason for making meth—to support his family—we can't help but soften our criticism of him.

## Activity

Create a character that can be described as being one of the words in List A. Choose a word and create a list of ten images or actions that make the character such:

List A:

- Reliable
- Intelligent
- Athletic
- Generous

Then, create an event where the character does something that can be characterized as being one of the words in List B.

List B:

- Gullible
- Jealous
- Controlling
- Overly Indulgent

Alternatively, reverse the lists and create a character who is appalling but does something kind.

## Let Objects Become Symbols

When your poems confront a speaker's intense emotion, whether from a real or imagined experience, one thing you can do to stay grounded in real emotion is to turn to images and objects which can become symbols for emotion. Return to Jane Kenyon's poem "What Came to Me." Here is an example of speaker who feels an overwhelming sense of grief, but the poem focuses on the gravy boat and that drop of gravy to evoke emotions. The object becomes a symbol of grief.

When experiencing loss or healing from grief, what do people do? We often turn to people, objects, and actions for comfort—the company of our children, a cup of tea, handfuls of birdseed in the birdhouse covered with snow. At the same time, objects can deepen the grief—a pair of empty slippers under the bed, untouched knitting needles in a basket by the couch, the still mobile of stars and planets dripping from a nursery ceiling. These images set a mood for the poem and evoke emotions without the poet having to turn to abstractions and oversentimentality.

## Create Distance

When emotions run high, turn down the diction and distance the speaker from the emotion. Rather than rely on hyperbole to describe the overwhelming, indescribable sense of emotion, turn your camera's eye elsewhere, cool the feelings. Sometimes pulling away creates an odd contrast that makes the poem more emotional, as odd as that sounds. In the following poem, Kim Addonizio uses this approach:

**Eating Together**

I know my friend is going,
though she still sits there
across from me in the restaurant,
and leans over the table to dip
her bread in the oil on my plate; I know
how thick her hair used to be,
and what it takes for her to discard
her man's cap partway through our meal,
to look straight at the young waiter
and smile when he asks
how we are liking it. She eats
as though starving—chicken, dolmata,
the buttery flakes of filo—
and what's killing her
eats, too. I watch her lift
a glistening black olive and peel
the meat from the pit, watch

her fine long fingers, and her face,
puffy from medication. She lowers
her eyes to the food, pretending
not to know what I know. She's going.
And we go on eating.

*"Eating Together", from WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE: POEMS by Kim Addonizio. Copyright © 2004 by Kim Addonizio. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.*

For five lines, we interpret "going" as maybe implying that the friend is leaving for another appointment or going home. When the friend leans over and dips her bread into the oil on the speaker's plate, the action can seem like an inconvenience or intrusion. But the mood changes as we discover the friend is losing her hair and is eating as though she is "starving." We begin to put pieces together until we understand that what's "killing her" is cancer. Still, even with this knowledge, the tone of the poem remains distant, the speaker objectively describing the scene and actions through imagery. The food is described as "buttery" and "glistening," which gives the food beauty and a sense of indulgence. In contrast, the friend's face is "puffy from medication," which strikes us as being unnatural. Although the speaker never says the words "death," "cancer," "loss," "miss," or "love," the cool tone and images create these emotions in us as though the loss of her friend's life is so devastating that the speaker cannot bring it to words directly. Like the tone, she remains distant from the fact of her friend's impending death, which can be seen as the poem ends not on "She's going," but on "we go on eating." They go on eating as if nothing is different or wrong. They go on eating because that is life.

In a poem of the same title, Li-Young Lee also adopts a distant tone in the beginning that shifts midway to something warmer:

**Eating Together**

In the steamer is the trout
seasoned with slivers of ginger,
two sprigs of green onion, and sesame oil.
We shall eat it with rice for lunch,
brothers, sister, my mother who will
taste the sweetest meat of the head,
holding it between her fingers
deftly, the way my father did
weeks ago. Then he lay down
to sleep like a snow-covered road
winding through pines older than him,
without any travelers, and lonely for no one.

*Li-Young Lee, "Eating Together" from* Rose. *Copyright © 1986 by Li-Young Lee. Reprinted with the permission of The Permissions Company, Inc., on behalf of BOA Editions, Ltd., www.boaeditions.org.*

For the first five lines, the focus on food sounds almost like a menu description or a recipe. The speaker's tone is distant as we are given the images of food and who is eating. It isn't until we reach the eighth line that states "the way my father did" that we feel a sense of absence and longing. The next line surprises us in that the father only disappeared "weeks ago." We understand that this is a recent loss, and possibly death. The poem affirms that the speaker's father "lay down / to sleep," a metaphor for death. And that, further, he lay down "like a snow-covered road / winding through pines older than him, / without any travelers." The snow evokes cold and the death that comes naturally in winter, and the pines place the father in a world that the old and ancient occupy, alone "without any travelers." Yet, the poem ends with a tone of acceptance and satisfaction, an affirmation that the speaker's father is "lonely for no one." Though the speaker and his family feel loss, emphasized by the assonance of the emotional "oh's" in the last phrase: "lonely for no one," his father is content and "lonely for no one." This last phrase offers complex feelings, both uplifting in acceptance and painful with mourning. There are two worlds now—life and death—and being "lonely for no one" translates differently in each world. Like Addonizio's poem, Lee's poem doesn't contain the words "death," or "sadness." Only a cool tone that arises partially from the imagery produced by a speaker who stands outside the experience of the poem, the eye of the camera an observer rather than a confessionalist.

## Activity

Write your own poem titled "Eating Together" in which you rely on images and a distant tone of voice to evoke a strong sense of

emotion. Begin by thinking for five minutes about an emotional event you've experienced. This event could be anything as long as it affects your memory and emotions strongly. Then, write the poem without speaking about or referring to the event. Simply try to write a poem that details imagery related to the theme of "eating together." How do your memories cause you to charge the language?

## Your Voice

As readers and students, you may have heard someone refer to a writer and his or her "voice." In many situations, we are able to spot a seasoned writer's voice by noting the subject matter, diction, tone, form, and other aspects of style. It is similar to how we recognize a familiar voice in a crowded room, and then again, it is not the same at all. With writing we miss the timbre of a voice, the auditory sound as air jets pass the speaker's unique body and vocal chords. Still, in writing, there are many ways to use grammar, syntax, and style to create a "voice." Many young writers get caught up in the mission to find or discover his or her voice. But this is not such an important thing to worry about at any stage of writing—just write. Write about what you know. Write about what you don't know. Experiment. Play. Don't think, just write. Your style will naturally evolve, and if you write long enough, it might even change.

Your voice depends on a variety of elements that make up the poems:

**Subject Matter**: What do you write about? What don't you write about? Sharon Olds writes frequently about her father; William Heyen about the Holocaust; Mary Oliver about nature and animals. These subjects are not all that these writers choose to write about, but they do have a heavy, repetitive presence in their collections. What interests you and often becomes the focus of your poems? It's okay for these to change, too. William Wordsworth wrote about nature when he was young, and much more about God as he aged.

**Tone and Mood:** Are your poems serious? Humorous? Dark? Inspirational? When we read Billy Collins we expect to smile and laugh. How do your poems make us feel, generally?

**Diction:** Perhaps the most influential element that creates voice and tone is *diction*, a term we use for "word choice" or the vocabulary used in a piece of writing. There is a range of diction—formal, informal, conversational, slang—and the words we choose reveal the emotional coloring of the speaker and the stance of the speaker in relation to the subject. There are no two words that mean the exact same thing—regardless of what a thesaurus tells you; synonyms are simply related, not exact variants. At your little sister's recital, did she look cute in her costume? Adorable? Pretty? Sweet? Diction can also reveal a speaker's range of knowledge, education, culture, and regional influence. Do you say sneakers or tennis shoes? Soda or pop?

## Activity

Write a list of synonyms for the following words:

- Vulgar
- Obsolete
- Peeved
- Enthralled
- Picky
- Dizzy
- Grass

Then choose one of these lists and use your crayons to draw a series of images that fit each. What differences do we *see* in these "similar" words. What are the similarities? Next, translate your drawings into writing using concrete, detailed descriptions.

**Syntax and Grammar**: Working hand in hand with diction is syntax, which refers to the order in which words are arranged. We make decisions every day about diction, prepare for phone calls by deciding what to say and how. Syntax is *how* we deliver our thoughts. If we have to tell someone something important or participate in an intense or touchy conversation, we might even rehearse how we are going to say something to someone before we do. For example, what do you say when you break off a relationship or tell someone you can't make it to their wedding? We think about what we say, what words we choose, and how we deliver them to our intended audience. There's a difference between telling someone, "I don't think we should see each other any more" and "I don't love you." What we choose to say creates our character in more than one way. Some of what's related to syntax and grammar are sentence length, fragments, and active or passive voice.

**Types of Images**: Like subject matter, writers tend to favor certain images or image types. Read through Michael Burkard's collected poems and you'll find frequent uses of trains, rain, and shadows. Some poets' bodies of work are filled with birds, or flowers, or astronomical metaphors, or images of the body. What images do you gravitate toward? Do you frequently use similes or metaphors?

## Activity

Go through your poems and note any patterns of images. What do you notice? Make a list of similar images and sculpt them into a poem.

**Form**: By simply looking at a poem on the page we may be able to identify a poet. Emily Dickinson's short poems with stanzas and lines of equal length. Norman Dubie's willingness to mix different stanzas and line lengths—a couplet followed by a sextet (six-line stanza), followed by a single line that stands on its own. e.e. cummings's abandonment of punctuation and capitalization. Are there forms and structures you like to use? Do your lines tend to be long or short?

The combination of all these elements determines your style and contributes to the formation of your voice.

## Activity

Choose a poet you like and identify what patterns you see in his or her poems in regard to the above elements. What does the poet frequently write about? What images are used? Is the mood and tone similar in his or her poems? What forms are frequently used? Next, try to imitate this poet's style by rewriting one of your own poems to adopt the techniques. What different types of moves are you making that you normally don't?

## Persona

"A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence," wrote John Keats, "because he has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other Body." In a letter to his brother, Keats famously wrote of the concept of "negative capability," which he described as "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason." A type of cognitive dissonance, in which one can peacefully hold two opposing thoughts in the mind at once, Keats' negative capability is what allows us as poets to imaginatively and empathetically muse upon the subject of our poems, or to enter the world of another, to speak from an imagined experience as if it were our own. In a persona poem, the poet adopts the perspective of a character or speaker in a specific situation. The poet steps outside his or her own body and into the body of this imagined speaker.

Adopting a persona widens a poet's range of subject matter. It allows us to explore different subjects and points of view. Rather than only writing from our experience, we can invent a new character or speak from a person in history or in literature. In his book-length poem *Shannon,* Campbell McGrath speaks from the perspective of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's youngest member Shannon when he goes missing in the prairie for over two weeks. Based on history, McGrath fills in the events and details no one could ever know. Speaking as Shannon, he writes:

> The rest of the day the country shimmers
> In a haze, these buffalo
> Have no fear of me
> Their eyes loll & moon in the grass
> & I must shout to start them from my path
> & hurl a stick at one brute
> Oblivious as if I were invisible
> Or he aware of my absolute helplessness.

William Heyen, also inspired by history, in his book *Crazyhorsein Stillness*, speaks from many personas. In the following, he depicts the plight of the buffalo by writing in the voice of an anonymous man hired on the prairie around the time of the Battle of Little Big Horn:

**Job**

I liked picking up the skulls best.

I could fling a calf's by one horn
maybe twenty feet into the wagon.
It didn't matter if it busted—
in fact, the smaller pieces the better.
But a bull's skull took two of us
to twist it off its stem and lift it.
You each grabbed a horn,
or did it the smart way with a pole
through the jaw and an eyesocket.
All in all, it was good work,
but ran out, but you had the feeling
of clearing something up, a job
no one would need to do again.

*Copyright ©William Heyen "Job" is licensed CC-BY-NC-SA.*

Should you not be so ambitious to write a hundred-page persona poem, or a full collection based on a handful of specific characters in American history, consider writing from the voice of a character with your main focus on theme or circumstance. Here is poem by Traci Brimhall, whose poems in the book *Our Lady of Ruins* speak from the personas of multiple women ravaged by war:

**Our Bodies Break Light**

We crawl through the tall grass and idle light,
our chests against the earth so we can hear the river
underground. Our backs carry rotting wood and books
that hold no stories of damnation or miracles.
One day as we listen for water, we find a beekeeper—
one eye pearled by a cataract, the other cut out by his own hand
so he might know both types of blindness. When we stand
in front of him, he says we are prisms breaking light into color—
our right shoulders red, our left hips a wavering indigo.
His apiaries are empty except for dead queens, and he sits
on his quiet boxes humming as he licks honey from the bodies
of drones. He tells me he smelled my southern skin for miles,
says the graveyard is full of dead prophets. To you, he presents
his arms, tattooed with songs slave catchers whistle
as they unleash the dogs. He lets you see the burns on his chest
from the time he set fire to boats and pushed them out to sea.
You ask why no one believes in madness anymore,
and he tells you stars need a darkness to see themselves by.
When you ask about resurrection, he says, How can you doubt?
and shows you a deer licking salt from a lynched man's palm.

*"Our Bodies Break Light", from OUR LADY OF THE RUINS: POEMS by Traci Brimhall. Copyright © 2012 by Traci Brimhall. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.*

## Activity

Choose a character from history and write a dramatic monologue in his or her voice. Either conduct some research to position yourself in a particular event, or place the person somewhere you know very well—your college dorm room or dining hall, your childhood bedroom, a favorite hangout, at your neighborhood deli, on your town's Main Street or on one of your city's main avenues. Give the speaker a concern—what does the speaker want, fear, need right now? Describe what he or she sees. Do not worry about being factually or historically correct. Rather, just pretend to be the person: human, complicated, flawed. Consider writing a diary entry for the speaker.

Alternatively, pretend to be someone you know well—a sibling, a friend—and place him or her in a specific situation that you yourself have never been in. Write a poem in his or her voice.

Alternatively, choose a speaker who you have nothing or little in common with: a terminally ill cancer patient, a middle-aged mother of three who works at a department store, a baseball card collector. Then, conduct some research and find a way to enter the speaker's experiences.

## Point of View

When we write we do so using one of three points of view:

**First Person** ● I/We ● *I went to the store to buy milk.*

> Most poets begin writing in first person, taking their own experiences as subject matter. The first-person point of view is present in memoir, the personal essay, and in autobiography and it allows us to be very close to not only the speaker's observations, but also with his or her thoughts. This is the point of view used in a persona poem or a dramatic monologue.

**Second Person** ● You ● *You went to the store to buy milk.*

> When we use this point of view, we may be addressing a particular person in the poem, or we may be addressing the reader. We may even be talking about the speaker, attempting to make the reader imagine being the "I" which is really the "you." This perspective can make the reader a character and it can also create a deep sense of connection between the reader and the speaker.

**Third Person** ● He/She/It ● *Her daughter went to the store to buy milk.*

> From third-person perspective, we can control the distance from which we observe the character by being an omniscient, limited omniscient, or an objective observer.
>
> > **Omniscient**Toby fastened his seatbelt and looked out the passenger side window. His mother, worrying about being late for the match, blasted the gas. Toby squeezed his hands into fists. He didn't want to go. He thought himself better off at the playground. On the swings where he left her, Susan rebraided her hair. By the next day she'd forget what Toby had told her.
>
> The omniscient speaker is powerful and godlike. As you see in the example above, the omniscient speaker isn't limited by space or time. We can enter the thoughts of all characters—Toby, his mother, and Susan. We can be in the car, on the playground, and we can fast-forward to tomorrow. The omniscient speaker is flexible and can go anywhere, anytime.
>
> > **Limited Omniscient** Toby fastened his seatbelt and looked out the passenger side window. His mother, worrying about being late for the match, blasted the gas. Toby squeezed his hands into fists. His mother figured that he didn't want to go. But she didn't feel comfortable with him and Susan being unsupervised at the playground—especially with how much "in love" he might be thinking he was.
>
> In this example, we are limited to Toby's mother's thoughts. We can observe Toby but we cannot enter his thoughts. As readers we ride alongside with Toby's mother, struggling as she does, experiencing what she does, discovering things only when she does. We are limited to her interpretations of the world—even if they are incorrect.
>
> > **Objective** Toby fastened his seatbelt and looked out the passenger side window. His mother blasted the gas. "Now we're going to be late," she said. Toby squeezed his hands into fists and rolled his eyes. Through the rear window, on the swings where he left her, he could see Susan rebraiding her hair.
>
> Here, the most distant of the perspectives, we can observe only what a witness could sense with his nose, ears, mouth, eyes, and skin. Any judgments we make must arise from the text and where the speaker directs our attention.

When you revise, try switching the point of view to see what difference it makes in the poem. If a poem is first person, try it in third. If it is objective, make it omniscient. The changes might alert you to new possibilities or make something stand out to you that didn't before. If you don't like it, you can always change it back.

## Activity

Revise one of your poems in three ways using first, second, and third person points of view. What differences do the different

perspectives make in your poem? What are the advantages/disadvantages in each?

### Psychic Distance

In addition to point of view, another element that influences voice in our writing is *psychic distance*, or how intimate a *narrator*, what we call a "speaker" in fiction, is to the subject. For us as poets, it's advantageous to consider the role of psychic distance in our poems, as well, since it affects tone.

In his book *The Art of Fiction*, John Gardner succinctly demonstrates differences in psychic distance, moving from farthest to closest:

1. It was winter of the year 1853. A large man stepped out of a doorway.
2. Henry J. Warburton had never much cared for snowstorms.
3. Henry hated snowstorms.
4. God how he hated these damn snowstorms.
5. Snow. Under your collar, down inside your shoes, freezing and plugging up your miserable soul...

In these examples, we see diction and point of view change tone and determine the distance from which we read the character of Henry. In the first example, Henry is just "a man," an unnamed figure in winter in 1853. With each subsequent example we take steps closer moving into Henry's thoughts and feelings and finally into Henry's body.

Just as it can be useful to experiment with different points of view in our poems, it can be insightful to try on different levels of psychic distance.

### Activity

Write a poem three different ways altering the speaker and his or her psychic distance. For example, write about a high school football game from the following perspectives: football quarterback; coach; newspaper reporter. Or about a car accident: driver; witness; police officer. Or at a restaurant: customer's five-year-old child; parent; server.

## Making Friends with Fictioneers

Although poetry and fiction are different in many ways, they do have points of intersection where mastering the skills of one can improve the other. Because it is so integral to narration, point of view is an aspect of writing that is more complex in fiction than it is for poetry. The same may be said of character; in fiction, the way a character changes is central to the form. But as different as they are, there are similarities and intersections where each genre's elements can benefit the other. For fictioneers, the attention paid in poetry to condensing language and making it musical can contribute to stronger prose. Likewise, some of the approaches our fictioneer friends use, particularly for point of view, character development, and setting are especially helpful for poets when thinking about persona/character, voice, and tone.

### Tips for Characterization, Burroway Style

In her classic text *Writing Fiction*, Janet Burroway lists tips for characterization that may be helpful for poets, too, when pinning down and developing a poem's tone and voice. One of the tips she provides:

1. If the character is based on a real model, including yourself, make a dramatic external alteration.

She suggests changing the color of your character's hair, or altering the gender. If we shift this advice to a poem's speaker instead of a story's narrator, we may alter more than just external appearances; we may alter memories, experiences, or stances, too. Just enough to give ourselves some distance where we can privilege the language instead of the facts.

Many beginning poets fall into the trap of writing directly from the facts of their own lives from which they refuse to deviate. Because the writer has chosen what to write about, or whom, the poem fails to grow organically, take risks, or create leaps and surprises. As Richard Hugo says, this type of poet is choosing to believe that "all music must conform to truth" rather than "all truth must conform to music." "One mark of a beginner," he writes, "is his impulse to push language around to make it accommodate what he has already conceived to be the truth, or, in some cases, what he has already conceived to be the form." If

you're writing about your Uncle Matt who is a recovering alcoholic, whose daughter is your cousin you sit with on the bus every day on your way to school, it is going to be difficult to give precedence to the language in the writing process, and instead, thoughts and adherence to facts will make the writing seem forced and contrived. Worst of all, you will shut down opportunities to give yourself over to imagination and create art.

To counter this impulse, Hugo suggests inventing a town populated with residents from which to write. The town is fictional, but it is derived from your experiences and your imagination. In your town, your Uncle Matt can become Louie the neighbor or Mrs. Stover the English teacher, thereby creating enough of a distance so you can feel free to imagine as you write and go where the music of language takes you.

Another tip that Burroway provides:

> 2. Know what your character wants, both generally out of life, and specifically in the context of the story. Keeping that desire in mind, "think backward" with the character to decide what he or she would do in any situation presented.

In the context of poetry, this advice works well for persona poems. If you're undertaking a persona and wearing a "mask" as a speaker, clearly you, speaking as that persona, should be a fully developed, complex human. If the persona is someone you know well, place that speaker in a situation you do not know well. If the persona is someone you've researched or invented, place that speaker in a circumstance you do know well. Always, some element of the strange and new for the poet will make for fresher writing. As Robert Frost has said, "No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader."

A third tip that Burroway provides is based on Aristotle's concept of "consistent inconsistencies," or conflicts within a character:

> 3. Identify, heighten, and dramatize consistent inconsistencies. What does your character want that is at odds with whatever else she wants? What patterns of thought and behavior work against his primary goal?

Complexity, complexity, complexity. When writing a persona poem, the voice should be based not on what the speaker *should say or think*, but on what the speaker potentially *would* say or think. Keep your writing surprising, and as Hugo says about language, don't be a bully!

## Who speaks? To Whom? In what form? From how far?

In fiction, these questions help a writer determine who the narrator is in a very precise way. The questions can also be useful in poetry to help us carve out a precise speaker and help develop a form. The following is based on the chart provided by Burroway in *Writing Fiction* with some alterations to make it more apt for poetry:

**Who Speaks?**

| **The Poet** | **The Poet** | **A Character** |
|---|---|---|
| In: Third Person | In: Second Person | In: First Person |
| Omniscient | "You" as Character | In: Second Person |
| Limited Omniscient | "You" as Reader | In: Third Person |
| Objective | | |

**To Whom?**

The reader, a character, the self

**In What Form?**

Dramatic monologue, narrative voice, lyric voice, meditative voice, prose poem, journal entry, letter, etc.

**At What Psychic Distance?**

Complete Identification versus Complete Opposition

If anything be taken from this chart, it is that a poet is offered a range of voices from which to speak. There are also different points of view to take, and even opportunities to speak as someone else, either real-ish or imagined, behind the mask of a persona. Experimenting with any of these can be fun and enlightening, and is highly encouraged.

## Actors are Fictioneers Too

In her book *Respect for Acting,* Uta Hagen distinguishes between representational actors and presentational actors. *Representational actors*, constantly aware of their physicality, try to act *like* the character. They make faces, speak, and move like they imagine the character would. *Presentational actors*, on the other hand, believe the way to best capture their character's essence is to find something about the character in themselves. The presentational actor embodies the character and takes risks in portraying him or her. Janet Burroway offers similar advice:

4. If the character is imaginary or alien to you, imagine a mental or emotional point of contact.

As poets, we strive to be presentational actors by finding ways to internally identify with the persona so we may portray him or her as convincingly human as possible.

To better embody your character, or in our case, our persona, Hagen provides a list of questions for the presentational actor to ask of his or her role:

Who am I? (Character)

What time is it? (Context, year, day)

Where am I? (Country, neighborhood, room, etc.)

What surrounds me? (Animate and inanimate)

What are the given circumstances? (Past, present, future and events)

What is my relationship? (To objects, characters, and events)

What do I want? (Character's immediate and superobjectives)

What's in my way? (Obstacles to objectives)

What do I do to get what I want? (Actions, words)

Notice how specific and concrete (country, neighborhood, room, etc.) the answers aim to be. It is much like writing when we position ourselves in our speaker's space and state. We need to feel situated in a very specific way before we can create concrete images for the reader. Hagen's questions are effective for not only acting, but for writing poetry, as well.

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# 2.19: Architecture

## Chapter Five: Architecture

In poetry, there are three units of architecture, or structure: words, lines, and stanzas. As with all forms of writing, words comprise the most basic level of form. But what makes poetry unique as a genre is **verse**—lines—which work as both a unit of sensibility and music. Lines assemble into stanzas, or "rooms" in Italian. Sometimes poems can have sections, too, where stanzas are confined yet relate to one another, and sometimes poems can break from line and stanza into what we call prose poems, which we will discuss later.

## The Line: Rows

Originally, poetry was used as a way to remember stories, which were delivered orally by a speaker or "the poet" to an audience. The units created *verse,* which in Latin translates to "line," "row," or "furrow," musical measures that were easier to remember. Poetry existed before writing; and even after writing was invented most people could not read. Poetry has been a way throughout human existence for people to pass on history, news, entertainment, and wisdom from one generation to the next. With the spread of literacy, the function of lines began to take on more complexity, increasing auditory and visual impacts. By the twentieth century, typeface allowed poets to place visual form at the center of their art.

It is apt that "verse" translates to "row" or "furrow," words we also use when speaking of gardens and farms (and also to the lines on our foreheads when we brood!). Think of each line of poetry you write as a row in your garden that is the poem. Every garden is different and the plants in it do not simply lie atop the surface; roots go deep and flourish from the nutrients in the soil. In a poem, those nutrients are the knowledge and emotions of the poet which, like in a garden, we do not see. Instead we see emotions and ideas transformed linguistically into imagery and music. In this analogy, words are the plants and flowers that the poet/gardener has chosen, and they are rooted into the earth, into history, into what came before. Words cannot detach themselves from their meanings and nuances. Each is a seed fallen from a mother plant. Poetry, the garden in which generations of words may flourish, gives opportunities for words to evolve. It is why the poet is known as the "keeper of language," giving words to the unspeakable, naming the unnameable.

In our gardens, the line is a unit of measurement different from that of sentences. A line can ignore syntax and grammar to create interesting effects. For instance, a line can end on a verb and suspend the object onto the next line. This move can increase speed, or the pace, of the poem, as the reader is propelled forward to complete the thought. The line break can also create an image or idea that can transform when the reader reaches the next line. For example, in Bruce Snider's poem "Epitaph," the word "alive" creates one meaning that changes with the turn to the next line:

> ... I could sense
> him down there, satin-lined,
> curled like the six-toe cat
> we'd found bloated in the creek, alive
> with lice and maggots.

As reader we think at first that the cat is alive, only to find that it is alive but with "lice and maggots." The effect comes from the use of an **enjambed** line, a line that does not end with punctuation. This enjambment is referred to as *hard* enjambment because it has so much of an effect and impact on the poem's reading. Enjambed lines can suggest complex meaning, create images or emphasis, and control the music, or **prosody**of the poem. In contrast, when a line ends with a form of punctuation, or with a complete phrase, we refer to those lines as **end-stopped**.

Deciding where to break a line can be determined by a number of things: rhythm, rhyme, emphasis, pace, or the way a poem looks on a page. Classic forms predetermine the form a poem takes, and include rules concerning meter, rhyme, and repetition. Some forms like the Shakespearian sonnet include the element of a turn, or a **volta**, in which there is a marked change in the speaker in thought, emotion, or rhetoric. Forms are fun to experiment with and assert pressure on the writer in interesting ways that result in surprises that wouldn't occur otherwise.

Today, most poetry is written in free verse, or *verslibre*in Latin, not requiring the poet to follow any prescribed rules of form. Robert

Frost famously referred to writing free verse as “playing tennis without a net.” And as you saw in the previous chapter, Billy Collins has noted the way free verse poems have come to rely on tone of voice to hold it together.

## Discussion

Do you tend to write in free verse or in classical forms? Why? How do you determine a line’s length and what belongs on it? Can one play tennis without a net?

## End-Stopped Lines and Enjambment

In the following poem, James Wright keeps his lines syntactically intact and uses almost entirely end-stopped lines. Read the poem via the Poetry Foundation.

The pauses at the ends of Wright’s lines are natural in speech and adhere to the formation of phrases, the units of sentences. Incorporating enjambment, Wright could’ve altered the music, meaning, and emphasis of this poem if he had started:

In the Shreve High football stadium, I think

Of Polacks nursing long beers in Titonsville.

You can see in this example how the speaker’s thinking is emphasized more than in the original because now the verb, “think,” falls at the end of the line. This formation also sets up a delay for the reader to find out what the speaker is thinking about. If this were the first line of the poem, we’d initially have more of a focus on the speaker and his thinking, his brooding. Instead, the first four lines of the original end with a place—stadium, Titonsville, Benwood, and Wheeling Steel. In addition, the punctuation enforces more of a pause at the end of the line than the break already does. We sense the separation of the places, yet their connectedness through the stanza that joins them, as well as the last line of the stanza which unites the Polacks, Negroes, and watchman through an action: “dreaming of heroes.” The collective action suggests that the speaker, part of this larger community, is also dreaming of heroes.

The only line not end-stopped with punctuation in the poem happens in the last stanza: “Their sons grow suicidally beautiful,” and this difference, as any change does, makes the line stand out. Even though there’s no punctuation, this line is not forcefully enjambed, as Wright continues to adhere to syntactical units:

> Possessive pronoun (Their)—noun (sons)—verb (grow)—adverb (suicidally)—adjective (beautiful)

And because he does, there is little if any jarring with the break to “At the beginning of October.”

Overall, the end-stopped lines and syntactical intactness of the lines moves the poem slowly, one step it seems at a time until it reaches its sum: “Therefore,” at which point the poem loosens its pace and speeds up just for a bit, as if the sons begin to “gallop” or run, as the line itself runs over into the next.

At the end of another one of Wright’s poems, “A Blessing,” enjambment is used to surprise the reader with an image that changes as the **penultimate,** or second to last, line gives way to the final line:

> Suddenly I realize
> That if I stepped out of my body I would break
> Into blossom.

The hard enjambment between “break” and “blossom” creates an initial image of breaking in which the tone is harsh, violent, a loss, a break in need of repair. But the last line changes the tone with the image of a body breaking into blossom rather than simply breaking.

In contrast to Wright’s poem, the following poem by Aimee Nezhukumatathil employs mostly enjambed lines that ignore syntactically complete units in this poem about the explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark:

**Lewis and Clark Disagree**

Because Meriwether ate the last berry

without consulting William. Because

the prairie dog only let *William* feed
it dried corn. Because the Nez Perce

gave one a necklace of purple quartz
and not the other. Because Osage oranges

gave Meriwether hives. Because a grizzly
chased William into an oak tree, left him

high for hours. Because “Someone” tucked
buffalo chips into Merriwether’s knapsack

when he wasn’t looking. Because after walking,
rowing, swimming, climbing, trotting, pulling,

cutting, all they really wanted was a name
for a fruit one found sour, the other, so sweet.

*“Lewis and Clark Disagree” from* Miracle Fruit*, published by Tupelo Press, copyright © 2003 Aimee Nezhukumatahil. Used with permission.*

The form is almost the exact opposite of Wrights’: ten enjambed lines followed by two end-stopped, then an enjambed line, then an end-stopped line. In this poem the lines break sometimes on the first word of the next sentence. If we were to layout the lines in terms of sentences, we would be left with an almost bullet-pointed list of reasons for why “Lewis and Clark Disagree” and they would look like this:

> Because Meriwether ate the last berry without consulting William.
>
> Because the prairie dog only let *William* feed it dried corn.
>
> Because the Nez Perce gave one a necklace of purple quartz and not the other.
>
> Because Osage oranges gave Meriwether hives.
>
> Because a grizzly chased William into an oak tree, left him high for hours.
>
> Because “Someone” tucked buffalo chips into Meriwether’s knapsack when he wasn’t looking.
>
> Because after walking, rowing, swimming, climbing, trotting, pulling, cutting, all they really wanted was a name for a fruit one found sour, the other, so sweet.

Because, because, because, because, because. Instead, verse allows Nezhukumatathil to tone down the repetition of “Because” while also allowing her to manipulate rhythm and layer meaning. Take, for instance, the following lines:

> … Because a grizzly
> chased William into an oak tree, left him
>
> high for hours. Because “Someone” tucked
> buffalo chips into Merriwether’s knapsack
>
> when he wasn’t looking. Because after walking,

The break after “left him” allows the image and idea of abandonment to linger before its meaning evolves into the complete thought “left him high for hours.” The next two lines use the break to emphasize the alliteration of “tuck” and “-sack,” which even continues beyond that couplet to the next with “walk.” “Walk” and “Tuck” also being verbs, we are propelled forward to the next line by action. As for meaning, we come to “tuck” and think: tucked what?

With lines, generally the first and last words will take on extra emphasis, and in “Lewis and Clark Disagree” they have multiple

effects. Some lines begin and end where they do to emphasize meaning: “left him” and “when he wasn’t looking” suggest tension that feeds back to the relationship between Lewis and Clark; abandonment and sneakiness aren’t marks of kindness. We read “left him” and think how terrible! We turn to “when he wasn’t looking” and think, oooooh sneaky.

Like Wright’s poem, this poem changes its pattern, moving from enjambed lines to end-stopped lines. The last sentence of the poem is strung out over four lines and arranged in a way so that the acoustics develop the feel of a burden or a long list:

> … Because after walking,
> rowing, swimming, climbing, trotting, pulling,
>
> cutting, all they really wanted was a name
> for a fruit one found sour, the other, so sweet.

Listen to how the rising pitch in the first line gives way to a list of actions that propels us into the penultimate line:

> . . . walking, [↑]
>
> [→] rowing, swimming, climbing, trotting, pulling, [a big pause]
>
> cutting

There is a long pause between “pulling” and “cutting” produced from the break of momentum in the list of actions. Nezhukumatathil could’ve placed all the verbs on one line to create an entirely different feel:

walking, rowing, swimming, climbing, trotting, pulling, cutting

But instead, in order to keep the inflection and pitch varied, she rearranges words on a line differently, regardless of their syntactical relationships.

### Activity

Choose a poem from the Poetry Foundation and erase the lines by placing the poem into complete sentences. Rewrite the poem experimenting with different line breaks. How much of a difference do your new lines make? What happens to tone? Images? Mood? Music?

## Stanzas: Rooms

Once the lines of our poem begin to find their length of breath, the next structural concern is how to break the lines into stanzas. In classic forms stanza lengths are predetermined. A **ballad**is written in quatrains, or stanzas containing four lines; a **roundel** has three stanzas; and a **villanelle** five **tercets**, or stanzas containing three lines. But in free verse, the poem’s stanzas are determined by the poet.There are no rules when it comes to deciding what kind of stanzas to use in a poem and usually any reason that seems to intuit itself to the poet is justification. The decisions are based on personal taste with consideration to how it looks on the page, how it affects rhythm and pacing, and what it emphasizes in the poem. Like many moves in poetry, stanzas should be organic to the poem and not feel forced or hokey. And like many of the techniques of writing poetry, knowing what to do comes with practice and fine-tuning our attention to language and the effects of poetic elements.

Like rhythm and line length, there is a nomenclature that permits us to talk about stanza length. These terms are used to speak about metrical verse, as well as free verse:

Couplet: a stanza of two lines

Tercet, or Triplet: a stanza of three lines

Quatrain: a stanza of four lines

Cinquain, or quintain, or quintet: a stanza of five lines

Sextain, or sestet: a stanza of six lines

Septet: a stanza of seven lines

Octave: a stanza of eight lines

## What Stanzas Do

There is no way around the fact that stanzas, which dictate the way space is used on the page, create unity and separation. Even if the motive is to break a poem into stanzas to make the poem easier to read on the page—a huge chunk of text can be intimidating and heavy—or even if the motive is to control the music of the language by adding longer pauses—breaking a poem into stanzas invites the ideas of division and unification into the poem.

Just like the rooms of houses, walls say "This is the den (let's relax!)," or "This is the dining room (no clutter allowed!)." Rooms help us create space and define the tone of that space. When I was young, my sister and I shared a doorway with no door. Our bedrooms flowed into and out of each other, but the walls still defined our own individual space. We were connected as siblings, could see into each other's rooms, but still had control over what we wanted in our private space. Like my childhood bedroom, stanzas in poems can suggest connection, or confine ideas, images, and sounds to their own space while still sharing the same roof. Punctuation and other devices in the last and first lines of a stanza suggest whether the doorway is open like mine and my sister's bedrooms, or whether it contains a titanium door.

There are endless ways to organize stanzas and infinite decisions that can be made in the process of doing so. Usually stanzas are built on more than one idea, for more than one reason (like all aspects of a poem). Lines are part of stanzas, and words are part of lines. These three elements—words, lines, and stanzas—work together to cause all sorts of effects from creating music to drawing parallels between ideas and images. There is no way to provide a comprehensive review of what stanzas do, but the following examples will offer a small sampling of what stanzas *can* do.

### Organize space and time

**To label the past, present, and future:**

> In a room full of books in a world
> of stories, he can recall
> not one, and soon, he thinks, the boy
> will give up on his father.
>
> Already the man lives far ahead, he sees
> the day this boy will go. Don't go!
> Hear the alligator story! The angel story once more!
> You love the spider story. You laugh at the spider.
> Let me tell it!
> (Li Young Lee, from "A Story")

In Lee's poem, the first stanza is delivered in the present tense and the second brings us to the future with "lives far ahead."

**To illustrate differences in location:**

**The Mile**

My grandmother crowns the hill,
her headlights lathing the dark,
a farm route

through rye then cotton
then the red and gold of wheat,
the scrub oak crowding

a little nameless river

where fog holds to low places.
Who would have seen the tractor

aimed down the highway by a boy
his first summer behind the wheel
with no lights but the holy

somnolence of a cowboy radio?
The next car over the rise
is my father

blind into the fog.
There is so much to talk about
at this moment,

so many lines of cause and effect
trembling taut into that gully.
How does my father choose,

with his mother's ribs broken,
his new wife moaning from the ditch,
to carry the limp body

of someone else's child
a mile over night fields
toward the insinuation of a roof?

Everyone is bleeding and starlight
drizzles over the summer wheat.
The poem holds them there

long enough to trace the flight
of an owl
from a cedar's black minaret

its wings underlit by brake-lights.
Which of you, dear reader,
is in the next Oldsmobile

to clatter over the bluff
shouting help into your CB radio?
Which of you opens the front door

weeping
to wrap your unconscious boy
in quilts? Do you kill

the man
who carries him?
In most endings I am never

born. In most,
you buy my family's farm cheap
at auction. Who among you

is rushing the ambulance
past the county line at mile 67
when the tire blows? The story

moves through telephone wires

at the pitiless speed of rumor:
when my father reaches the house

with the boy expiring in his arms,
a white rectangle of light
and grief

seers his eyes forever.
In the cave of my mother's
body

I listen to the first fire.

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Here, Sweeney's stanzas bring us on a journey. We move with the grandmother over the hill, then through the grain fields, then beside a river. The lack of punctuation between the stanzas unifies the locations and makes the transitions feel like one journey. Had punctuation such as periods been used at the end of each stanza, there would be a stronger sense of isolation:

> My grandmother crowns the hill,
> her headlights lathing the dark.
>
> A farm route
> through rye then cotton
> then the red and gold of wheat.
>
> Then, the scrub oak crowding
> a little nameless river
> where fog holds to low places.

## Indicate shifts in a poem's mode or voice

Stanzas can mark transitions between narrative and lyrical modes, descriptions and questions, and shifts in tone or perspective.

**A shift in voice or address:**

**Dinner Out**

We went to either the Canton Grill
or the Chinese Village, both of them
on 82nd among the car lots
and discount stores and small nests
of people waiting hopelessly
for the bus. I preferred the Canton
for its black and bright red sign
with the dragon leaping out of it
sneezing little pillows of smoke.
And inside, the beautiful green
half-shell booths, glittery brass encrusted
lamps swinging above them.

What would I have?
Sweet and sour?
Chow mein with little wagon wheel shaped
slices of okra and those crinkly noodles
my father called deep fried worms?
Fried rice?

Among such succulence, what did it matter?
We could eat till we were glad and full, the whole
family sighing with the pleasure of it.
And then the tea!
All of this for about six bucks, total,
my father, for that once-in-awhile, feeling
flush in the glow of our happy faces
and asking me, “How you doing, son?”

Fine, Dad. Great, really, in the light
of that place, almost tasting
the salt and bean paste and molasses, nearly
hearing the sound of the car door
opening before we climbed in together
and drove and drove,
though we hadn’t far to go.

*From* Gaze *by Christopher Howell (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, ). Copyright © 2012 by Christopher Howell. Reprinted with permission from Milkweed Editions. milkweed.org*

In each stanza we hear a shift in voice. The first opens in a narrative mode as we are given a place and time, a description of the street on which the restaurant the speaker and his dad go to eat. In the second stanza, the voice shifts into an interrogative mode, asking questions about what will be ordered. Though the third stanza also begins with a question, this is a different type of question than what is posed in the second stanza. Here, the voice becomes lyrical and introspective: “Among such succulence, what did it matter?” In the last stanza the voice shifts to answer the question posed by the dad in the end of the third stanza and in this way, the first line of the last stanza directly addresses the dad. In Howell’s poem each stanza is used to mark a slight shift in voice.

**A shift in thought or a resolution:**

> You are the bread and the knife,
> the crystal goblet and the wine.
> You are the dew on the morning grass
> and the burning wheel of the sun.
> You are the white apron of the baker,
> and the marsh birds suddenly in flight.
>
> However, you are not the wind in the orchard,
> the plums on the counter,
> or the house of cards.
> And you are certainly not the pine-scented air.
> There is just no way that you are the pine-scented air.
>
> It is possible that you are the fish under the bridge,
> maybe even the pigeon on the general’s head,
> but you are not even close
> to being the field of cornflowers at dusk.
>
> (Billy Collins, from “Litany”)

As in Howell’s poem, in Collins’ poem there is a shift in the voice’s pitch. But in “Litany,” the stanzas emphasize moves in the thought process that build upon the ideas established in the preceding stanza. You can follow these turns of thought by the transition words that begin them: “You are”...“However, you are not...” “It is possible that you are...”

## Create emphasis

**On individual images:**

**Passover: The Injections**

Clouds pass over, endless,
black fruit dripping
sap from the branches
of lightning.

We lie down in the field,
thousands of us,
never mind the rain.

Soldiers come toward us,
groups of three or four.
The wind opens their long coats.
Underneath, their uniforms are black.

They bend over to the babies.
The babies cry,
for a little while.

“We are living in Biblical times,”
a woman says.

*“Passover: The Injections”, from* The Candle: Poems of Our Twentieth Century Holocausts *by William Heyen. Copyright © 2016 by William Heyen. Used by permission of Etruscan Press.*

Rarely is there one reason for the way stanzas are arranged. In the above excerpt, the stanzas isolate images, but they also organize space and actions. Each stanza is end-stopped, further emphasizing the divide between the fields, the prisoners, the soldiers.

**On Enjambment**

Even the tumbleweed

is a stowaway sneaked in

with the grass seed, given

an easier-to-say name. It became

American. We are lonely

when it stumbles by, but it’s just

a weed. We made it

a thing sadder than itself,

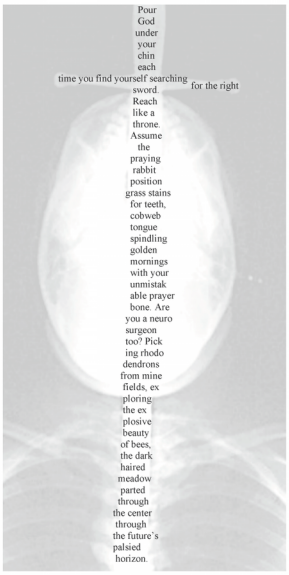
like a nursing home lunch.

(Bethany Schultz Hurst, from “Settler”)

The stanzas used by Hurst accentuate the way the enjambment affects images and sounds. Each stanza break makes the line break even harder. When we end the first stanza, we are left with the idea of sharing or giving something away. There is

connection: “Even the tumbleweed / is a stowaway sneaked in / with the grass seed, given.” It sounds thoughtful. It sounds like we are receiving—“given.” But moving to the second stanza, the meaning changes: “given // an easier-to-say name.” This happens again in the transition from the second to third stanzas with the meaning of “just” changing from the idea of justice or fairness—“but it’s just”—to something different: “but it’s just // a weed.” The beginning of both the second and third stanzas undercut the sentiment we are left with at the end of the preceding stanza and the way the stanzas are formed emphasize this change.

## Create an image with the words on the page




S.Marie LaFata-Clay, “Prayer Bone”.

## Draw attention to other patterns like repetition

In the following examples, one poem ends each stanza similarly and the other begins each stanza similarly:

**Age**

They grow ethereally, the wild
Roses on the graden-trellis:
O—silent soul!

The crystal sun grazes through
The cool vine-leaves:
O—holy purity!

With courteous hands an old man offers
Ripened fruit.
O—glimpse of love!

*Georg Trakl, trans. Stephen Tapscott, “Age” from* Georg Trakl: Poems*, Oberlin College. All rights reserved.*

> If you rub too eagerly
> and the head falls to your feet,
> you can hollow its skull
> and fill it with seeds.
>
> If the eyes are dull
> like your clay-covered fingerprints,

it's best to bend it to a turtle's shell
and fill it with water and hot stones.

If the mane starts to curl
like a hawk's talons
before it flies, bite your tongue,
and push the lion to the hearth.

(Tom Holmes, from "The First Potter's Advice")

As we go deeper into the craft of poetry the more we find elements to be connected. Stanzas cannot stand independently from choices made about music, line, and diction. Building on the components learned in this chapter, the next two chapters will introduce you to the particulars of sound and then some forms.

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# 2.20: Acoustics

## Chapter Six: Acoustics

Even before you were born, in your watery womb home, your body recognized patterns of sound. It began with the beat of your mother's heart, the swishing of her blood. Rhythm is primal. It is comforting, and it can be startling. When rhythms break, they wake us. When rhythms extend, we become entranced. Rhythm is integral to poetry and a mark of what poetry actually is. In learning to interpret poetry's structures and sound patterns, in free verse, our ears attune finely to tone, cadence, pitch, rhythm, and silence. In formal verse, we employ a particular language to help us talk about rhythm.

## Meter: Length and Rhythm

In metrical verse, lines can be divided into length and rhythm which we refer to as **feet**, and each foot's syllable into a **stress**. Each foot contains either two or three syllables (see below). You may have seen the symbols used to indicate this: ˘ ´ :the curve marks an unstressed foot, the slash a stress. In the following words, the first syllable is stressed and the second is not: **Te**nnis. **Fic**tion. **Mus**ic. In the following words, the first syllable is unstressed and the second is: Un**lock**. To**night**. A**gainst**. Using this method of dividing a poem's lines into feet and stresses is called **scansion.**

### Metrical Lines

Monometer: A one-foot line

| *Therefore*

Dimeter: A two-foot line

| *Therefore,* | *dolphins*

Trimeter: A three-foot line

| *Therefore,* | *dolphins* | *broke through*

Tetrameter: A four-foot line

| *Therefore,* | *dolphins* | *broke through* | *happily*

Pentameter: A five-foot line

| *Therefore,* | *dolphins* | *broke through* | *happily* | *and leapt*

Hexameter: A six-foot line. Also called Alexandrine when purely iambic.

| *Therefore,* | *dolphins* | *broke through* | *happily* | *and leapt* | *into*

Septameter: A seven-foot line

| *Therefore,* | *dolphins* | *broke through* | *happily* | *and leapt* | *into* | *daylight*

Octameter: An eight-foot line

| *Therefore,* | *dolphins* | *broke through* | *happily* | *and leapt* | *into* | *daylight* | *in a flash*

## Metrical Feet

Iamb ˘ ´ a light stress followed by a heavy stress

- and leapt

Trochee ´ ˘ a heavy stress followed by a light stress

- dolphin

Dactyl ´ ˘ ˘ a heavy stress followed by two light stresses

- happily

Anapest ˘ ˘ ´ two light stresses followed by a heavy stress

- in a flash

Spondee ¯ ¯ two equal stresses

- broke through

If we put these terms together, we can begin to scan lines:

Iambic tetrameter:

> Whose woods | these are | I think | I know
>
> His house | is in | the vil| lage* though
>
> (Robert Frost from “Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening”)

*Note that feet can break in the middle of words.

Iambic pentameter:

> The world | is too | much with | us late | and soon
>
> (William Wordsworth from “The World Is Too Much with Us”)

Trochaic Octometer:

> Once up| on a | midnight | dreary, | while I | pondered,| weak and | weary,
>
> Over | many | quaint and | curious| volume| of for| gotten | lore—
>
> (Edgar Allan Poe from “The Raven”)

Scansion contains many words that allow us to speak in a specific way about verse. When a line of poetry adheres to a pattern the poem has undertaken, it is called **pure**. But often poems are what we call **impure**. These poems break from the pattern—not to switch to a different meter, which can happen as the examples above show—but to alter the pattern altogether.

Impure Dactylic dimeter:

> Hickory | dickory | dock

Iambic trimeter:

> The mouse | ran up | the clock

In the above example, the first line is impure. Here is another example of an impure rhythm, but one that follows another named

pattern: **catalectic**:

Trochaic tetrameter:

> Tyger! | Tyger! | Burning | bright
>
> In the | forests | of the | night
>
> (William Blake from “The Tyger”)

These lines by Blake are catalectic because the final foot is cut off. It also contains lines that end with a stressed beat in what we refer to as a **masculine** beat. If the last beat were unstressed, we’d refer to it as **feminine**.

The art of scansion is both scientific and subjective. The specialty language allows us to examine poetry in a calculated way, but there are times when the degree of stresses sound different to different ears.

There are many good sources on scansion and I want here to simply provide the basic language you may use to speak about poems, and to understand the detailed rhythms of your own poems. Scansion can be useful in discovering where language goes slack by identifying words that produce less energy like prepositions. It can also allow you to identify places in poems that move you, allow you to hear what patterns you are drawn to as a reader and writer.

## Music and Rhyme

In addition to line length and rhythm, we also categorize lines by rhyme, especially in formal verse where an extended pattern is maintained. You, of course, have been rhyming from an early age. Children’s books written by writers like Shel Silverstein and Dr. Seuss have delighted both children and adults with their rhyming stories. Rhyme makes language memorable and pleasurable.

In both formal verse and free verse, rhyming is elemental. In formal poetry it occurs more frequently as **end-rhyme**, when two or more words that end lines rhyme. In free verse, the rhyme is more likely to be **internal,** not necessarily occurring at the end of lines.

Let’s take a look at an excerpt from William Wordsworth’s poem “The Daffodils”:

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

Here we can see the first and third lines rhyme; the second, fourth and sixth; the fifth and sixth. There is definite **rhyme scheme**. When we refer to the rhymes in this stanza, we diagram the rhymes with matching letters like this: ABABCC.

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

The letter changes whenever the rhyme changes, and whenever a new rhyme is introduced you add a new letter.

In the poem “They Feed They Lion,” rather than end-rhyme, Philip Levine utilizes internal rhyme. Read the first stanza via this link.

In this example, Levine uses rhymes that are both internal and slant or off rather than exact: sacks, black, shafts; butter, tar. Even the numerous occurrences of “out” paired with “creosote” creates a kind of slant rhyme. Here is another example:

> Not my hands but green across you now.
> Green tons hold you down, and ten bass curve

teasing your hair. Summer slime
will pile deep on your breast. Four months of ice
will keep you firm.

(Richard Hugo, from "The Lady in Kicking Horse Reservoir")

In this example, the second line contains a slant internal rhyme: "ten" and "ton," which also rhyme with "hands" in line one. These sounds are tightly woven and where there isn't rhyme, per se, there is **assonance**, similar vowel sounds, or vowel rhyme: green, tease, deep; and slime, pile, ice.

## Activity

Turn to the entire Levine poem "They Feed They Lion" and perform a close reading with your ears. Note places of assonance and rhyme. How do these patterns affect your reading of the poem? How do these sounds work to create the poem's tone of voice?

Like assonance, a term we use to describe vowel sounds, we also have terms that refer to the sounds that consonants make. **Alliteration**is a term used to describe a series of sounds consonants make at the beginning of or in the middle of words. In the following excerpt from "Shine, Perishing Republic," Robinson Jeffers employs several uses of alliteration:

While this A**m**erica settles in the **m**ould of its vulgarity,

Heavily thickening to e**mp**ire,

And **p**rotest, only a bubble in the **m**olten **m**ass, **p**o**p**s

And sighs out, and the **m**ass hardens,

I sadly re**m**e**m**ber that the **f**lower **f**ades to **m**ake

**F**ruit, the **f**ruit rots to **m**ake earth.

Out of the **m**other; and through the spring exultances,

Ripeness and decadence; and ho**m**e to the **m**other.

In these first two stanzas of the poem, Jeffers' use of **m**, **p**, and **f**, create three strains of alliteration. In addition to alliteration, we can further label the **f** sounds as an occasion of **consonance,** what Edward Hirsch defines as "the audible repetition of consonant sounds in words encountered near each other whose vowel sounds are different"—flower-fades-fruit: fow-fay-frew.

## Activity

The poet Mary Ruefle writes what she calls "erasure" poems where she will use white out to erase portions of—most of—a text to create her own poem. Find an old novel or purchase a book of prose at a book sale and try her approach. Choose to keep words you like the sounds of. Make chains of alliteration and assonance. Devote the next page to rhyme. Erase half words if you feel like it. You can also access digital versions of books made to disappear as you click away on the Wave Books web site.

# Line Length

If you simply browse the poems included in any anthology, you will see all types of shapes on the page. The length of the line is one of the most important decisions a poet makes about a poem, and the decision usually comes to define a poet's style. Robert Creeley's poems use short lines. C. K. Williams, long. Most poets write somewhere in between. The decision of how long to make lines can be driven by a number of factors, but mostly it is chosen by prosody, the musical component of the language that projects the speaker's voice and breath. As we've seen in the last chapter, where we choose to break lines also has a tremendous affect on the poem's tone and meaning.

One of the elements that determine line length is the character of the language in which you write. English contains many iambic patterns that often sound most right on a line between four and five feet long. Lines one foot long are barely poems at all; it is difficult to create tension or musical phrases with only two beats per line. Lines with four feet are frequently used to tell stories

as is the case often with Robert Frost's poems. Longer lines lend themselves well to conversational tones, like that of Denise Duhamel's, or in lyric poems like Larry Levis'.

Some poets like Allen Ginsberg and Charles Olson, who wrote about it in his essay "Projective Verse," considered a line to be a unit of breath. Olson writes:

> And the line comes (I swear it) from the breath, from the breathing of the man who writes, at the moment that he writes, and thus is, it is here that, daily work, the WORK, gets in, for only he, the man who writes, can declare, at every moment, the line its metric and its ending—where its breathing, shall come to, termination.

There can be no denial of the essential relationship between the poetic line and breath. Or between any carefully constructed writing and the pace at which it's read. Just look at Olson's passage and his use of commas, which causes us to stagger through the sentence.

Poetry is an oral art which comes fully to life when read aloud. Lines are instructions for how often and how long to pause. Like sheet music, the lines guide our pace, emphasis, and silence. If you were to read short-lined poems, however, taking a new breath at each line's start, you'd sound like a panting dog. So, there is some room for interpretation on Olson's assertion. Nonetheless, breath and line are intertwined, as you will see from the following examples.

As we read through these, note the different line lengths and their effects:

Here from this mountain shore, headland beyond stormy headland plunging

like dolphins through the blue sea-smoke

Into pale sea—look west at the hill of water: it is half the planet: this dome, this half globe, this bulging

Eyeball of water, arched over to Asia,

Australia and white Antarctica: those are the eyelids that never close; this is the staring unsleeping

Eye of the earth; and what it watches is not our wars.

(Robinson Jeffers, from "The Eye")

In this excerpt from Robinson Jeffers' poem "The Eye" we see the different affects long and short lines have on the breath. The first lengthy line full of images beyond the human—the headlands, the mountain, the shore, the dolphin, the smoke—in a long line like this we are given a sense of being overwhelmed as the images keep building and drawing out the breath until we are breathless. Compare this line to what follows two lines below: "Eyeball of water, arched over to Asia." If you read both out loud you can feel how the length changes the way you use your lungs: long breath, short breath. The effect of the shorter line is like a quick glance—the eye open from the Pacific coast to Asia.

## Activity

Click on the following link to take a look at the first four lines of Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl."

Knowing that Ginsberg considered a line to be a unit of breath, it is easy for us to read the lines the way they were intended. In Ginsberg's long lines we sense overwhelming frustration, exasperation, and urgency. There is the sense that the speaker has so much to say that he cannot contain himself, that he cannot take a breath deep enough to capture all of his thoughts. What happens when you read the last line here out loud? Try it if you haven't. What happens is that you need to speak quickly, and this creates a voice of desperation—perfectly appropriate given the subject matter of Ginsberg's great generational poem "Howl." The title itself, taken from a line in Walt Whitman's great poem "Song of Myself," reflects the tone that Ginsberg's lines create.

In the strange house
In the strange town
Going barefoot past the parents' empty room
I hear the horses the fire the wheel bone wings
Your voice

(Jean Valentine, from “The Messenger”)

Rather than breaking the line after words or phrases to create a pause, many poets incorporate white space into the line itself. Here, the spaces in line four visually mimic the footsteps referred to in line three, as well as create the pacing—as though the steps being taken are slow. Notice that the phrase “Your voice,” which is part of the list in line four is moved to line five. That means there must be some difference between the effect created between the phrases with white space and those created by line breaks. It seems that the pauses between the list in line four are slightly shorter, more staccato, than the pause created between “bone wings” and “Your voice.” The more poetry you read, and the more poetry you write, the more you will begin to identify the subtleties of these techniques.

## Lines

On our first date, instead of holding my hand, my future-husband looked

at my palm. *Here’s your fame line your heart line the lucky M*

he said *you were in danger but you are coming out of it now.*

He said it like he meant it, the way the old women in the Philippines

had taught him. *Now make a fist these two little lines under your pinky*

*these are the two kids you’ll have.*

My sister keeps waiting

for her third baby. She has three lines. Three kids, that’s what the palm reader

at Rocky Point told her. *You’ll get married next year*

*and you’ll have three beautiful daughters*. My sister laughed and said

I*‘ll get a second opinion* because she was just a junior in high school

and sure she was going to college.

On our first date my future-husband

traced

the lines on my palm with his finger and I closed my hand around his

because it tickled. *If the pad near your thumb is fleshy*, he said,

*it means you’re very passionate*. His own palms were chubby and pink,

his brown fingers tapered and elegant. He wore a silver and turquoise ring.

He said, *You’ll get married only once*

*but later there’ll be an affair.*

Now that we’re married, he can’t find that wrinkle of infidelity.

Our palms change, he tells me, especially our right palms

that mutate through our behavior. He examines the bunch of tiny *x*s

that look like windshield frost, the wishbones, the spider webs,

the triangle dragon teeth.

My sister will most likely have that third baby.

My husband sees those three lines though my sister groans,

*Two are enough*. Her oldest is already fourteen, and my sister

is finally able to start taking classes at the community college.

My husband says to make everyone feel better: *I was only kidding*

*I don't really know that much about predictions*.

That night we all go

to Rocky Point which isn't as fun as it used to be, which is going bankrupt,

my sister says, like everything else in Rhode Island. The rollercoaster

is broken down, the cars off the tracks, lying on their sides

like cows. And hanging from the booths' roofs, giant Tweety Birds and Pink Panthers,

the cuddly neon elusive ones that hardly anyone ever wins.

*"Lines", from* The Star-Spangled Banner *by Denise Duhamel. Copyright © 1999 by Denise Duhamel. Reprinted by permission of Southern Illinois University Press.*

One of the most conversational of contemporary poets, Duhamel speaks to us like we are a long-time friend. Her voice is energetic though the lines are long. And in this poem she varies line lengths drastically but keeps to an overall pattern so it still looks uniform on the page. Once again, like other poems we've looked at, the form reflects and enhances the subject: the lines on our hands that palm readers use to predict our future. As we read the poem, we read the lines as though we are scanning a palm. Ironically, poems are made of lines too! In addition to the visual echo, the spaces also create pauses that mimic the way a fortune teller speaks: slowly, interpreting, considering—"He said, *You'll get married once* / [space] *But later there'll be an affair*." The space also creates suspense and drama. In this excerpt, there is one line on which only one word sits: "trace." It is the only line in the poem that contains one word. What is the effect? Why this word?

## Activity

Follow the link to Gwendolyn Brooks' poem "We Real Cool." This short poem accomplishes a lot with its short lines and enjambment. Reflecting the theme of rebellion, each line ignores standards of syntax and ends on a word that actually starts the next sentence. The enjambment places a stress on the word "We" and therefore emphasizes the will of the speaker to identify the group. What else do you think this poem accomplishes with its lines?

If the poem is laid out so that each sentence falls on its own line, what happens to the poem's energy? Music? Tone? Or what if you place one-and-a-half sentences on each line? Try rearranging the lines differently again and see what the effect is.

Alternatively, try another excerpt from above. Break "Howl" up into short lines, Duhamel's poem into medium lines. Experiment with how line affects music and emphasis in meaning. Try it in one of your own poems.

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# 2.21: Experimenting with Forms

## Chapter Seven: Experimenting with Forms

In this chapter I wish to introduce you not only to common forms, but also to lesser-known forms, all with the intention that you will experiment with forms while writing your own poetry. I was first introduced to many of these forms in Robin Skelton's wonderful book *The Shapes of Our Singing*, which I highly recommend.

## Abecedarian

In this form, the poem works its way through the alphabet, each line beginning with the letter following the first letter of the previous line. There are no restrictions on meter or rhyme. The following example demonstrates the abecedarian form:

### Lake Affected

April 11th and out my Michigan window: no surprise, really:
Blizzard. The small sidewalk trees sag under fluff and sky.
Cindy says she can't take it, this weather. She misses
Dallas, the blue bells, has had enough of the lake's snow globe
Extending its stay beyond this season's home opener, yellow
Flowers and late night light for late nights
Grilling. Her hand opens back toward Texas like a beauty queen's,
Her eyes bat their long lashes: Take me back old friend, holy hell,
I am sorry. But everyone has different needs
Jig-sawing their bellies. Pieces of life floating down like, well, you
Know. Kevin, I'm leaving messages like lightning on your machine.
Lying in bed this morning I couldn't sleep. Snow
Makes electric champagne of my nerves, pops me open, twists me until sweet
Nostalgia curls me up with a book, squeezes poetry from my skull, seduces me to
Ogle over young faces in old pictures, realphabetize my library, boil
Potatoes until my kitchen windows steam. I burned yesterday's leftover
Quart of coffee reheating on the stove. But I didn't care, all
Restless as I was and hungry for everything no longer
Snuggling in my shoes or my bed, which is to say, bodies from the past.
Time, oh time and time again time
Undoes more than the elastic seams on lingerie, but like that—
Very much like that, the things that make us sexy
Wear away. And when it snows like this I want to melt until
X-rays show me one white dot, unique, branching out, stuck,
Yearning for others like me that will have a ball balling with me something
Zesty as an orange, ready to be thrown at the world.

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## Aubade

Partner to the serenade, which focuses on evening, the aubade is a poem about the morning or dawn. There are no restrictions on line, meter, or rhyme. Here is one by Traci Brimhall:

### Aubade with a Broken Neck

The first night you don't come home

summer rains shake the clematis.
I bury the dead moth I found in our bed,
scratch up a rutabaga and eat it rough
with dirt. The dog finds me and presents
between his gentle teeth a twitching
nightjar. In her panic, she sings
in his mouth. He gives me her pain
like a gift, and I take it. I hear
the cries of her young, greedy with need,
expecting her return, but I don't let her go
until I get into the house. I read
the auspices—the way she flutters against
the wallpaper's moldy roses means
all can be lost. How she skims the ceiling
means a storm approaches. You should see
her in the beginnings of her fear, rushing
at the starless window, her body a dart,
her body the arrow of longing, aimed,
as all desperate things are, to crash
not into the object of desire,
but into the darkness behind it.

*"Aubade With a Broken Neck", from* Rookery *by Traci Brimhall; Copyright © 2010 Traci Brimhall, reproduced by permission of Southern Illinois University Press.*

## Ballad

Before written language, folk ballads were used around the world to transmit stories—often tragic—from one generation to another. The word "ballad" has its roots in the Latin word *ballare,* meaning "to dance," evidence of the rhythmic qualities of the form and its frequent recital to musical accompaniment. Although written in many variations, the ballad is today most commonly written in quatrains and A B C B rhyme. The first and third lines contain eight syllables, while the second and fourth lines contain six. According to Robin Skelton, the most common rhyme scheme is iambic tetrameter alternating with iambic trimeter. The following is a ballad by Muriel Rukeyser:

### Read Ballad of Orange and Grape on PoetryFoundation.org

Listen to Muriel Rukeyser read the poem here.

## Blank Verse

A form that lends itself well to a meditative voice, blank verse is written in iambic pentameter lines that do not rhyme. The Poetry Foundation contains numerous examples, including links to those written in 10-syllable lines traditional of epic poems such as John Milton's *Pardise Lost*.

## Ch'i-Yen-Shih

In this Chinese pattern, each line contains seven monosyllabic words with a caesura after each fourth word. The rhyme scheme is comprised of the pattern A B C B.

### Captured

In the low grass, a girl holds
a bright pink shell washed to land
by high white waves. Her toes grow
like a tree's roots in the sand.

# Cinquain

Adelaide Crapsey established this unrhymed iambic form, which consists of a five-line stanza with the syllable count 2 4 6 8 2. Here is an example of one titled "Amaze" and another called "November Night."

# Daina

This Latvian form consists of a quatrain of trochaic octometer lines with feminine endings. Although there are no end rhymes, alliteration and internal rhymes are common. The example below breaks form in the last line and adds a stressed foot for effect.

### Catholic School

Every Friday early morning
we would march to church all wearing
navy beanies nuns pulled down our
heads like muffins. We preferred them

sideways, some French painter's fancy
style. But always Sisters reaching
over pressing God's will into
bodies, taming young girls from the wild.

# Dodoitsu

This Japanese form is composed of four lines with the syllable count 7 7 7 5. There is no rhyme or set meter.

### Service

An altar boy holds the stained-
glass door open as women
in satin-lined skirts enter
the church like saints.

# Elegy

An elegy is a lament for the dead and contains the character of sadness and loss. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland explain that an elegy "mourns for a dead person, lists his or her virtues, and seeks consolation beyond the momentary event." It is considered a public poem that when done best, according Strand and Boland, sets the customs of death in a particular culture against the decorum and private feelings of the speaker.

The following is by the poet William Heyen:

### Elegy for Wilt the Stilt

October 12, 1999. Remember the date.
As of this autumn day at century's end,
God's fortunes in heaven have changed.
He's drafted and signed Himself a center.
Wilt the Stilt is dead.

Wilt the Stilt is dead before George Mikan,
first of the big men,
dead before Bill Russell,
before Kareem Abdul Jabbar,

before Moses Malone, before Shaquille O'Neal

who might have taken Him
to His own promised land.
God could wait no longer
for his franchise player,
so Wilt the Stilt is dead.

In Philly, his high school rims shiver with applause.
In Kansas, his college rims rattle with applause.
Globetrotter and NBA nets rip themselves in homage,
and in the silence of a hundred gyms
in the dead of night backboards

shatter in adulation and remembrance as, now
Wilt the Stilt ducks his head
under the transom of heaven,
as God reaches up to shake hands
with his new acquisition,

to welcome Wilt home among the constellations
of His cosmic league.
Wilt bows, vows to work hard,
to settle down with one woman,
to earn his minutes here with sweat,

to balance power and finesse,
even, on occasion, to pass the ball
out of the low post. God smiles,
cheerleaders leap, spread legs, and tumble,
for today the Stilt has joined them in death.

*Copyright © William Heyen. "Elegy for Wilt the Stilt" is licensed CC-BY-NC-SA.*

## Exquisite Corpse

This form, invented by the Surrealists, is fun to write in a group. Each person writes two lines, then folds the paper so the next person writing can see only the second line; the next person writes two more lines and folds the paper so that only the second line is visible; and so on.

### Activity

Work with a partner and play another Surrealist game called "If This, Then That." Each person writes without knowing what the other person is writing. The first person writes a phrase on one side of a piece of paper that begins "If…" and then passes the paper to his or her partner. Without looking at the "If" statement, the partner then writes a statement beginning "Then…" Here are some examples that make it hard to believe that these were random—but they were! You'll be surprised how the collective unconscious sometimes aligns:

If school is cancelled tomorrow… then girls will dance under umbrellas in the rain.

If turkeys made honey… then no would ever have to go to bed without supper.

If you heard a sound and didn't know what it was… then the neighbors would be knockin' at your door.

## Ghazal

Typically dealing with subjects of love and separation, the ghazal is a form with Arabic roots consisting of rhyming couplets of the

same syllabic length and a refrain. As explained on the Academy of American Poets website:

The ghazal is composed of a minimum of five couplets—and typically no more than fifteen—that are structurally, thematically, and emotionally autonomous. Each line of the poem must be of the same length, though meter is not imposed in English. The first couplet introduces a scheme, made up of a rhyme followed by a refrain. Subsequent couplets pick up the same scheme in the second line only, repeating the refrain and rhyming the second line with both lines of the first stanza. The final couplet usually includes the poet's signature, referring to the author in the first or third person, and frequently including the poet's own name or a derivation of its meaning.

Here is an example of one by Patricia Smith:

**Read Hip-Hop Ghazal at PoetryFoundation.org**

## Haiku

This well-known Japanese form is three lines long and comprised of unrhymed, unmetered lines with a 5 7 5 syllable count. Traditionally, the haiku's subject matter relates to nature or seasons.

### Mother's Day

One Sunday in May
Mothers answer mothers' calls
We are all children

## Italian Quatrain

The four lines are written in iambic pentameter and rhyme A B B A.

### Mountain Road

We drove the silver van full speed
The branches snapped in windows
We dipped and bumped in rocky holes
From earth we felt like we'd been freed

### Activity

Write an Italian quartet, then develop it into a Petrarchan sonnet (see below).

## Katauta

In this three-line poem with the syllable count 5 7 7, the first line poses a question that the next two lines attempt to answer in an intuitive, immediate way. Try answering with the first image that pops into your mind.

What's in my future?
The budding heads of tulips
Fragrant, red-lipped, and sealed.

## Pantoum

Originating in Malaysia, the pantoum was adapted by French poets. It consists of an unlimited number of quatrains in which the second and fourth lines of each are repeated in the first and third lines of the next. The first and third lines of the first stanza become the final stanza's second and fourth lines. There can be some variation. For instance, the first line of the poem may be

the last.

The following is an example by Melissa Rhoades:

### Dutch East India Company

Back home, my new wife makes fine lace. I keep
a scrap of her work in my brine-soaked breeches.
Black waters pitch and the hull creaks
as I head for spice stores at Malacca's beach.

The scrap of her work in my brine-soaked breeches
is soiled from these sickened months
of heading for spice stores at Malacca's beach.
The taste of molded hard tack licks my tongue

and soiled from these sickened months,
we had to leave nine scurvied men with the Boers.
The taste of molded hard tack licks all our tongues
and the Captain won't say when next we moor.

Although we left nine scurvied men with the Boers,
we're all bleeding gums, thin skin, and fleas.
The Captain still won't say when we moor
and some dirty dogs talk of mutiny.

But for all our bleeding gums, thin skin, and fleas
sweet land comes, a line on the horizon.
Now, no dogs talk of mutiny,
not with palm trees visible from our galleon.

Sweet land! Malaya fills the horizon.
Scrabble at the riggings, keen to anchor.
Palm trees look heavenly from the galleon.
Once ashore, we drink till we slur,

scrabbling around port, keen from anchor.
Sweat runs down our backs. In the shade
we sprawl out, still drinking in a slur.
At dusk, I thrust into a dark-skinned maiden,

sweat running down our backs in the shade.
Black Malacca reeks of nutmeg and mace.
Again, I thrust into the dark-skinned maid
and moan. Back home, my new wife makes fine lace.

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## Pregunta

This Spanish form was practiced by poets of the court in pairs during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One poet asks a question or series of questions in one form and the second poet, matching the form, answers. The topics usually related to love, philosophy, or morality.

> Q: If two loves want one heart
> And the heart thrums both loves' strings
> How long before one parts
> From two and chooses a single fling?

A: Since no hearts be alike
If no love presumes a thing
You may wish to keep arms wide
And see what each day brings.

### Activity

Alternatively, it might be fun to experiment with different topics and be loose and spontaneous with the answers and with the form. The Surrealists were great at inventing these types of games. Pair up and in the style of the Surrealists, have one person write a question and the other write an imagistic answer without knowing what the question is.

Q. How do I know if I love her?
A. The shutters will fly off the house.

Q. How do I know when to tell her?
A. A row of blackbirds a choir on a wire.

Q. How will I know when to ask her?
A. Her open hand and the light lifting from it.

## Prose Poem

The prose poem, which can be any length, isn't broken into verse, but contains many of the elements of poetry: figures of speech, musical language, internal rhyme, repetition, condensed syntax, and imagery. There is some debate over the form, as there are some poets who do not consider the form a poem, per se, but something more akin to flash fiction, or at least a genre of prose rather than verse. Either way, it is a cross-genre form—half prose, half verse—and fun to experiment with.

An influential revivalist of the form was Robert Bly, who said in an 1997 interview that the form is part of an evolution in human democracy: from gods to heroes to everyday humans; from sacred culture to aristocracy to democracy; likewise, from sacred chants in which "all words are signs" to metered poetry to free verse to prose. Additionally in the interview, Bly spoke about his feeling of freedom and "safety" in writing prose poems: "The most wonderful thing about the prose poem is that nobody has set up any standards yet."

The following poem is by Russell Edson, known as "the godfather of the prose poem." As a father of the form, Edson provided one of the form's common characteristics: strangeness. His subjects tend to be odd, surreal, and humorous. The figure of the ape is one that appears frequently in his poems.

### Ape and Coffee

Some coffee had gotten on a man's ape. The man said, animal did you get on my coffee?
No no, whistled the ape, the coffee got on me.
You're sure you didn't spill on my coffee? said the man.
Do I look like a liquid? peeped the ape.
Well you sure don't look human, said the man.
But that doesn't make me a fluid, twittered the ape.
Well I don' know what the hell you are,
so just stop it, cried the man.
I was just sitting here reading the newspaper when you splashed coffee all over me, piped the ape.
I don't care if you are a liquid, you just better stop splashing on things, cried the man.
Do I look fluid to you? Take a good look, hooted the ape.
If you don't stop I'll put you in a cup, screamed the man.
I'm not a fluid, screeched the ape.
Stop it, stop it, screamed the man, you are frightening me.

*Russell Edson, "Ape and Coffee" from* The Tunnel: Selected Poems of Russell Edson. *Copyright © 1973 by Russell Edson. Reprinted with the permission of Oberlin College Press.*

**Here is another example by Devon Moore:**

### Motion Sick

I was five but the woman thought I was seven ‘cause that’s how old you had to be to be an unaccompanied minor, so that’s what my daddy told me to say, so then I was an unaccompanied liar catapulting through the clouds and later I told my daddy, “I saw a lightning bolt,” and he said, “Yeah, right,” and I said, “Why?” and he said, “Cause I thought you said you saw an angel,” and I said, “No, a lightning bolt,” and we were quiet.

I was up in the clouds looking for angels and the nice stewardess offered me hot chocolate instead of pop, and maybe it was the turbulence or my open hands, but the next thing I know the scalding hot was all in my lap, and I was crying loud, but that’s not the worst of it ‘cause then I was standing in the front row butt naked from the waist down, just a simple small hairless vagina for all to see.

I was in the terminal on a layover, but I still thought every man I saw with black hair and a moustache might be my father, and I tried to go to them but the stewardess grabbed me back and said, “No, this is not your stop,” so she sat me down on a chair and told me not to move and left me for what felt like hours and I had to pee so bad but I couldn’t move ‘cause I was still hoping that my daddy might surprise me and show up before his time.

I was chewing the bubblegum my mommy got me for popping ears when I started throwing up Dramamine and I might as well have been the plague or the grossest thing she’d ever seen ‘cause the woman sitting next to me leapt out of her seat and pointed and said, “She’s sick,” which was true, but I cried anyways and then my new coat that had a detachable outer layer smelled like throw-up, so the stewardess put it in a plastic bag, which was the first thing they handed my father when he got to the airport.

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## Roundel

The roundel is an English form consisting of eleven lines in three stanzas with no set meter. The first part of line one repeats at the end of the first stanza and again as the last line of poem. The half line also forms the rhyme pattern and is indicated here as R for “refrain”: A B A R–B A B–A B A R.

### Spring

The daffodils roaring from the ground, at the April
market, tables are lined with buds and green
and people stand in lines looking around
at the daffodils roaring from the ground.

In winter’s sleep few colors seen:
no birds or bugs outdoors make sound.
Now, voices, friends, and new bags of seed

are garden bed and birdhouse bound.
Off with gloves and scarves and wool that’s been
wrapped around us for so long for now we’ve found
the daffodils roaring from the ground.

## Sestina

The sestina consists of five sestets culminating in a final tercet called an **envoi**, also called a **tornada**. The six words that end each of the lines in the first stanza repeat throughout the poem in the following pattern:

1. A B C D E F
2. F A E B D C
3. C F D A B E

4. E C B F A D
5. D E A C F B
6. B D F E C A
7. (envoi) E C A or A C E

In addition, the envoi also repeats the words that end lines B D F in the first stanza. These three words can go anywhere in interior of the final tercet's lines.

Here is an example by Chad Sweeney:

## Michigan Sestina

I've tried to understand this winter
that grows out from no root and no
seed, yet sways like a meadow toward the mind,
sways on its white stem and is
a figure of uncertainty over hills of sleep,
where aging factories gesture to a train

and mills are shuttered over river ice. The train
crosses a bridge from Michigan into winter,
its silos and tobacco fields framed by sleep,
inscrutable and nine hells down. No
horses center the pastures where the sky is
its own pasture, a drift of snow over the mind.

Three crows motionless on a fence, in the mind
are moving, crossing the windows of the train
like Japanese characters whose sense is
effortless, a calligraphy of winter
whose shifting figures evoke a *No*
theater, three masks in a theater of sleep.

But the land draws its own lessons from sleep,
a heap of frozen images in the mind,
Polish teachers in the birch grove and no
one to bury them, shoved from the train,
the faces of the dead occupy the whole winter,
one borderless nation of snow. Memory is

unable to bury them. What *was* and what *is*
and what *never was*—mounded together in sleep:
history erects a statue to winter,
a wolf leaves its tracks across the mind,
the train and the memory of the train
arrive on the same line, though no

station is there to greet them and no
one is getting on or off. Is
it irony draws this train
west toward Chicago with its cargo of sleep?
My forehead against the window doesn't mind
closing its one eye against winter,

the train moves deeper into memory, no
train and no winter, though one crow is
changed in sleep to the Japanese character for *mind*.

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### Activity

Make a list of six words you absolutely love. Then write five sentences that include all of the words. Then, write five more. Then write ten more. Then use these six words to write a sestina!

## Sonnet

Although there are several versions of the sonnet, each has fourteen lines and contains a **volta**, or a turn in thought, which can sometimes be indicated with the words "but" or "yet." In contemporary poetry it has become common for poets to compose sonnets with differing rhyme or meter, or with none at all.

> **Shakespearian**: Comprised of an octet and a sextet, this sonnet is composed in iambic pentameter and rhymes A B A B–C D C D–E F E F–G G. The volta appears either between lines eight and nine or between lines twelve and thirteen.
>
> **Petrarchan**: This sonnet contains two stanzas: one octet that rhymes as A B B A–A B B A, and a remaining sextet with varying rhyme schemes. The volta occurs between the stanzas.
>
> **Spenserian**: This sonnet modifies the Petrarchan to contain a rhyme scheme of A B A B–B C B C–C D C D–E E.

Garrison Keiller featured Billy Collins' parody of the form on *The Writer's Almanac*.

Listen to Billy Collins read it.

## Split Couplet

Composed of two lines, the split couplet contains a first line in iambic tetrameter and a second in iambic dimeter; the two lines should rhyme. Another variation is to write the first line in iambic pentameter.

### Morning Run

A rabbit hops across my trail
A bouncy tail

A fawn leans into chamomile
Its sunny meal

The miles vanish beneath my feet
It brings me peace

## Tanka, or Waka

This Japanese form, which focuses primarily on nature or strong emotions, consists of five unrhymed, non-metrical lines with the syllable count 5 7 5 7 7.

In Waka, lines one and two, as well as three and four, form complete sentences, as does the last line.

### July

Grasshoppers alight
Onto the sunflower's face.
Honeybees buzzing
From lavender to basil.
The whole garden is alive.

# Than-Bauk, or Climbing Rhyme

This Burmese form consists of three four-syllable lines, with rhyme falling on the fourth syllable of the first line, the third syllable of the second line, and the second syllable of the third line.

Relish your sleep
Wake, repeat, wake
Count sheep and dream

Never lose hope
There is no time
To mope around.

## Activity

Experiment with different syllable lengths that integrate the same climbing rhyme pattern.

# Villanelle

This French form consists of five tercets and a final quatrain. The first stanza's first and third lines repeat in an alternating pattern as the last line in the subsequent stanzas. In the final quatrain, the two lines that have been repeating throughout the poem form the final two lines of the poem.

The following villanelle was written by Victor James Daley. It is title is simply "Villanelle":

### Villanelle

We said farewell, my youth and I,
When all fair dreams were gone or going,
And Love's red lips were cold and dry.

When white blooms fell from tree-tops high,
Our Austral winter's way of snowing,
We said farewell, my youth and I.

We did not sigh, what use to sigh
When Death passed as a mower mowing,
And Love's red lips were cold and dry?

But hearing Life's stream thunder by,
That sang of old through flowers flowing,
We said farewell, my youth and I.

There was no hope in the blue sky,
No music in the low winds blowing,
And Love's red lips were cold and dry.

My hair is black as yet, then why
So sad! I know not, only knowing
We said farewell, my youth and I.

All are not buried when they die;
Dead souls there are through live eyes showing
When Love's red lips are cold and dry.

So, seeing where the dead men lie,
Out of their hearts the grave-flowers growing,

We said farewell, my youth and I,
When Love's red lips were cold and dry.

*"Villanelle" by Victor James Daley is in the Public Domain.*

For more examples, please see the The Poetry Foundation.

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# 2.22: Revision

## Chapter Eight: Revision

Beginning writers tend to write first drafts and call them final drafts, but as we know by now, writing a poem—or writing anything, for that matter—is a process that takes time. On rare occasions a poem will pour forth finished in its initial draft, but the large majority of the time, each poem will need to be revised. Whether you change four words, four stanzas, or one period, we can understand it all as being part of the process of revision.

The origin of the word "revision" is the Latin *revisonem* meaning "a seeing again." When we revise, we see our poem again, which is to imply that we see it differently. The more time that lapses between our writing of the poem and when we look at it again, the more objectively we will see the poem. Imagine writing a poem and not looking at it for ten years. Ten years is time enough to truly see the poem differently because you are literally a different person looking at that poem. You've had new experiences that have influenced your person and your understanding of poetry. What you wrote ten years ago is different than what you would write now. Write long enough and you will have the experience of returning to a poem and not even remembering writing it, asking, "Is this mine?"

When we write and revise poems, sometimes we grapple with the emotional tendency to protect or defend our work, which can hamper changes that could improve our poems. With distance, we see a poem objectively; we are therefore able to make changes that improve the poem because we've forgotten how much work went into the poem in the first place. Our memories and feelings that the poem may touch on have also changed, and so we may no longer consider certain parts crucial to the poem.

Waiting ten years to revise a poem you wrote yesterday may be the easiest way to bring a new eye to the poem, but it's not very practical. As writers we need to also be our best readers, capable of seeing weakness and capable of the bravery it takes to make the big changes to our poems when necessary—even when that means cutting our favorite lines, even when it means slashing the stanza we labored over for a month. This chapter will address ways to improve your ability to see a poem anew and will provide you with methods and tools to make the most of revision.

## Three Goals, Four Elements

In her book *The Practice of Creative Writing,* Heather Sellers identifies **energy, tension, and insight** as being essential goals for any good piece of writing. These three characteristics make writing entertaining to our wit, rewarding to our spirit, and pleasurable to our senses. When writing lacks these things, the language goes slack, the purpose becomes hazy, and the reader disengages from the text. All three characteristics are necessary in engaging the reader and holding the reader's attention. We don't ever want our reader to be bored or confused.

By identifying these three important characteristics, Sellers also illuminates the main goals writers have when revising. We ask questions and revise our poems in order to increase the energy, the tension, and the insight. And we do so by tending to four main elements: **clarity, language, structure, and speaker.**

To achieve energy, tension, and insight, the following questions may be asked in regard to each element:

1. Clarity

- Is it clear to the reader what this poem is about?
- Is it clear to the reader who the speaker is and to whom the poem is being addressed?
- Is it clear to the reader where the poem is taking place / what its setting (location, time) is?
- Can diction be more precise?
- Are images clearly seen?
- Does the procession of images / the order in which they occur make sense logically?
- Are there places where expansion is needed?

2. Language

- Does the poem contain any clichés?

- Is the language fresh and surprising?
- Are there any places where the energy of the language goes slack?
- Are there any Latinate, multi-syllabic words that can be replaced with more Germanic, sense-inducing words?
- Is the language musical and entrancing?
- Are there places where assonance and alliteration can be increased?
- Are there any places where assonance, alliteration, or rhyme make the poem sound too sing-songy?
- Am I using too many articles and prepositions, which sap energy?
- Is any repetition of words ineffective?
- If using end-rhyme, are there places where the rhyme feels forced instead of natural and organic to the poem?
- Are there occasions where the syntax is so artificial that it could be classified what we might call “Stereotypical Indian speak”? (E.g.: You write poem good.) How about “Yoda speak”? (E.g.: Writing a poem are you?)
- Are there any uses of archaic language?
- Have I examined each word and verified that it is needed?
- Are there any nouns that would better as verbs?

3. Structure

- Do the lines create a pace appropriate to the poem’s subject?
- Do line breaks make the most out of image and emphasis?
- Do the lines maintain energy or cause it to slack?
- Does each character in the poem belong?
- Is the opening of the poem surprising, alluring, and energetic? Does it make the reader want to keep reading?
- Does the ending of the poem “click shut” like a box?
- Is there any content that can be removed?

4. Speaker

- What is the emotional center of the poem? Is it complex enough to create tension?
- Is the speaker’s voice genuine in tone, or do some lines sound artificial?
- Are line lengths appropriate to the speaker’s personality and voice?
- Is it clear what’s at stake / what the risk is for the speaker of this poem?
- Is the tense (past, present, etc.) the most effective for the poem to produce energy?
- Are there places where the persona of the poem is explaining context instead of living in it?

## Activity

Diagram the intent of each line of one of your poems by writing what you hope the reader will experience from each line beside the line. How does each line advance the reader’s experience of your poem?

**A Revision Example**

Sometimes where a poem ends up is not where you thought it would. As Naomi Shihab Nye has said, sometimes you start to write about church and end up at the dog races. You just never know—and that’s the fun of it.

The following is an example of my own poem “19-19” and its stages of revision.

When I lived in Washington State, I often traveled to neighboring states. One weekend I was in Sandpoint, Idaho, eating lunch at a downtown pub, when I was caught by a black-and-white photograph of a girl’s basketball team. The girls, maybe eight of them, wore long skirts, bobby socks, and saddle shoes. Half of them lay on their stomachs in the front row with their ankles crossed behind them. The caption beneath the photograph, which appeared in a local newspaper in 1914, summarized the day. The girls had played a game that went into overtime, but the officials ended the game at a tie because there was a dance that night. This photograph became the trigger for my poem. Here is its first draft:

> It would take another period
> Before a draw was declared
> And the girls would get to go
> To the dance. Fathers in bleachers
> Cheering them on, perhaps, whishing
> For sons. But the boys team lost

That night. The caption told me so.
Those words rolling along
The enlarged page on the wall
In the bar in that black and white
From 1914. This was before the war.
Five girls lying
On their bellies,
Feet crossed at their ankles, white
Bobble socks. All five hold basketballs
Under their chins.
Referees declared it
A tie. 17-17. Didn't want the girls
To strain themselves the caption
Says. Go to the dance
Chaperoned instead. How fun
It must've been to be a girl
That night. Dancing in the arms
of number 24 on the boys team,
challenging him
to a game of ball
on the pavement the next
afternoon. How fun to be the girl
who asked the night before the bomb
dropped.

When I look back on this poem, I can see the mental and artistic moves I was making in an effort to discover the bigger something to write about. I was clearly loosened up, non-judgmental. There is word play—"whishing"—as well as a feminist tone of sorts that begins with the thought that maybe the fathers of these girls wished (whished!) they were sons, which grows into: "Didn't want the girls / To strain themselves the caption / Says." I was very interested in what the climate would have been in regard to gender stereotypes. The poem reports on the actual photograph and my encounter with it, describing the girls in the photograph. Then there is an imaginative leap into what it might have felt like being one of these girls, and then the realization (as the writer) that 1914 would have been before the first World War. The poem is laced with sexuality and reproduction—the break on "period," the focus on couples at the dance. It also contains references to history, war, and gender issues. In addition, it is also has a setting and time.

After writing this poem I remember taking a break, and when I returned to the computer I read the poem, printed it out, read it again, and started to crumple it up (I don't know why—I never do this). The poem seemed flat and cliché, forced, but as I crumpled it up I thought about the line "This was before the war," and I smoothed out the paper. That line—"This was before the war"—was musical. And I liked how the last two lines surprised with their hard enjambment: "the night before the bomb / dropped." I thought of the newspaper and the way we not only report information, but how we tell stories that begin to create history and identity. I thought about gossip and the way we spread those stories. And I thought of the way we imagine grandparents, grandchildren on their laps, telling family stories. I turned back to the computer and started to rewrite the poem from scratch. The following is the revision, with notes elucidating some of my thinking behind the decisions I made:

| | |
|---|---|
| 17-17 | My aim here was for the title to allude to both the game's tie and to echo the sound of a year. |
| | |
| The game went into overtime that night. | The first line immediately sets the time and place, as well as the occasion for the poem. |
| The moon didn't stay to witness. On top | I pull the camera's eye outward, from the game to the moon and then inward to the mountain. |
| Of Mount Thoradour she couldn't wait to lose | Initially a word used to refer to the game, I heard in the language how "lose" is also frequently a term used when referring to one's virginity. The phrase echoes the themes of sport and sex already on my mind exposed in the poem's first draft. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Her virginity. This was before the war. | |
| Before he would leave her | Moving line by line, I tried to surprise myself with each turn of line. In this case, “leave her,” like “lose” sounded like it go a different direction. I imagined how a man leaves his wife and children. |
| | |
| And a round belly, alone, until he returned, | |
| His left arm’s ghost dangling along his side like a medal. | Stanza two and no figure of speech yet? Time for a simile. |
| He was lucky, he’d tell her, the scent of her hair | This stanza zooms into the intimate moment between the couple. It also expands the senses to include smell. |
| Against his bruised cheek. The scent of her | |
| | |
| Like oranges for the first time again. This | The third stanza returns us to that one night, thinking about how so many lives circle one event. I kept diction in mind here, again stressing the sexual currents in the poem. And broke the line on “score,” another word associated with both games and sex. |
| Was before the dance where her little sister, who scored | |
| Four points in the game that night would sprain | |
| Her ankle while dancing with George Thyman, | Sounds like “hymen.” That blatant. The next line’s image continues along this theme. |
| Her knee scraped red dripping from the split skin | |
| | |
| But this was before photographic color. It kept her | The poem took this turn beyond my control. I guess I was thinking about newspapers. |
| Sister out for the rest of the season. The black | |
| And white their father took still hangs on the wall. | |
| Whenever her daughter sees the picture, her aunt’s | I breach time and start to imagine the impact one night can have on a life. |
| Long caterpillar body flying up toward the basket, | |
| | |
| Her daughter remembers her mother pointing | In this stanza I can see myself holding my place in a sense, integrating the poem’s logic, telling the story. You can see the language become clunky, but that’s okay. The stanza lands an anchor for me so I can leap again in the next stanza. |
| To the photograph telling her that this was the night | |
| She decided to be, a spirit in her mother’s womb. | |
| They had to get married to legitimize the child. | |
| Her sister came on crutches with Barry Lourdes. | |
| | |
| This was before women could vote, before blacks | Here I really take advantage of the repeating motif of time and history, using the phrase “This was before.” |
| Had rights. The last witch trial in New England | |
| Had not yet taken place or precedent in the lives | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Of witches' daughters. That night | And we return again to that night. The camera moves in and out through time and space, from large to small, from large populations in history to an individual in history. |
| On the court, ball circling the rim of the basket, faltering, | The largeness of the previous lines calls for contracting back to the image of something specific. |
| Then rolling in, the whole world | |
| | |
| Felt right. She will remember this as she buries her sister. | |
| She will remember this as she buries her face | Again, listening to the language, I sense how "bury" is associated with not only body but "face," as well. |
| In her sister's husband's empty sleeve, her niece | And this touches back to the soldier in stanza one. |
| Embracing the idea of the basketball that made everything | |
| Mean, everything possible, everything relate. | |
| This was before the war. | |

As you see, much of the redrafting of this poem happened by listening to the language and making leaps while maintaining connections as I wrote. In the actual writing process, it is usually sound that drives my poems. Here, I needed to work slower and to pay attention to the logistics of the narrative as I invented family members through time and space. This attention to explaining resulted in using a lot of Latinate words whose main intent is to relay meaning.

This second draft lay out the narrative. After reading this draft out loud, I immediately moved to a third draft to smooth out the sections where the language became clunky or Latinate. The poem went through one more revision, and then a workshop after it was basically finished. I remember several comments made in that workshop, but the suggestion that I took was to add a section in which we find out what happened to the missing mom. My professor had an issue with the metaphor of the body as a caterpillar scoring a basket, but I kept it as was because it made sense to *me*. The final version below was published in the literary journal *Crazyhorse*.

| | |
|---|---|
| 19-19 | 1919 sounded more like a probable date given the subject matter. |
| | |
| The game went into overtime that night. The moon didn't | Pulling the moon up to the first line creates personification and contrast. |
| Stay to witness, having other places to be. On top | I remember I was at a stage in my writing when I wanted to push strangeness and imagination. Here, the moon becomes a character in the narrative, too. The addition also creates a rhyme with "virginity" adding musical elements to the poem. |
| Of Mount Thoradour she couldn't wait | |
| To lose her virginity. This was before the war. | |
| Before he would leave her | |
| | |
| Pregnant with Sierra, alone, until he returned, | Using names helps the reader stay grounded in a poem with many characters and references to them. |
| His left arm's ghost dangling from his side like a medal. | |
| He was lucky, he'd tell her, her hair | |
| Against his bruised cheek. The scent of her | |

| | |
|---|---|
| | |
| Like orange groves for the first time again. This | |
| Was before the dance where her little sister, who scored | |
| The tying points in the game that night would break | |
| Her ankle while dancing with George Thyman, | |
| Her curious white bone pushing through the skin | |
| | |
| Of this world before being forced back, | |
| Sewn tight under the ivory-dry cast. | I wanted to zoom in on something and add an element of surprise and strangeness while echoing the theme of oppression in regard to women. |
| But this was before color. The black and white | |
| The newspaper took still hangs on their father's wall. | |
| Whenever Sierra sees the picture: her aunt's | |
| | |
| Long caterpillar body balancing up toward the basket, | |
| She remembers her mother pointing to the photograph saying | |
| *This was the night when the door to my womb unlocked.* | The dialogue allowed me to smooth over the clunky language in the last draft, and make the moment of conception magical. |
| When they married for Sierra, her sister came | |
| On crutches with George Thyman. This was before | |
| | |
| The last witch trial had taken place. In dense forests | Camera zooms in and voila: images. |
| Skirts still fanned cautiously around dark fires. | |
| And this was before the reunion, before Sierra's | I felt that adding a reason for Sierra's mom's disappearance would help the narrative. Plus it allowed me to integrate the theme of female oppression and violence even further into the poem. |
| Mom would pull her blue Ford over to the side of the road | |
| To wait out the storm. It was before the police would find her car | |
| | |
| The next morning, empty, blood still wet on the steering wheel's rim, | |
| Black windshield wipers, broken, lying in the back seat. | |
| This was when murder first entered the town of Pulaski. | |
| The newspaper ran a story on the accident: Sierra's face | |
| In color on the cover next to a reprint of her missing mother. | |
| | |
| This was before the picture of her aunt that night on the basketball court | |
| Would fade. That night on the court, ball rising from the arch of her | |
| Fingers, circling the rim of the basket, wavering, | |
| Then falling in, the whole world | |
| Seemed right—she will remember this feeling | |

| | |
|---|---|
| When she buries the ghost of her sister's body in an empty casket. | |
| | |
| She will remember this as she buries her face | |
| In her brother-in-law's empty sleeve, her niece embracing | |
| The idea of the basketball | These lines are a rewrite of language that didn't sound right to me: "everything / Mean, everything possible, everything relate." |
| That made everything possible, everything feel | |
| Secure. The way it fell through the chute, guided | The change to the ending came from following the lead of musical language. In developing the image I thought "guided by the net," but as I like to, I looked closer—"holes in the net."<br><br>That the casket enters is a poetic moment that I can only assume happened because of sound—net, basket, casket—and the love of the line "This was before." I was definitely in the zone. |
| By holes in the net. This was before the casket hit the ground. | |
| This was before the war. | |

## Creating Your Own Aesthetic

The revision process of "19-19" reflects my own poetics at the time that I composed and revised it. If the first draft was given to any other poet, the revision would be completely different. As you begin to revise your poems, the most useful approach you can take is to be aware of the decisions you are making and understand why you are making them. I hope you will see the above examples as one of many ways one may approach a poem.

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# 2.23: About Drama

**Learning Objectives**

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

- describe the elements of drama.
- identify drama-specific literary devices.
- perform drama-specific literary analysis.
- write a literary analysis essay on a play.

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# 2.24: What is Drama?

## What is Drama?



Sarah Bernhardt performs as Hamlet, holding poor Yorick's skull (1899) - public domain

## Drama as a Genre

Like fiction, **drama**—sometimes referred to as a **play**—features characters caught up in a **plot**, or series of events in a storyline. Just like in fiction, the plot is the trajectory of the story. Plays and novels are actually very similar in this way. In fact, some plays have been based on novels, and novels on plays. Yet, whereas the narrator of a novel can spend pages painting a picture of the story's circumstances for the reader, a play is restricted to the space of the stage and the time frame of a couple of hours. This adds unique considerations for a **playwright**—or author who writes plays—to consider. What strategies are available to the playwright to ensure that the play successfully conveys its intended effects and themes? And how can we most clearly settle upon one definition of drama, considering it manifests in different permutations across cultures?

African drama scholar Ruth Finnegan stressed that, when defining drama across cultures, "[m]ost important is the idea of enactment, of representation through actors who imitate persons and events" (486). In addition to this definition, plot, setting, dialogue, and action are probably the most clearly defining characteristics of drama as genre. These elements will be covered in greater detail in the Elements of Drama section.

## A Brief History of Drama

### Greece

Most historians agree Western drama originated in Greece as an evolution of religious ritual, probably around the 5th century BCE as an evolution of poetry and song (qtd. Miller 126-7). While more controversial, many scholars believe the first plays probably began when singers in a festival celebrating the Greek God Dionysus/Bacchus began acting out characters in worship songs (Miller 127). Eventually, this developed into increasingly elaborate productions, growing from one actor to several, incorporating props and costumes. By the 4th century BCE, drama had become a valued cultural practice in Greece and was in fact considered a civic duty that would help Greek society remain rational through the purgation of negative emotion, which Aristotle called **catharsis** (Scodel 40). By seeing actors acting out intense emotions and brutal acts, it meant Athenian citizens could vicariously experience those emotions, emptying themselves of such emotions so they could focus on their civic duties like voting. Eventually,

Athenian citizens would gather every year to watch playwrights akin to celebrities compete against one another (Scodel 40). Many critics argue Greek drama was one of the heaviest influences on William Shakespeare's works, and most poets of the Western world.

### India

Some scholars contend drama did not begin in Greece, as popularly assumed, but in India. Or perhaps that drama was not necessarily a spreading phenomena, but a simultaneous evolution in both India and Greece. Regardless, around the same time of the origins of Greek drama arose the Sanskrit Indian *prakarana* (Walker 7). Prakarana is a play in five acts. This *prakarana* theatre is widely regarded to have begun the spread of drama in the East in the same way Greek drama spread through the West.

## Common Genres of Drama

- **Comedy**: probably the first drama subgenre, comedy traditionally features lower-class characters, emphasizes silly or bawdy themes, and often ends in marriage.
- **Tragedy**: what Aristotle considered the artistic height of drama, Tragedy depicts a protagonist's downfall due to his or her own tragic flaw, or **hamartia**. Readers can usually recognize a tragedy by its noble characters, elevated language (iambic pentameter), and scenes of suffering and death. They almost always feature death or many deaths and/or a funeral.
- **History**: recreates a historically significant event. May include elements of comedy, tragedy, or romance
- **Romance**: usually focuses on love between characters

## Distinguishing Features of Drama

- Meant to be performed rather than read
- Emphasis on dialogue, character, and stage direction
- May include elements of music, dance, art, poetry, and prose
- Usually fictional, though may include nonfiction or be inspired by true stories or historical events

## Supplemental Videos

- Crash Course Theatre #7: Ancient Sanskrit Theatre

YouTube Video

*This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.*

View this YouTube Video online

# Contributors and Attributions

Parts of this chapter adapted from *Writing and Literature: Composition as Inquiry, Learning, Thinking, and Communication* by Dr. Tanya Long Bennett of the University of North Georgia.

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# 2.25: Elements of Drama

## Plot

As discussed in the Creative Nonfiction and Fiction chapters, plot is the most important element in a narrative. Similarly, it comprises arguably the most important element of a play. Plot is the events in the play and the order in which the events are told. There is no one correct way to structure a drama! However, the structure of a drama is only as effective as it is intentionally formed to elicit the desired response from its audience. A play usually has a beginning, middle, and end. It almost always has a character grow and develop over the course of the play. Let's look closely at one type of plot structure in order to see what plot might look like.

### Case Study: Tragic Plot

According to Aristotle, an effective plot of a tragedy follows this order:

1. **Inciting incident: the background of the play that causes the central conflict.**
    1. **Example**: two brothers murder each other. Their uncle, the King, refuses to bury one of the brothers and makes a law against burying him. This puts the sister of the brothers in a bad place, because her religion requires her to bury them so they go to heaven.
2. **Rising Action**: **the conflict built through friction between characters**.
    1. **Example**: The sister defies her uncle the King and buries her brother against the king's orders and then refuses to apologize. The king then commands his soldiers to bury his niece alive for her defiance!
3. **Anagnorisis or Scene of Recognition: the protagonist realizes he has made an error that carries serious consequences.**
    1. **Example**: The King receives a warning from a wise elder that burying his niece is a terrible idea that has angered the gods. The king finally realizes he has been a stubborn bonehead (he has exhibited excessive pride, hubris) and has a serious character flaw (hamartia).
4. **Peripeteia or Reversal of Fortune: this is when the protagonist's luck runs out.**
    1. **Example**: the King's recognition of his error comes too late: just as he sends his soldiers to free the niece from her cave, she dies in her cave and the King's son—his niece's betrothed—has killed himself in sorrow.
5. **Scene of Suffering: a bunch of people suffer and/or die as a result of the protagonist's hamartia.**
    1. **Example**: Not only did the King's niece and son die, but a messenger tells him that his wife killed herself in grief. The heartbroken King leaves the city in self-imposed exile. The audience feels pity and fear watching the King suffer, and this helps purge their feelings of pity and fear.

Not all plays or even tragedies follow this structure exactly. That being said, it can be helpful to analyze the ways in which a plot's structure is formed, as this can reveal deeper meanings. For example, what would have happened if the above mentioned King had recognized his tragic flaw (hamartia) in time to save his niece? This would have been a very different play: perhaps even a romance if the niece and king's son married and lived happily ever after. As in this example (based on *Antigone* by Sophocles), the structure of a play can have profound effects on its meaning or even genre!

## Structure

Whether tragedy, comedy, history, or romance, all plays generally follow the structure of **act, scene, and line.**

A play can be anywhere from a few minutes to several hours. Usually a play will be divided into anywhere from one to five **acts.** These acts usually hinge upon a central plot point. Between each act, the curtain will fall; perhaps in the middle of the play there might be an intermission for audiences to use the restroom or buy drinks. A lot of literary production is driven by economics, after all: playwrights gotta eat, too!

The acts are further divided into **scenes.** The scene is usually set in a particular moment in time and setting.

When reading the play, actors reference **lines**. The lines are the dialogue that they speak to one another. A long time ago, poems and plays were often written in verse such as iambic pentameter, so poems and plays shared the concept of line structure.

However, in contemporary plays, dialogue may be written in prose. Usually it will still have some kind of numbering system so that actors, directors, and readers can find their place.

When writing about a play, you should try to reference act, scene, and line number in your parenthetical in-text citation. For example (1.3.186) means Act 1, Scene 3, Line 186. However, not all plays have line numbers, or even scenes. So you may need to just reference act and scene (1.3) or just the act (Act 3).

## Setting

To provide the story's setting, a play requires sets. If you've ever been involved with a play, you know that the set can be made up of detailed backdrops, specifically designed props, strategic lighting, and sometimes even background noise. A set, along with the characters' subtle indications of the scene, can generate a full setting in the audience's imagination. For example, the play *Hamlet* starts its setting on a creepy, dark, foggy, cold night in the fictional Castle Elsinore on Denmark. The setting is often established on a **stage**, or the physical space upon which actors move. In order for a play to take place, there must be **actors** (people performing the play), an **audience** (people viewing the play), and **action and/or dialogue** as performed by the actors.

## Character

While in short stories or novels a reader must wait until a character appears to know who the important characters are, in a play they are often the first aspect of the text encountered by readers. The character list usually appears in the first pages of the play. This is because, as a play emphasizes action over narration, the actors must know their parts!

Usually, the most important characters are listed first. Think most spoken lines, protagonists, antagonists, etc. However, the order in which the characters appear on the character list does not necessarily dictate the order of appearance. Like in creative nonfiction or fiction, writers develop characters over the course of the play. Different characters serve different roles such as protagonist, antagonist, or foil. There are a few types of character archetypes unique to drama which are described below. Note that not all of them will be in every play!

- **Protagonist**: the hero of the play. Usually the main character or the character with the most spoken lines, or the character around whom all the other characters seem to orbit. Hamlet would be an example of a protagonist.
- **Antagonist**: the villain of the play, usually opposite the protagonist. Claudius would be an example of an antagonist.
- **Foil**: this is a character meant to define another character through juxtaposition or comparison. For example, in *Hamlet*, Old Hamlet and Old Fortinbras and Hamlet and Fortinbras are often considered foils of each other. Fortinbras and Hamlet are both on paths of vengeance, yet each goes about their vengeance in different ways. While Fortinbras uses military strength, Hamlet chooses to use his intellect. While Fortinbras is decisive, Hamlet seems paralyzed by indecision. By examining the ways in which these two characters are similar and different, we can learn a lot about each of them and their significance in the play.
- **Wise elder**: in most plays, there is a wise old man or figure of wisdom who guides the protagonist. In Hamlet, it might be the ghost of his father, or Polonius can be a silly inversion of this archetype. In Antigone, it is probably Tieresias.
- **Love interest**: again, in most plays, there is usually a love interest of the protagonist, though not always. For Hamlet, this is Ophelia (though some scholars have argued Horatio!)
- **Messenger**: a character who delivers news

## Dialogue and Action

One of the main differences between fiction and drama is that usually a play's plot is primarily forwarded through **dialogue** and **action**. **Dialogue** is comprised of the words directly spoken by characters, while **actions** are the physical movements of the actors. In a novel, action is described in detail and dialogue is usually put in quotation marks. For example, consider the following example of **action** and **dialogue** from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde:

> As the painter looked at the gracious and comely form he had so skilfully mirrored in his art, a smile of pleasure passed across his face, and seemed about to linger there. But he suddenly started up, and closing his eyes, placed his fingers upon the lids, as though he sought to imprison within his brain some curious dream from which he feared he might awake.
>
> "*It is your best work, Basil, the best thing you have ever done,*" said Lord Henry languidly. "*You must certainly send it next year to the Grosvenor. The Academy is too large and too vulgar. Whenever I have gone there, there have been either so many people that I have not been able to see the pictures, which was dreadful, or so many pictures that I have not been able to see the people, which was worse. The Grosvenor is really the only place.*"
>
> "*I don't think I shall send it anywhere,*" he answered, tossing his head back in that odd way that used to make his friends laugh at him at Oxford. "*No, I won't send it anywhere.*"

Distinct from the novel form of dialogue evidenced above, in a play, any words which come after the character's name will be considered dialogue. Action is usually not described in great depth, and actors are to interpret what actions to take based on the dialogue. Consider this example from *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare:

> MARCELLUS: Holla, Bernardo!
>
> BERNARDO: Say,
>
> What, is Horatio there?
>
> HORATIO: A piece of him.
>
> BERNARDO: Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.
>
> MARCELLUS: What, has this thing appear'd again tonight?
>
> BERNARDO: I have seen nothing.

In the above excerpt from the beginning of the play (1.1), Marcellus, Bernardo, and Horatio (soldiers) greet each other as they patrol the castle. When Horatio says "a piece of him," we might imagine the fog is so thick or the night so dark that only pieces of each character can be seen. Horatio might be holding up his hand in the torchlight. We might imagine the characters wandering about in the dark speaking to each other, a bit rattled, worrying if the mysterious "thing" Marcellus references will reappear. We learn later in the dialogue that "thing" is an apparition (ghost). None of the characters' movements are described, so we must infer what their actions are through their dialogue.

Although a novel's narrator can describe in detail the thoughts and impressions of its characters, a play's effects depend much more heavily on what the characters say and do. A play is a performance, a spectacle, rather than words on paper. That is, drama is a story performed by actors. Some plays do include a narrator or a chorus, to introduce the scene or set the tone of the play, but the bulk of the production's effect is generated through the dialogue and its visual devices, and since the play's script dictates what the characters will say and often, through stage direction, its production strategies as well, the script is crucial to a successful performance.

## Audience

While in other literary works the audience takes a more passive role, in plays the audience often becomes part of the show. When a character goes on an extended soliloquy, or extended speech when they are by themselves on the stage, they will often address the audience directly; the audience gets the insider view of their thoughts. Sometimes actors join audience members or extend the stage into the seats! Audiences in the old days also would get rowdy and interact with the actors and actresses, sometimes in outright chaotic ways. For example, during the first act of a play in 1883, actor John Ritchie was allegedly pelted by rotten eggs and tomatoes and "demoralized" ("AN ACTOR DEMORALIZED"). So when analyzing drama it's important to analyze how audience members might experience the play!

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## Contributors

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# 2.26: Reading and Responding to Drama

## How to "Read" Drama

For reasons discussed in this chapter so far, drama comes with a unique set of benefits and challenges for readers. Beginning students of drama often make the mistake of reading plays the same way they would a novel, becoming frustrated or lost as a result. Because it is meant to be performed and/or viewed as an audience member, readers must infer a lot about the setting and characters' internal feelings through the dialogue. This takes a bit more work than a novel, which often offers this kind of description for the reader. While ideally readers could either act out the play or see a play live, this is not always an option. So what is the best way to "read" a play?

**ACT IT OUT LOUD.**

That's right: as silly as it may feel, reading the play out loud in character will help readers better grasp the meanings of the play which may be missed when read silently. To reiterate, plays are meant to be performed. To be heard. To be seen. When possible, students should pair up with fellow classmates to take turns reading and acting out the parts. This is what makes plays fun: they are the most collaborative genre of literature!

Other tips for reading plays:

- Watch film versions of the play
- Go see live performances
- Listen to audiobook verions
- Summarize each act in your own words as you read
- Takes notes on each character: Who are they? What is their role (protagonist, antagonist, or supporting role)? What are the characters' relationships with each other?

## Special Considerations For Reading Shakespeare & Other "Old" Works of Literature

### Diction

As if reading plays was not challenging enough, many students find older literature's **diction**—or vocabulary choices—flummoxing. I use the term flummoxing here because it is a term that is not widely in circulation anymore. That is, it is archaic or antiquated. Or, to put it more simply, it's old. Shakespeare can be difficult to read for this reason: over time, like any language, English has evolved. Certain figures of speech, manners of speaking, and words commonly used in Elizabethan London (Shakespeare's time) are no longer used today. So if it feels like you are reading a foreign language when reading Shakespeare or his contemporaries, you kind of are: Early Modern English.

- **Old English – 450 to 1066 A.D.**
  - **Example**: "Hwæt. We Gardena in geardagum,

    þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,

    hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.

    Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum" (from Beowulf, author unknown).

- **Middle English – 1150 to 1500**
  - **Example:** "Whan that aprill with his shoures soote
    The droghte of march hath perced to the roote,
    And bathed every veyne in swich licour
    Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
    Whan zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
    Inspired hath in every holt and heeth" (from The Prologue of *The Canturbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer)

- **Early Modern English – 1500 to 1690**
  - **Example:** "Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
    And will not let belief take hold of him
    Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us.
    Therefore I have entreated him along
    With us to watch the minutes of this night,
    That if again this apparition come
    He may approve our eyes and speak to it" (from 1.1 of *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare).
- **Modern English – 1700 to present**
  - **Example:** "You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I arrived here yesterday; and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare, and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking." (from the first page of *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley)

Early Modern English is actually much closer to our modern English than one would think. It is much easier to understand than Old English for this reason. Basically, to use a Pokemon simile, if Old English is Charmander, and contemporary English is Charizard, Early Modern English is like Charmeleon. And it goes both ways: if I lost you with these Pokemon words you probably feel a lot like a speaker of Early Modern English would feel having to learn contemporary English!

The good news is, like learning a new language, there are helpful tools students can use to understand Shakespeare and other older or culturally or linguistically distant literature.

Use the Oxford English Dictionary combined with context clues to learn what words meant in the time period. Some words mean the same thing. But other words have entirely different meanings. Try looking up how the words were used in the 1500s or 1600s to get a better understanding of how Shakespeare intended the word to be understood by his audiences.

**Practicing Looking Up Diction**

Let's try looking up a word which is difficult to understand in *Hamlet*.

> BARNARDO: Well, good night.
> If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
> The **rivals** of my watch, bid them make haste.
>
> (1.1.13 - **emphases mine**)

In our modern understanding, "rival" means competitor. Like when playing Pokemon, you are introduced to a neighbor who also is given a Pokemon at the same time as you. As you raise your Pokemon, so does your rival, and you must continuously battle against your rival throughout the game. However, it seems like our modern understanding of this word does not quite work in the context of *Hamlet*. Why would Barnardo bid Horatio and Marcellus -- who seem not to be his competitors -- to make haste (AKA hurry up)? It seems like we are missing the definition of the word in Early Modern English.

So, let's use the Oxford English Dictionary to look up the word **"rival"** (1.1.13)

While there are a lot of definitions, many of them the same as the contemporary meaning, none quite fit as well as this one:

> A person having the same objective as another, an associate. *Obsolete*. *rare*.
>
> 1604 W. Shakespeare *Hamlet* i. i. 10 The riualls of my watch, bid them make hast.
>
> ("rival, 3" Oxford English Dictionary)

As you can see, this definition is literally from *Hamlet*. And, knowing this meaning, it makes much more sense: Horatio and Marcellus are not Barnardo's competitors: they are his associates, fellow castle guards, who share his objective of patrolling and protecting Elsinore. Knowing this, we can better understand the relationship dynamics between characters.

- **Pro Tip #1: Use a dictionary.** Keep the Oxford English Dictionary open while reading and be willing to look up words you do not understand.

## Syntax and Iambic Pentameter

Another confusing aspect of Shakespearean language is due to a poetic structure called **iambic pentameter.** This is the meter of epics dating all the way back to Greek antiquity. You might recognize iambic pentameter from poetry, too, like sonnets. Iambic pentameter is a poetic meter in which each line contains five sets of iambs, or about ten syllables. An iamb is essentially a two-syllable pairing of an unstressed and stressed syllable: think of it like da-dum, the sound of a heart beat. Since the word "pentameter" has the root of "penta" or five, we know then that the term means five sets of iambs. Take a look at the following first line of a popular Shakespeare poem (Sonnet 18) to see iambic pentameter in action, where each bolded portion represents a stressed syllable, and a non-bolded represents an unstressed syllable:

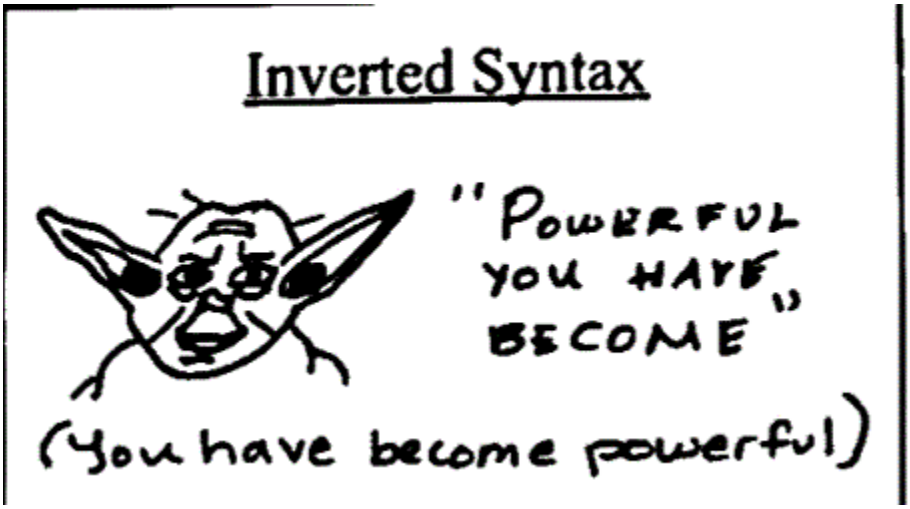
Shall **I** com**pare** thee **to** a **sum**mer's **day**?

Poets and playwrights often wrote in iambic pentameter as a means to signal to audiences the genre of their work, the literary significance of their work, to indicate the class of the character speaking (iambic pentameter for the upper class, prose for a commoner), or just to make the play or poem sound euphonic. Whatever the purpose, writing a poem in iambic pentameter is difficult. Writing an entire play in iambic pentameter? And rhyming? Even more difficult, since ideas have to perform intense linguistic gymnastics just to conform to the structure.

In order to fit the iambic pentameter, writers sometimes mess with **syntax**, or the grammatical order of words. More specifically, this is called **inverted syntax**. This makes for some pretty sounding lines, but can be confusing at first. While contemporary English often goes subject-verb-object, Shakespeare's verse often switches this order around. This means it is easier to understand if you re-order the words to be in an order we are more comfortable with. So what can you do if you encounter words which seem out of order, to the point where you cannot understand what is being said?

Whenever you read a poem or play where the words seem out of normal order, think of Yoda. If it sounds like Yoda is saying it, it is probably a case of inverted syntax. Simply re-order the words to make them clearer.

Try the Yoda trick.




The Yoda Trick is essentially pretending it is Yoda who says the words in the play, and re-ordering the words to make more sense.

#### Re-Ordering Syntax Practice

Try the Yoda trick on the following line from *Hamlet*:

“To thine own self be true” (*Hamlet* 1.3.78)

How would you re-order this to be more comprehensible?

**“Be true to yourself.”**

- **Pro Tip #2: The Yoda Trick.** Anytime you encounter words that seem out of order, try reordering words to help you make sense of them.

## Zeitgeist

**Zeitgeist** is a German word meaning "spirit of the times." Aristotle might use a similar term called **Kairos,** or the temporal and cultural context of a piece of rhetoric. Whatever term you prefer, it basically means that any work of writing is, in some way, a product of the time in which it was written. This means that, like language has evolved since the past, so has culture. For example, while Shakespeare's audience would have understood the many references to the Bible, Greek Mythology, and contemporary political events, modern readers might not be as familiar with these references. This can be super confusing. But, believe it or not, you practice learning cultural context all the time. For example, take a look at an excerpt from Tupac Shakur's song "Changes" (1992):

> And still I see no changes can't a brother get a little peace
> It's war on the streets and the war in the Middle East
> Instead of war on poverty they got a war on drugs
> So the police can bother me
> And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do
> But now I'm back with the blacks givin' it back to you
> Don't let 'em jack you up, back you up,
> Crack you up and pimp smack you up
> You gotta learn to hold ya own
> They get jealous when they see ya with ya mobile phone
> But tell the cops they can't touch this
> I don't trust this when they try to rush I bust this
> That's the sound of my tool you say it ain't cool
> My mama didn't raise no fool
> And as long as I stay black I gotta stay strapped
> And I never get to lay back
> 'Cause I always got to worry 'bout the pay backs
> Some buck that I roughed up way back
> Comin' back after all these years
> Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat that's the way it is uhh

In this excerpt, there are several cultural reference points which are easily understood to most current readers, but would be completely lost to someone outside of the cultural context. The "war in the Middle East" is likely a reference to the Gulf War (1990-1991) which was taking place just before Tupac penned this song, so readers would understand the comparison to "war on the streets" (poor people of color confrontations with police) as a violent and unjust act of war on people because of their skin color. Similarly, the reference to the "war on drugs" is likely a reference to former President Ronald Reagan's war on drugs which (starting in 1982) is widely understood to have disproportionately affected people of color ("Racially Disproportionate"). And while Shakespeare would have no idea what a "mobile phone" might be, and the term might itself seem antiquated at the time of this textbook's publication (2019) when the term "cell phone" is more commonly used, the phrase is contemporary enough that we understand what Tupac means. We also might understand the value of the mobile phone as a signifier of wealth, especially in 1992 when mobile phones were luxury items compared to now. Other terms, like "strapped" and "Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat" are references to guns. Through understanding these cultural references (direct) and allusions (indirect), readers are able to understand the theme of the verse: expressing frustration with the oppressive force of racism which never seems to change, and the need for marginalized people to always be prepared to defend themselves from disproportionate violence.

So just like listening to a popular rap song using context-specific words and references might confuse an older audience, or my previous reference to Pokemon might confuse people who have never played Pokemon, or my reference to Yoda might confuse those who have never seen Star Wars, so too might Shakespeare's lingo be confusing to us because we miss the cultural reference points. The good news is that cultural context can be learned so that we can fully enjoy older literature.

### Practicing Learning Cultural Context

Take, for example, the following lines from *Hamlet,* wherein Hamlet compares his uncle Claudius with his deceased father Old Hamlet:

> So excellent a king; that was, to this,
>
> Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
>
> (1.2.139-140)

1. Who or what was Hyperion?
2. Who or what is a satyr?
3. After looking up these references, what do you think Hamlet is insinuating about his uncle Claudius compared to his father, Old Hamlet?

### Elizabethan Cultural Reference Point: Greek Mythology

In this case, a simple Google search of the terms will help elucidate cultural reference points we might not understand. A cursory search reveals these are important figures in Greek mythology: a satyr is a gross, sexually perverted crossbreed between a man and a goat. Hyperion was the glorious and dazzling God/Titan of the sun. So we can infer from this comparison that Hamlet is saying his dad was awesome and represented all things good and powerful, and his uncle is a nasty perverted animal. This tells us a lot about the plot and character dynamic between Claudius and Hamlet, and foreshadows, perhaps, that a confrontation will take place between the two of them.

**Pro Tip #3: Research cultural contexts.** Use Google or your library's databases to do a little bit of research on cultural context to give you a deeper understanding of the play.

Other recommended resources for understanding drama (Shakespeare in particular):

- YouTube videos, like Crash Course Literature
- No Fear Shakespeare provides a translation of Shakespeare into modern English. Be wary of using this resource, though, as you may lose important literary aspects. Just like listening to a song, movie, or meme in its original form and taking time to understand the cultural background, so too is it important to read a play in its original form.
- Folger's Shakespeare, which includes helpful annotations and footnotes to explain diction and cultural context
- Watching live or film adaptations of plays. Many of these can be accessed for free through your college or local library.

Works Cited

"Racially Disproportionate Drug Arrests." *Human Rights Watch*. https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2000/usa/Rcedrg00-05.htm Accessed 11 October 2019.

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# 2.27: About Literary Criticism

**Learning Objectives**

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

- define, identify, discuss, and apply concepts of basic literary theory.

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# 2.28: Literary Criticism

By reading and discussing literature, we expand our imagination, our sense of what is possible, and our ability to empathize with others. Improve your ability to read critically and interpret texts while gaining appreciation for different literary genres and theories of interpretation. Read samples of literary interpretation. Write a critique of a literary work.

Texts that interpret literary works are usually persuasive texts. Literary critics may conduct a close reading of a literary work, critique a literary work from the stance of a particular literary theory, or debate the soundness of other critics' interpretations. The work of literary critics is similar to the work of authors writing evaluative texts. For example, the skills required to critique films, interpret laws, or evaluate artistic trends are similar to those skills required by literary critics.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8adK...b_channel=eHow

## Why Write Literary Criticism?

People have been telling stories and sharing responses to stories since the beginning of time. By reading and discussing literature, we expand our imagination, our sense of what is possible, and our ability to empathize with others. Reading and discussing literature can enhance our ability to write. It can sharpen our critical faculties, enabling us to assess works and better understand why literature can have such a powerful effect on our lives.

"Literary texts" include works of fiction and poetry. In school, English instructors ask students to critique literary texts, or works. Literary criticism refers to a genre of writing whereby an author critiques a literary text, either a work of fiction, a play, or poetry. Alternatively, some works of literary criticism address how a particular theory of interpretation informs a reading of a work or refutes some other critics' reading of a work.

## Diverse Rhetorical Situations

The genre of literary interpretation is more specialized than most of the other genres addressed in this section, as suggested by the table below. People may discuss their reactions to literary works informally (at coffee houses, book clubs, or the gym) but the lion's share of literary criticism takes place more formally: in college classrooms, professional journals, academic magazines, and websites.

Students interpret literary works for English instructors or for students enrolled in English classes. In their interpretations, students

may argue for a particular interpretation or they may dispute other critics' interpretations. Alternatively, students may read a text with a particular literary theory in mind, using the theory to explicate a particular point of view. For example, writers could critique "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin from a feminist theoretical perspective. Thanks to the Internet, some English classes are now publishing students' interpretations on websites. In turn, some students and English faculty publish their work in academic literary criticism journals.

Over the years, literary critics have argued about the best ways to interpret literature. Accordingly, many "schools" or "theories of criticism" have emerged. As you can imagine—given that they were developed by sophisticated specialists—some of these theoretical approaches are quite sophisticated and abstract.

Below is a summary of some of the more popular literary theories. Because it is a summary, the following tends to oversimplify the theories. In any case, unless you are enrolled in a literary criticism course, you won't need to learn the particulars of all of these approaches. Instead, your teacher may ask you to take an eclectic approach, pulling interpretative questions from multiple literary theories.

**Note**: If you are interested in learning more about these theories, review either Skylar Hamilton Burris' "Literary Criticism: An Overview of Approaches" or Dino F. Felluga's "Undergraduate Guide to Critical Theory."

- Schools of Literary Criticism
- New Criticism: Focuses on "objectively" evaluating the text, identifying its underlying form. May study, for example, a text's use of imagery, metaphor, or symbolism. Isn't concerned with matters outside the text, such as biographical or contextual information. Online examples: "A Formalist Reading of Sandra Cisneros's 'Woman Hollering Creek'" and "Sound in William Shakespeare's 'Tempest': A Formalist Approach" by Skylar Hamilton Burris
- Reader-Response: Criticism focuses on each reader's personal reactions to a text, assuming meaning is created by a reader's or interpretive community's personal interaction with a text. Assumes no single, correct, universal meaning exists because meaning resides in the minds of readers. Online example: "Theodore Roethke's 'My Papa's Waltz': A Reader's Response" (PDF)
- Feminism: Criticism Focuses on understanding ways gender roles are reflected or contradicted by texts, how dominance and submission play out in texts, and how gender roles evolve in texts. Online Example: "'The Yellow Wall-Paper': A Twist on Conventional Symbols" by Liselle Sant, "Kate Chopin as Feminist: Subverting the French Androcentric Influence" by Jane Le Marquand
- New Historicism: Focuses on understanding texts by viewing texts in the context of other texts. Seeks to understand economic, social, and political influences on texts. Tend to broadly define the term "text," so, for example, the Catholic Church could be defined as a "text." May adopt the perspectives of other interpretive communities—particularly reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, and Marxist approaches—to interpret texts. Online example: "Monstrous Acts and Little Murders" by Jonathan Lethem
- Media Criticism: Focuses on writers' use of multimedia and hypertexts. Online example: *The Electronic Labyrinth* by Christopher Keep, Tim McLaughlin, and Robin Parmar
- Psychoanalytical Criticism: Focuses on psychological dimensions of the work.
- Marxist Criticism: Focuses on ways texts reflect, reinforce, or challenge the effects of class, power relations, and social roles. Online example: "A Marxist/Feminist Reading of Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery'" by Peter Kosenko
- Archetypal Criticism: Focuses on identifying the underlying myths in stories and archetypes, which reflect what the psychologist Carl Jung called the "collective unconsciousness." Online example: "A Symbolic Approach to Kate Chopin's 'The Awakening'" by Skylar Hamilton Burris
- Postcolonial Criticism: Focuses on how Western culture's (mis)representation of third-world countries and peoples in stories, myths, and stereotypical images encourages repression and domination. Online example: *Other Voices: The eJournal of Cultural Criticism*
- Structuralism/Semiotics: Focuses on literature as a system of signs where meaning is constructed in a context, where words are inscribed with meaning by being compared to other words and structures.
- Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction: Focuses, along with Structuralism, on viewing literature as a system of signs, yet rejects the Structuralist view that a critic can identify the inherent meaning of a text, suggesting, instead that literature has no center, no single interpretation, that literary language is inherently ambiguous

Powerful works of literature invoke multiple readings. In other words, we can all read the same story or poem (or watch the same movie or listen to the same song) and come up with different, even conflicting, interpretations about what the work means. Who we are reflects how we read texts. Our experiences inspire us to relate to and sympathize with characters and difficult situations. Have we read similar stories? Have we actually faced some of the same challenges the characters in the story face?

In addition, literary theories have unique ways to develop and substantiate arguments. Some theories draw extensively on the work of other critics, while others concentrate on the reader's thoughts and feelings. Some theories analyze a work from an

historical perspective, while others focus solely on a close reading of a text.

Accordingly, as with other genres, the following key features need to be read as points of departure as opposed to a comprehensive blueprint:

## Focus

Examine a subject from a rhetorical perspective. Identify the intended audience, purpose, context, media, voice, tone, and persona. Distinguish between summarizing the literary work and presenting your argument. Many students fall into the trap of spending too much time summarizing the literature being analyzed as opposed to critiquing it. As a result, it would be wise to check with your teacher regarding how much plot summary is expected. As you approach this project, remember to keep your eye on the ball: What, exactly (in one sentence) is the gist of your interpretation?

## Development

You can develop your ideas by researching the work of other literary critics. How do other critics evaluate an author's work? What literary theories do literary critics use to interpret texts or particular moments in history? Reading sample proposals can help you find and adopt an appropriate voice and persona. By reading samples, you can learn how others have prioritized particular criteria.

Below are some of the questions invoked by popular literary theories. Consider these questions as you read a work, perhaps taking notes on your thoughts as you reread. You may focus on using one theory to "read and interpret" text or, more commonly, you may compare the critical concerns of different theories.

## New Criticism/Formalism

- Character: How does the character evolve during the story? What is unique or interesting about a character? Is the character a stereotypical action hero, a patriarchal father figure, or Madonna? How does a character interact with other characters?
- Setting: How does the setting enhance tension within the work? Do any elements in the setting foreshadow the conclusion of the piece?
- Plot: What is the conflict? How do scenes lead to a suspenseful resolution? What scenes make the plot unusual, unexpected, suspenseful?
- Point of View: Who is telling the story? Is the narrator omniscient (all knowing) or does the narrator have limited understanding?

## Reader-Response Criticism

How does the text make you feel? What memories or experiences come to mind when you read? If you were the central protagonist, would you have behaved differently? Why? What values or ethics do you believe are suggested by the story? As your reading of a text progresses, what surprises you, inspires you?

## Feminist Criticism

How does the story re-inscribe or contradict traditional gender roles? For example, are the male characters in "power positions" while the women are "dominated"? Are the men prone to action, decisiveness, and leadership while the female characters are passive, subordinate? Do gender roles create tension within the story? Do characters' gender roles evolve over the course of the narrative?

## New Historicism Criticism

How does the story reflect the aspirations and conditions of the lower classes or upper classes? Is tension created by juxtaposing privileged, powerful positions to subordinated, dominated positions? What information about the historical context of the story helps explain the character;s motivations? Who benefits from the outcome of the story or from a given character's motivation?

## Media Criticism

How does the medium alter readers' interactions with the text? Has the reader employed multimedia or hypertext? What traditions from print and page design have shaped the structure of the text? In what ways has the author deviated from traditional, deductively organized linear texts?

## Cite from the Work

Literary criticism involves close reading of a literary work, regardless of whether you are arguing about a particular interpretation, comparing stories or poems, or using a theory to interpret literature. Do not summarize the story. The purpose of the document is not to inform the readers, but to argue a particular interpretation. You only need to cite parts of the work that support or relate to your argument and follow the citation format required by your instructor (see Using and Citing Sources).

Below is an example from "Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction," Professor Matthew Hurt. Note how the writer uses block quotes to highlight key elements and paraphrase and summarizes the original works, using quotation marks where necessary.

"...Twain offers a long descriptive passage of Huck and Jim's life on the raft that seems, at first glance, to celebrate the idyllic freedom symbolized by the river and nature. . . A close reading of this passage, however, shows that the river is not a privileged natural space outside of and uncontaminated by society, but is inextricably linked to the social world on the shore, which itself has positive value for Huck. Instead of seeking to escape society, Huck wants to escape the dull routines of life."

The passage abounds with lyrical descriptions of the river's natural beauty. For example, Huck's long description of the sunrise over the river captures the peaceful stillness and the visual beauty of the scene:

"The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line — that was the woods on t'other side — you couldn't make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness, spreading around; then the river softened up, away off, and warn't black any more, but gray; . . . sometimes you could hear a sweep screaking; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by-and-by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there's a snag there in the swift current which breaks on it and makes the streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t'other side of the river, . . . then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh, and sweet to smell, on account of the woods and the flowers; . . . and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going at it!" (129-130)

Here Huck celebrates the beauty of the natural world coming to life at the beginning of a new day. The "paleness" gradually spreading across the sky makes new objects visible which he describes in loving detail for the reader. The "nice breeze" is "cool and fresh" and "sweet to smell," and the world seems to be "smiling in the sun" as the song-birds welcome the new day.

However, Huck includes a number of details within this passage that would seem to work against the language of natural beauty. After describing the gradually brightening sky, Huck notes that "you could see little dark spots drifting along, ever so far away — trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks — rafts." The sun rise reveals not only natural objects (the brightening sky, the "snag," the "mist"), but also brings into view man-made objects ("trading scows" and "rafts") that signify human society's presence in this natural environment. Similarly, Huck speculates that the picturesque "log cabin" on the distant shore is a "woodyard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres." Here the marker of human society takes on a sinister tone of corruption as Huck describes how unscrupulous wood sellers stack wood loosely to cheat their customers. Finally, although the breeze is "sweet to smell," Huck assures the reader that this isn't always the case: "but sometimes not that way, because they've left dead fish laying around, gars, and such, and they do get pretty rank."

These signs of society's presence on the river are largely negative. The woodyard is "piled by cheats" and the stacked fish pollute the "sweet" smell of the breeze. At this point, the opposition between "good nature" and "bad society" remains intact. The signs of human presence suggest a corruption of nature's beauty. In the paragraphs that follow, however, this opposition is subtly reversed. After Huck's account of the sunrise over the river, he describes how he and Jim watch the steamboats "coughing along up stream." But when there are no steamboats or rafts to watch, he describes the scene as "solid lonesomeness" (130). No songbirds, no sweet breezes. Without human activities to watch, the scene suddenly becomes empty and "lonesome," and nothing captures Huck's attention until more rafts and boats pass by and he can watch them chopping wood or listen to them beating pans in the fog.

## Cite Other Critics' Interpretations of the Work

Criticism written by advanced English majors, graduate students, and literary critics may be more about what other critics have said than about the actual text. Indeed, many critics spend more time reading criticism and arguing about critical approaches than actually reading original works. However, unless you are enrolled in a literary theory course, your instructor probably wants you to focus more on interpreting the work than discussing other critical interpretations. This does not mean, however, that you should write about a literary work "blindly." Instead, you are wise to find out what other students and critics have said about the work.

Below is a sample passage that illustrates how other critics' works can inspire an author and guide him or her in constructing a counter argument, support an author's interpretation, and provide helpful biographical information.

*In her critical biography of Shirley Jackson, Lenemaja Friedman notes that when Shirley Jackson's story "The Lottery" was published in the June 28, 1948 issue of the New Yorker it received a response that "no New Yorker story had ever received": hundreds of letters poured in that were characterized by "bewilderment, speculation, and old-fashioned abuse."1 It is not hard to account for this response: Jackson's story portrays an "average" New England village with "average" citizens engaged in a deadly rite, the annual selection of a sacrificial victim by means of a public lottery, and does so quite deviously: not until well along in the story do we suspect that the "winner" will be stoned to death by the rest of the villagers.*

## Organization

The format for literary critiques is fairly standard:

- State your claim(s).
- Forecast your organization.
- Marshal evidence for your claim.
- Reiterate argument and elaborate on its significance.

In English classes, you may be able to assume that your readers are familiar with the work you are critiquing. Perhaps, for example, the entire class is responding to one particular work after some class discussions about it. However, if your instructor asks you to address a broader audience, you may need to provide bibliographical information for the work. In other words, you may need to cite the title, publisher, date, and pages of the work (see Citing Sources).

Literary critiques are arguments. As such, your instructors expect you to state a claim in your introduction and then provide quotes and paraphrased statements from the text to serve as evidence for your claim. Ideally, your critique will be insightful and interesting. You'll want to come up with an interpretation that isn't immediately obvious. Below are some examples of "thesis statements" or "claims" from literary critiques:

- In "The Yellow Wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the protagonist is oppressed and represents the effect of the oppression of women in society. This effect is created by the use of complex symbols such as the house, the window, and the wall-paper which facilitate her oppression as well as her self expression. ["'The Yellow Wall-Paper': A Twist on Conventional Symbols" by Liselle Sant]
- "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Gilman is a sad story of the repression that women face in the days of the late 1800's as well as being representative of the turmoil that women face today. [Critique of "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Brandi Mahon]
- "The Yellow Wallpaper," written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a story of a woman, her psychological difficulties and her husband's so called therapeutic treatment of her aliments during the late 1800s. . . Gilman does well throughout the story to show with descriptive phrases just how easily and effectively the man "seemingly" wields his "maleness" to control the woman. But, with further interpretation and insight I believe Gilman succeeds in nothing more than showing the weakness of women, of the day, as active persons in their own as well as society's decision making processes instead of the strength of men as women dominating machines. ["The View from the Inside" by Timothy J. Decker]
- In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain creates a strong opposition between the freedom of Huck and Jim's life on the raft drifting down the Mississippi River, which represents "nature," and the confining and restrictive life on the shore, which represents "society." ["'All I wanted was a change': Positive Images of Nature and Society in Chapter 19 of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*" from Professor Matthew Hurt's "Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction"]
- In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's short story, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," an unexpected visitor comes down from the sky, and seems to test the faith of a community. The villagers have a difficult time figuring out just how the very old man with enormous wings fits into their lives. Because this character does not agree with their conception of what an angel should

look like, they try to determine if the aged man could actually be an angel. In trying to prove the origin of their visitor, the villagers lose faith in the possibility of him being an angel because he does not adhere to their ordered world. Marquez keeps the identity of the very old man with enormous wings ambiguous to critique the villagers and, more generally, organized religion for having a lack of faith to believe in miracles that do not comply with their master narrative. ["Prove It: A Critique of the Villagers' Faith in 'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings'" from "Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction," Professor Matthew Hurt]

## Style

Literary criticism is a fairly specialized kind of writing. Instead of writing to a general lay audience, you are writing to members of a literary community who have read a work and who developed opinions about the work — as well as a vocabulary of interpretation.

Following are some common words used by literary critics. More specialized terms can be learned by reading criticism or by referring to a good encyclopedia for criticism or writing, including the *Writer's Encyclopedia*:

- Protagonist: The protagonist is the major character of the story; typically the character must overcome significant challenges.
- Antagonist: The protagonist's chief nemesis; in other words, the character whom the protagonist must overcome.
- Symbols: Metaphoric language; see "'A Symbolic Approach to Kate Chopin's 'The Awakening'"
- Viewpoint: Stories are told either in the first-person or third-person point of view. The first person is limited to a single character, although dialog can let you guess at other characters' intentions. The third person allows readers inside the character's mind so you know what the character feels and thinks. Viewpoint can be "limited," where the character knows less than the reader, or "omniscient," where the reader can hear the thoughts and feelings of all characters. Occasionally writers will use multiple character viewpoint, which takes you from one character's perspective to another.
- Plot: Plots are a series of scenes, typically moving from a conflict situation to a resolution. To surprise readers, authors will foreshadow "false plants," which lead readers to anticipate other resolutions. The term "denouement" refers to the unraveling of the plot in the conclusion.

## Contributors and Attributions

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# 2.29: What is Literary Criticism?

## What is Literary Theory?

When students hear the word "theory," they might think first of the natural sciences, rather than of literature. In the sciences, theories are systems for understanding how an aspect of the world works: they can be used to explain past phenomena and predict future behavior. Some common conceptions of theory in the public consciousness might include the theory of evolution or the search for the unified theory of the universe.



This image of a magnifying glass resting on an old book is in the public domain.

The term theory does not have the exact same applications in science and literature. However, literary scholars do understand their subject through **literary theories**, which are intellectual models that seek to answer a number of fundamental interpretive questions about literature. In *How to Do Theory*, literary critic Wolfgang Iser suggests that the natural sciences (and the social sciences to a large part) operate under **hard-core** theories, whereas the humanities use **soft-core** theories. Simply put, hard-core theories lead to problem-solving and are governed by general laws and rules; they predict and rely on objective facts. Soft-core theories, on the other hand, do not problem solve but predict — they map ideas and are not necessarily governed by laws but by metaphors and images.

Thus literary scholars use theories that are more descriptive of ideas — which map ideas more than quantify them. Such scholars are guided by questions that may include the following:

1. What exactly do we mean by "literature"? What counts as literature, and what does not?
2. Can (and should) we determine the value or worth of literary works? If so, how should we go about this task? If not, why not?
3. To what extent does a given text reflect its author and/or the historical moment of its composition?
4. What are the political and social ramifications of literary texts and of the ways we study them?

These are very broad versions of the questions that literary scholars ask in their work, but you can probably already see that different scholars are likely to have very different answers to many of them. Thus we often talk about different "schools" of literary theory. Each school prioritizes certain concerns for talking about literature while de-emphasizing others. Thus one critic might focus on the representation of women within a given story or poem (feminist theory), while another critic might concentrate on representations of unconscious desire in that same text (psychoanalytical theory). Though they're studying the same text, these two critics may come to very different conclusions about what is most interesting in that text and why.

# Why Study Literary Theory?

In his essay "Disliking Books at an Early Age," literary scholar Gerald Graff talks about how he struggled as a child to see the point of literature. "Literature and history," he recalls, "had no apparent application to my experience." Even in college, Graff says, he "continued to find 'serious' reading painfully difficult and alien." This all changed for Graff when he encountered critical debates over the interpretation of Mark Twain's novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1876). He read about critics who disagreed over the book's meaning, value, and attitudes toward race. He realized that the conversations he'd been having with his classmates about the book in class discussion "were not too far from the thoughts of famous published critics," which gave Graff a feeling of power and excitement about reading he'd never felt before.

We hope you will feel that same power and excitement about reading as you learn about critical debates in literary study and begin to contribute to them in your own papers. Literature isn't made up of inscrutable texts that can be deciphered only by a chosen few who have learned to speak in a secret code. Literature is written by people — talented people perhaps, but people nonetheless. And the concerns of literary critics are concerns that many people share: What does this work say about the human condition? How does it convey its message? Does it portray its subjects fairly? What political or social ideas does it advance? Literature has many potential meanings, and literary theory gives scholars different avenues to uncover those meanings.

By asking theoretical questions of the novels, stories, poems, plays, and essays that you read in your literature class, you can begin to grasp works that may seem ineffable—impenetrable—if you try to uncover a single, "correct" interpretation for them. In short, literary theory can give you a toolbox for approaching any literary text: a set of interpretive moves that can help you figure out where to start when your instructor asks you to comment on a work in class or develop a paper topic.

# Theory as Lens

One helpful way of thinking about theory is to imagine it as a kind of lens, or perspective. By viewing literature through a lens, it allows scholars to focus on a particular aspect of the text. Through this perspective, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the significance of the text. For example, if we view *Hamlet* through the gender lens, we might examine the ways in which Hamlet is mocked by Claudius for his "unmanly" grief and how this reflects gender roles in Shakespeare's time. We might also examine the way Ophelia or Gertrude function in the text, or why Hamlet is so rude and sexist towards the women in his life.

By zooming in on a particular aspect of a text, students can focus on a topic that interests them. Focused essays—with clear thesis statements —are often better essays. But they are also often more enjoyable to write for students!

Think about what expertise you might have, or what issues are most important to you. Let's say you are a student who is really into sports, for example. You might examine the role of sports in *Hamlet* (there is fencing!). If you are passionate about nature or the environment, you might consider the botany of daffodils in Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" or the flowers Ophelia carries in *Hamlet*. Essentially, there is a way to apply a theoretical lens or perspective to any work of literature.

Therefore, rather than thinking of theory as restrictive, think of it as a way to explore literary texts in a way that is meaningful to you; a way that empowers you to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation not only for literature, but for your own passions, dreams, and ideas.

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# 2.30: Formalism

John Donne (1572–1631), the great metaphysical poet, provides a metaphor that is useful for close reading. In "The Canonization" (1633) he writes:

> We'll build sonnets pretty rooms;
>
> As well a well-wrought urn becomes
>
> The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
>
> And by these hymns, all shall approve
>
> Us canonized for Love.

—John Donne, "The Canonization," *Poetry Foundation*

Another poet returns to the same metaphor 118 years later. Thomas Gray, in "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), writes:

> Can storied urn or animated bust
>
> Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?

—Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Courtyard," *Poetry Foundation*

Both Donne and Gray use the image of the urn in their poetry. An *urn*, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), is "an earthenware or metal vessel or vase of a rounded or ovaloid form and with a circular base, used by various peoples especially in former times...to preserve the ashes of the dead. Hence vaguely used (esp. *poet*.) for 'a tomb or sepulchre, the grave.' Donne and Gray use the urn poetically, or metaphorically, for the urn is an image, a container to hold poetic meaning. To Donne, the poet can "build sonnets pretty rooms; / As well a well-wrought urn becomes"; to Gray the urn becomes "storied" or an "animated bust" capable of containing stories and meaning. As an image, then, the urn becomes symbolic: poets argue that a poem is like an urn, a container for artistic meaning.

Let's add one final component to our *urn* image. Jump ahead another sixty-nine years from Gray's poem and read John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820). At the end of this poem, Keats writes:

> When old age shall this generation waste,
>
> Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
>
> Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
>
> 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
>
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Donne's "**well-wrought urn**" became the title of a book by Cleanth Brooks—*The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1947)—a central manifesto of the New Criticism. New Criticism is synonymous with close reading, so the urn becomes an important symbol for the New Critics: the urn as artistic container of beauty and meaning represents the New Critical enterprise. A poem, a play, a novel, a short story is like a "storied urn" or "well-wrought urn," capable of conveying poetic beauty and truth. Even if the poem is "Jabberwocky"!

In all likelihood, you have already practiced **New Criticism**, the close reading of a poem, short story, or longer narrative that focuses on the unity of that work. When you examine a short story for its character development, a drama for its plot construction, or a poem for its imagery, you are reading as a New Critic, looking at the literary work through the lens of close reading. In a sense, New Critical close reading is at the heart of every form of literary analysis you do, regardless of the theoretical approach taken. Thus it becomes essential that you become proficient in close readings of texts, for this skill is the foundation of all forms

of literary criticism. If you cannot read a text closely and analyze it, you will have difficulty reading from any critical perspective.

practice questions

1. List the papers, if any, you have written in high school or college using the close reading approach.
2. Describe your experience writing such papers.
3. What challenges or questions do you remember having as you were working on these papers?
4. On which literary work have you decided to write your paper?
5. What are the fundamental questions you have about this work?

## Focus on New Critical Strategies

The New Critics, as we discussed, regard a literary work as an *urn*—a well-wrought, storied urn, or a Grecian urn. As Keats writes, this urn contains not only beauty but also truth: a work of literature has some objective meaning that is integral to its artistic design. In other words, literature is the art of conveying truth about the world. Thus the New Critics view the study of literature as an inherently valuable enterprise; literary criticism, it follows, is fruitful because it clarifies art by assigning a truth value to this art. To quote the nineteenth-century poet and critic Matthew Arnold, as he writes in *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1865), literature reflects "the best that is known and thought in the world." To the New Critics, as you can see, literature—in particular the analysis of it—was a profound activity.

A central concern of the New Critics is to understand how meaning and form interweave into a total artistic effect, the well-wrought urn. A New Critical reading assumes that the literary work has an organic structure that leads to unity or harmony in the work. An important concern for New Critics, consequently, is to show how meaning is achieved or dependent on the organic structure—the form—of the work. A New Critical reading, then, focuses on the various elements of literature that complement and create the theme.

## Basic Philosophy of Close Reading

A New Critic's toolbox will hold those elements of literature that allow for the discussion of form and technique as it applies to meaning. Since New Critics perform a close reading of the text to illustrate how structure and theme are inseparable, they are eager to tell us both how to read and how *not* to read. They identify various fallacies of reading that must be avoided:

### The Intentional Fallacy

The **intentional fallacy** occurs when readers claim to understand an author's intended meaning for a work of literature. The New Critics believed that a literary work belongs to the readers, to the public, which suggests that we should read the work isolated from what the author may have said about the work. In other words, the critic never knows specifically what the author intended. Indeed, an author may have conveyed meanings he or she did not intend at all, but those meanings are still present in their work. The literary critic, then, must concentrate solely on the extrinsic formal qualities of the poem, play, short story, or novel.

### The Biographical Fallacy

Related to the intentional fallacy is the **biographical fallacy**, which, as you might suspect, is committed when you use an author's life as a frame of reference to interpret a work of art. The New Critics took painstaking measures to keep the focus on the work of art itself.

### The Affective Fallacy

The **affective fallacy** is produced when the critic brings in his or her personal feelings about how a literary work moves them. While New Critics were aware that many readers found meaning in the emotional impact of literature, they were careful to distinguish between subjective emotional responses and objective critical statements about a literary work. Critics, then, should stick closely to the work of art, eliminating the author's intention from consideration, and they should also eliminate their emotional involvement in the reading experience. We discover later in our study that many critical theories—psychoanalytic and

reader-response theories, in particular—are diametrically opposed to New Criticism: both psychoanalytic and reader-response theories highlight the way a literary work affects a reader's emotional and intellectual responses.

## The Heresy of Paraphrase

Finally, the New Critics warned against the **heresy of paraphrase**, which happens when readers artificially separate meaning from structure or form. You have probably fallen into this trap once or twice when you concentrated on summarizing a work's plot rather than analyzing its meaning. New Criticism teaches us not to assign a meaning to a literary work *unless* that meaning can be supported by a close examination of the artistic elements of the text. To say that Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is about the death of a migrant worker fails to acknowledge that the poem does not support such a reading. Humpty Dumpty, in fact, could be accused of the heresy of paraphrase, as Amy Chisnell explores in her student paper later in the chapter.

In review, a close reading, as defined by the New Critics, focuses narrowly on the literary work as a well-wrought urn. All we need for our interpretation is the literary work itself, where we examine how the artistry of the work leads to a larger theme that reflects the truth value of the work. Easy to state, more difficult to do! So let's now turn to see how a close reading can be connected to the writing process itself.

practice questions

1. How do you react to such rules that define the philosophy of New Critical close reading?
2. What do you see as the strengths to such an approach?
3. What do you see as some of the limits to this approach?

# The Writing Process and the Protocols of Close Reading

If New Critics provide us with so many strategies for *not* reading a text, they should present us with strategies *for* reading texts. And they do. They suggest protocols of reading that are the heart of traditional close readings of texts. In a nutshell, a close reading exposes a problem or issue that needs examination to bring unity to the work; a close reading demonstrates how a literary work's meaning is unified, balanced, and harmonized by its aesthetic—or literary—structure. Your close reading, then, often identifies a **tension** or **ambiguity**—the issue or problem—that can be resolved by showing that the literary work achieves unity even in the apparent tension or ambiguity. Consequently, the critic can often examine how language creates tension through **paradox** or **irony**. Paradox (when something appears contradictory or discordant, but finally proves to be actually true) and irony (when a perceived meaning or intention is eventually found not to be accurate) are a result of a writer's use of language in a *metaphorical* way.

## Questions

1. Read Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn"
2. Examine the last two lines of the poem (49–50).
3. Do you think the urn is speaking the lines at the end? Does it matter?

There is no more famous example of a professional critical reading than Cleanth Brooks's "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes." (Cleanth Brooks, “Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes,” Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html.)

Brooks's reading of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" begins by disagreeing with T. S. Eliot, who believed the concluding lines of the poem—"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—constituted a major flaw in the poem, for, as Brooks relates, "the troubling assertion is apparently an intrusion upon the poem—does not grow out of it—is not dramatically accommodated to it" (Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html). Eliot feels the urn's speech doesn’t make much sense—and that the statement simply isn't true. Brooks sets out to counter Eliot and prove that the poem is unified around the central paradox of the poem: "What is the relation of the beauty (the goodness, the perfection) of a poem to the truth or falsity of what it seems to assert?"

Brooks contends that the poem is "a parable on the nature of poetry, and of art in general" and that the concluding lines must be taken in the "total context of the poem" (Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's

English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html). When read in this manner, the urn's speech was "'in character,' was dramatically appropriate, [and] was properly prepared for" (Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html). To support his contention, Brooks provides a stanza-by-stanza close reading in which he suggests that the paradox of the speaking urn is naturally part of each stanza and related to a key thematic concept: the poem highlights the tension between bustling life depicted on the urn and the frozen vignettes of the "Cold Pastoral." Brooks concludes, "If the urn has been properly dramatized, if we have followed the development of the metaphors, if we have been alive to the paradoxes which work throughout the poem, perhaps then, we shall be prepared for the enigmatic, final paradox which the 'silent form' utters.'" (Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html). In concluding his essay, Brooks warns readers not to fall into the trap of paraphrase, for we must ultimately focus on "the world-view, or 'philosophy,' or 'truth' of the *poem as a whole* in terms of its dramatic wholeness" (Brooks's emphasis) (Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html).

Brooks's reading of Keats's ode is an exemplar of New Critical reading. Remember, a close reading will examine a literary work and find some objective meaning (a theme) that is harmonized with structure, thus balancing theme and form.

## Implementing the Reading Protocols: A Strategy

To perform a close reading, use the following strategy:

1. Identify a tension or ambiguity in the literary work, the "problem" that needs to be solved by a close reading. In other words, your interpretation will highlight a theme or meaning that resides in the work.
2. Demonstrate how the work sustains or achieves this meaning through its artistic "principle of composition," which might include an examination of the following:
   - imagery
   - character
   - plot
   - symbol
   - setting
   - point of view
   - language use (i.e. denotation, connotation, metaphor, simile, personification, rhythm)

   Of course, the principle of composition is determined by the literary genre you are analyzing (i.e. short story, poetry, drama, novel). By showing that #1 is dependent on #2, you present a New Critical interpretation reflecting how meaning is integral to theme.

To review, New Criticism provides us with concrete strategies to use when we read and interpret works of literature. Such reading and interpreting, however, never happens after just a first reading; in fact, all critics—New Critics and the others we examine later in this text—reread works multiple times before venturing an interpretation. You can see, then, the connection between reading and writing: as Chapter 1 indicates, writers create multiple drafts before settling for a finished product (writing is never adequately "finished"); the writing process, in turn, is dependent on the multiple rereadings the writer has performed to gather evidence for the paper. It's important that you integrate the reading and writing process together. As a model, use the following ten-step plan as you write using New Critical theory:

1. Carefully *read the work* you will analyze.
2. *Formulate a general question* after your initial reading that identifies a problem—a tension—that is fruitful for discussion.
3. *Reread the work*, paying particular attention to the question you posed. *Take notes*, which should be focused on your central question. *Write an exploratory journal entry* or *blog post* that allows you to play with ideas.
4. *Construct a working thesis* that makes a claim about the work and accounts for the following:
   1. What does the work mean?
   2. How does the work artistically demonstrate the theme you've identified?
   3. "So what" is significant about the work? That is, why is it important for you to write about this work? What will readers learn from reading your interpretation?
5. *Reread the text to gather textual evidence* for support. What literary devices are used to achieve theme?
6. *Construct an informal outline* that demonstrates how you will support your interpretation.
7. *Write a first draft*.
8. *Receive feedback* from peers and your instructor via *peer review* and *conferencing* with your instructor (if possible).
9. *Revise the paper*, which will include revising your original thesis statement and restructuring your paper to best support the thesis. Note: You probably will revise many times, so it is important to receive feedback at every draft stage if possible.

10. *Edit and proofread* for correctness, clarity, and style.

We recommend that you follow this process for every paper that you write from this textbook. Of course, these steps can be modified to fit your writing process, but the plan does ensure that you will engage in a thorough reading of the text as you work through the writing process, which demands that you allow plenty of time for reading, reflecting, writing, reviewing, and revising.

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# 2.31: Psychoanalytic Criticism

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell

To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades

Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

—excerpt from "Ode to a Nightingale" by John Keats (1819)

“Do I wake or sleep?” Keats's question is perplexing, one we have probably asked ourselves. For our dreams often seem as real as our waking life. We dream, we wake, and we try to recollect our dream, which somehow seems to tell us something that we should know. We may tell friends our dreams, especially those strange ones that haunt our imagination, and they may venture an interpretation for us by reading our dream. Dreams are stories of our mind, albeit often bewildering narratives in need of interpretation.

## Learning Exercise: Dream Analysis

1. Keep a dream journal for a least one week, jotting down those dreams that you can remember most vividly.
2. Take one of your dreams and analyze it like a story: What is the plot? Who are the characters? What symbols seem to be operating in the dream-story?
3. Now try to understand your dream: What might be the theme of your dream-story?

# Psychoanalytic Criticism

Psychoanalytical literary criticism, on one level, concerns itself with dreams, for dreams are a reflection of the unconscious psychological states of dreamers. Freud, for example, contends that dreams are "the guardians of sleep" where they become "disguised fulfillments of repressed wishes." To Freud, dreams are the "royal road" to the personal unconscious of the dreamer and have a direct relation to literature, which often has the structure of a dream. Jacques Lacan, a disciple of Freud, was influenced by Freud's psychoanalytical theories and contended that dreams mirrored our unconscious and reflected the way we use language; dreams, therefore, operate like language, having their own rhetorical qualities. Another Freud disciple, Carl Jung, eventually rejected Freud's theory that dreams are manifestations of the personal unconsciousness, claiming, instead, that they reflect archetypes that tap into the "collective unconsciousness" of all humanity.

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

1. Analyze the author's life.
2. Analyze the thematic content of the work, especially the motivations of characters and the narrator(s).
3. Analyze the artistic construction of a text.

Here is a quick overview of some psychoanalytical interpretations that demonstrate these approaches.

## Analyze the Author's Life

In *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (1933), Marie Bonaparte psychoanalyzes Poe, concluding that his fiction and poetry are driven by his desire to be reunited with his dead mother (she died when he was three). This desire leaves him symbolically castrated, unable to have normal relationships with others (primarily women). Bonaparte analyzes Poe's stories from this perspective, reading them as dreams reflecting Poe's repressed desires for his mother. While such an interpretation is fascinating—and can be quite useful—you probably won't attempt to get into the mind of the author for a short paper. But you will find, however, that examining the life of an author can be a fruitful enterprise, for there may be details from an author's life that might become useful evidence in your paper.

## Analyze the Thematic Content: The Motivations of Characters and the Narrator(s)

An example showing a psychoanalytic focus on literary characters is Frederick Crews's reading in *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne*'s *Psychological Themes* (1966). Crews first provides a psychoanalytical reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne's life: he sees reflected in Hawthorne's characters a thwarted Oedipus complex (no worries, we'll define that a bit later), which creates repression. Furthermore, Hawthorne's ties to the Puritan past engenders his work with a profound sense of guilt, further repressing characters. Crews reads "The Birthmark," for example, as a tale of sexual repression. Crews' study is a model for psychoanalyzing characters in fiction and remains a powerful and persuasive interpretation.

## Analyze the Artistic Construction

Jacques Lacan shows us how a psychoanalytical reading can focus on the formal, artistic construction of a literary text. In other words, Lacan believes that our unconscious is "structured like a language" and that a literary text mirrors this sense of the unconscious. In "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" Lacan argues that Edgar Allan Poe's tale is not necessarily about the meaning of the message in the stolen letter; rather, the tale is about who controls the letter, who has power over the language contained in the letter.

### How to Write A Psychoanalytic Literary Essay

1. Choose three authors and/or literary works that you think might be fruitful for applying the three psychoanalytical approaches.
2. Now jot down two reasons why you think your author and/or work might work well with these theories.
3. Keep this material, for you may have already developed an idea for your paper.

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# 2.32: Criticism and Gender

## Feminist Criticism

Let's whet our appetite for literature in a different, maybe more peculiar way. Let's read a different text, this one from a cookbook, the *Amberg Centennial 1890–1990 Cookbook* (American Legion Auxiliary #428, *Amberg Centennial 1890–1990 Cookbook* (n.p.: n.d.)). The two recipes come from the section "Game."

### Duck with Wild Rice

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 ducks | 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley |
| 1 onion, chopped | 1 ½ teaspoons salt |
| 1 (5 ounce) package wild rice | 1 (8 ounce) can mushrooms and liquid |
| ½ cup butter | ½ cup flour |
| 1 ½ cups half and half | 1 (4 ounce) package slivered almonds, toasted |
| 2 ribs celery, chopped | salt and pepper to taste |

Boil duck, onion, and celery until tender. Remove meat from bones. Set aside. Cook rice. Set aside. Melt butter and sauté onion. Stir in flour and half-and-half to make cream sauce. Add parsley and seasonings. Add cooked duck, rice, mushrooms, and almonds to cream sauce. Bake mixture in a casserole at 350° for 30–45 minutes. Serves 6–8.

—Mrs. Charles T. Dekuester (Doris Van Vleit)

### Bessie's Birds

| | |
|---|---|
| 12 birds (dove or quail) | 1 cup beef consommé |
| 1 cup uncooked rice | 1 (10–3/4 ounce) can onion soup |
| ¼ cup chopped bell pepper | ½ cup flour |
| ¼ cup chopped onion | salt and pepper |
| butter or bacon drippings | |

Sauté salted and floured birds in small amount of butter or bacon drippings to brown well. Put rice in bottom of buttered oblong casserole dish. Place birds on top of rice. Sprinkle peppers and onion on top. Pour consommé and onion soup over casserole. Cover casserole with aluminum foil and bake at 350° for 45 minutes. Serves 6.

Chicken may be substituted for the birds.

—Mrs. Hugh Guy (Viola Barette)

## CLASS PROCESS

1. Put students in groups of three or four.
2. Have them read the recipes carefully.
3. Have them interpret the recipes as they would examine a story or poem.
4. What "themes" can they find in the recipe text?
5. Generate class discussion as you are guided by the discussion following the excerpt.

The recipes reflect a particular view of women and their role in the domestic space. In other words, the woman's domain is in the house; her workspace the kitchen, where she will cook for her husband (and by extension the children). Notice that each recipe privileges the male name, with the woman's maiden name—her original name and identity—put in parenthesis. Even the use of *Mrs.* denotes her married status, whereby *Mr.* does not tell us the married status of the male. We are in the realm of **patriarchy**, the condition that demonstrates male domination over women. The recipes are even more interesting, for the section of this cookbook is "Game," further suggesting particular gender roles: men, the sportsmen, go hunting for this game, while the women, remaining at home, cook up that game for the family. If we interpret these recipes as we might a piece of literature, we can identify particular themes that represent feminist criticism: women are inferior to men in patriarchy; women's space is the private place of domesticity, the man's space is public (in this case the rugged wild); the woman's identity is determined by her husband's identity (she, like Eve, is dependent on her husband's rib, so to speak).

Now let's look at a literary use of the kitchen as a domestic space. Here is the cast of characters and opening set description for Susan Glaspell's one-act play, *Trifles* (1916). The play was first performed by the Provincetown Players in Massachusetts, with Glaspell playing the role of Mrs. Hale. A year later, Glaspell turned the play into a short story, "A Jury of Her Peers," partly to reach a larger reading audience. The inspiration for the play came from a murder reported in the *Des Moines Register*. (Articles on case: www.midnightassassin.com/sgarticles.html.)

- GEORGE HENDERSON (County Attorney)
- HENRY PETERS (Sheriff)
- LEWIS HALE, A neighboring farmer
- MRS PETERS
- MRS HALE

SCENE: *The kitchen is the now abandoned farmhouse of* JOHN WRIGHT, *a gloomy kitchen, and left without having been put in order—unwashed pans under the sink, a loaf of bread outside the bread-box, a dish-towel on the table—other signs of incompleted work. At the rear the outer door opens and the* SHERIFF *comes in followed by the* COUNTY ATTORNEY *and* HALE. *The* SHERIFF *and* HALE *are men in middle life, the* COUNTY ATTORNEY *is a young man; all are much bundled up and go at once to the stove. They are followed by the two women—the* SHERIFF's *wife first; she is a slight wiry woman, a thin nervous face.* MRS HALE *is larger and would ordinarily be called more comfortable looking, but she is disturbed now and looks fearfully about as she enters. The women have come in slowly, and stand close together near the door.* (Susan Glaspell, *Trifles* (1916; Project Gutenberg, 2011, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10623/10623-h/10623-h.htm#TRIFLES.)

The following excerpt is the opening of the short story "A Jury of Her Peers":

WHEN Martha Hale opened the storm-door and got a cut of the north wind, she ran back for her big woolen scarf. As she hurriedly wound that round her head her eye made a scandalized sweep of her kitchen. It was no ordinary thing that called her away—it was probably farther from ordinary than anything that had ever happened in Dickson County. But what her eye took in was that her kitchen was in no shape for leaving; her bread all ready for mixing, half the flour sifted and half unsifted.

She hated to see things half done; but she had been at that when the team from town stopped to get Mr. Hale, and then the sheriff came running in to say his wife wished Mrs. Hale would come too—adding, with a grin, that he guessed she was getting scarey and wanted another woman along. So she had dropped everything right where it was. (Susan Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers," in *The Best Short Stories of 1917*, ed. Edward J. O'Brien (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1918; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1996), etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin...ublic&part=all.)

## CLASS PROCESS

1. Have the students read *Trifles*.
2. Ask the students to make a chart on a piece of paper: label the left side "men," the right side "women."
3. Students should then fill in the chart: what symbols are associated with the men and women?

When we turn to the *Trifles* example, we see how a writer uses this domestic space and its implications to create a symbolic statement about gender. The men all have first and last names and are given an occupation (attorney, sheriff, or farmer); the women are only known by their husbands' names — they are not even given first names. This naming becomes important in the play, for the suspected murderer Minnie Wright is referred to as Minnie Foster by Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale, suggesting that she had lost her identity by marrying her husband, who was a cold and cruel man, even preventing her from singing in the choir or

having a telephone in the house (see Gretchen Panzer's sample paper on voice in *The Great Gatsby* later in the chapter).

Furthermore, the setting of the play is important — all the action on stage takes place in the kitchen, a kitchen that is in disarray. The men, of course, view the messy kitchen as a fault of Minnie's: she just isn't a very good housewife and housekeeper, for that is her primary role according to the men. To be a housewife, in addition, means that women are only concerned with "trifles," insignificant things. Later in the play and the short story we find out that Minnie's canning—her preserves—have been ruined because the jars have frozen and burst. Again, the men see this as sloppy housekeeping, while the women view the preserves as Minnie's hard work to care for her family. The idea of "preserves" or "preservation" becomes a central theme in Glaspell's work, for Minnie must preserve her dignity as a woman, even if it means that she must murder her husband. The great irony of the play and short story is that the women discover the evidence—the strangled bird—that would be enough to convict Minnie of murder, but they withhold this evidence, thus implying that Minnie will be set free. The women create their own justice system, becoming a jury of their peers: women.

**Feminism** is a powerful literary theory that is dedicated to social and political change. "How to define feminism? Ah, that is the question," a befuddled Hamlet might ask. A useful definition can be found in Michael Kimmel and Thomas Mosmiller's *Against the Tide: Pro-Feminist Men in the United States, 1776–1990: A Documentary History* (1992). They focus on four central points:

1. There is evidence that women are treated differently and unequally.
2. Women are not treated equally in the private and public sphere.
3. If these points are true, then that's wrong and becomes a moral problem.
4. Thus feminism is a commitment to change. (Michael Kimmel and Thomas Mosmiller, *Against the Tide: Pro-Feminist Men in the United States, 1776–1990 a Documentary History* (Boston: Beacon, 1992).)

## CLASS PROCESS

1. On the blackboard or whiteboard, have the students generate examples for points 1 and 2 of the list. This should lead to a spirited discussion.

Two other definitions will be useful to you: Barbara Smith argues that "feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free *all* women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, Jewish women, lesbians, old women—as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement" (from *A History of U.S. Feminisms* by Kory Dicker (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), p. 7). Noted feminist author bell hooks adds, "Feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression. Therefore it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels, as well as a commitment to reorganize society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires" (bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 2nd ed. (London: Pluto, 2000)).

Feminist literary criticism is also about this commitment to equality, to change, and it works its way by arguing that literature is a powerful cultural force that mirrors gender attitudes. Feminist literary criticism can be categorized into three stages: patriarchal criticism, gynocriticism, and feminine writing.

**Patriarchal criticism** examines the prejudices against women by male writers. Such criticism analyzes the way that canonical authors—mostly men—create images of women. For example, Gretchen Panzer's sample paper in this chapter explores how F. Scott Fitzgerald silences Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*, further reinforcing the notion that this great American novel depicts women in demeaning ways. (F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Scribner, 2003)). This criticism is often focused on close textual study since it will examine how men and women are depicted in literary texts. Patriarchal criticism will be central to this chapter.

**Gynocriticism** is concerned with women writers, particularly in the ways that women writers have become included within the canon. In American literature, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* are classic examples (Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*, 2nd ed., ed. Nancy A. Walker (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000); Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000)). These texts, now part of the canon of American literature, have only been seen as such for the past twenty-five years or so. Another interesting example is the evolution of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, which reflects the insertion of women into the canon. The edition for 1968 (M. H. Abrams, ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968)), which covers the Middle Ages, the seventeenth century, the Restoration and the eighteenth century, the Romantic period, the Victorian age, and the twentieth century, includes no women.

That's right—not one single woman! The latest (eighth) edition of this anthology (Stephen Greenblatt and M. H. Abrams, eds., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 8th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996)), published thirty-eight years later, includes the following women writers:

- *Middle Ages*: Marie De France and Margery Kempe
- *Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*: Queen Elizabeth, Mary (Sydney) Herbert, Aemilia Lanyer, Mary Wroth, Katherine Philips, and Margaret Cavendish
- *Restoration and eighteenth century*: Aphra Behn, Eliza Haywood, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Frances Burney
- *Romantic period*: Anna Letitia Barbauld, Charlotte Smith, Mary Wollstonecraft, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Felicia Dorothea Hemans
- *Victorian age*: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Christina Rossetti
- *Twentieth century*: Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Jean Rhys, Nadine Gordimer, Alice Munro, and Anne Carson

What does it mean, consequently, when there are no representations of women? Historically, if women didn't exist in the canon, then we did not—we could not—study them. But with the rise of the field of women's studies in the 1960s, which introduced the idea of feminist literary criticism, we now value the study of women and their accomplishments, as well as thinking about how gender is constructed and perpetuated generally. This evolution about women and literature is mirrored in the evolving contents of the Norton anthology, which also reflects the evolving canon that is more inclusive, particularly to women writers.

**Feminine writing** explores the notion that women may write differently than men, suggesting that there may be a "women's writing" that is an alternative to male writing. Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) (Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998)) traces women's writing into three stages. The first stage is **Imitation** or **Feminine** (1840–80), where women imitated men. The classic examples of this are Charlotte and Emily Brontë (of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* fame, respectively), who took on male names — Currer Bell and Acton Bell (Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Richard J. Dunn (New York: Norton, 2001); Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. Richard J. Dunn (New York: Norton, 2003)). To give another famous example, George Eliot, who wrote the Victorian classic *Middlemarch*, was actually Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. Bert G. Hornback (New York: Norton, 2000)). The second stage of women's writing is **Protest** or **Feminist** (1880–1920), which sees women becoming much more political as writers, reacting directly to male domination in society and literature. Kate Chopin is an example of this stage, as is Virginia Woolf. Finally, the third stage, **Self-Discovery** or **Female** (1920–), becomes more radical as women turn inward toward the female, toward the body, creating works that mirror a writing particular to women.

As you can see, to narrowly define feminist literary criticism is difficult, for there are a myriad of approaches to take. Feminism is often referred to in the plural—feminisms—because there is such diversity within feminism about core terms and philosophies. A useful starting point is *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, eds., *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997)). You can examine the table of contents here.

A look at this table of contents will show you the complexity of feminist literary criticism and provide you with some ideas to focus your feminist paper on.

YOUR PROCESS

1. Choose a literary work to examine: either a male or female writer.
2. Look through the table of contents of *Feminisms* and choose three chapter areas that might lead to a focus for your paper.
3. Write down several possible working thesis ideas for your paper.
4. Remember, you may decide to focus your paper on gender criticism or masculinity studies, which are defined in the Key Terms.

## Gender Criticism

Gender criticism, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's articulation, is an extension of feminist literary criticism. It focuses not just on women but on the construction of gender and sexuality, especially LGBTQ issues, which gives rise to queer theory. Gender criticism suggests that power is not just top down or patriarchal, for example, a man dominating a woman. It suggests that power is multifaceted and never just in one direction. For example, in the nineteenth century while many women argued for suffrage (or the right to vote), at the same time those very women who were white could be dominating or holding power over African Americans in the American slave system. In the nineteenth century, many white women were pictured as angelic, ideal, and the angel in the house who protected men from the cruel world of commerce (see Coventry Patmore's poem *The Angel in the*

*House* (Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House*, The Victorian Web, http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/patmore/angel). But that idealized view of women is incomplete given that we know from diaries and other historical evidence that white women could have sexual longing (shocking!), treat others barbarically, or even be sadistic and murderous. Thus identity is complicated and rich, involving much more than gender alone. It is the intersection of a variety of things—including geographical location, age, race, class, nationality, ability, and sexuality as well as gender—that make up our identities.

A key to gender criticism, consequently, is that gender is a socially constructed ideology that is reflected in our culture and political, social, economic, educational, and religious institutions and is coded in the very language we use. For example, the adjective *queer*, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) tells us, originally meant something "strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric," the earliest use being from 1513 (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "queer"). Not until 1894, partly a result of the sodomy trial of Oscar Wilde, where he was convicted of being a homosexual and sentenced to prison ("Famous World Trials: The Trials of Oscar Wilde, 1895," University of Missouri–Kansas City, http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/wilde/wilde.htm) did the word *queer* (as an adjective or a noun) come to be associated with homosexuality, and then in a strictly derogatory sense.

Like feminism, gender criticism examines how gender is caught between the notion of **essentialism**, the belief that women are naturally and fundamentally different than men based on their biological sex and that nonheterosexual identities are deviant from the biological heteronormative distinction between male and female, and **constructionism**, the belief that gender is not essentialist or based on biological nature but is constructed through culture. One of the most famous scenes from literature depicting this essentialism versus constructionism debate comes from Mark Twain's classic *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. At the end of chapter 10, Jim and Huck determine that the best way to find information so that the two can avoid capture is to have Huck put on a disguise and go into the nearby town:

"Next morning I said it was getting slow and dull, and I wanted to get a stirring up some way. I said I reckoned I would slip over the river and find out what was going on. Jim liked that notion; but he said I must go in the dark and look sharp. Then he studied it over and said, couldn't I put on some of them old things and dress up like a girl? That was a good notion, too. So we shortened up one of the calico gowns, and I turned up my trouser-legs to my knees and got into it. Jim hitched it behind with the hooks, and it was a fair fit. I put on the sun-bonnet and tied it under my chin, and then for a body to look in and see my face was like looking down a joint of stove-pipe. Jim said nobody would know me, even in the daytime, hardly. I practiced around all day to get the hang of the things, and by and by I could do pretty well in them, only Jim said I didn't walk like a girl; and he said I must quit pulling up my gown to get at my britches-pocket. I took notice, and done better." (Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1912; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1995), chap. 10, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Twa2Huc.html.)

In the next chapter, Huck, dressed as a girl, meets Mrs. Judith Loftus. Huck tells her his name is Sarah Williams, and Mrs. Loftus asks Huck-Sarah to help her with a few tasks, such as throwing a piece of lead at a rat and helping with threading a needle. When she tosses an extra piece of lead to Huck-Sarah, his true identity as a boy is exposed. After Huck tells Mrs. Loftus that his name is George, she criticizes his attempt to fool her:

"Well, try to remember it, George. Don't forget and tell me it's Elexander before you go, and then get out by saying it's George Elexander when I catch you. And don't go about women in that old calico. You do a girl tolerable poor, but you might fool men, maybe. Bless you, child, when you set out to thread a needle don't hold the thread still and fetch the needle up to it; hold the needle still and poke the thread at it; that's the way a woman most always does, but a man always does t'other way. And when you throw at a rat or anything, hitch yourself up a tiptoe and fetch your hand up over your head as awkward as you can, and miss your rat about six or seven foot. Throw stiff-armed from the shoulder, like there was a pivot there for it to turn on, like a girl; not from the wrist and elbow, with your arm out to one side, like a boy. And, mind you, when a girl tries to catch anything in her lap she throws her knees apart; she don't clap them together, the way you did when you catched the lump of lead. Why, I spotted you for a boy when you was threading the needle; and I contrived the other things just to make certain. Now trot along to your uncle, Sarah Mary Williams George Elexander Peters, and if you get into trouble you send word to Mrs. Judith Loftus, which is me, and I'll do what I can to get you out of it. Keep the river road all the way, and next time you tramp take shoes and socks with you. The river road's a rocky one, and your feet'll be in a condition when you get to Goshen, I reckon." (Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1912; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1995), chap. 11, http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Twa2Huc.html.)

Mrs. Judith Loftus views sexuality as essentialist—there are real, innate differences between a girl and boy, which perpetuate the stereotypes about gender. Another way to view her comments, however, is to acknowledge that gender is a performance, a role that we play or construct. If we read Judith's comments in this light, then *Huckleberry Finn* becomes a more enlightened text on gender than one might initially think.

Just as we think gender is constructed, queer theorists argue that sexuality is constructed and not just "natural" as well. Lady Gaga sings, "Baby I was born this way," but others, like Adrienne Rich, argue that sexuality exists on a continuum and is more fluid

than a binary equation of straight or gay (Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 227–54). Rich suggests that "**compulsory heterosexuality**," the drive to make everything heterosexual, shapes our sexual socialization to such an extent that the only choice is to be straight (Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993)). Building from Sigmund Freud's ideas on sexuality, sex researcher Alfred Kinsey created the Kinsey scale, which suggests that human sexuality exists on a 0–6 scale, with 0 being exclusively homosexual and 6 being exclusively heterosexual. In all his research, he discovered that most people were somewhere around a 3 (bisexual) and that few people were at either ends of the straight/gay spectrum ("Kinsey's Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale," Kinsey Institute, http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/research/ak-hhscale.html).

In addition, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a prominent queer theorist, suggests culture is so **heteronormative** (making heterosexuality the norm) that gay characters—and, particularly, the affection between men in literature—is rendered invisible and must be routed through a character of the opposite gender to be acceptable. A classic example comes from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850); Hester becomes the target as Dimmesdale and Chillingworth work about their male desire by competing for Hester (Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850; Project Gutenberg, 2005), http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/33). In her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), Sedgwick coins the term "**homosocial desire**" to refer to relationships between men that are not explicitly sexual, but could actually have erotic components if allowed to exist (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)). Homosocial worlds include all-male contexts like boarding schools, the military, and sports (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)). The recent idea of the "bromance" from films such as *I Love You, Man* (2009) is an example of homosocial expression. It is no accident that we often laugh when using the term "bromance" because it seems ludicrous, given the norms of masculinity in our culture, that men might love one another and express that love as women in female friendships often do. It would require heterosexual men to potentially break out of certain norms of how they are supposed to act. We'll discuss this more in a minute when we talk about masculinity.

This idea that some expressions or identities are invisible and then visible once you have a particular lens to see them (theorists call this ideology) is as important to feminist literary criticism as it is to gender and sexuality criticism. What if we look at Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* anew in a way that focuses on how men might care for and love one another as they are sequestered on this famous, frightening ship, the *Pequod*. Chapter 94, "A Squeeze of the Hand," finds the whalemen breaking up the spermaceti from a just-harvested sperm whale. Spermaceti is the wax or oil in the skull of the sperm whale, and this oil was valuable and used to make candles and various ointments. Suddenly, Melville's description of the squeezing of the whale sperm takes on an erotic meaning perhaps previously unnoticed. This interpretation changes the way we may traditionally read the book:

"Squeeze! squeeze! squeeze! all the morning long; I squeezed that sperm till I myself almost melted into it; I squeezed that sperm till a strange sort of insanity came over me; and I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers' hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing their hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally; as much as to say,—Oh! my dear fellow beings, why should we longer cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humor or envy! Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness" (Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: Harper, 1851; Power Moby-Dick, 1998), http://www.powermobydick.com/Moby094.html).

After this paragraph, Ishmael states,

"Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm for ever! For now, since by many prolonged, repeated experiences, I have perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country; now that I have perceived all this, I am ready to squeeze case eternally. In thoughts of the visions of the night, I saw long rows of angels in paradise, each with his hands in a jar of spermaceti" (Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: Harper, 1851; Power Moby-Dick, 1998), http://www.powermobydick.com/Moby094.html).

Melville's text flirts with homoerotic desire, but that desire is short-lived as the narrator suggests that men must "lower" their desire to other outlets — "but in the wife."

Ultimately, gender and sexuality theorists go back in history and look at who might have been left out. Where are there absences in the canon such that gay and lesbian authors and characters might be included? And when gay and lesbian characters are present, how are they perceived?

What about a supposedly "straight" text that appears to have a queer subtext previously unseen? For example, Julia Ward Howe

was a nineteenth-century author who wrote the famous "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and founded Mother's Day. However, she also wrote a secret novel, *The Hermaphrodite*, which featured a male gender-bending protagonist who loves both sexes but particularly another man (Julia Ward Howe, *The Hermaphrodite*, ed. Gary Williams (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004)). Once discovered, this book was a shocking addition to the profile people had created of Howe. Howe's text is considered a "recovered" text and has been brought back into circulation, a common phenomenon in the literature of marginalized groups where texts have disappeared only to be rediscovered and read.

YOUR PROCESS

1. Can you think of texts where a character is forced into certain roles, behaviors, and actions because of compulsory heterosexuality?
2. Is that character's sexuality more complex than you realized?
3. When you consider sexuality on a continuum, does it change how characters interact?
4. Could your observations lead to a focus for a literary analysis?

Contributors

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# 2.33: Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies Criticism

As you've seen throughout this textbook, the field of English or literary studies has changed significantly through the years. At one time, to study English meant to study only literature from England. In fact, it meant to study, almost exclusively, poetry from England. As we see in Chapter 4, the poetry that English students read for the majority of the field's history was almost exclusively written by men. It may not surprise you to learn that the majority of the men that English students read came from Western cultures and were white. The experiences of minorities (within Western culture) and non-Western people were largely excluded from the canon. When their experiences did appear in widely read books, poems, plays, and essays, their experiences were usually filtered through perspective of a white author.

Over the past decades, many literary scholars have begun working to change this reality. Drawing from a range of disciplines, including history, anthropology, and sociology, these scholars have demonstrated how the literary canon excludes the voices of minority and non-Western writers, thinkers, and subjects. They have exposed attitudes of prejudice within canonical works. They have also worked to recover and celebrate works by writers from previously ignored or denigrated racial and ethnic backgrounds. Though their subjects vary widely—from the African American experience in the United States to those of Indians living under British colonial rule—scholars interested in racial, ethnic, and postcolonial studies share a conviction that literature is not politically neutral. Instead, they argue that literature both reflects and shapes the values of the cultures that produce it and that literary critics have a duty to analyze and often critique the cultural values embedded in the texts we study.



*Illustration by Edward Winsor Kemble for Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884).*

Think, for instance, of the frequent debates that have arisen over Mark Twain's novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1912; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1995), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Twa2Huc.html). For years, literary critics, scholars, students, and parents have debated whether the novel, written by a white American man, should be considered racist (and, if so, whether it should be taught in schools). These debates center on three major issues: (1) the novel's depiction of Jim, the runaway slave who is simultaneously the novel's moral center and a frequent object of ridicule; (2) the novel's frequent use of the pejorative N-word to describe its African American characters; and (3) the heavy dialect through which the speech of Black Americans is presented in the book. Schools have frequently debated banning Twain's novel, often in response to the concerns of parents or students (see Gregory Roberts, "'Huck Finn' a Masterpiece—Or an Insult," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, November 25, 2003, http://www.seattlepi.com/local/article/Huck-Finn-a-masterpiece-or-an-insult-1130707.php).

Though it has happened more slowly than many cultural critics would like, the literary canon has shifted in the past decades to reflect a wider sense of who writes literature and what we should learn from it. The fact that we study American literature at all reflects an earlier shift away from a strict focus on English writing. Moreover, students in American literature classrooms today study more writers of color than did students even twenty years ago. Some African American writers are now studied so frequently

they could be called canonical, including Olaudah Equiano, Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, Charles Chesnutt, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison. American literature classes often cover writing by Native American writers, such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdich, and Sherman Alexie, and by Hispanic, Chicano/a, or Latino/a American writers such as George Santayana, Isabel Allende, and Gary Soto. Moreover, British literature classrooms now routinely include works by authors from former British colonies, such as Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Jean Rhys (Dominica), Salman Rushdie (India), and Anita Desai (India). Finally, courses in world literature regularly teach minoritized and/or postcolonial writers who compose in languages other than English.

We recognize that these are incomplete lists. Indeed, even separating authors into these distinct categories can be problematic, as many writers span geographic regions, ethnic identities, or racial backgrounds. Nevertheless, these names can help get us started thinking about the diverse voices that literature classrooms now include. Of course, scholars working in these fields would point out that there is much work yet to be done to build a truly representative curriculum. Though minority and non-Western writers are now studied regularly, they still occupy relatively small places in most literature classrooms and curricula.

YOUR PROCESS

1. What minoritized or non-Western writers have been part of your literary education to this point? Jot down a few examples.
2. Now think about how those writers shaped your understanding of our literary inheritance. How did reading those writers change your ideas about literature, culture, or history? How would your literary education have been different with a textbook of thirty years ago that largely excluded nonwhite voices?
3. How does your cultural background shape your response to these questions?

Scholars working in these fields often seek to challenge **Eurocentrism**, which is a worldview that considers European societies (and those closely related to them, such as white American society) as the model to which other societies should aspire. Taking a slightly different focus, the critic Edward Said coined the term **Orientalism**, which refers to a set of false assumptions and stereotypes that Western cultures maintain about societies other than themselves.Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1994). These **Others** are sometimes portrayed as excessively bad (demonic others) and sometimes as excessively beautiful (exotic others), but neither view actually builds a true picture of non-Western societies or people. In other words, literary critics are wary of texts in which a foreign society is portrayed as ideal, just as they are when a foreign society is portrayed as depraved.

Looking at literature through the lens of social and cultural identity often requires that critics read beyond the surface meanings of texts and think about the ethnic, cultural, and social implications of the words on the page. For instance, let's consider Phillis Wheatley's "On Being Brought from Africa to America," which was published in her 1773 collection, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*:

## On Being Brought from Africa to America.

'TWAS mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,

Taught my benighted soul to understand

That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:

Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.

Some view our sable race with scornful eye,

"Their colour is a diabolic die."

Remember, *Christians*, *Negros*, black as *Cain*,

May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.
—Phillis Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” in *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (Denver: W. H. Lawrence, 1887), 17.

Wheatley was a slave, brought to Boston on the slave ship *Phillis* in 1761 and owned by John and Susanna Wheatley, who gave her an education, which was uncommon for slaves at the time. On the surface, Wheatley's poem seems to praise the system of slavery that brought her to America, noting that it was "mercy" that "brought [her] from [her] *Pagan* land." With that latter phrase she seems to disown her heritage as simply pagan, a "benighted" contrast to the Christian education she has received in the United States. We might even accuse Wheatley of **mimicry**, or attempting to imitate the language and (as you can see in the following engraving) dress of the ruling class.




*Portrait by Scipio Moorehead as a frontispiece to Phillis Wheatley's Poems on Various Subjects... (1773).*

However, scholars of African American literature might urge us to read the poem as a subtle critique of the American slave system. In her article "A Slave's Subtle War: Phillis Wheatley's Use of Biblical Myth and Symbol," Sondra O'Neale begins by insisting that "any evaluation of Phillis Wheatley must consider her status as a slave." O'Neale notes that a slave who wanted to write during this time period "first had to acquire the requisite language skills." Then "appropriate whites had to authenticate the writer's mental and moral capacity, and then the slave's master had to agree that the slave could publish the work. Moreover, the slave's offering was carefully censored to ensure that it was in no way incendiary" (Sondra O'Neale, "A Slave's Subtle War: Phillis Wheatley's Use of Biblical Myth and Symbol," *Early American Literature* 21, no. 2 (1986): 144–45). In other words, Wheatley could not write a bald condemnation of slavery; her owners held absolute sway over both her writing and her person, and to be published, she had to write within the constraints imposed on her by white people invested in keeping the slave system intact.

For O'Neale, Wheatley "challenged eighteenth-century evangelicals in their cherished religious arena by redeploying the same language and doctrine that whites had used to define the African, thereby undercutting conventional colonial assumptions about race and skin color" (Sondra O'Neale, "A Slave's Subtle War: Phillis Wheatley's Use of Biblical Myth and Symbol," *Early American Literature* 21, no. 2 (1986): 145). In the poem, Wheatley refers to "*Negros*, black as *Cain*." In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many religious and political commentators taught that African people descended from the biblical Cain, who was cursed by God after murdering his brother, Abel. In the King James Bible, it says "the LORD set a mark upon Cain" to identify him to other people, and many white commentators argued that this mark was a dark skin tone (Gen. 4:15 (King James Version)). By associating black people with Cain, white people implied that Black people were inferior both physically and morally — marked as "other" than white people, whom they considered normal.

Wheatley's poem reappropriates these ideas into a critique of Christians who refuse to acknowledge the brotherhood of African people: "Remember, *Christians*, *Negros*, black as *Cain*." First, the terms "Christian," "Negroes," and "black as Cain" are presented in a close sequence, as Wheatley conflates her presumably white readers ("*Christians*") with herself and her people ("*Negros*, black as *Cain*"). In the next line she insists that Black Americans "May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train," where they would, presumably, stand shoulder-to-shoulder with white Christians. Wheatley notes, "Some view our sable race with scornful eye," and say "Their colour is a diabolic die," but she refuses this mischaracterization of her people. They are not "diabolic"—a "demonic other"—but instead equal in potential to white Americans. Though she cannot directly condemn slavery, Wheatley's poem simultaneously evokes and calls into the question prejudiced ideas about African Americans. By writing such refined poetry, Wheatley embodies the mental equality of Black and white people, and in these final lines she insists on that equality. If her readers grant this last concession, however—if they agree that Black and white people can indeed join the same "angelic

train"—then the systems of denigration and oppression they support will be exposed as resting on false pretenses. In other words, we can read Wheatley's mimicry as subversive. She is an African American writer working within the strict limitations of the slave system to write and distribute poetry that subtly undermines that very system.

YOUR PROCESS

1. Read the following Wheatley poem, "To the University of Cambridge, in New-England." As you read, consider what underlying messages Wheatley might seek to convey, as in the poem we discussed previously. Jot down your ideas.

While an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,

The muses promise to assist my pen;

'Twas not long since I left my native shore

The land of errors, and Egyptian gloom:

Father of mercy, 'twas thy gracious hand

Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.

Students, to you 'tis giv'n to scan the heights

Above, to traverse the ethereal space,

And mark the systems of revolving worlds.

Still more, ye sons of science ye receive

The blissful news by messengers from heav'n,

How Jesus' blood for your redemption flows.

See him with hands out-stretcht upon the cross;

Immense compassion in his bosom glows;

He hears revilers, nor resents their scorn:

What matchless mercy in the Son of God!

When the whole human race by sin had fall'n,

He deign'd to die that they might rise again,

And share with him in the sublimest skies,

Life without death, and glory without end.

Improve your privileges while they stay,

Ye pupils, and each hour redeem, that bears

Or good or bad report of you to heav'n.

Let sin, that baneful evil to the soul,

By you be shun'd, nor once remit your guard;

Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg.

Ye blooming plants of human race divine,

An Ethiop tells you 'tis your greatest foe;

Its transient sweetness turns to endless pain,

And in immense perdition sinks the soul.

Wheatley is an interesting example because her work speaks to the concerns of scholars interested in the African American literary tradition and scholars interested in issues of conquest and colonialism. Wheatley wrote, after all, when Massachusetts was a British colony, and she came to Massachusetts after being forcibly seized from her home in either Senegal or Gambia, in West Africa. Next we'll look at another text that can help us understand the concerns of postcolonial critics. Nearly 150 years after Wheatley was captured, Joseph Conrad published one of the most famous works ever written about the African continent, *Heart of Darkness* (1899) (Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902; University of Virginia Electronic Text Center, 1993), etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mo...c/ConDark.html).

YOUR PROCESS

1. As we've suggested throughout this text, these process papers will make more sense if you are familiar with the literary work under discussion. For this section, you should read Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness*.
2. As you read, pay particular attention to the way that Conrad portrays relationships between European and African characters in the text.

Though *Heart of Darkness* was written, in part, as a critique of Belgian colonialism and commerce in the Congo, many postcolonialist critics have pointed out that the novella perpetuates attitudes of racism and Eurocentrism through its portrayal of Africans.

Most famously, Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe wrote in "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" that the novella "projects the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" in *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (New York: Anchor, 2012)). Achebe notes that few Africans are allowed to speak in Conrad's text. Through most of the novella, he notes, the African characters simply make noises — grunts and babble and sounds. Only two African characters speak: one to express cannibal propensities and another to announce the death of the white enigma, Mr. Kurtz. Achebe insists, despite the stylistic merits of Conrad's work (which he admits are considerable), that "the real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. And the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot" (Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" in *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (New York: Anchor, 2012)). In other words, Achebe insists that the text's aesthetic qualities cannot and should not redeem its cultural and racial attitudes. Such a commitment to the political and social implications of literature characterizes much ethnic criticism.

If that attitude seems extreme, consider the following excerpt from a 2003 article in the British newspaper *The Guardian*. It's written by Caryl Phillips, who initially met with Achebe to defend Joseph Conrad's writing against Achebe's critiques, but their conversation took another turn:

*"I am an African. What interests me is what I learn in Conrad about myself. To use me as a symbol may be bright or clever, but if it reduces my humanity by the smallest fraction I don't like it."*

*"Conrad does present Africans as having 'rudimentary' souls."*

*Achebe draws himself upright.*

*"Yes, you will notice that the European traders have 'tainted' souls, Marlow has a 'pure' soul, but I am to accept that mine is 'rudimentary'?" He shakes his head. "Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a very short-lived period of ambivalence about the certainty of this colonising mission, and Heart of Darkness falls into this period. But you cannot compromise my humanity in order that you explore your own ambiguity. I cannot accept that. My humanity is not to be debated, nor is it to be used simply to illustrate European problems."*

*The realisation hits me with force. I am not an African. Were I an African I suspect I would feel the same way as my host. But I was raised in Europe, and although I have learned to reject the stereotypically reductive images of Africa and Africans, I am*

*undeniably interested in the break-up of a European mind and the health of European civilisation. I feel momentarily ashamed that I might have become caught up with this theme and subsequently overlooked how offensive this novel might be to a man such as Chinua Achebe and to millions of other Africans. Achebe is right; to the African reader the price of Conrad's eloquent denunciation of colonisation is the recycling of racist notions of the "dark" continent and her people. Those of us who are not from Africa may be prepared to pay this price, but this price is far too high for Achebe. However lofty Conrad's mission, he has, in keeping with times past and present, compromised African humanity in order to examine the European psyche.*
—Caryl Phillips, "Out of Africa," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2003, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003...s.chinuaachebe.

Phillips begins to understand that he shares, to some degree, Conrad's Eurocentric perspective and thus has not to this point understood Achebe's African perspective. When Phillips begins to see how Conrad's focus on the novella's European characters leads him to disregard its African characters, Phillips also begins to accept Achebe's postcolonial critique of the novel.

YOUR PROCESS

1. Listen to Chinua Achebe's 2009 interview with NPR about *Heart of Darkness* (Robert Siegel, "Chinua Achebe: 'Heart of Darkness' Is Inappropriate," *All Things Considered*, NPR, audio, October 15, 2009, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=113835207). Can you understand why Achebe, as an African, takes such umbrage at the portrayal of Africans in this canonical novel? Should such concerns shape what we read in literature classrooms?
2. You can read Caryl Phillips's full article about his discussion with Achebe here. How does Phillips's epiphany square with your own thoughts about Achebe and Conrad?
3. To learn more about postcolonial writers and critics, visit the Postcolonial Web or read Deepika Bahri's "Introduction to Postcolonial Studies" (http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Intro.html) (George P. Landlow, "Home Page," The Postcolonial Web, http://www.postcolonialweb.org/; Deepika Bahri, "Introduction to Postcolonial Studies," Dept. of Postcolonial Studies, Emory University, http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Intro.html).

To sum up, when you want to read with an eye toward racial, ethnic, or postcolonial issues, you should consider the following questions:

1. How does this work represent different groups of people? Does it valorize one particular culture at the expense of another? Are characters from particular groups portrayed positively or negatively? Does the work employ stereotypes or broad generalizations?
2. How does this work present political power and/or domination? Are there clear lines drawn between conquerors and conquered people in the work? Does the work seem to argue that these lines are appropriate, or does it challenge the divisions between colonizer and colonized?
3. What is the historical or cultural context of the work? Is the story set during a time of conflict or peace? Is the story set in a location where one culture colonized another? Does the story unfold before the colonial period, during the colonial period, or after the colonial period?
4. Can you discern any particular political agendas at work in the text? That is, does the novel, story, poem, play, or essay seem to make an argument about racial relations, ethnic identity, or political oppression?

The theories we outline in this chapter share many concerns but can be applied in many different ways. To that end, we provided three sample papers in this chapter. Each uses a slightly different lens to investigate a given literary text. Please review all the papers since they will prepare you for the chapter's conclusion, which will synthesize the insights of all three papers.

## Contributors and Attributions

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# 2.34: New Historicism

## The Relationship Between History and Literature

Early scholars of literature thought of history as a progression: events and ideas built on each other in a linear and causal way. History, consequently, could be understood objectively, as a series of dates, people, facts, and events. Once known, history became a static entity. We can see this in the previous example from *Wonderland*. The Mouse notes that the "driest thing" he knows is that "William the Conqueror, whose cause was favoured by the pope, was soon submitted to by the English, who wanted leaders, and had been of late much accustomed to usurpation and conquest. Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria—" I think we would all agree to moan "Ugh!" In other words, the Mouse sees history as a list of great dead people that must be remembered and recited, a list that refers only to the so-called great events of history: battles, rebellions, and the rise and fall of leaders. Corresponding to this view, literature was thought to directly or indirectly mirror historical reality. Scholars believed that history shaped literature, but literature didn't shape history.

While this view of history as a static amalgamation of facts is still considered important, other scholars in the movement called **New Historicism** see the relationship between history and literature quite differently. Today, most literary scholars think of history as a dynamic interplay of cultural, economic, artistic, religious, political, and social forces. They don't necessarily concentrate solely on kings and nobles, or battles and coronations. In addition, they also focus on the smaller details of history, including the plight of the common person, popular songs and art, periodicals and advertisements — and, of course, literature. New Historical scholarship, it follows, is **interdisciplinary**, drawing on materials from a number of academic fields that were once thought to be separate or distinct from one another: history, religious studies, political science, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and even the natural sciences. In fact, New Historicism is also called **cultural materialism** since a text—whether it's a piece of literature, a religious tract, a political polemic, or a scientific discovery—is seen as an artifact of history, a material entity that reflects larger cultural issues.

Exercise 10.7.1

How have you learned to connect literature and history? Jot down two or three examples from previous classes.

## History Influences Literature

Sometimes it's obvious the way history can help us understand a piece of literature. When reading William Butler Yeats's poem "Easter, 1916," for instance, readers immediately wonder how the date named in the poem's title shapes the poem's meaning. Curious readers might quickly look up that Easter date and discover that leaders of the Irish independence movement staged a short-lived revolt against British rule during Easter week in 1916. The rebellion was quickly ended by British forces, and the rebel leaders were tried and executed. Those curious readers might then understand the allusions that Yeats makes to each of the executed Irish leaders in his poem and gain a better sense of what Yeats hopes to convey about Ireland's past and future through his poem's symbols and language. Many writers, like Yeats, use their art to directly address social, political, military, or economic debates in their cultures. These writers enter into the social **discourse** of their time, this discourse being formed by the cultural conditions that define the age. Furthermore, this discourse reflects the **ideology** of the society at the time, which is the collective ideas—including political, economic, and religious ideas—that guide the way a culture views and talks about itself. This cultural ideology, in turn, reflects the **power structures** that control—or attempt to control—the discourse of a society and often control the way literature is published, read, and interpreted. Literature, then, as a societal discourse comments on and is influenced by the other cultural discourses, which reflect or resist the ideology that is based on the power structures of society.

## Literature Influences History

Let's turn to another example to illuminate these issues. One of the most influential books in American history was Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which Stowe wrote to protest slavery in the South before the Civil War. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was an instant bestseller that did much to popularize the abolitionist movement in the northern United States. Legend has it that when Abraham Lincoln met Stowe during the Civil War, he greeted her by saying, "So you're the little woman that wrote

the book that started this great war." In the case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, then, it's clear that understanding the histories of slavery, abolitionism, and antebellum regional tensions can help us make sense of Stowe's novel.

But history informs literature in less direct ways, as well. In fact, many literary scholars—in particular, New Historical scholars—would insist that every work of literature, whether it explicitly mentions a historical event or not, is shaped by the moment of its composition (and that works of literature shape their moment of composition in turn). The American history of the Vietnam war is a great example, for we continue to interpret and revise that history, and literature (including memoirs) is a key material product that influences that revision: think of Michael Herr's *Dispatches* (1977); Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War* (1977); Bobbie Anne Mason's *In Country* (1985); Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1990); Robert Olen Butler's *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* (1992); and, most recently, Karl Marlantes's *Matterhorn* (2010) (Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Vintage, 1977); Philip Carputo, *A Rumor of War* (New York: Ballantine, 1977); Bobbie Anne Mason, *In Country* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005); Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Mariner, 2009); Robert Olen Butler, *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain: Stories* (New York: Holt, 1992); Karl Marlantes, *Matterhorn* (New York: Atlantic Monthly, 2010)).

**Exercise 10.7.2**

Pick something you've read or watched recently. It doesn't matter what you choose: *Dear White People*, the Harry Potter series, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games*, even *Jersey Shore* or *American Idol*. Now reflect on what that book, movie, or television show tells you about your culture. What discourses or ideologies (values, priorities, concerns) does your cultural artifact reveal? Jot down your thoughts.

## New Historicism Practice

As you can see, authors influence their cultures and they, in turn, are influenced by the social, political, military, and economic concerns of their cultures. To review the connection between literature and history, let's look at one final example, "London", written by the poet William Blake in 1794.

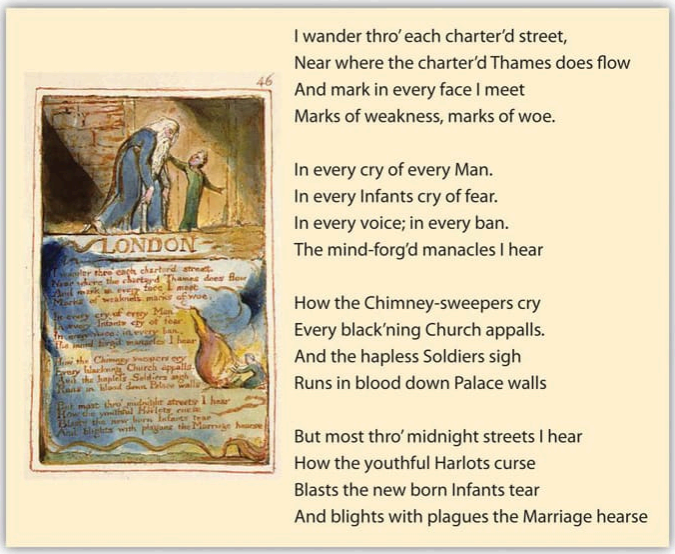



*Illustration by William Blake for "London" from his Songs of Innocence and Experience (1794).*

Unlike Yeats or Stowe, Blake does not refer directly to specific events or people from the late eighteenth century. Yet this poem directly confronts many of the most pressing social issues of Blake's day. The first stanza, for example, refers to the "charter'd streets" and "charter'd Thames." If we look up the meaning of the word "charter," we find that the word has several meanings. "Charter" can refer to a deed or a contract. When Blake refers to "charter'd" streets, he might be alluding to the growing importance of London as a center of industry and commerce. A "charter" also defines boundaries and control. When Blake refers to "charter'd Thames," then, he implies that nature—the Thames is the river that runs through London—has been constricted by modern society. If you look through the rest of the poem, you can see many other historical issues that a scholar might be interested in exploring:

the plight of child laborers ("the Chimney-sweepers cry"); the role of the Church ("Every black'ning Church"), the monarchy ("down Palace walls"), or the military ("the hapless Soldiers sigh") in English society; or even the problem of sexually transmitted disease ("blights with plagues the Marriage hearse"). You will also notice that Blake provided an etching for this poem and the poems that compose *The Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *The Songs of Experience* (in which "London" was published), so Blake is also engaging in the artistic movement of his day and the very production of bookmaking itself. And we would be remiss if we did not mention that Blake wrote these poems during the French Revolution (1789–99), where he initially hoped that the revolution would bring freedom to all individuals but soon recognized the brutality of the movement. That's a lot to ask of a sixteen-line poem! But each of these topics is ripe for further investigation that might lead to an engaging critical paper.

When scholars dig into one historical aspect of a literary work, we call that process **parallel reading**. Parallel reading involves examining the literary text in light of other contemporary texts: newspaper articles, religious pamphlets, economic reports, political documents, and so on. These different types of texts, considered equally, help scholars construct a richer understanding of history. Scholars learn not only what happened but also how people understood what happened. By reading historical and literary texts in parallel, scholars create, to use a phrase from anthropology, a **thick description** that centers the literary text as both a product and a contributor to its historical moment. A story might respond to a particular historical reality, for example, and then the story might help shape society's attitude toward that reality, as *Uncle Tom*'s *Cabin* sparked a national movement to abolish slavery in the United States.

## Apply New Historicism To Your Reading

When reading a work through a New Historicism reading, apply the following steps:

1. Determine the time and place, or historical context of the literature.
2. Choose a specific aspect of the text you feel would be illuminated by learning more about the history of the text.
3. Research the history.
4. Analyze the ways in which the text may be influenced by its history or the text may have influenced the culture of the time.

## Apply New Historicism To Your Writing

To review, New Historicism provides us with a particular lens to use when we read and interpret works of literature. Such reading and interpreting, however, never happens after just a first reading; in fact, all critics reread works multiple times before venturing an interpretation. You can see, then, the connection between reading and writing: as Chapter 1 indicates, writers create multiple drafts before settling for a finished product. The writing process, in turn, is dependent on the multiple rereadings you have performed to gather evidence for your essay. It's important that you integrate the reading and writing process together. As a model, use the following ten-step plan as you write using a new historical approach:

1. Carefully *read the work* you will analyze.
2. *Formulate a general question* after your initial reading that identifies a problem—a tension—related to a historical or cultural issue.
3. *Reread the work*, paying particular attention to the question you posed. Take notes, which should be focused on your central question. *Write an exploratory journal entry* or *blog post* that allows you to play with ideas.
4. *Construct a working thesis* that makes a claim about the work and accounts for the following:
    1. What does the work mean?
    2. How does the work demonstrate the theme you've identified using a new historical approach?
    3. "So what" is significant about the work? That is, why is it important for you to write about this work? What will readers learn from reading your interpretation? How does the theory you apply illuminate the work's meaning?
5. *Reread the text to gather textual evidence* for support.
6. *Construct an informal outline* that demonstrates how you will support your interpretation.
7. *Write a first draft*.
8. *Receive feedback* from peers and your instructor via *peer review* and *conferencing* with your instructor (if possible).
9. *Revise the paper*, which will include revising your original thesis statement and restructuring your paper to best support the thesis. Note: You probably will revise many times, so it is important to receive feedback at every draft stage if possible.
10. *Edit and proofread* for correctness, clarity, and style.

We recommend that you follow this process for every paper that you write from this textbook. Of course, these steps can be modified to fit your writing process, but the plan does ensure that you will engage in a thorough reading of the text as you work through the writing process, which demands that you allow plenty of time for reading, reflecting, writing, reviewing, and revising.

For more strategies, read on here.

## Contributors and Attributions

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# 2.35: Ecocriticism

## Literature and the Natural World

Literary critics have long been interested in the way the natural world influences literary expression. For instance, in his important 1964 book *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, Leo Marx demonstrated that a "pastoral ideal" guided the formation of American culture, identity, and literature. This "urge to idealize a simple, rural environment," Marx argues, continued even as America became "an intricately organized, urban, industrial, nuclear-armed society." Marx sees much of American literature as a response to this tension between urban realities ("the machine") and pastoral ideals ("the garden"). Many other literary critics who wrote before the advent of a formal ecocritical school investigated similar topics, particularly when they studied authors who write frequently about nature, such as the Romantics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

## Romanticism

The term **Romanticism** doesn't have anything to do with steamy love scenes. Instead, Romanticism was an intellectual movement that idealized emotional experiences and the natural world, eschewing many of the scientific, industrial, and capitalistic ideals that had come to define society between, roughly, 1800–50. The following oil painting, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818), by the German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich, demonstrates the Romantic position. The painting can be interpreted in a variety of ways. An ecocritical reading might examine humanity's relationship to nature—a human's desire to appreciate the sheer power of the natural world—yet there seems to be a suggestion that the man, with his walking stick, is also contemplating the way to harness this power of nature, to civilize the natural world.



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

To get a better sense of these concerns, let's look at "The World Is Too Much with Us" (1807), a poem written by one of the most well-known Romantics, William Wordsworth.

## "The World Is Too Much with Us" by William Wordsworth

The world is too much with us; late and soon,

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;

Little we see in Nature that is ours;

We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;

The winds that will be howling at all hours,

And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be

A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;

So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;

Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Activity: analyze the poem

1. What do you think Wordsworth means by "the world" in this poem? How is "the world" distinct from "Nature"? Why do you think Wordsworth splits these two ideas apart? Record your thoughts.
2. A related question: Why do you think Wordsworth capitalizes "Nature" and "Sea" in the poem? What other words are capitalized, and how might they relate to these two words? Jot down your ideas.

For a critic interested in literature and nature, Wordsworth's poems are rich territory. In "The World Is Too Much with Us," the speaker worries that people "lay waste" their "powers" because they are too wrapped up with "getting and spending." In other words, the concerns of industry and commerce have crowded out those things that the speaker believes give human beings their power. We can read "the world" in the poem as the constructed world of human cities and concerns; that world "is too much with us" while the natural world has become estranged from humanity. "Little we see in Nature that is ours," the speaker worries, and "we are out of tune" with "this Sea," "the moon," and "the winds." By claiming that human beings have fallen out of tune with nature, the speaker implies that humanity was once in tune with it. The poem mourns a profound loss for men and women, who can no longer feel the emotions that bucolic natural scenes should evoke in them: "It moves us not."

In the final lines of "The World Is Too Much with Us," Wordsworth's speaker wishes he could trade his modern existence for a more primitive life that is closer to nature. "Great God!" he exclaims, "I'd rather be / a pagan suckled in a creed outworn." In other words, while the speaker does not believe in, say, the Greek myths—he insists that such religions are "outworn"—he would nonetheless trade his more modern ideas for a faith that allowed him to see the divine in the natural world. Keep in mind the Greek myths, in which each aspect of the natural world is overseen by a god or goddess, and in which many plants, animals, and natural features are said to embody mythical heroes or monsters. Wordsworth's speaker wishes he could, when looking at the ocean, see more than water. He wishes he could see also "Proteus rising from the sea" and "hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn." Were he able to recognize the divinity of nature, the speaker insists, he would be "less forlorn" about his life in the modern world.

Whether they wrote during the Romantic period or not, writers who focus explicitly on nature in their works (e.g., John Keats, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, and Annie Dillard) lend themselves well to this kind of analysis. However, modern ecocritics have expanded their focus to include much writing that's not explicitly about nature. Ecocritics are interested in the attitudes that literary works express about nature, whether those attitudes are expressed consciously through the themes or plot of a work or unconsciously through the work's symbols or language. Even a work set in a city—the most urban of spaces—can nonetheless convey ideas about the loss of nature. Ecocritics can discuss the absence of nature in a work as well as its presence.

One could argue that a key turning point was the Industrial Revolution, which transformed the way people lived in worked in the nineteenth century. Moving from an agrarian or agricultural model to one centered on industry, the Industrial Revolution further reinforced the divide between the city and the country. Here are a few opening paragraphs from Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*

(1852–53):

> London. Michaelmas term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snowflakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas in a general infection of ill temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if this day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.
>
> Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon and hanging in the misty clouds.
>
> Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongey fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.
>
> The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation, Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.
>
> Never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds this day in the sight of heaven and earth.

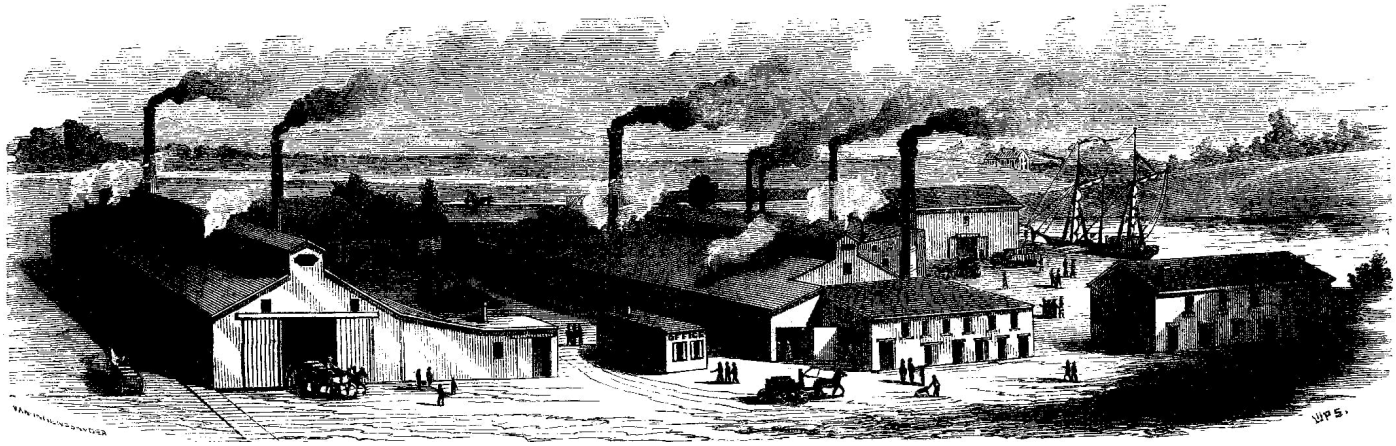
Dickens's famous first sentence—"London."—sets the action in London, where the mud and fog overpower the city. Dickens uses the "filth" of London as a symbol for the corruption of Chancery, the court system of London, but he's also depicting a London that is diseased by industrialization — the fog, in particular, reflects the poor air quality of London during this time as coal-powered factories spewed their smoke over the city.

## Life in the Iron Mills by Rebecca Harding Davis

In America, writers also focused on the environment and the dangers of industrialization. Two famous examples are Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Nature" (1836). Thoreau and Emerson, in fact, are two of the earliest ecocritical voices in America, and their influence was significant. Emerson and Thoreau argued that experiences in nature were the most authentic in human existence, and they urged their countrymen and women to go into the natural world for inspiration. Those ideas continue to inform literature to this day as well as more tangible aspects of our lives, such as the dedication of so many communities to creating green spaces—parks, greenways, or river walks—for their citizens. Let's look at a classic example, Rebecca Harding Davis's 1861 short story, *Life in the Iron Mills*.

Activity: ecocriticism reading log

As you read the story, keep a running list of all the references you find to the natural world. You can list natural features described, discussions of the characters' attitudes toward nature, or anything else that seems to comment on humanity's relationship to its environment. Be sure to include quotation marks around sentences or phrases you pull from the story so you can ethically attribute any material you end up using in an essay!



"Wilmington and Its Industries," originally printed in *Lippincott*'s *Magazine of Popular Literature and Science* (April, 1873), is in the public domain

*Life in the Iron Mills* recounts a story of Welsh immigrants working in an iron-mill town along the Ohio River in an area that would become West Virginia. Readings of this story often focus on its critique of industrialization and capitalism. For instance, a critic might look at the ways that Hugh Wolfe's artistic talents cannot flower in the story because of his class or ethnic background. Let's look closely at the story's opening paragraphs, however, with an eye to the text's attitudes toward the environment and natural world.

> A cloudy day: do you know what that is in a town of iron-works? The sky sank down before dawn, muddy, flat, immovable. The air is thick, clammy with the breath of crowded human beings. It stifles me. I open the window, and, looking out, can scarcely see through the rain the grocer's shop opposite, where a crowd of drunken Irishmen are puffing Lynchburg tobacco in their pipes. I can detect the scent through all the foul smells ranging loose in the air.
>
> The idiosyncrasy of this town is smoke. It rolls sullenly in slow folds from the great chimneys of the iron-foundries, and settles down in black, slimy pools on the muddy streets. Smoke on the wharves, smoke on the dingy boats, on the yellow river,—clinging in a coating of greasy soot to the house-front, the two faded poplars, the faces of the passers-by. The long train of mules, dragging masses of pig-iron through the narrow street, have a foul vapor hanging to their reeking sides. Here, inside, is a little broken figure of an angel pointing upward from the mantel-shelf; but even its wings are covered with smoke, clotted and black. Smoke everywhere! A dirty canary chirps desolately in a cage beside me. Its dream of green fields and sunshine is a very old dream,—almost worn out, I think.
>
> From the back-window I can see a narrow brick-yard sloping down to the river-side, strewed with rain-butts and tubs. The river, dull and tawny-colored, (la belle riviere!) drags itself sluggishly along, tired of the heavy weight of boats and coal-barges. What wonder? When I was a child, I used to fancy a look of weary, dumb appeal upon the face of the negro-like river slavishly bearing its burden day after day. Something of the same idle notion comes to me to-day, when from the street-window I look on the slow stream of human life creeping past, night and morning, to the great mills. Masses of men, with dull, besotted faces bent to the ground, sharpened here and there by pain or cunning; skin and muscle and flesh begrimed with smoke and ashes; stooping all night over boiling caldrons of metal, laired by day in dens of drunkenness and infamy; breathing from infancy to death an air saturated with fog and grease and soot, vileness for soul and body. What do you make of a case like that, amateur psychologist? You call it an altogether serious thing to be alive: to these men it is a drunken jest, a joke,—horrible to angels perhaps, to them commonplace enough. My fancy about the river was an idle one: it is no type of such a life. What if it be stagnant and slimy here? It knows that beyond there waits for it odorous sunlight, quaint old gardens, dusky with soft, green foliage of apple-trees, and flushing crimson with roses,—air, and fields, and mountains. The future of the Welsh puddler passing just now is not so pleasant. To be stowed away, after his grimy work is done, in a hole in the muddy graveyard, and after that, not air, nor green fields, nor curious roses.
>
> Can you see how foggy the day is? As I stand here, idly tapping the windowpane, and looking out through the rain at the dirty back-yard and the coalboats below, fragments of an old story float up before me,—a story of this house into which I happened to come to-day. You may think it a tiresome story enough, as foggy as the day, sharpened by no sudden flashes of pain or pleasure.—I know: only the outline of a dull life, that long since, with thousands of dull lives like its own, was vainly lived and lost: thousands of them, massed, vile, slimy lives, like those of the torpid lizards in yonder stagnant water-butt.—Lost? There is a curious point for you to settle, my friend, who study psychology in a

> lazy, dilettante way. Stop a moment. I am going to be honest. This is what I want you to do. I want you to hide your disgust, take no heed to your clean clothes, and come right down with me,—here, into the thickest of the fog and mud and foul effluvia. I want you to hear this story. There is a secret down here, in this nightmare fog, that has lain dumb for centuries: I want to make it a real thing to you. You, Egoist, or Pantheist, or Arminian, busy in making straight paths for your feet on the hills, do not see it clearly,—this terrible question which men here have gone mad and died trying to answer. I dare not put this secret into words. I told you it was dumb. These men, going by with drunken faces and brains full of unawakened power, do not ask it of Society or of God. Their lives ask it; their deaths ask it. There is no reply. I will tell you plainly that I have a great hope; and I bring it to you to be tested. It is this: that this terrible dumb question is its own reply; that it is not the sentence of death we think it, but, from the very extremity of its darkness, the most solemn prophecy which the world has known of the Hope to come. I dare make my meaning no clearer, but will only tell my story. It will, perhaps, seem to you as foul and dark as this thick vapor about us, and as pregnant with death; but if your eyes are free as mine are to look deeper, no perfume-tinted dawn will be so fair with promise of the day that shall surely come.

These first paragraphs detail the scenery of the narrator's world (and notice the similarity to Dickens). In this case, however, the scenery described is obscured by the products of human industry. The natural world is obscured both figuratively ("The air is thick, clammy with the breath of crowded human beings.") and literally, by smoke: "The idiosyncrasy of this town is smoke. It rolls sullenly in slow folds from the great chimneys of the iron-foundries, and settles down in black, slimy pools on the muddy streets. Smoke on the wharves, smoke on the dingy boats, on the yellow river,—clinging in a coating of greasy soot to the house-front, the two faded poplars, the faces of the passers-by." The river, too, is polluted; it's "dull and tawny-colored" and "tired" of the many "boats and coal-barges" bringing goods to and from the town. The town is so polluted that its human inhabitants suffer acutely, "breathing from infancy to death an air saturated with fog and grease and soot, vileness for soul and body."

The ecocritic might interpret this story as a sustained critique of a modern society that disregards the needs of the planet in order to advance the narrow priorities of industrial and consumer culture. In order to produce iron, the material that shaped so much of the Industrial Revolution, the owners of the factories in this story have destroyed the air, the water, and even the health of the human beings who make their business run. In fact, they have made all of nature (including human beings) slaves to industry. The river is imagined as "slavishly bearing its burden day after day." The men who work in the factories are so broken in spirit that they consider their lives "a drunken jest, a joke." The narrator points out that far beyond this town one can find "odorous sunlight, quaint old gardens, dusky with soft, green foliage of apple-trees, and flushing crimson with roses,—air, and fields, and mountains." These healthful natural features, however, are beyond the reach and understanding of those living in this "town of iron-works," who are "stowed away, after [their] grimy work is done, in a hole in the muddy graveyard, and after that, not air, nor green fields, nor curious roses." Harding Davis's novella, then, draws an explicit parallel between human flourishing and human treatment of the natural world. When human beings disregard nature, *Life in the Iron Mills* implies, they suffer with nature.

What's more, the narrator of Harding Davis's story challenges the story's readers to come to terms with the realities described in the novella. The original readers of this story would have been subscribers to the *Atlantic* magazine, which means they would likely have been educated, financially secure members of middle- or upper-class society. In other words, they would have been nothing like the iron workers Harding Davis writes of in the story and would not have experienced the absolute deprivation from nature the tale relates. Her narrator addresses this discrepancy directly:

> There is a curious point for you to settle, my friend, who study psychology in a lazy, dilettante way. Stop a moment. I am going to be honest. This is what I want you to do. I want you to hide your disgust, take no heed to your clean clothes, and come right down with me,—here, into the thickest of the fog and mud and foul effluvia. I want you to hear this story. There is a secret down here, in this nightmare fog, that has lain dumb for centuries: I want to make it a real thing to you. You, Egoist, or Pantheist, or Arminian, busy in making straight paths for your feet on the hills, do not see it clearly,—this terrible question which men here have gone mad and died trying to answer. I dare not put this secret into words.

There's a lot going on in these few sentences, but the ecocritic would likely concentrate on the way Harding Davis's narrator insists that her readers must experience the horrible environmental conditions of her subjects in order to understand their story. Her readers must "take not heed to [their] clean clothes" and "come right down...into the thickest of the fog and mud and foul effluvia." Readers "busy in making straight paths for [their] feet on the hills" cannot "see clearly" the plight of those who cannot spend time in the hills, experiencing the natural world without smoke and mud and effluvia.

These natural themes continue throughout *Life in the Iron Mills*. At the end of the novella, in fact, Deborah—one of the characters deformed, body and soul, by her time in the mill town—is taken in by Quakers who live in the hills near the town. The narrator reports that life in closer communion with nature purifies Deborah:

> There is no need to tire you with the long years of sunshine, and fresh air, and slow, patient Christ-love, needed to make healthy and hopeful this impure body and soul. There is a homely pine house, on one of these hills, whose windows overlook broad, wooded slopes and clover-crimsoned meadows,—niched into the very place where the light is warmest, the air freest. It is the Friends' meeting-house. Once a week they sit there, in their grave, earnest way, waiting for the Spirit of Love to speak, opening their simple hearts to receive His words. There is a woman, old, deformed, who takes a humble place among them: waiting like them: in her gray dress, her worn face, pure and meek, turned now and then to the sky.

Living in greater harmony with nature "make[s] healthy and hopeful" Deborah's "impure body and soul." The warm light, free air, "wooded slopes," and "clover-crimsoned meadows" all contribute to her restoration. In the last view readers have of Deborah, she turns her face "now and then to the sky."

Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills* can be read, then, as a searching critique of modern society *without* nature — a warning about what mass industrialization will do to the environment and the people who rely on it. You can probably see that these ideas relate closely to ideas one would find in modern **environmentalist and environmental justice** thought. We can read Harding Davis's story as an exposé of human practices that permanently scar the natural world — an argument against pollution and waste. In cases like this, we want to be careful of **anachronism**. Harding Davis wrote this work long before scientists and other thinkers articulated the ideas and principles of the modern environmentalist and enviornmental justice movements. We wouldn't, for instance, want to discuss *Life in the Iron Mills* as advocating for recycling, a word and practice of which Harding Davis would never have heard. Nevertheless, we can point out sympathetic ideas between Harding Davis's story and modern environmental concerns, drawing out nuances of the story that may not have been apparent to earlier readers.

Activity: approach a literary text as an ecocritic

When you're reading literature as an ecocritic, start by asking the following questions:

1. How does this novel, story, poem, play, or essay represent the natural world (e.g., plants, animals, ecosystems)? Is nature portrayed positively, negatively, or otherwise?
2. How does the work represent the relationship between human beings and nature? For instance, is the relationship symbiotic or adversarial?
3. Do the characters in the work express ideas or opinions about their environment (whether a "natural" environment as in Wordsworth's poem or a man-made environment as in Harding Davis's story)? What cultural, social, or political values do characters seem to embody? When asking this question, don't forget to consider the narrator!
4. Does the text engage consciously with ideas related to modern environmentalism and environmental justice? For instance, does the text seem to make an argument for or against conservationism, preservation, or restoration?

## Works Cited


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# 3: WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE


3.1: The Literary Landscape- Four Major Genres
3.2: The Writing Process for Literary Essays
3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays
3.4: Writing About Fiction and Creative Nonfiction
3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays
3.6: Literary Thesis Statements
3.7: Essay as Argument
3.8: Summarizing vs. Analyzing Literary Works
3.9: Essay Type - Literary Response
3.10: Essay Type - Literary Analysis
3.11: Essay Type - Comparing and Contrasting Literature
3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research
3.13: How to Perform Literary Research (Navigating Secondary Sources and Library Databases)
3.14: Writing About Poetry
3.15: Analyzing Poetry
3.16: Compare and Contrast Poetry Assignments
3.17: Writing About Drama
3.18: Literary Essay Titles
3.19: Research for Literary Analysis
3.20: Developing Analysis
3.21: Preparing for Research — Knowing Your Thesis
3.22: Discovering and Documenting Sources
3.23: Approaches to Literary Analysis
3.24: Writing as a Process - Breaking it Down
3.25: What Is the Writing Process?
3.26: Why Commit to the Writing Process?
3.27: What Is Academic Argument?
3.28: Introducing an Academic Argument
3.29: Student Writer at Work- Monica Platten's "'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'- An Allegory for a Young America"
3.30: Understanding the Body of Monica's Argument



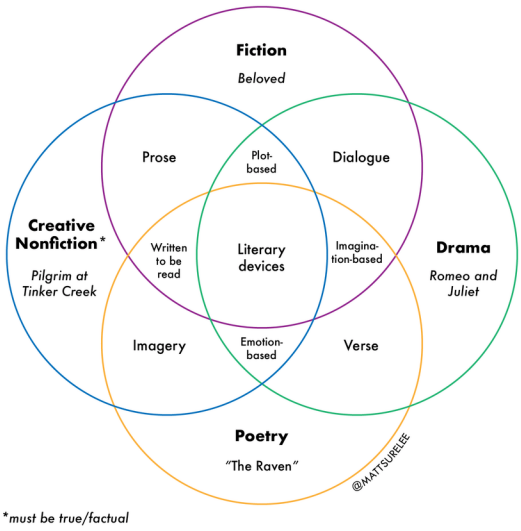
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# 3.1: The Literary Landscape- Four Major Genres

## The Literary Landscape: Four Major Genres

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




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

## Poetry

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

### Example

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

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

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

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

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

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

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

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

# Drama

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

## Example

*The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde (excerpt)

THE PERSONS IN THE PLAY

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

ACT 1 SCENE 1

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

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

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

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

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

6 **Lane.** Yes, sir.

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

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

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

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

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

# Fiction

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

## Example

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

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

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

# Creative Nonfiction

- Prose
- **True** (not fabricated, not from the imagination). This is a *very important* distinction from the other genres.
- Plot-based
- Character-based
- Usually includes dialogue and scene descriptions
- Organized through paragraphs and sentences
- Types: Narrative, Memoir, and Literary Journalism, among others

## Example

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

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

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

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# 3.2: The Writing Process for Literary Essays

## Why Follow the Writing Process?

Even the most talented writers rarely get a piece right in their first draft. What's more, few writers create a first draft through a single, sustained effort. Instead, the best writers understand that writing is a process: it takes time; sustained attention; and a willingness to change, expand, and even delete words as one writes. Good writing also takes a willingness to seek feedback from peers and mentors and to accept and use the advice they give. In this book, we will refer to and model the **writing process**, showing how student writers like yourself worked toward compelling papers about literary works. Watch the video below where author Salman Rushdie talks about some misconceptions new writers sometimes have about what it takes to write effectively. Though he is discussing novels specifically, the same concepts apply to literary essays.

Interactive Content

*This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.*

View this Interactive Content online

The following are a few famous writers' pieces of advice when it comes to following the writing process:

- "For me and most of the other writers I know, writing is not rapturous. In fact, the only way I can get anything written at all is to write really, really shitty first drafts"—Anne Lamott
- "The key to writing is concentration, not inspiration"—Salman Rushdie
- "By the time I am nearing the end of a story, the first part will have been reread and altered and corrected at least one hundred and fifty times. I am suspicious of both facility and speed. Good writing is essentially rewriting. I am positive of this." —Roald Dahl (Vander Hook)
- "I don't write easily or rapidly. My first draft usually has only a few elements worth keeping. I have to find what those are and build from them and throw out what doesn't work, or what simply is not alive." —Susan Sontag (Lee)

Take it from the writing experts: following the writing process is the key to writing success. Following this process can be liberatory in the sense that you don't have to feel an immense pressure to write brilliantly. The best writing takes time, incremental effort, and resilience.

As I often tell my students:

"There is no such thing as bad writers, only writers who give up too soon. There is no such thing as bad writing, just writing in need of revision." This means anyone can write a strong essay if they follow the writing process!

Your process

1. How do you typically approach writing assignments in your classes? When do you start working? Do you employ any prewriting techniques?
2. Have you ever been given the chance to revise your writing after receiving feedback from your peers or your instructor? How did the act of revising change your relationship to your paper?

Good writing takes, above all, planning and organization. If you wait until the night before a written assignment is due to begin, your hurrying will supersede the necessary steps of prewriting, researching, outlining, drafting, revising, seeking feedback, and re-revising. Those stages look something like this:

# The Writing Process Steps

## Reading

First, read the work of literature you plan to write about. This may seem like an obvious step, but some students think they can write an effective essay by just reading the SparkNotes or Shmoop. While some students may be able to get away with writing a passing essay this way, most cannot. Besides, by completing the readings, you actually learn!

## Prewriting

Many of the questions and activities peppered throughout sections of this book will be **prewriting** activities. We'll ask you to reflect on your reading, to make connections between your experiences and our text, and to jot down ideas spurred by your engagement with the theories presented here. It's from activities like these that writers often get their ideas for writing. The more engaged you are as a reader, the more engaged you'll be when the time comes to write.

## Researching

This book will also help you start the research process, in which you hone in on those aspects of a given literary text that interest you and seek out a deeper understanding of those aspects. Literary researchers read not only literary texts but also the work of other literary scholars and even sources that are indirectly related to literature, such as primary historical documents and biographies. In other words, they seek a wide range of texts that can supplement their understanding of the story, poem, play, or other text they want to write about. As you research, you should keep prewriting, keeping a record of what you agree with, what you disagree with, and what you feel needs further exploration in the texts you read.

## Outlining

To write well, you should have a plan. As you write, that plan may change while you learn more about your topic and begin to fully understand your own ideas. However, papers are easier to tackle when you first sketch out the broad outline of your ideas, a general arc or path you want your paper to follow. Committing those ideas to paper will help you see how different ideas relate to one another (or don't relate to one another). Don't be afraid to revise your outline — play around with the sequence of your ideas and evidence until you find the most logical progression.

## Drafting

The most important way to improve your writing is to start writing! Because you’re treating writing as a process, it's not important that every word you type be perfectly chosen, or that every sentence be exquisitely crafted. When you're drafting, the most important thing is that you get words on paper. Follow your outline and write. If ideas come to you as you're writing, but do not quite fit in that section of the paper, make note of it! You don't have to use it, but few things are more frustrating than forgetting an idea that might work perfectly for your paper.

## Revising

After you've committed words to paper (or, more accurately, to your computer screen), you can go back and shape them more deliberately through **revision**. Cognitive research has shown that a significant portion of reading is actually remembering. As a result, if you read your work immediately after writing it, you probably won't notice any of the potential problems with it. Your brain will "fill in the gaps" of poor grammar, misspelling, or faulty reasoning. Because of this, you should give yourself some time in between drafting and revising—the more time the better. As you revise, try to approach your text as your readers will. Ask yourself skeptical questions (e.g., Are there clear connections between the different claims I'm making in this paper? Do I provide enough evidence to convince someone to believe my claims?). Revisions can often be substantial: you may need to rearrange your points, delete significant portions of what you've written, or rewrite sentences and paragraphs to better reflect the ideas you have developed while writing. Don't be afraid to cut the parts of your paper that aren't working, even if you like a particular fact or anecdote. Don't be afraid to, as they say, "Kill your darlings." Everything in your paper should, on some level, work towards the purpose of your claim. Most importantly, you should revise your introduction several times. Writers often work into their strongest ideas, which then appear in their conclusions but not (if they do not revise) their introductions. Make sure that your introduction

reflects the more nuanced claims that appear in the body and conclusion of your paper.

### Seeking Feedback

Even after years of practice revising your writing, you'll never be able to see it in an entirely objective light. To really improve your writing, you need feedback from others who can identify where your ideas are not as clear as they should be. You can seek feedback in a number of ways: you can make an appointment in your college's writing center, you can participate in class peer-review workshops, or you can talk to your instructor during his or her office hours. If you will have a chance to revise your paper after your instructor grades it, his or her comments on that graded draft should be considered essential feedback as you revise.

### Re-revising

Once you've garnered feedback on your writing, you should use that feedback to revise your paper yet again. You should not, however, simply make every change that your colleagues or instructor recommended. You should think about the suggestions they've made and ensure that their suggestions will help you make the argument you want to make. You may decide to incorporate some suggestions and not others. Not all feedback is helpful or applicable. It takes some critical thinking to determine whether the feedback will improve the essay. When you treat writing as a process, it should become a genuine dialogue between you and your readers.

### Publishing

Finally, you will submit your paper to an audience for review. As college students, this primarily means the paper you turn in to your instructor for evaluation.

## Writing Process Not Linear, But a Cycle

The preceding categories suggest that writing is a linear process — that is, that you will follow these steps in the following order:

prewriting → researching → outlining → drafting → revising → feedback → re-revising → publishing.

The reality of the writing process, however, is that as you write you shuttle back and forth in these stages. For example, as you begin writing your thesis paragraph, the beginning of your essay, you will write and revise many times before you are satisfied with your opening; once you have a complete draft, you will more than likely return to the introduction to revise it again to better match the contents of the completed essay. This shuttling highlights the recursive nature of the writing process and can be diagrammed as follows:

prewriting ↔ researching ↔ outlining ↔ drafting ↔ revising ↔ feedback ↔ re-revising ↔ publishing.

This is a good thing. If you are too rigid in your process, it's easier to get stuck on insisting an idea or claim that might not be working, rather than discovering one or coming to an informed, well-reasoned conclusion. Furthermore, you should be aware that each writer has a unique writing process: some will be diligent outliners, while others may discover ideas as they write. There is no right way to write (so to speak), but the key is the notion of process — all strong writers engage in the writing process and recognize the importance of feedback and revision in the process.

Your process

1. Describe your current writing process.
2. Do you normally engage in the stages listed previously?
3. If not, why? If so, what part of the process do you find most helpful?

Share your process with the class to discover the variety of approaches writers take. Always be willing to try new methods of approaching the writing process. You might find a new tool or habit that works well for you!

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# 3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays

## Reading

The first step in writing a literary analysis essay is actually completing the reading. Sometimes the professor will give you a prompt before you read. If this is the case, look for material which relates to the prompt as you read. If the professor did not give you a prompt, look for any material in the assigned reading that piques your interest or relates to class discussions. Highlight or underline any moments in the reading which stick out to you: something you don't understand, something that relates to a topic you care about, or something weird or surprising. Keeping track of patterns, themes, or literary devices is a great way to engage with a work of literature and prepare for a future discussion or essay.

### Completing the Reading

One time, I was talking with my sister-in-law about her experience in nursing school. Whereas her brother had barely achieved Cs in college, she somehow maintained a 4.0, even though she was simultaneously working and caring for her two young daughters.

"What is your secret to success?" I asked.

"Actually doing the assigned readings," she laughed, "most of my peers didn't. And it showed."

As a college professor who teaches reading-heavy classes, this is not a shock to me. After all, most students taking the required writing and literature courses do not wish to become English majors. They sometimes see their literature class as a means to an end: at best, a stepping stone towards their future career; at worst, a time-suck of hoops to jump through. Also, because of today's gig economy, many students are juggling multiple jobs in addition to multiple college classes. This makes it tempting for students to want to skip the readings and just read SparkNotes or have ChatGPT summarize the literature for them. Truth be told, students who pursue this method, depending on their BSing skills, might be able to pass a literature class. But for the vast majority of students, this popular high school tactic will not work at the college level. More importantly, it means students miss out on many of the exciting benefits of diving deep into analysis, discussion, and engaging with the text. Plus, there might be consequences when SparkNotes or ChatGPT gives you incorrect answers, your instructor asks you not to use these sources, or you plagiarize by using ideas from these sources without credit.

Of course, I want my students to fall in love with the written word. I want my passion for literature to be contagious, to light students' hearts and minds on fire with a hunger for the beauty of syntax and diction and literary devices. But I also completely understand that students have limited time. Therefore, I recommend prioritizing the writing process *by reading attentively* so writers can make the most efficient use of their time. In the long run, while it might seem like skipping the readings saves time, completing the readings is actually the best way for students to optimize their time. This is because a strong essay depends on a deep understanding of the literature. If the class features examinations, these almost always test students on whether they completed and understand the readings. Finally, class will be more fun for students if they understand what their peers are talking about in class discussion, and what their professor is talking about during lectures.

Students who complete the readings and annotate as they go will find it much easier to flip back through their notes to find relevant quotations and information. Successful students often break the readings into small, manageable chunks of twenty to thirty minutes at a time. This helps their brains absorb the information better and retain information for writing and tests.

Students skipping reading often end up performing more work when it comes to writing an essay because they will spend so much time looking up text summaries on the internet (which may or may not be accurate or align with the intricacies of the assignment directions). They will also have to go back and re-read the text to find quotations that fit their prompt. Their essays may not succeed because they do not fulfill the in-depth analysis required by the assignments.

So, long story short: even the most practically-minded, time-crunched students would do well to perform the readings. And, while in pursuit of success, a previously literature-averse student might find themselves liking reading more than they thought they would. Just like watching a favorite movie or show, reading a good book can be fun and relaxing!

## Active versus Passive Reading

Many students, when first reading academic material, read it like they would a timeline of Facebook or Instagram posts: not fully attentive, skimming over the material in search of something interesting or for what they think are "answers" on a test. Or they might read literature with full attention, but read without questioning or engaging with the material. The difference between a student who is successful in a literature class and a student who is not successful is often that the successful student participates in **active reading.**

| Actions | Passive Reading | Active Reading |
|---|---|---|
| **Engagement Level** | Skimming or not giving the reading undivided attention; reading for "gist" rather than substance | Reading closely, annotating, analyzing, and reflecting as you read; reading deeply for understanding |
| **Tools** | Just the book | Book, writing utensils, highlighters, sticky notes, reading journal |
| **Number of Times Read** | Once (or *gasp* not at all!) | Read three or more times:<br>• Once without expectation<br>• Once for comprehension<br>• Once for closely analyzing and annotating |

# Annotating

In a literature class, students encounter a lot of literature, written by many different authors. Annotating, or taking notes on the assigned literature as you read, is a way to have a conversation with the reading. This helps you better absorb the material and engage with the text on a deeper level. There are several annotation methods. These are like tools in a student's learning utility belt. Try them all out to discover which tools or combinations of tools help you learn best!

## Margin Notes & Highlighting

One of the best ways to interact with a text is to write notes as you read. Underlining and/or highlighting relevant passages, yes, but also responding to the text in the margins. For instance, if a character I love makes a bad choice (like Sydney Carton in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*), I will write, "Nooooo, Sydney Carton, don't sacrifice yourself for Lucie's sake!" This helps me remember the events of the plot. Many students also find it helpful to summarize each chapter or section of the literature as they read it. For example, a student said it was helpful for them to draw a picture representing every stanza of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by William Wordsworth to help them understand what was being said. Other ideas include:

- Circling unfamiliar words
- Writing questions in the margins
- Color-coded highlighting to track various literary devices (i.e., blue for metaphors, pink for symbolism, and so forth)

## Sticky Notes

For students who would like to sell their textbooks back to the bookstore, writing notes in the margins might not be a practical choice, as it may devalue the textbook or the bookstore may refuse to take it back. For these students, I recommend using sticky notes instead. If sticky notes are cost-prohibitive, most colleges have plenty of scrap paper students can use as bookmarks to stick between pages. This is also an eco-friendly way to re-use paper!

## Reading Journal

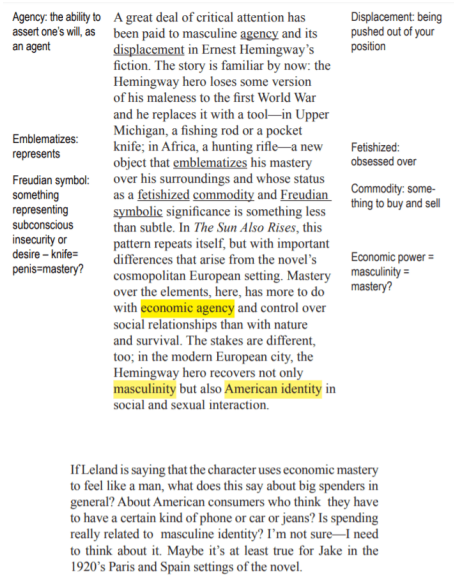
Another option many students find helpful is keeping a reading journal. Students can write notes in their journals as they read. This helps students keep track of readings and materials in a chronological fashion. Just like when annotating the text directly or upon sticky notes, the most effective use of a reading journal, for learning purposes, is going to be active engagement with the text rather than passive absorption. That is, try to summarize the plot of what you read every time you read. Also, ask questions about the text. If you can record quotes and paraphrase along with in-text parenthetical citations (i.e., the page number where you found the material), this will optimize your time because you already have quotes ready to go when you write an essay!

## Example of an Annotated Passage

Using the guidelines above, let's consider this excerpt from a scholarly article by Jacob Michael Leland, "'Yes, That is a Roll of Bills in My Pocket': The Economy of Masculinity in The Sun Also Rises."

> *A great deal of critical attention has been paid to masculine agency and its displacement in Ernest Hemingway's fiction. The story is familiar by now: the Hemingway hero loses some version of his maleness to the first World War and he replaces it with a tool—in Upper Michigan, a fishing rod or a pocket knife; in Africa, a hunting rifle—a new object that emblematizes his mastery over his surroundings and whose status as a fetishized commodity and Freudian symbolic significance is something less than subtle. In* The Sun Also Rises*, this pattern repeats itself, but with important differences that arise from the novel's cosmopolitan European setting. Mastery over the elements, here, has more to do with economic agency and control over social relationships than with nature and survival. The stakes are different, too; in the modern European city, the Hemingway hero recovers not only masculinity but also American identity in social and sexual interaction. (37)*

In researching The Sun Also Rises for a project, Ling Ti found Leland's article. What follows is her annotated copy of the above excerpt:




As you can see, this writer highlighted words that seemed important to understanding the text. She included questions in the margins to help her understand the reading. She also provided definitions for terms she did not know, presumably looking them up as she read. Finally, she wrote a brief summary of her reading, also known as a reflection.

# Reflecting on Assigned Literature

Studies show reflecting on reading is one of the best ways to learn. This is called metacognition, or thinking about thinking. It is a way to keep track of the knowledge you have learned as you go. Students who reflect on their reading and learning tend to, as a whole, perform better on essays and examinations. So how can you take advantage of this skill?

If you have a prompt, choose a prompt and read through the assigned literature again, noting any quotes which may relate to the

assigned topic. It is recommended at this point that you keep track of your observations in a document: either on a computer (Word, Google Docs) or on a physical piece of paper. Write down any quotations along with page numbers (fiction, nonfiction), line numbers (poem), or act, scene, line numbers (drama). This way, you have all potential evidence in one place, and it makes for easy in-text citations when it comes to knitting the evidence together to form an essay. In fact, it is highly recommended that students start an informal Works Cited page to keep track of every source consulted. This makes it much easier to avoid plagiarism by practicing ethical citation habits. For more information about citations, please see the Citations and Formatting Chapter.

Start with a hypothesis or focus but be willing to refine, adjust, or completely discard it if new evidence refutes it. An essay is not a stagnant piece, but a living, breathing thought experiment. Many students feel reluctant to change their thesis or major parts of their essays because they are afraid it means the previous writing was wasted. As a professional writer, editor, and scholar, I want to clue students in on a secret:

**There is no such thing as wasted writing.**

Even writing that does not end up in the final draft is worthwhile because it is a chance to experiment with ideas. It helps students find a path toward stronger ideas. Just like a gardener might allow branches of a tree to grow to see which ones bear flowers and fruit and then prune the weak, unproductive branches to make the plant stronger and more beautiful, so too must a writer be willing to cut out branches of reasoning which no longer serve the essay. But before you know which ideas or thoughts are worth pursuing, you first have to give them space to grow. You never know what idea branches might prove fruitful!

## Contributors and Attributions

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# 3.4: Writing About Fiction and Creative Nonfiction

## Demystifying the Process

Writing an analysis of a piece of fiction can be a mystifying process. First, literary analyses (or papers that offer an interpretation of a story) rely on the assumption that stories must mean something. How does a story mean something? Isn't a story just an arrangement of characters and events? And if the author wanted to convey a meaning, wouldn't he or she be much better off writing an essay just telling us what he or she meant?

It's pretty easy to see how at least some stories convey clear meanings or morals. Just think about a parable like the prodigal son or a nursery tale about "crying wolf." Stories like these are reduced down to the bare elements, giving us just enough detail to lead us to their main points, and because they are relatively easy to understand and tend to stick in our memories, they're often used in some kinds of education.

But if the meanings were always as clear as they are in parables, who would really need to write a paper analyzing them? Interpretations of fiction would not be interesting if the meanings of the stories were clear to everyone who reads them. Thankfully (or perhaps regrettably, depending on your perspective) the stories we're asked to interpret in our classes are a good bit more complicated than most parables. They use characters, settings, and actions to illustrate issues that have no easy resolution. They show different sides of a problem, and they can raise new questions. In short, the stories we read in class have meanings that are arguable and complicated, and it's our job to sort them out.

It might seem that the stories do have specific meanings, and the instructor has already decided what those meanings are. Not true. Instructors can be pretty dazzling (or mystifying) with their interpretations, but that's because they have a lot of practice with stories and have developed a sense of the kinds of things to look for. Even so, the most well-informed professor rarely arrives at conclusions that someone else wouldn't disagree with. In fact, most professors are aware that their interpretations are debatable and actually love a good argument. But let's not go to the other extreme. To say that there is no one answer is not to say that anything we decide to say about a novel or short story is valid, interesting, or valuable. Interpretations of fiction are often opinions, but not all opinions are equal.

So what makes a valid and interesting opinion? A good interpretation of fiction will:

- avoid the obvious (in other words, it won't argue a conclusion that most readers could reach on their own from a general knowledge of the story)
- support its main points with strong evidence from the story
- use careful reasoning to explain how that evidence relates to the main points of the interpretation.

The following steps are intended as a guide through the difficult process of writing an interpretive paper that meets these criteria. Writing tends to be a highly individual task, so adapt these suggestions to fit your own habits and inclinations.

## Writing an Essay on Fiction in 9 Steps

### 1. Become familiar with the text

There's no substitute for a good general knowledge of your story. A good paper inevitably begins with the writer having a solid understanding of the work that they interpret. Being able to have the whole book, short story, or play in your head—at least in a general way—when you begin thinking through ideas will be a great help and will actually allow you to write the paper more quickly in the long run. It's even a good idea to spend some time just thinking about the story. Flip back through the book and consider what interests you about this piece of writing—what seemed strange, new, or important?

### 2. Explore potential topics

Perhaps your instructor has given you a list of topics to choose, or perhaps you have been asked to create your own. Either way, you'll need to generate ideas to use in the paper—even with an assigned topic, you'll have to develop your own interpretation. Let's

assume for now that you are choosing your own topic.

After reading your story, a topic may just jump out at you, or you may have recognized a pattern or identified a problem that you'd like to think about in more detail. What is a pattern or a problem?

A pattern can be the recurrence of certain kinds of imagery or events. Usually, repetition of particular aspects of a story (similar events in the plot, similar descriptions, even repetition of particular words) tends to render those elements more conspicuous. Let's say I'm writing a paper on Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. In the course of reading that book, I keep noticing the author's use of biblical imagery: Victor Frankenstein anticipates that "a new species would bless me as its creator and source" (52) while the monster is not sure whether to consider himself as an Adam or a Satan. These details might help me interpret the way characters think about themselves and about each other, as well as allow me to infer what the author might have wanted her reader to think by using the Bible as a frame of reference. On another subject, I also notice that the book repeatedly refers to types of education. The story mentions books that its characters read and the different contexts in which learning takes place.

A problem, on the other hand, is something in the story that bugs you or that doesn't seem to add up. A character might act in some way that's unaccountable, a narrator may leave out what we think is important information (or may focus on something that seems trivial), or a narrator or character may offer an explanation that doesn't seem to make sense to us. Not all problems lead in interesting directions, but some definitely do and even seem to be important parts of the story. In *Frankenstein*, Victor works day and night to achieve his goal of bringing life to the dead, but once he realizes his goal, he is immediately repulsed by his creation and runs away. Why? Is there something wrong with his creation, something wrong with his goal in the first place, or something wrong with Victor himself? The book doesn't give us a clear answer but seems to invite us to interpret this problem.

If nothing immediately strikes you as interesting or no patterns or problems jump out at you, don't worry. Just start making a list of whatever you remember from your reading, regardless of how insignificant it may seem to you now. Consider a character's peculiar behavior or comments, the unusual way the narrator describes an event, or the author's placement of an action in an odd context. (Step 5 will cover some further elements of fiction that you might find useful at this stage as well.)

There's a good chance that some of these intriguing moments and oddities will relate to other points in the story, eventually revealing some kind of pattern and giving you potential topics for your paper. Also keep in mind that if you found something peculiar in the story you're writing about, chances are good that other people will have been perplexed by these moments in the story as well and will be interested to see how you make sense of it all. It's even a good idea to test your ideas out on a friend, a classmate, or an instructor since talking about your ideas will help you develop them and push them beyond obvious interpretations of the story. And it's only by pushing those ideas that you can write a paper that raises interesting issues or problems and that offers creative interpretations related to those issues.

## 3. Select a topic with a lot of evidence

If you're selecting from a number of possible topics, narrow down your list by identifying how much evidence or how many specific details you could use to investigate each potential issue. Do this step just off the top of your head. Keep in mind that persuasive papers rely on ample evidence and that having a lot of details to choose from can also make your paper easier to write.

It might be helpful at this point to jot down all the events or elements of the story that have some bearing on the two or three topics that seem most promising. This can give you a more visual sense of how much evidence you will have to work with on each potential topic. It's during this activity that having a good knowledge of your story will come in handy and save you a lot of time. Don't launch into a topic without considering all the options first because you may end up with a topic that seemed promising initially but that only leads to a dead end.

## 4. Write out a working thesis

Based on the evidence that relates to your topic—and what you anticipate you might say about those pieces of evidence—come up with a working thesis. Don't spend a lot of time composing this statement at this stage since it will probably change (and a changing thesis statement is a good sign that you're starting to say more interesting and complex things on your subject). At this point in my *Frankenstein* project, I've become interested in ideas on education that seem to appear pretty regularly, and I have a general sense that aspects of Victor's education lead to tragedy. Without considering things too deeply, I'll just write something like, "Victor Frankenstein's tragic ambition was fueled by a faulty education."

## 5. Make an extended list of evidence

Once you have a working topic in mind, skim back over the story and make a more comprehensive list of the details that relate to your point. For my paper about education in *Frankenstein*, I'll want to take notes on what Victor Frankenstein reads at home, where he goes to school and why, what he studies at school, what others think about those studies, etc. And even though I'm primarily interested in Victor's education, at this stage in the writing, I'm also interested in moments of education in the novel that don't directly involve this character. These other examples might provide a context or some useful contrasts that could illuminate my evidence relating to Victor. With this goal in mind, I'll also take notes on how the monster educates himself, what he reads, and what he learns from those he watches. As you make your notes keep track of page numbers so you can quickly find the passages in your book again and so you can easily document quoted passages when you write without having to fish back through the book.

At this point, you want to include anything, anything, that might be useful, and you also want to avoid the temptation to arrive at definite conclusions about your topic. Remember that one of the qualities that makes for a good interpretation is that it avoids the obvious. You want to develop complex ideas, and the best way to do that is to keep your ideas flexible until you've considered the evidence carefully. A good gauge of complexity is whether you feel you understand more about your topic than you did when you began (and even just reaching a higher state of confusion is a good indicator that you're treating your topic in a complex way).

When you jot down ideas, you can focus on the observations from the narrator or things that certain characters say or do. These elements are certainly important. It might help you come up with more evidence if you also take into account some of the broader components that go into making fiction, things like plot, point of view, character, setting, and symbols.

Plot is the string of events that go into the narrative. Think of this as the "who did what to whom" part of the story. Plots can be significant in themselves since chances are pretty good that some action in the story will relate to your main idea. For my paper on education in *Frankenstein*, I'm interested in Victor's going to the University of Ingolstadt to realize his father's wish that Victor attend school where he could learn about a another culture. Plots can also allow you to make connections between the story you're interpreting and some other stories, and those connections might be useful in your interpretation. For example, the plot of *Frankenstein*, which involves a man who desires to bring life to the dead and creates a monster in the process, bears some similarity to the ancient Greek story of Icarus who flew too close to the sun on his wax wings. Both tell the story of a character who reaches too ambitiously after knowledge and suffers dire consequences.

Your plot could also have similarities to whole groups of other stories, all having conventional or easily recognizable plots. These types of stories are often called genres. Some popular genres include the gothic, the romance, the detective story, the bildungsroman (this is just a German term for a novel that is centered around the development of its main characters), and the novel of manners (a novel that focuses on the behavior and foibles of a particular class or social group). These categories are often helpful in characterizing a piece of writing, but this approach has its limitations. Many novels don't fit nicely into one genre, and others seem to borrow a bit from a variety of different categories. For example, given my working thesis on education, I am more interested in Victor's development than in relating *Frankenstein* to the gothic genre, so I might decide to treat the novel as a bildungsroman.

And just to complicate matters that much more, genre can sometimes take into account not only the type of plot but the form the novelist uses to convey that plot. A story might be told in a series of letters (this is called an epistolary form), in a sequence of journal entries, or in a combination of forms (*Frankenstein* is actually told as a journal included within a letter).

These matters of form also introduce questions of point of view, that is, who is telling the story and what do they or don't they know. Is the tale told by an omniscient or all-knowing narrator who doesn't interact in the events, or is it presented by one of the characters within the story? Can the reader trust that person to give an objective account, or does that narrator color the story with his or her own biases and interests?

Character refers to the qualities assigned to the individual figures in the plot. Consider why the author assigns certain qualities to a character or characters and how any such qualities might relate to your topic. For example, a discussion of Victor Frankenstein's education might take into account aspects of his character that appear to be developed (or underdeveloped) by the particular kind of education he undertakes. Victor tends to be ambitious, even compulsive about his studies, and I might be able to argue that his tendency to be extravagant leads him to devote his own education to writers who asserted grand, if questionable, conclusions.

Setting is the environment in which all of the actions take place. What is the time period, the location, the time of day, the season, the weather, the type of room or building? What is the general mood, and who is present? All of these elements can reflect on the story's events, and though the setting of a story tends to be less conspicuous than plot and character, setting still colors everything that's said and done within its context. If Victor Frankenstein does all of his experiments in "a solitary chamber, or

rather a cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a staircase" (53) we might conclude that there is something anti-social, isolated, and stale, maybe even unnatural about his project and his way of learning.

Obviously, if you consider all of these elements, you'll probably have too much evidence to fit effectively into one paper. Your goal is merely to consider each of these aspects of fiction and include only those that are most relevant to your topic and most interesting to your reader. A good interpretive paper does not need to cover all elements of the story — plot, genre, narrative form, character, and setting. In fact, a paper that did try to say something about all of these elements would be unfocused. You might find that most of your topic could be supported by a consideration of character alone. That's fine. For my *Frankenstein* paper, I'm finding that my evidence largely has to do with the setting, evidence that could lead to some interesting conclusions that my reader probably hasn't recognized on his or her own.

## 6. Select your evidence

Once you've made your expanded list of evidence, decide which supporting details are the strongest. First, select the facts which bear the closest relation to your thesis statement. Second, choose the pieces of evidence you'll be able to say the most about. Readers tend to be more dazzled with your interpretations of evidence than with a lot of quotes from the book. It would be useful to refer to Victor Frankenstein's youthful reading in alchemy, but my reader will be more impressed by some analysis of how the writings of the alchemists—who pursued magical principles of chemistry and physics—reflect the ambition of his own goals. Select the details that will allow you to show off your own reasoning skills and allow you to help the reader see the story in a way he or she may not have seen it before.

## 7. Refine your thesis

Now it's time to go back to your working thesis and refine it so that it reflects your new understanding of your topic. This step and the previous step (selecting evidence) are actually best done at the same time, since selecting your evidence and defining the focus of your paper depend upon each other. Don't forget to consider the scope of your project: how long is the paper supposed to be, and what can you reasonably cover in a paper of that length? In rethinking the issue of education in *Frankenstein*, I realize that I can narrow my topic in a number of ways: I could focus on education and culture (Victor's education abroad), education in the sciences as opposed to the humanities (the monster reads Milton, Goethe, and Plutarch), or differences in learning environments (e.g. independent study, university study, family reading). Since I think I found some interesting evidence in the settings that I can interpret in a way that will get my reader's attention, I'll take this last option and refine my working thesis about Victor's faulty education to something like this: "Victor Frankenstein’s education in unnaturally isolated environments fosters his tragic ambition."

## 8. Organize your evidence

Once you have a clear thesis you can go back to your list of selected evidence and group all the similar details together. The ideas that tie these clusters of evidence together can then become the claims that you'll make in your paper. As you begin thinking about what claims you can make (i.e. what kinds of conclusion you can come to) keep in mind that they should not only relate to all the evidence but also clearly support your thesis. Once you're satisfied with the way you've grouped your evidence and with the way that your claims relate to your thesis, you can begin to consider the most logical way to organize each of those claims. To support my thesis about *Frankenstein*, I've decided to group my evidence chronologically. I'll start with Victor's education at home, then discuss his learning at the University, and finally address his own experiments. This arrangement will let me show that Victor was always prone to isolation in his education and that this tendency gets stronger as he becomes more ambitious.

There are certainly other organizational options that might work better depending on the type of points I want to stress. I could organize a discussion of education by the various forms of education found in the novel (for example, education through reading, through classrooms, and through observation), by specific characters (education for Victor, the monster, and Victor's bride, Elizabeth), or by the effects of various types of education (those with harmful, beneficial, or neutral effects).

## 9. Interpret your evidence

Avoid the temptation to load your paper with evidence from your story. Each time you use a specific reference to your story, be sure to explain the significance of that evidence in your own words. To get your readers' interest, you need to draw their attention to elements of the story that they wouldn't necessarily notice or understand on their own. If you're quoting passages without interpreting them, you're not demonstrating your reasoning skills or helping the reader. In most cases, interpreting your evidence

merely involves putting into your paper what is already in your head. Remember that we, as readers, are lazy — all of us. We don't want to have to figure out a writer's reasoning for ourselves; we want all the thinking to be done for us in the paper.

## General Hints

The previous nine steps are intended to give you a sense of the tasks usually involved in writing a good interpretive paper. What follows are just some additional hints that might help you find an interesting topic and maybe even make the process a little more enjoyable.

**1. Make your thesis relevant to your readers**

You'll be able to keep your readers' attention more easily if you pick a topic that relates to daily experience. Avoid writing a paper that identifies a pattern in a story but doesn't quite explain why that pattern leads to an interesting interpretation. Identifying the biblical references in *Frankenstein* might provide a good start to a paper—Mary Shelley does use a lot of biblical allusions—but a good paper must also tell the reader why those references are meaningful. So what makes an interesting paper topic? Simply put, it has to address issues that we can use in our own lives. Your thesis should be able to answer the brutal question "So what?" Does your paper tell your reader something relevant about the context of the story you're interpreting or about the human condition?

Some categories, like race, gender, and social class, are dependable sources of interest. This is not to say that all good papers necessarily deal with one of these issues. My thesis on education in *Frankenstein* does not. But a lot of readers would probably be less interested in reading a paper that traces the instances of water imagery than in reading a paper that compares male or female stereotypes used in a story or that takes a close look at relationships between characters of different races. Again, don't feel compelled to write on race, gender, or class. The main idea is that you ask yourself whether the topic you've selected connects with a major human concern, and there are a lot of options here (for example, issues that relate to economics, family dynamics, education, religion, law, politics, sexuality, history, and psychology, among others).

Also, don't assume that as long as you address one of these issues, your paper will be interesting. As mentioned in step 2, you need to address these big topics in a complex way. Doing this requires that you don't go into a topic with a preconceived notion of what you'll find. Be prepared to challenge your own ideas about what gender, race, or class mean in a particular text.

**2. Select a topic of interest to you**

Though you may feel like you have to select a topic that sounds like something your instructor would be interested in, don't overlook the fact that you'll be more invested in your paper and probably get more out of it if you make the topic something pertinent to yourself. Pick a topic that might allow you to learn about yourself and what you find important.

Of course, your topic can't entirely be of your choosing. We're always at the mercy of the evidence that's available to us. For example, your interest may really be in political issues, but if you're reading *Frankenstein*, you might face some difficulties in finding enough evidence to make a good paper on that kind of topic. If, on the other hand, you're interested in ethics, philosophy, science, psychology, religion, or even geography, you'll probably have more than enough to write about and find yourself in the good position of having to select only the best pieces of evidence.

**3. Make your thesis specific**

The effort to be more specific almost always leads to a thesis that will get your reader's attention, and it also separates you from the crowd as someone who challenges ideas and looks into topics more deeply. A paper about education in general in *Frankenstein* will probably not get my reader's attention as much as a more specific topic about the impact of the learning environment on the main character. My readers may have already thought to some extent about ideas of education in the novel, if they have read it, but the chance that they have thought through something more specific like the educational environment is slim.

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# 3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays

## Outlining Basics

The purpose of an outline is twofold: first, to help you organize your ideas. Second, to help readers follow along with your ideas. Think of an outline as a map for your essay. An essay without some kind of structure often flounders because readers get lost. The following are basic principles of essay organization that should help you craft logically organized papers that keep readers (and you!) on track.

- **Always include a clear thesis**. Think of this as the essay's destination. It essentially tells readers where the essay is going. Without a clear destination, readers might wonder why they are there, reading the essay in the first place!
- **Keep one main idea per paragraph.** Including a topic sentence—a one-sentence summary of the paragraph's main idea—is an effective way to keep the paragraph focused. Think of each topic sentence as a mini-thesis in support of the essay's overall thesis.
- **Include evidence to support all claims.** Usually, one quote or paraphrase per paragraph is an effective use of evidence. Spend at least 2-3 sentences analyzing and explaining each quote.
- **Be flexible.** An essay changes over time. Be willing to adapt and adjust the outline to fit the needs of the essay. If it doesn't serve your essay, let it go.

## General Essay Template

This essay template is not meant to be prescriptive (the end all, be all), but to provide a commonly used essay structure students can adapt to write their own essays. As with any learning resource, students should choose organizational methods to enhance their learning and writing process.

### Paragraph 1: Introduction

#### Sentence 1: Hook

Captures readers' attention and interest through a quote from the literary work, startling contextual information, or a question.

#### Sentence 2-3: Context/Background

Helps readers understand where the essay fits into the scholarly discourse by providing background information on the essay topic. For example, you might briefly summarize the literary work (for a close reading essay), or research on your topic (what other people/scholars have said about your topic) or you might give historical background on your topic, depending on the essay prompt.

#### Sentence 4: (The) Thesis statement

Articulates the main argument of the essay. It should be short, specific, debatable, and clear.

#### Sentence 5: Essay map/sign post

Uses the last sentence(s) of the introduction to transition into body paragraphs. This may look like a "map" where you state the main arguments you will make in your essay. For example, this argument is true because of reason X, reason Y, and reason Z. Basically, you give readers an idea of where the essay is going.

# Paragraphs 2-10+: Body Paragraphs

## Sentence 1: Topic sentence

Summarizes the main argument or point of the paragraph.

## Sentence 2: Present evidence

Present evidence in the form of quotes or paraphrasing from authoritative primary or secondary sources, which supports the paragraph main idea, as well as the thesis main idea. The more scholarly the source, the better; check with your librarian if you are unfamiliar with in-text citations.

## Sentence 3: Analyze, interpret, and explain evidence

Use your own words to do so. While what the information means may be clear to you, the writer, you should not assume that readers will understand the information. Explain everything within reason.

## Sentence 4: Contextualize evidence

Show how evidence relates to and supports your thesis statement

## Sentence 5: Transition

Introduce the next paragraph topic by using a linking word, phrase, or idea. This will improve your essay's organization and "flow."

# Final Paragraph: Conclusion

## Sentence 1: Restate thesis statement

State the thesis using new words. This helps readers remember the focus of the essay.

## Sentence 2-3: Briefly summarize main arguments

Present a summary of the essay's main arguments. Again, this reminds readers of your main points in case they have forgotten.

## Sentence 4-5: Explain the significance

Indicate the significance of your analysis and/or research to other scholars in your field/scholars of the subject or topic/society in general. This is also called the "takeaway." Your readers should feel like they learned something new or are seeing the literature in a new light.

# General Essay Advice

1. Be as specific as possible.
2. Stay on topic. All information in the essay should work towards proving your argument. (Use it or lose it.)
3. Use the known-new contract. Every sentence should "flow" into the next sentence, unless intentionally breaking the flow to make a point. This is achieved by using repeated words, ideas, or phrases from one sentence to the next.
4. **Practice ethical attribution. Do not plagiarize.** Plagiarism can result in an F for the essay and the course, and can even result in expulsion. When in doubt, ask your professor or librarian. Using ethical attribution is the best way to avoid plagiarism, as it also helps you build credibility as a writer and literary scholar.
5. For more information on essay writing—specifically works cited/references, citation, and formatting (MLA)—please visit the chapter on Ethical Attribution.

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# 3.6: Literary Thesis Statements

## The Literary Thesis Statement

Literary essays are argumentative or persuasive essays. Their purpose is primarily analysis, but analysis for the purposes of showing readers your interpretation of a literary text. So the thesis statement is a one to two sentence summary of your essay's main argument, or interpretation.

Just like in other argumentative essays, the thesis statement should be a kind of opinion based on observable fact about the literary work.

### Thesis Statements Should Be

- **Debatable**
  - Ex: "While most people reading *Hamlet* think he is the **tragic hero**, Ophelia is the real **hero** of the play as demonstrated through her critique of Elsinore's court through the language of flowers."
    - This thesis takes a position. There are clearly those who could argue against this idea.
- **Rooted in observations about literary devices, genres, or forms**
  - Ex: "Hawthorne's use of **symbolism** in *The Scarlet Letter* falters and ultimately breaks down with the introduction of the **character** Pearl, which shows the perceived danger of female sexuality in a puritanical society."
    - Look at the text in bold. See the strong emphasis on how form (literary devices like symbolism and character) acts as a foundation for the interpretation (perceived danger of female sexuality).
- **Specific**
  - Ex: "Through its **contrasting river and shore scene**s, Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* suggests that to find the true expression of American ideals, one must leave 'civilized' society and go back to nature" ("Thesis Statements")
    - Through this specific yet concise sentence, readers can anticipate the text to be examined (*Huckleberry Finn)*, the author (Mark Twain), the literary device that will be focused upon (river and shore scenes) and what these scenes will show (true expression of American ideals can be found in nature).

### Thesis Statements Should NOT Be

- **Overly broad or generalized**
  - Ex: "I am going to be writing about "The Raven" by Edgar Allen Poe."
    - While we know what text and author will be the focus of the essay, we know nothing about what aspect of the essay the author will be focusing upon, nor is there an argument here.
- **More about society than the work of literature**
  - Ex: "Gender roles are bad and should be abolished."
    - This may be well and true, but this thesis does not appear to be about a work of literature. This could be turned into a thesis statement if the writer is able to show how this is the theme of a literary work (like "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid) and root that interpretation in observable data from the story in the form of literary devices.
- **A summary or obvious statement about the text**
  - Ex: "Hamlet is about a prince whose father dies."
    - Yes, this is true. But it is not debatable. You would be hard-pressed to find someone who could argue with this statement. Yawn, boring.
- **A judgment about the quality of the work**
  - Ex: "'La Migra' by Pat Mora is a really good/powerful poem"
    - This may very well be true. But the purpose of a literary critic is not to judge the quality of a literary work, but to make analyses and interpretations of the work based on observable structural aspects of that work.
- **About the author (biographical) rather than literature**
  - Ex: "Edgar Allan Poe and Washington Irving were both creepy towards women in their personal lives but in different ways"
    - Again, this might be true, and might make an interesting essay topic, but unless it is rooted in textual analysis, it is not within the scope of a literary analysis essay. **Be careful not to conflate author and speaker! Author, speaker, and narrator are all different entities! See: intentional fallacy.**

# Thesis Statement Formula

One way I find helpful to explain literary thesis statements is through a "formula":

**Thesis statement = Observation + Analysis + Significance**

- Observation: usually regarding the form or structure of the literature. This can be a pattern, like recurring literary devices. For example, "I noticed the poems of Rumi, Hafiz, and Kabir all use **symbols** such as **the lover's longing and Tavern of Ruin**"
- Analysis: You could also call this an opinion. This explains what you think your observations show or mean. "I think these recurring symbols all **represent the human soul's desire."** This is where your debatable argument appears.
- Significance: this explains what the significance or relevance of the interpretation might be. Human soul's desire to do what? Why should readers care that they represent the human soul's desire? "I think these recurring symbols all show the human soul's desire **to connect with God.**" This is where your argument gets more specific.

**Thesis statement:** The works of ecstatic love poets Rumi, Hafiz, and Kabir use **symbols** such as a lover's longing and the Tavern of Ruin **to illustrate** the **human soul's desire to connect with God**.

# Thesis Examples

**SAMPLE THESIS STATEMENTS**

These sample thesis statements are provided as guides, not as required forms or prescriptions.

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## The Literary Device Thesis Statement

The thesis may focus on an analysis of one of the elements of fiction, drama, poetry or nonfiction as expressed in the work: character, plot, structure, idea, theme, symbol, style, imagery, tone, etc.

**Example 1:**

In "A Worn Path," Eudora Welty creates a fictional character in Phoenix Jackson whose determination, faith, and cunning illustrate the indomitable human spirit.

Note that the work, author, and character to be analyzed are identified in this thesis statement. The thesis relies on a strong verb (creates). It also identifies the element of fiction that the writer will explore (character) and the characteristics the writer will analyze and discuss (determination, faith, cunning).

**Example 2:**

The character of the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet serves as a foil to young Juliet, delights us with her warmth and earthy wit, and helps realize the tragic catastrophe.

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## The Genre / Theory Thesis Statement

The thesis may focus on illustrating how a work reflects the particular genre's forms, the characteristics of a philosophy of literature, or the ideas of a particular school of thought.

**Example 1:**

Samuel Beckett's Endgame reflects characteristics of Theatre of the Absurd in its minimalist stage setting, its seemingly meaningless dialogue, and its apocalyptic or nihilist vision.

**Example 2:**

A close look at dialogue, characterization, and paragraph structure in “The Story of an Hour” reveals how language, institutions, and expected demeanor suppress the natural desires and aspirations of women.

## Generative Questions

One way to come up with a riveting thesis statement is to start with a generative question. The question should be open-ended and, hopefully, prompt some kind of debate.

- What is the effect of [choose a literary device that features prominently in the chosen text] in this work of literature, and how does it relate to a theme?
- How does this work of literature conform or resist its genre, and to what effect?
- How does this work of literature portray the environment, and to what effect?
- How does this work of literature portray race, and to what effect?
- How does this work of literature portray gender, and to what effect?
- What historical context is this work of literature engaging with, and how might it function as a commentary on this context?

These are just a few common of the common kinds of questions literary scholars engage with. As you write, you will want to refine your question to be even more specific. Eventually, you can turn your generative question into a statement. And, in the essay body paragraphs, you will provide evidence in support of your thesis statement in the form of quotations, paraphrase, and/or summary from the text.

## Expert Examples

While nobody expects you to write professional-quality thesis statements in an undergraduate literature class, it can be helpful to examine some examples. As you view these examples, consider the structure of the thesis statement. You might also think about what kinds of questions the scholar wondered that led to this statement!

- "*Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (Achebe 3).
- "...I argue that the approach to time and causality in Boethius' sixth-century *Consolation of Philosophy* can support abolitionist objectives to dismantle modern American policing and carceral systems" (Chaganti 144).
- "I seek to expand our sense of the musico-poetic compositional practices available to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, focusing on the metapoetric dimensions of *Much Ado About Nothing*. In so doing, I work against the tendency to isolate writing as an independent or autonomous feature the work of early modern poets and dramatists who integrated bibliographic texts with other, complementary media" (Trudell 371).

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# 3.7: Essay as Argument

## Argument

What is an argument, and why do you need one in your essays on literary analysis?

### Arguments are everywhere

You may be surprised to hear that the word “argument” does not have to be written anywhere in your assignment for it to be an important part of your task. In fact, making an argument—expressing a point of view on a subject and supporting it with evidence—is often the aim of academic writing. Your instructors may assume that you know this and thus may not explain the importance of arguments in class.

Most material you learn in college is or has been debated by someone, somewhere, at some time. Even when the material you read or hear is presented as a simple fact, it may actually be one person’s interpretation of a set of information. Instructors may call on you to examine that interpretation and defend it, refute it, or offer some new view of your own. In writing assignments, you will almost always need to do more than just summarize information that you have gathered or regurgitate facts that have been discussed in class. You will need to develop a point of view on or interpretation of that material and provide evidence for your position.

Consider an example. For nearly 2000 years, educated people in many Western cultures believed that bloodletting—deliberately causing a sick person to lose blood—was the most effective treatment for a variety of illnesses. The claim that bloodletting is beneficial to human health was not widely questioned until the 1800s, and some physicians continued to recommend bloodletting as late as the 1920s. Medical practices have now changed because some people began to doubt the effectiveness of bloodletting; these people argued against it and provided convincing evidence. Human knowledge grows out of such differences of opinion, and scholars like your instructors spend their lives engaged in debates over what claims may be counted as accurate in their fields. In their courses, they want you to engage in similar kinds of critical thinking and debate.

Writing on literary texts is no different. You take a stance and make an argument in your essay with the needed support to back up your points.

Argumentation is not just what your instructors do. We all use argumentation on a daily basis, and you probably already have some skill at crafting an argument. The more you improve your skills in this area, the better you will be at thinking critically, reasoning, making choices, and weighing evidence. These are leadership skills that hone the mind and are highly sought after abilities, regardless of what field you choose to enter.

## Making a claim

What is an argument? In academic writing, an argument is usually a main idea, often called a “claim” or “thesis statement,” backed up with evidence that supports the idea. In a majority of college papers, you will need to make some sort of claim and use evidence to support it, and your ability to do this well will separate your papers from those of students who see assignments as mere accumulations of fact and detail. In other words, gone are the happy days of being given a “topic” about which you can write anything. It is time to stake out a position and prove why it is a good position for a thinking person to hold. See our handout on thesis statements.

Claims can be as simple as, “Protons are positively charged, and electrons are negatively charged,” with evidence such as, “In this experiment, protons and electrons acted in such and such a way.” Claims can also be as complex as “The end of the South African system of apartheid was inevitable,” using reasoning and evidence such as, “Every successful revolution in the modern era has come about after the government in power has given and then removed small concessions to the uprising group.” In either case, the rest of your paper will detail the reasoning and evidence that have led you to believe that your position is best.

When beginning to write a paper, ask yourself, “What is my point?” For example, the point of this handout is to help you become a better writer, and we are arguing that an important step in the process of writing effective arguments is understanding the concept of argumentation. If your papers do not have a main point, they cannot be arguing for anything. Asking yourself what

your point is can help avoid a mere "information dump." Consider this: your instructors probably know a lot more than you do about your subject matter. Why, then, would you want to provide them with material they already know? **Instructors are usually looking for two things:**

1. Proof that you understand the material
2. A demonstration of your ability to use or apply materials in ways that go beyond what you have read or heard

This second part can be done in many ways: you can critique the material, apply it to something else, or even just explain it in a different way. In order to succeed at this second step, though, you must have a particular point to argue.

Arguments in academic writing are usually complex and take time to develop. Your argument will need to be more than a simple or obvious statement, such as "Frank Lloyd Wright was a great architect." Such a statement might capture your initial impressions of Wright as you have studied him in class; however, you need to look deeper and express specifically what caused that "greatness." Your instructor will probably expect something more complicated, such as "Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture combines elements of European modernism, Asian aesthetic form, and locally found materials to create a unique new style," or "There are many strong similarities between Wright's building designs and those of his mother, which suggests that he may have borrowed some of her ideas." To develop your argument, you would then define your terms and prove your claim with evidence from Wright's drawings and buildings and those of the other architects you mention.

## Evidence

Do not stop with having a point. You have to back up your point with evidence. The strength of your evidence, and your use of it, can make or break your argument. See our handout on evidence. You already have the natural inclination for this type of thinking, if not in an academic setting. Think about how you talked your parents into letting you borrow the family car. Did you present them with lots of instances of your past trustworthiness? Did you make them feel guilty because your friends' parents all let them drive? Did you whine until they just wanted you to shut up? Did you look up statistics on teen driving and use them to show how you didn't fit the dangerous-driver profile? These are all types of argumentation, and they exist in academia in similar forms.

Every field has slightly different requirements for acceptable evidence, so familiarize yourself with some arguments from within that field instead of just applying whatever evidence you like best. Pay attention to your textbooks and your instructor's lectures. What types of arguments and evidence are they using? The type of evidence that sways an English instructor may not work to convince a sociology instructor. Find out what counts as proof that something is true in that field. Is it statistics, a logical development of points, something from the object being discussed (artwork, text, culture, or atom), the way something works, or some combination of more than one of these things?

Be consistent with your evidence. Unlike negotiating for the use of your parents' car, a college paper is not the place for an all-out blitz of every type of argument. You can often use more than one type of evidence within a paper, but make sure that within each section, you are providing the reader with evidence appropriate to each claim. So, if you start a paragraph or section with a statement like, "Putting the student seating area closer to the basketball court will raise player performance," do not follow with your evidence on how much more money the university could raise by letting more students attend games for free. Information about how fan support raises player morale, which then results in better play, would be a better follow-up. Your next section could offer clear reasons why undergraduates have as much or more right to attend an undergraduate event as wealthy alumni—but this information would not go in the same section as the fan support stuff. You cannot convince a confused person, so keep things tidy and ordered.

## Counterargument

One way to strengthen your argument and show that you have a deep understanding of the issue you are discussing is to anticipate and address counterarguments or objections. By considering what someone who disagrees with your position might have to say about your argument, you show that you have thought things through, and you dispose of some of the reasons your audience might have for not accepting your argument. Recall our discussion of student seating in the Dean Dome. To make the most effective argument possible, you should consider not only what students would say about seating but also what alumni who have paid a lot to get good seats might say.

You can generate counterarguments by asking yourself how someone who disagrees with you might respond to each of the points you've made or your position as a whole. **If you can't immediately imagine another position, here are some strategies to try:**

- Do some research. It may seem to you that no one could possibly disagree with the position you are arguing, but someone probably has. For example, some people argue that the American Civil War never ended. If you are making an argument concerning, for example, the outcomes of the Civil War, you might wish to see what some of these people have to say.
- Talk with a friend or with your teacher. Another person may be able to imagine counterarguments that haven't occurred to you.
- Consider your conclusion or claim and the premises of your argument and imagine someone who denies each of them. For example, if you argued, "Cats make the best pets. This is because they are clean and independent," you might imagine someone saying, "Cats do not make the best pets. They are dirty and needy."

Once you have thought up some counterarguments, consider how you will respond to them—will you concede that your opponent has a point but explain why your audience should nonetheless accept your argument? Will you reject the counterargument and explain why it is mistaken? Either way, you will want to leave your reader with a sense that your argument is stronger than opposing arguments.

When you are summarizing opposing arguments, be charitable. Present each argument fairly and objectively, rather than trying to make it look foolish. You want to show that you have considered the many sides of the issue. If you simply attack or caricature your opponent (also referred to as presenting a "straw man"), you suggest that your argument is only capable of defeating an extremely weak adversary, which may undermine your argument rather than enhance it.

It is usually better to consider one or two serious counterarguments in some depth, rather than to give a long but superficial list of many different counterarguments and replies.

Be sure that your reply is consistent with your original argument. If considering a counterargument changes your position, you will need to go back and revise your original argument accordingly.

## Audience

Audience is a very important consideration in argument. Take a look at our handout on audience. A lifetime of dealing with your family members has helped you figure out which arguments work best to persuade each of them. Maybe whining works with one parent, but the other will only accept cold, hard statistics. Your kid brother may listen only to the sound of money in his palm. It's usually wise to think of your audience in an academic setting as someone who is perfectly smart but who doesn't necessarily agree with you. You are not just expressing your opinion in an argument ("It's true because I said so"), and in most cases, your audience will know something about the subject at hand—so you will need sturdy proof. At the same time, do not think of your audience as capable of reading your mind. You have to come out and state both your claim and your evidence clearly. Do not assume that because the instructor knows the material, he or she understands what part of it you are using, what you think about it, and why you have taken the position you've chosen.

## Critical reading

Critical reading is a big part of understanding argument. Although some of the material you read will be very persuasive, do not fall under the spell of the printed word as authority. Very few of your instructors think of the texts they assign as the last word on the subject. Remember that the author of every text has an agenda, something that he or she wants you to believe. This is OK—everything is written from someone's perspective—but it's a good thing to be aware of. For more information on objectivity and bias and on reading sources carefully, read our handouts on evaluating print sources and reading to write.

Take notes either in the margins of your source (if you are using a photocopy or your own book) or on a separate sheet as you read. Put away that highlighter! Simply highlighting a text is good for memorizing the main ideas in that text—it does not encourage critical reading. Part of your goal as a reader should be to put the author's ideas in your own words. Then you can stop thinking of these ideas as facts and start thinking of them as arguments.

When you read, ask yourself questions like, "What is the author trying to prove?" and, "What is the author assuming I will agree with?" Do you agree with the author? Does the author adequately defend her argument? What kind of proof does she use? Is there something she leaves out that you would put in? Does putting it in hurt her argument? As you get used to reading critically, you will start to see the sometimes hidden agendas of other writers, and you can use this skill to improve your own ability to craft effective arguments.

## Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

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# 3.8: Summarizing vs. Analyzing Literary Works

## Summary: Using it Wisely

Knowing how to summarize something you have read, seen, or heard is a valuable skill, one you have probably used in many writing assignments. It is important, though, to recognize when you must go beyond describing, explaining, and restating texts and offer a more complex analysis. This handout will help you distinguish between summary and analysis and avoid inappropriate summary in your academic writing.

### Is summary a bad thing?

Not necessarily. But it's important that your keep your assignment and your audience in mind as you write. If your assignment requires an argument with a thesis statement and supporting evidence—as many academic writing assignments do—then you should limit the amount of summary in your paper. You might use summary to provide background, set the stage, or illustrate supporting evidence, but keep it very brief: a few sentences should do the trick. Most of your paper should focus on your argument. (Our handout on argument will help you construct a good one.)

Writing a summary of what you know about your topic before you start drafting your actual paper can sometimes be helpful. If you are unfamiliar with the material you're analyzing, you may need to summarize what you've read in order to understand your reading and get your thoughts in order. Once you figure out what you know about a subject, it's easier to decide what you want to argue.

You may also want to try some other pre-writing activities that can help you develop your own analysis. Outlining, freewriting, and mapping make it easier to get your thoughts on the page. (Check out our handout on brainstorming for some suggested techniques.)

### Why is it so tempting to stick with summary and skip analysis?

Many writers rely too heavily on summary because it is what they can most easily write. If you're stalled by a difficult writing prompt, summarizing the plot of The Great Gatsby may be more appealing than staring at the computer for three hours and wondering what to say about F. Scott Fitzgerald's use of color symbolism. After all, the plot is usually the easiest part of a work to understand. Something similar can happen even when what you are writing about has no plot: if you don't really understand an author's argument, it might seem easiest to just repeat what he or she said.

To write a more analytical paper, you may need to review the text or film you are writing about, with a focus on the elements that are relevant to your thesis. If possible, carefully consider your writing assignment before reading, viewing, or listening to the material about which you'll be writing so that your encounter with the material will be more purposeful. (We offer a handout on reading towards writing.)

### How do I know if I'm summarizing?

**As you read through your essay, ask yourself the following questions:**

- Am I stating something that would be obvious to a reader or viewer?
- Does my essay move through the plot, history, or author's argument in chronological order, or in the exact same order the author used?
- Am I simply describing what happens, where it happens, or to whom it happens?

A "yes" to any of these questions may be a sign that you are summarizing. **If you answer yes to the questions below, though, it is a sign that your paper may have more analysis (which is usually a good thing):**

- Am I making an original argument about the text?
- Have I arranged my evidence around my own points, rather than just following the author's or plot's order?

- Am I explaining why or how an aspect of the text is significant?

Certain phrases are warning signs of summary. **Keep an eye out for these:**

- "[This essay] is about…"
- "[This book] is the story of…"
- "[This author] writes about…"
- "[This movie] is set in…"

Here's an example of an introductory paragraph containing unnecessary summary. **Sentences that summarize are in italics:**

- The Great Gatsby *is the story of a mysterious millionaire, Jay Gatsby, who lives alone on an island in New York. F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote the book, but the narrator is Nick Carraway. Nick is Gatsby's neighbor, and he chronicles the story of Gatsby and his circle of friends, beginning with his introduction to the strange man and ending with Gatsby's tragic death. In the story, Nick describes his environment through various colors, including green, white, and grey. Whereas white and grey symbolize false purity and decay, respectively, the color green offers a symbol of hope.*

**Here's how you might change the paragraph to make it a more effective introduction:**

- In The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald provides readers with detailed descriptions of the area surrounding East Egg, New York. In fact, Nick Carraway's narration describes the setting with as much detail as the characters in the book. Nick's description of the colors in his environment presents the book's themes, symbolizing significant aspects of the post-World War I era. Whereas white and grey symbolize the false purity and decay of the 1920s, the color green offers a symbol of hope.

This version of the paragraph mentions the book's title, author, setting, and narrator so that the reader is reminded of the text. And that sounds a lot like summary—but the paragraph quickly moves on to the writer's own main topic: the setting and its relationship to the main themes of the book. The paragraph then closes with the writer's specific thesis about the symbolism of white, grey, and green.

## How do I write more analytically?

Analysis requires breaking something—like a story, poem, play, theory, or argument—into parts so you can understand how those parts work together to make the whole. Ideally, you should begin to analyze a work as you read or view it instead of waiting until after you're done—it may help you to jot down some notes as you read. Your notes can be about major themes or ideas you notice, as well as anything that intrigues, puzzles, excites, or irritates you. Remember, analytic writing goes beyond the obvious to discuss questions of how and why—so ask yourself those questions as you read.

**The St. Martin's Handbook encourages readers to take the following steps in order to analyze a text:**

- Identify evidence that supports or illustrates the main point or theme as well as anything that seems to contradict it.
- Consider the relationship between the words and the visuals in the work. Are they well integrated, or are they sometimes at odds with one another? What functions do the visuals serve? To capture attention? To provide more detailed information or illustration? To appeal to readers' emotions?
- Decide whether the sources used are trustworthy.
- Identify the work's underlying assumptions about the subject, as well as any biases it reveals. (Lunsford 38)

Once you have written a draft, some questions you might want to ask yourself about your writing are, "What's my point?" or, "What am I arguing in this paper?" If you can't answer these questions, then you haven't gone beyond summarizing. You may also want to think about how much of your writing comes from your own ideas or arguments. If you're only reporting someone else's ideas, you probably aren't offering an analysis.

## What strategies can help me avoid excessive summary?

- Read the assignment (the prompt) as soon as you get it. Make sure to reread it before you start writing. Go back to your assignment often while you write. (Check out our handout on reading assignments).
- Formulate an argument (including a good thesis) and be sure that your final draft is structured around it, including aspects of the plot, story, history, background, etc. only as evidence for your argument. (You can refer to our handout on constructing thesis statements).

- Read critically—imagine having a dialogue with the work you are discussing. What parts do you agree with? What parts do you disagree with? What questions do you have about the work? Does it remind you of other works you've seen?
- Make sure you have clear topic sentences that make arguments in support of your thesis statement. (Read our handout on paragraph development if you want to work on writing strong paragraphs).
- Use two different highlighters to mark your paper. With one color, highlight areas of summary or description. With the other, highlight areas of analysis. For many college papers, it's a good idea to have lots of analysis and minimal summary/description.
- Ask yourself: What part of the essay would be obvious to a reader/viewer of the work being discussed? What parts (words, sentences, paragraphs) of the essay could be deleted without loss? In most cases, your paper should focus on points that are essential, and will be interesting to people who have already read or seen the work you are writing about.

## Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial.

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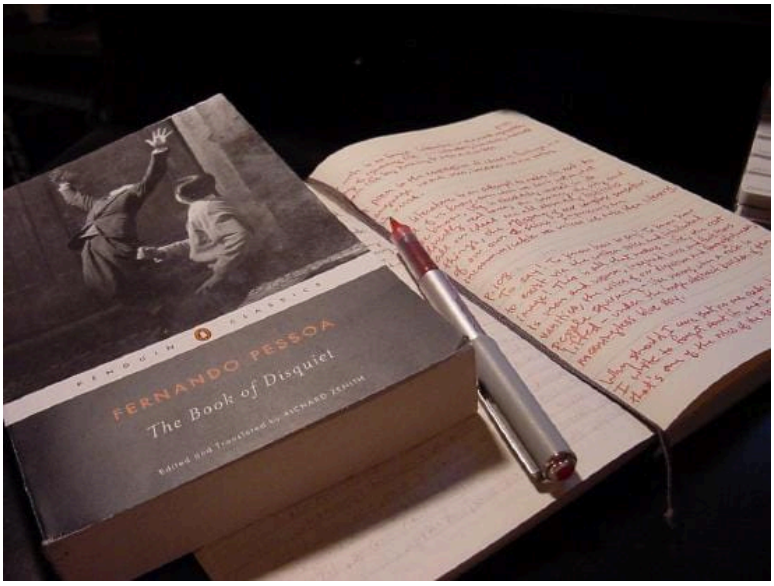
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# 3.9: Essay Type - Literary Response

## The Response Essay

The **response essay** is likely the most informal type of literary analysis essay students will encounter in a literature course. This essay simply asks the student to read the assigned text(s) and respond to said text(s). There are several purposes in writing such an essay. This kind of essay:

1. helps students better understand the reading through informal analysis
2. enables students to practice close-reading in a low-stakes, informal, and more comfortable way
3. prepares students for writing a more formal essay by recording their initial impressions of a text




"Fernando Pessoa" by Jennifer Fred Merchán, 2006. CC BY-SA 2.0

Usually, the requirements for such an essay are more open-ended than what is expected on more formal essay assignments. For example, students are often allowed to use first-person "I" and **colloquial** (that is, spoken rather than academic) language. A **thesis statement** and formal organization are also usually not required.

What is always required is a willingness to ask questions and engage with the text. The following are some questions students might respond to when writing a response essay:

- **First impressions:** When reading the title and first lines, what impression did you get from the text? How did this impression change as you read the rest of the story or poem? What might the title indicate about the story or poem?
- **Characters:** What kind of character is the main character of the story or poem? Are they likable? Trustworthy? Why? Which character do you like or relate to the most, and why? Which character do you dislike the most, and why? What kinds of characters (**dynamic, round, flat, static**) are featured in this story?
- **Tone:** How would you describe the tone of the story? What words, phrases, images, or snippets of dialogue indicate this tone?
- **Figurative language:** What figurative language or literary devices do you notice? Why do you think certain images appear? What kinds of patterns of language do you notice, and what significance might these patterns or literary devices have on the story or poem?

In addition to these basic literary analysis questions, some helpful tips for writing this kind of essay:

- **Take notes as you read.** Use highlighters to mark quotations or passages that jump out at you, along with post-it notes

or page clips to mark those pages so you can find them again when writing the essay. Don't be afraid to write notes in the margins of the book. If you must sell back the book to the bookstore, or don't want to mark the book for other reasons, you can use post-it notes to write your responses. Essentially, effective note-taking is like having a conversation with the text.
- **Keep a document or journal open to record your ideas as you read.** For example, refer to the image at the top of this page. This way, you can begin responding to the text as you read it, making efficient use of your time. You can then simply develop your reading notes in the essay.
- **Cite passages to support your analyses.** Like in an argumentative or persuasive essay, be ready to drop quotations or paraphrase into the essay to support your analysis and show those reading your essay examples of what you are talking about. Be ready to provide page or line numbers to cite the source. For example, if you say Hamlet (the main character of *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare) comes across as whiny and egotistical, be prepared to quote or paraphrase the play and point readers to the act, scene, and line numbers which show your point.

## Example Student Response Essay Prompt

| | |
|---|---|
| **Length requirement:** | 750 words minimum (no maximum, but please keep it under 5 pages if possible) |
| **Essay type:** | Response |
| **Number of sources required:** | One: the primary text you are analyzing. Use MLA citations and formatting. |

### Objective

By the end of this assignment, students will be able to engage with a work of literature through analysis and response. They will be able to define and locate examples of at least three basic literary devices within a single literary text.

**Audience:** instructor & classmates

**Purpose:** practice analyzing literature in a less formal environment

**Content:** literary analysis & response, practice for the upcoming literary analysis essay

### Directions

Students will choose one work of literature to analyze (that is, pick apart, zooming in, and looking closely at the literary devices and narrative elements of the story). Students may choose any of the stories we have read so far in class. As you read the story, respond to anything interesting in the text you notice.

- Focus on one story
- Identify & analyze at least three **literary devices** such as character, plot, setting, metaphor, and so forth
- Use either objective third-person or first-person "I"
- Present tense verbs, informal tone
- Quote & paraphrase the text using MLA Works Cited + In-Text citation
- Do not to bring in any secondary sources yet: this should be your personal observations and analysis of the text. Avoid using Shmoop, Cliffnotes, or any other plot summary websites. These will tarnish your reading process. I am interested in YOUR thoughts, not Shmoop's
- Avoid plot summary, unless used briefly to contextualize analysis. I know what happens in the stories. This is NOT a "summarize the story in your own words" exercise, but a "what patterns or interesting devices did you notice? What stuck out to you? Why do you think the author made the choices they did? In what ways does the story's form reflect its content?" exercise.

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# 3.10: Essay Type - Literary Analysis

## The Literary Analysis Essay

The literary analysis essay is the study of literature's meat and potatoes. Like the response essay, a literary analysis essay prompt asks students to examine one or more works of literature closely. The difference is that while a response essay is informal, a literary analysis essay is more formal. By more formal, I mean it abides by the following structural requirements:

- Clear, debatable thesis statement
- Clear introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion
- Quotations as evidence from the text to support the thesis

Let's take a deeper look into the literary analysis process, which focuses on the form of the text, also called **New Criticism.**

## New Criticism Practice

John Donne (1572–1631), the great metaphysical poet, provides a metaphor that is useful for close reading. In “The Canonization” (1633) he writes:

We’ll build sonnets pretty rooms;

As well a well-wrought urn becomes

The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,

And by these hymns, all shall approve

Us canonized for Love.

John Donne, “The Canonization,” Poetry Foundation, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173353.

Another poet returns to the same metaphor 118 years later. Thomas Gray, in “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751), writes:

Can storied urn or animated bust

Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?

Thomas Gray, “Elegy Written in a Country Courtyard,” Poetry Foundation, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173564.

Both Donne and Gray use the image of the urn in their poetry. An *urn*, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), is “an earthenware or metal vessel or vase of a rounded or ovaloid form and with a circular base, used by various peoples especially in former times… to preserve the ashes of the dead. Hence vaguely used (esp. *poet.*) for ‘a tomb or sepulchre, the grave.’”*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “urn.” Donne and Gray use the urn poetically, or metaphorically, for the urn is an image, a container to hold poetic meaning. To Donne, the poet can “build sonnets pretty rooms; / As well a well-wrought urn becomes”; to Gray, the urn becomes “storied” or an “animated bust” capable of containing stories and meaning. As an image, then, the urn becomes symbolic: poets argue that a poem is like an urn, a container for artistic meaning.

Let’s add one final component to our *urn* image. Jump ahead another sixty-nine years from Gray’s poem and read John Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1820). At the end of this poem, Keats writes:

When old age shall this generation waste,

Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’st,

‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.’

John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, ed. Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1919; Bartleby.com, 1999), http://www.bartleby.com/101/625.html.

Donne’s “**well-wrought urn**” became the title of a book by Cleanth Brooks—*The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1947) Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1956)—a central manifesto of the New Criticism. New Criticism is synonymous with close reading, so the urn becomes an important symbol for the New Critics: the urn as artistic container of beauty and meaning represents the New Critical enterprise. A poem, a play, a novel, a short story is like a “storied urn” or “well-wrought urn,” capable of conveying poetic beauty and truth. Even if the poem is “Jabberwocky”!

In all likelihood, you have already practiced **New Criticism**, the close reading of a poem, short story, or longer narrative that focuses on the unity of that work (or even in your daily lives through text messages, tweets, song lyrics, etc.). When you examine a short story for its character development, a drama for its plot construction, or a poem for its imagery, you are reading as a New Critic, looking at the literary work through the lens of close reading. In a sense, New Critical close reading is at the heart of every form of literary analysis you do, regardless of the theoretical approach taken. Thus it becomes essential that you become proficient in close readings of texts, for this skill is the foundation of all forms of literary criticism. If you cannot read a text closely and analyze it, you will have difficulty reading from any critical perspective. But fear not! If you have ever read and reread emails/text messages/tweets/instagram posts from a friend or family member or whomever (trying to decipher the underlying meaning), if you've ever explored song lyrics and discovered a deeper meaning or interpretation, you have these skills. And these skills are like any other, you need to practice and hone them.

Your Process

1. List the papers, if any, you have written in high school or college using the close reading approach.
2. Describe your experience writing such papers.
3. What challenges or questions do you remember having as you were working on these papers?
4. On which literary work have you decided to write your paper?
5. What are the fundamental questions you have about this work?

## Focus on New Critical Strategies

The New Critics, as we discussed, regard a literary work as an *urn*—a well-wrought, storied urn, or a Grecian urn. As Keats writes, this urn contains not only beauty but also truth: a work of literature has some objective meaning that is integral to its artistic design. In other words, literature is the art of conveying truth about the world. Thus the New Critics view the study of literature as an inherently valuable enterprise; literary criticism, it follows, is fruitful because it clarifies art by assigning a truth value to this art. To quote the nineteenth-century poet and critic Matthew Arnold, as he writes in *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1865), literature reflects “the best that is known and thought in the world” (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2010). To the New Critics, as you can see, literature—in particular, the analysis of it—is a profound activity.

A central concern of the New Critics is to understand how meaning and form interweave into a total artistic effect, the well-wrought urn. A New Critical reading assumes that the literary work has an organic structure that leads to unity or harmony in the work. An important concern for New Critics, consequently, is to show how meaning is achieved or dependent on the organic structure—the form—of the work. A New Critical reading, then, focuses on the various elements of literature that complement and create the theme. Consider the way you might pick apart, almost unconsciously, the elements of a song to determine its themes: beat, melody, tone, lyrics, rhythm, speed, key, etc. All these elements help a listener determine the themes of a song and there are countless varieties of combinations to express any number of ideas/feelings/stories (love song, breakup song, celebratory song, sad song, etc.). Have you ever wondered why a song might sound happy, but when you listen to the words, you realize it's a sad song? Why did the artist choose to create this dichotomy? What is accomplished by creating this tension between happy and sad? How does this add to the experience of the piece? These are the things New Critics explore. These are some of the tools used in literary analysis.

# Basic Philosophy of Close Reading

A New Critic's toolbox will hold those elements of literature that allow for the discussion of form and technique as it applies to meaning. Since New Critics perform a close reading of the text to illustrate how structure (form/organization/etc.) and theme (idea/subject/etc.) are inseparable, they are eager to tell us both how to read and how *not* to read. They identify various fallacies of reading that must be avoided:

## The Intentional Fallacy

The **intentional fallacy** occurs when readers claim to understand an author's intended meaning for a work of literature. The New Critics believed that a literary work belongs to the readers, to the public, which suggests that we should read the work isolated from what the author may have said about the work. In other words, the critic never knows specifically what the author intended. Indeed, an author may have conveyed meanings he or she did not intend at all, but those meanings are still present in their work (what the author intended doesn't really matter). The literary critic, then, must concentrate solely on the extrinsic formal qualities of the poem, play, short story, or novel.

## The Biographical Fallacy

Related to the intentional fallacy is the **biographical fallacy**, which, as you might suspect, is committed when you use an author's life as a frame of reference to interpret a work of art. The New Critics took painstaking measures to keep the focus on the work of art itself (separate the art from the artist).

## The Affective Fallacy

The **affective fallacy** is produced when the critic brings in his or her personal feelings about how a literary work moves them. While New Critics were aware that many readers found meaning in the emotional impact of literature, they were careful to distinguish between subjective emotional responses ("I hate this!") and objective, critical statements ("This isn't effective because of reasons X, Y, and Z") about a literary work. Critics, then, should stick closely to the work of art, eliminating the author's intention from consideration, and they should also eliminate their emotional involvement in the reading experience. We discover later in our study that many critical theories—psychoanalytic and reader-response theories, in particular—are diametrically opposed to New Criticism: both psychoanalytic and reader-response theories highlight the way a literary work affects a reader's emotional and intellectual responses.

## The Heresy of Paraphrase

Finally, the New Critics warned against the **heresy of paraphrase**, which happens when readers artificially separate meaning from structure or form. You have probably fallen into this trap once or twice when you concentrated on summarizing a work's plot rather than analyzing its meaning. New Criticism teaches us not to assign a meaning to a literary work *unless* that meaning can be supported by a close examination of the artistic elements of the text. To say that Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is about the death of a migrant worker fails to acknowledge that the poem does not support such a reading. Humpty Dumpty, in fact, could be accused of the heresy of paraphrase, as Amy Chisnell explores in her student paper later in the chapter.

In review, a close reading, as defined by the New Critics, focuses narrowly on the literary work as a well-wrought urn. All we need for our interpretation is the literary work itself, where we examine how the artistry of the work leads to a larger theme that reflects the true value of the work. Easy to state, more difficult to do! So let's now turn to see how a close reading can be connected to the writing process itself.

Your Process

add here

1. How do you react to such rules that define the philosophy of New Critical close reading?

2. What do you see as the strengths of such an approach?
3. What do you see as some of the limits to this approach?

## The Writing Process and the Protocols of Close Reading

If New Critics provide us with so many strategies on how *not* to read a text, they should present us with strategies *for* reading texts. And they do. They suggest protocols of reading that are the heart of traditional close readings of texts. In a nutshell, a close reading exposes a problem or issue that needs further examination to bring unity to the work; a close reading demonstrates how a literary work's meaning is unified, balanced, and harmonized by its aesthetic—or literary—structure. Your close reading, then, often identifies a **tension** or **ambiguity**—the issue or problem—that can be resolved by showing that the literary work achieves unity even in the apparent tension or ambiguity. Consequently, the critic can often examine how language creates tension through **paradox** or **irony**. Paradox (when something appears contradictory or discordant, but finally proves to be actually true) and irony (when a perceived meaning or intention is eventually found not to be accurate) are a result of a writer's use of language in a *metaphorical* way.

Your Process

add here

1. Read Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (http://www.bartleby.com/101/625.html).
2. Examine the last two lines of the poem (49–50).
3. Do you think the urn is speaking the lines at the end? Does it matter?
4. Read Cleanth Brooks's interpretation of the ending lines (www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html).
5. Then read the following overview.

There is no more famous example of a professional critical reading than Cleanth Brooks's "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes." Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. You can access the essay at www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html.

Brooks's reading of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" begins by disagreeing with T. S. Eliot, who believed the concluding lines of the poem—"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—constituted a major flaw in the poem, for, as Brooks relates, "the troubling assertion is apparently an intrusion upon the poem—does not grow out of it—is not dramatically accommodated to it." Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. Eliot feels the urn's speech doesn't make much sense—and that the statement simply isn't true. Brooks sets out to counter Eliot and prove that the poem is unified around the central paradox of the poem: "What is the relation of the beauty (the goodness, the perfection) of a poem to the truth or falsity of what it seems to assert?"

Brooks contends that the poem is "a parable on the nature of poetry, and of art in general," and that the concluding lines must be taken in the "total context of the poem." Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. When read in this manner, the urn's speech was "'in character,' was dramatically appropriate, [and] was properly prepared for." Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. To support his contention, Brooks provides a stanza-by-stanza close reading in which he suggests that the paradox of the speaking urn is naturally part of each stanza and related to a key thematic concept: the poem highlights the tension between bustling life depicted on the urn and the frozen vignettes of the "Cold Pastoral." Brooks concludes, "If the urn has been properly dramatized, if we have followed the development of the metaphors, if we have been alive to the paradoxes which work throughout the poem, perhaps then, we shall be prepared for the enigmatic, final paradox which the 'silent form' utters." Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. In concluding his essay, Brooks warns readers not to fall into the trap of paraphrase, for we must ultimately focus on "the world-view, or 'philosophy,' or 'truth' of the *poem as a whole* in terms of its dramatic wholeness" (Brooks's emphasis). Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html.

Brooks's reading of Keats's ode is an exemplar of New Critical reading. Remember, a close reading will examine a literary work and find some objective meaning (a theme) that is harmonized with structure, thus balancing theme and form.

## Implementing the Reading Protocols: A Strategy

To perform a close reading, use the following strategy:

1. Identify a tension or ambiguity in the literary work, the “problem” that needs to be solved by a close reading. In other words, your interpretation will highlight a theme or meaning that resides in the work.
2. Demonstrate how the work sustains or achieves this meaning through its artistic “principle of composition,” which might include an examination of the following:
    - imagery
    - character
    - plot
    - symbol
    - setting
    - point of view
    - language use (i.e., denotation, connotation, metaphor, simile, personification, rhythm)

    Of course, the principle of composition is determined by the literary genre you are analyzing (i.e., short story, poetry, drama, novel). By showing that #1 is dependent on #2, you present a New Critical interpretation reflecting how meaning is integral to theme.

## Example Literary Analysis Assignment

## Contributors: Adapted from material in "The Foundations of New Criticism: An Overview" by Ryan Cordell and John Pennington.

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# 3.11: Essay Type - Comparing and Contrasting Literature

## Compare and Contrast Essay Basics

The Compare and Contrast Essay is a literary analysis essay, but, instead of examining one work, it examines two or more works. These works must be united by a common theme or thesis statement. For example, while a literary analysis essay might explore the significance of ghosts in William Shakespeare's Hamlet, a compare/contrast essay might explore the significance of the supernatural in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.

### Literary Analysis Thesis Statement:

While Horatio seems to think the ghost of Old Hamlet is a demon trying to lead Hamlet to death, and Gertrude and Claudius think it is a figment of Hamlet's insanity, Hamlet's status as an unreliable narrator and the ghost actually symbolizes the oppression of Catholics during Shakespeare's time period.

### Compare and Contrast Thesis Statement:

The unreliable narrators paired with the ghosts in both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* symbolize the oppression of Catholics in Shakespeare's time period.

### Essay Genre Expectations

- **Tone:** formal, scholarly
  - Use first-person pronouns sparingly (you, me, we, our)
  - Avoid colloquialisms
  - Spell out contractions
  - Use subject-specific terminology, such as naming literary devices
- **Texts:** two or more
- **Avoid summary.** Aim for analysis and interpretation
- **MLA formatting and citations**

## Organization

While the literary analysis essay follows a fairly simple argumentative essay structure, the compare and contrast essay is slightly more complicated. It might be arranged by:

- Literary Work
- Alternating literary works
- Topic/subtopics

In general, ensure each paragraph works to support the thesis statement, and that both works receive equal attention.

### One Option for Organization

1. Introduction
   1. Background of topic
   2. Background of works related to topic
   3. Thesis Statement
2. Body paragraph 1
   1. Topic sentence
   2. Summary of Text 1
   3. Summary of Text 2

    4. Explanation of unifying theme for both texts
3. Body paragraphs
    1. Topic sentence
    2. Introduction of evidence
    3. Evidence
    4. Explanation of evidence
    5. Analysis of evidence
4. Conclusion
    1. Restatement of thesis in new words
    2. Summary of essay arguments
    3. Take-away

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# 3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research

## The Research Essay

The research essay is basically a literary analysis essay supported by research. Usually, this research takes the form of literary criticism. For more on literary criticism, check out the literary criticism chapter.

## Finding a Topic

Often times, instructors will assign a research topic. Be sure to consult with your instructor and/or the assignment prompt given by the instructor. If, however, the assignment is open-ended, then that is exciting news! You can write an essay about your interests in literature. It is like an adventure! However, too much choice can be debilitating. You want an essay that is large enough in scope that you can write an entire essay about it, but you don't want too large of a topic as you may not be able to feasibly cover it in the short amount of time you have. Therefore, a good way to find a "Goldilocks" topic—not too big and not too small—is to start with a simple formula and adjust as you go.

1. Find the literary text you want to write about. For example, "Bajadas" by Francisco Cantu or *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare.
2. Find an aspect or angle about that text which interests you. For example, when writing about "Bajadas," you might want to write about the ecology of the border desert, the use of animal symbolism, or the history of border politics and how it may have informed the story. When writing about *Hamlet,* you might be interested in the way female characters like Ophelia and Gertrude are treated, about the symbolism behind Ophelia's flowers, or about espionage on the part of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

**Finding a topic formula**

Topic = angle + text

**Example:**

Topic = Espionage + *Hamlet*

Working thesis statement: In this essay, I will be exploring espionage in *Hamlet*

## Brainstorming

Once you come up with a topic, start brainstorming. Yes, brainstorm before you perform research. The reason for this is because your instructor is interested in your original ideas about the text, not the ideas of scholars. **Secondary sources should only be used to support your own original ideas.** If you start with research, it is much more difficult to come up with your own ideas, because all of your ideas are going to sound a lot like the articles you read. So start with your initial impressions of your topic.

### Brainstorming Example:

Espionage in Hamlet is interesting to me because it seems like everyone in Elsinore is spying on each other. For example, Claudius sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Ophelia to spy on Hamlet. Polonius dies because he is spying on Hamlet. In turn, Hamlet spies on Claudius during the play within the play. Spying seems to play a huge part in the play, and I wonder why. Was there espionage in Shakespeare's London? Might it have influenced or inspired his writing?

## Outlining

Once you get some of your basic ideas down, you might start outlining the "big ideas" of your essay. This will help when it comes to writing the essay and organizing your ideas. It will also help you when it comes time to research.

### Outlining Example

1. Background of espionage in Hamlet
2. Espionage in Shakespeare's Time
3. Analysis of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Spying scene
4. Analysis of Ophelia spying scene
5. Analysis of Polonius spying scene
6. Analysis of Claudius/Hamlet spying scene
7. Analysis of Hamlet conducting counter-espionage against Claudius
8. How might these scenes have been influenced by espionage in Shakespeare's time?
9. Conclusion

## Writing

Before you begin researching, write what you can on your own. For example, write a literary analysis essay where you simply examine and analyze the literature without input from outside sources. This will allow you to solidify your ideas. It will also make it easier to find search terms when you are ready to research.

## Researching

Once you have a solid topic and writing, it's time to research your essay topic. Starting with some questions about your topic is a great way to start. See the chapter on navigating scholarly sources for a more detailed look at how to find research material.

## Annotated Bibliography

As you read, keep track of your sources using an Annotated Bibliography or Research Log. Basically, an Annotated Bibliography is just like a regular Works Cited page, except every source is summarized after the bibliographical entry. Because you will be reading a lot of different sources, some 20+ pages in length, it can be difficult to keep track of the ideas of each source. An Annotated Bibliography is a tool to help you keep track of your research. This also can help you avoid plagiarism! When taking notes on your sources, be sure to clearly mark summary, paraphrase, and quotation so that you ethically attribute words and ideas to their author.

### Annotated Bibliography Example

Lastname 1

Student first name Last name

Professor Soandso

English 2

30 March 2019

Annotated Bibliography: Espionage in Hamlet

**Working title:** Elizabethan Spy Culture Reflected in Hamlet

**Working thesis**: for this essay I will explore how Elizabethan spy culture might have influenced Hamlet. For example, I will look at how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are used to spy on Hamlet, and how it seems like everyone is watching everyone in Elsinore: perhaps Claudius is a stand-in for the English monarchy, a critique of its corruption?

Honan, Park. *Christopher Marlowe: Poet & Spy*. OUP Oxford, 2005. EBSCOhost, ezproxy.solano.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.as...&site=eds-live.

Christopher Marlowe was a contemporary of Shakespeare. He was also his competitor as a fellow playwright and poet. This text is a scholarly biography of Marlowe's life as a spy and poet. This source gives a picture of the cultural context of Shakespeare:

of particular relevance to my research is the chapter describing Marlowe and Shakespeare's relationship (187-196). Though this gives interesting background information, it might solely be useful to note that Shakespeare regularly rubbed elbows with a spy, Marlowe, so he was at least somewhat familiar with Elizabethan spy culture, though how much he knew is a mystery. Otherwise, this text may not be very useful because it only briefly mentions Shakespeare.

## Sample Student Research Essay

Text: "The Hunting of the Hare" by Margaret Cavendish

Topic: Symbol & Theme: Humanity's Attraction to Destruction and Violence

Rebekah's research essay on Margaret Cavendish's poem "The Hunting of the Hare" illustrates several of the principles discussed in this chapter:

- How to integrate scholarly secondary sources without relinquishing control of the argument
- How to make it clear whose ideas are whose through use of tag words and phrases
- How to employ parenthetical in-text citations according to MLA guidelines
- How to construct a Works Cited page according to MLA guidelines

The parts where the author engages with scholarly criticism are **in bold.** Pay close attention to how and where student Rebekah Fish incorporates primary and secondary sources.

Rebekah Fish

English 3460

Human Nature in Margaret Cavendish's "The Hunting of the Hare"

Margaret Cavendish's 1653 poem "The Hunting of the Hare" relates the cruel fate of a hare that has fallen prey to a group of hunters. A study of this poem suggests that Cavendish can be viewed as one of the first supporters for animal rights as she criticizes the cruelty of men who kill animals for sport. On a more personal level, Cavendish could have closely identified with the hare, which is ostensibly humanlike, and also with its fear. She might have even intended to parallel her critics to the dogs and the hunters within the poem. On a grander scale, Cavendish might be making the critical judgment that humankind seeks enjoyment through violent competition with others. Through a study of the many different thematic levels of the poem, Margaret Cavendish's "The Hunting of the Hare" seems to have an overarching theme of humanity's destructive attraction to violence in order to achieve supremacy.

It is evident through the poet's portrayal of the hare that it is meant to be seen as a significant and even a symbolic figure, beginning in the first line of the poem where the hare is granted the name "Wat." He is humanlike, "glaring" across the landscape as his "Haires blew up behind" him in the wind instead of his fur (4 and 6). The hare is also described as "wise" instead of merely being a sentient creature, and Cavendish makes its humanlike features even more evident as the hare "walks about" rather than hopping or crawling (Cavendish 7 and 11). Another way the rabbit is seemingly anthropomorphized is through the continual use of the personal pronoun "him" in the poem, which is used instead of "it." To indicate her disapproval of the unethical treatment of all animals, near the very end of the poem Cavendish grants all creatures the same humanlike quality as the hare by saying that creatures are being "murdered" (100) by men instead of "killed." The word "murder" connotes unlawfulness and makes a connection between that illicitness and the killing of animals, indicating that all sentient life, that of humans and animals, is important and worthy of being preserved. Some may even argue that Cavendish was trying to make a point that humankind should not express dominant authority over other creatures through the use of violence, because, within the last lines of the poem, man is portrayed not only as murderous but also as an oppressive tyrant that rules over all other living creatures.

Cavendish's humanlike portrayal of the hare might raise concerns for some readers. **Bruce Thomas Boehrer discusses some critics' objection to an author's anthropomorphizing nonhuman characters. To anthropomorphize is to project one's own tendencies and traits onto another species. Some critics argue that this act ignores a nonhuman species' real behaviors and traits and illustrates humans' feeling of dominance over nature. However, as Boehrer explains, many animal characters in literature "challenge the human-animal divide" (5) and force people to examine their values, especially those related to nature. Donna Landry supports the view that "The Hunting of the Hare" raises these issues. She argues that in Cavendish's work, she promotes the "democratizing of relations between humans and other species" (471). Rather than emphasizing the superiority of human emotions by anthropomorphizing the hare, Cavendish humanizes him**

**in order to bridge the gap between the reader and the hare. Paul Salzman states that Cavendish's main goal as a writer was "to enter into an empathetic relationship with the world around her" (142). In "The Hunting of the Hare," Cavendish portrays the hare with empathy in order to persuade the reader that committing unnecessary violence on animals is cruel and terrible.**

In addition, the description of the hare is used to form and emphasize the strong connection between the hare and Cavendish, who was similarly being pursued by her critics as a female writer. **This criticism is clearly shown through the description of Cavendish by Mary Evelyn, who portrayed her as extravagant and vain and said that her discourse was "as airy, empty, whimsical, and rambling as her books" (Qtd. in Damrosch and Dettmar 2058-9).** Many people of Cavendish's time viewed her as outrageous, partly because publicly recognized women writers were rare during the seventeenth century. **Although scholars seriously study Cavendish's work now, Emma L.E. Rees says that because of the harsh critics of her time, "The impression which lasted for many years was of an eccentric, disturbed and arrogant woman" (11). "The Hunting of the Hare" could be interpreted as a response to this criticism.** Her critics, paralleled by both the "cruel dogs" (16) and the men in the poem, are often referred to as merciless. The critics are described as nosy through common references to the dogs and how they always "thrust [their] snuffling nose[s]" into things (64). They are also described as loudmouths through the image of dogs who cry out with their "wide mouths" (19). While at times, Cavendish seems to be uncaring as to what the critics say about her, at other times, she seems terrified of the public's opinion of her life and writing, much like the hare's terror of being pursued. She suggests that, in public, she hides her fear of the critics, similarly to the hare when, "Licking his feet, he wiped his ears so clean / That none could tell that Wat had hunted been" (41-2). Although critics continued to pursue her, Cavendish emphasizes through the poem that she will continue to maintain her composure until the very end, like the hare does until his death. Yet, this continual pursuing and killing of hares, which parallels Cavendish's experience, critiques human nature's desire for supremacy over all living things—even each other.

Not only can Cavendish's poem be seen as a response to animal cruelty and the cruelty of critics, but it can also be seen as an assessment of how humankind treats its brethren. In the poem, the men are portrayed as bloodthirsty monsters that thrive off cruelty to others. The men in Cavendish's poem, who "destroy those lives that God did make" (98) solely for "sport or recreation's sake" (97), seek to kill the rabbit, the symbol, through heavy personification, of a fellow human (Cavendish 2062).

Margaret Cavendish's "The Hunting of the Hare" is a comment on human nature and the desire for obtaining dominion over others by any means necessary. Through her extensive use of pathos throughout the poem, her audience at the time was meant to feel a sense of culpability and a desire to change. Despite her portrayal of human nature as inherently evil, the guilt the audience is supposed to feel offers a sense of hope, as it indicates that human nature is capable of being altered and even changed.

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Damrosch, David and Kevin J. H. Dettmar. "Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle." The Longman Anthology: British Literature, edited by David Damrosch and Kevin J. H. Dettmar, Longman, 2010, pp. 2060-63.

Landry, Donna. "Green Languages? Women Poets as Naturalists in 1653 and 1807." Huntington Library Quarterly, vol. 63, no.4, 2000, pp. 467-89. JSTOR. www.jstor.org/stable/3817613. Accessed 2 Oct. 2013.

Rees, Emma L.E. Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile. Manchester UP, 2003. EBSCOHost, libproxy. ung.edu/login?url=search.ebscohost.com/login. aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2004581244&site=e ds-live&scope=site. Accessed 8 Nov. 2013.

Salzman, Paul. Reading Early Modern Women's Writing. Oxford UP, 2006.

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# 3.13: How to Perform Literary Research (Navigating Secondary Sources and Library Databases)

## Finding Literary Criticism

Have you ever looked up the lyrics of a song you loved? Perhaps you went to Genius or azlyrics.com or another lyrics website. Perhaps you went on Reddit to see what other people have said about the meaning of the song lyrics. In each of these cases, you performed an informal version of literary research! That is, you tried to find out more about a work of literature (song lyrics) by researching what other listeners have said about the topic. When performing research for formal literature essays, the concept is the same, but there expectations are higher in the sense that you are tasked with finding what *experts* have said about a work of literature. In the field of literary studies, these experts are called **literary critics.** The articles they write are called **literary criticism.**

Finding Literary Criticism is similar to doing a Google search. The difference is that, instead of Google, you use your school's library databases specific to the study of literature. Just as you would not go to McDonald's to buy sushi, so too must you consider the places you go to find criticism specific to your research needs. To that end, there are several resources geared towards the study of literature where students can find literary criticism. Each database presents its own benefits and challenges.

## Physical Books



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### Campus Library

If you are a student with access to a college campus library, ask the librarian for help finding literary criticism. Generally, college libraries will have access to these kinds of materials. If the material you are looking for is not available at your campus, your librarian may be able to request it through a process called Inter-library Loan (ILL). Talk to your librarian about your options. Be sure to block out enough time to access and read these articles, which often takes longer than students anticipate.

### City Library or Library for the General Public

While city libraries or libraries for the general public may not have as much literary criticism as a college library, they do usually

have some of the more famous examples. For example, Harold Bloom's *Hamlet: Poem Unlimited* (2003) is available at most libraries. Again, librarians are your friends in the research process: ask your librarian for help finding materials to support your individual research needs. Increasingly, libraries have access to massive amounts of digital material even if they don't have physical copies.

## Online Databases




"JSTOR Icon" by Gwillhickers (2018) is licensed CC BY-SA 4.0

If your campus or local library subscribes to databases, the following databases are the most relevant to the study of literature.

### Literary Reference Center Plus

This database is probably the most easily accessible and user-friendly database for literary research. It contains primary sources (classic texts), and secondary sources (biographies and literary criticism). It is completely focused on literature, so this database means you do not have to worry about finding material from other disciplines. However, this database is also not as comprehensive as other databases.

### MLA International Bibliography

Vimeo Video

*This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.*

View this Vimeo Video online

The MLA International Bibliography is an online database containing over 2.8 million articles in over 60 languages from all over the world (MLA). New articles are added every year. This is probably the best place to find the most relevant and current literary criticism. Warning: be careful to avoid Book Reviews which are not considered literary criticism! If you have the ability to filter your search, click "Scholarly" or "Peer Reviewed" to increase likelihood you will find relevant articles.

### JSTOR

JSTOR is another large database but is less literature and language-specific as it also contains articles in subjects such as history and psychology. It can be an effective tool for finding older literary criticism and primary source documents. It also provides a free research course to aid students in using databases. However, watch out, because it is such a massive database it also contains a lot of book reviews (which are not literary criticism) and a lot of really, really old literary criticism that may no longer be relevant to the discipline.

### Oxford English Dictionary

This is the go-to dictionary for literary critics. It is better for the study of literature than Google or Merriam-Webster because it provides the historical context (etymology) of terms in addition to their current usage, an important consideration for older works such as *Hamlet*, where word meanings have changed significantly over time. When reading a work of literature, have the Oxford English Dictionary open in a separate window so that you can look up words as you read.

## General Tips for Using Databases

## On Navigating Databases

#### Search Terms

Before jumping into the databases, be sure to have, at least, a topic you are interested in researching. A topic should include a work of literature and an aspect of that work of literature. For example:

- Work of Literature: Hamlet
- Aspect: Prison/Incarceration

So my research topic might be: "Prison in Hamlet" or "Incarceration in Hamlet"

Once you have this main topic, brainstorm a list of search terms that might generate results. Because the searching mechanism is an algorithm, you may need to experiment with different search terms, as computers have a difficult time recognizing synonyms.

Example of Terms Related to Topic

- Hamlet prison
- Incarceration Hamlet
- Panopticon Hamlet
- Jail Hamlet
- All of Denmark is a prison
- Elsinore prison
- Elsinore incarceration
- Elsinore jail

Now that I have some search terms, I will try using them in each database.

After performing my searches, the following results popped up, each in a different database:

Ahnert, Ruth. “The Prison in Early Modern Drama.” *Literature Compass*, vol. 9, no. 1, Jan. 2012, pp. 34–47. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1111/j.1741-4113.2011.00860.x.

Hopkins, Lisa. “‘Denmark’s a Prison’: Hamlet and the Earl of Bothwell.” *Hamlet Studies: An International Journal of Research on The Tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke*,

vol. 19, no. 1–2, 1997, pp. 93–96. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cpid,uid&custid=s4302453&db=mlf&AN=19970657000&site=ehost-live.

Kozusko, Matt. “Monstrous!: Actors, Audiences, Inmates, and the Politics of Reading Shakespeare.” *Shakespeare Bulletin: A*

*Journal of Performance Criticism and Scholarship*,

vol. 28, no. 2, 2010, pp. 235–251. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cpid,uid&custid=s4302453&db=mlf&AN=2010582294&site=ehost-live.

Steggle, Matthew. “CRITICAL READINGS: What Kinds of Prison Are in Hamlet?” *Critical Insights: Hamlet*, Jan. 2019, pp. 134–148. *EBSCOhost*,

search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lkh&AN=137041969&site=lrc-plus.

I can now begin to read my sources and learn more about my research topic.

## Research Log

While researching, you will likely encounter many, many, many different sources. Because there are so many sources, it is easy to lose track of them unless you organize your search process. Otherwise, at best, you might miss out on including a source that is helpful. At worst, you might unintentionally plagiarize and receive a 0 on the assignment.

Thus, to help combat the potential for disorganization during the research process, keep a research log. A research log—or, more formally, an Annotated Bibliography—is basically a document where you keep track of information, such as:

- Search terms used
- Databases explored
- Citations for articles/resources found
- Annotations of these sources

Keeping a research log may seem like extra work, but, in the long run, it is actually more efficient. It helps you keep track of the sources you have already explored so that you do not waste time re-reading articles and performing research steps you already completed. It also makes it easier to pull information when writing the essay and aids you in avoiding plagiarism. Depending on your class, you may be asked to perform a more formal research log called an **Annotated Bibliography.** More on that in the next section.

So what are you waiting for? Enjoy the process of research!

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# 3.14: Writing About Poetry

## Overview

When your teachers or professors ask you to analyze a literary text, they often look for something frequently called close reading. Close reading is a deep analysis of how a literary text works; it is both a reading process and something you include in a literary analysis paper, though in a refined form.

Fiction writers and poets build texts out of many central components, including subject, form, and specific word choices. Literary analysis involves examining these components, which allows us to find, in small parts of the text, clues to help us understand the whole. For example, if an author writes a novel in the form of a personal journal about a character's daily life, but that journal reads like a series of lab reports, what do we learn about that character? What is the effect of picking a word like "tome" instead of "book"? In effect, you are putting the author's choices under a microscope.

The process of close reading should produce a lot of questions. It is when you begin to answer these questions that you are ready to participate thoughtfully in class discussion or write a literary analysis paper that makes the most of your close reading work.

Close reading sometimes feels like over-analyzing, but don't worry. Close reading is a process of finding as much information as you can in order to form as many questions as you can. When it is time to write your paper and formalize your close reading, you will sort through your work to figure out what is most convincing and helpful to the argument you hope to make and, conversely, what seems like a stretch. This guide imagines you are sitting down to read a text for the first time on your way to developing an argument about a text and writing a paper. To give one example of how to do this, we will read the poem, "Design," by famous American poet Robert Frost and attend to four major components of literary texts: subject, form, word choice (diction), and theme.

If you want even more information about approaching poems specifically, take a look at our guide: How to Read a Poem.

## The Poem

As our guide to reading poetry suggests, have a pencil out when you read a text. Make notes in the margins, underline important words, place question marks where you are confused by something. Of course, if you are reading in a library book, you should keep all your notes on a separate piece of paper. If you are not making marks directly on, in, and beside the text, be sure to note line numbers or even quote portions of the text, so you have enough context to remember what you found interesting.



Robert Frost, 1941. Library of Congress.

Design
I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,

On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth—
Assorted characters of death and blight
Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
Like the ingredients of a witches' broth—
A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth,
And dead wings carried like a paper kite.
What had that flower to do with being white,
The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?
What brought the kindred spider to that height,
Then steered the white moth thither in the night?
What but design of darkness to appall?—
If design govern in a thing so small.

---

# Subject

The subject of a literary text is simply what the text is about. What is its plot? What is its most important topic? What image does it describe? It's easy to think of novels and stories as having plots, but sometimes it helps to think of poetry as having a kind of plot as well. When you examine the subject of a text, you want to develop some preliminary ideas about the text and make sure you understand its major concerns before you dig deeper.

## Observations

In "Design," the speaker describes a scene: a white spider holding a moth on a white flower. The flower is a heal-all, the blooms of which are usually violet-blue. This heal-all is unusual. The speaker then poses a series of questions, asking why this heal-all is white instead of blue and how the spider and moth found this particular flower. How did this situation arise?

## Questions

The speaker's questions seem simple, but they are actually fairly nuanced. We can use them as a guide for our own as we go forward with our close reading.

- Furthering the speaker's simple "how did this happen," we might ask, is the scene in this poem a manufactured situation?
- The white moth and white spider each use the atypical white flower as camouflage in search of sanctuary and supper, respectively. Did these flora and fauna come together for a purpose?
- Does the speaker have a stance about whether there is a purpose behind the scene? If so, what is it?
- How will other elements of the text relate to the unpleasantness and uncertainty in our first look at the poem's subject?

After thinking about local questions, we have to zoom out. Ultimately, what is this text about?

# Form

Form is how a text is put together. When you look at a text, observe how the author has arranged it. If it is a novel, is it written in the first person? How is the novel divided? If it is a short story, why did the author choose to write short-form fiction instead of a novel or novella? How does the chosen form impact the story (how does the form inform the piece)? How would the piece be different if it were in a different form? Examining the form of a text can help you develop a starting set of questions in your reading, which may then guide further questions stemming from even closer attention to the specific words the author chooses. A little background research on form and what different forms can mean makes it easier to figure out why and how the author's choices are important.

## Observations

Most poems follow rules or principles of form; even free verse poems are marked by the author's choices in line breaks, rhythm, and rhyme—even if none of these exists, which is a notable choice in itself. Here's an example of thinking through these elements

in “Design.”

In “Design,” Frost chooses an Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnet form: fourteen lines in iambic pentameter consisting of an octave (a stanza of eight lines) and a sestet (a stanza of six lines). We will focus on rhyme scheme and stanza structure rather than meter (a pattern of syllabic emphasis) for the purposes of this guide. A typical Italian sonnet has a specific rhyme scheme for the octave:

a b b a a b b a

There’s more variation in the sestet rhymes, but one of the more common schemes is

c d e c d e

Conventionally, the octave introduces a problem or question which the sestet then resolves. The point at which the sonnet goes from the problem/question to the resolution is called the volta, or turn. (Note that we are speaking only in generalities here; there is a great deal of variation.)

Frost uses the usual octave scheme with “-ite”/”-ight” (a) and “oth” (b) sounds: “white,” “moth,” “cloth,” “blight,” “right,” “broth,” “froth,” “kite.” However, his sestet follows an unusual scheme with “-ite”/”-ight” and “all” sounds:

a c a a c c

## Questions

Now, we have a few questions with which we can start:

- Why use an Italian sonnet?
- Why use an unusual scheme in the sestet?
- What problem/question and resolution (if any) does Frost offer?
- What is the volta in this poem?
- In other words, what is the point?

Italian sonnets have a long tradition; many careful readers recognize the form and know what to expect from his octave, volta, and sestet. Frost seems to do something fairly standard in the octave in presenting a situation; however, the turn Frost makes is not to resolution, but to questions and uncertainty. A white spider sitting on a white flower has killed a white moth.

- How did these elements come together?
- Was the moth’s death random or by design?
- Is one worse than the other?

We can guess right away that Frost’s disruption of the usual purpose of the sestet has something to do with his disruption of its rhyme scheme. Looking even more closely at the text will help us refine our observations and guesses.

# Word Choice, Or Diction

Looking at the word choice of a text helps us “dig in” ever more deeply. If you are reading something longer, are there certain words that come up again and again? Are there words that stand out? While you are going through this process, it is best for you to assume that every word is important—again, you can decide whether something is really important later.

Even when you read prose, our guide for reading poetry offers good advice: read with a pencil and make notes. Mark the words that stand out, and perhaps write the questions you have in the margins or on a separate piece of paper. If you have ideas that may possibly answer your questions, write those down, too.

## Observations

Let’s take a look at the first line of “Design”:

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white

The poem starts with something unpleasant: a spider. Then, as we look more closely at the adjectives describing the spider, we may see connotations of something that sounds unhealthy or unnatural. When we imagine spiders, we do not generally picture them dimpled and white; it is an uncommon and decidedly creepy image. There is dissonance between the spider and its descriptors, i.e., what is wrong with this picture? Already we have a question: what is going on with this spider?

We should look for additional clues further on in the text. The next two lines develop the image of the unusual, unpleasant-sounding spider:

On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth—

Now we have a white flower (a heal-all, which usually has a violet-blue flower) and a white moth in addition to our white spider. Heal-alls have medicinal properties, as their name suggests, but this one seems to have a genetic mutation—perhaps like the spider? Does the mutation that changes the heal-all's color also change its beneficial properties—could it be poisonous rather than curative? A white moth doesn't seem remarkable, but it is "Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth," or like manmade fabric that is artificially "rigid" rather than smooth and flowing like we imagine satin to be. We might think for a moment of a shroud or the lining of a coffin, but even that is awry, for neither should be stiff with death.

## Questions

The first three lines of the poem's octave introduce unpleasant natural images "of death and blight" (as the speaker puts it in line four). The flower and moth disrupt expectations: the heal-all is white instead of "blue and innocent," and the moth is reduced to "rigid satin cloth" or "dead wings carried like a paper kite." We might expect a spider to be unpleasant and deadly; the poem's spider also has an unusual and unhealthy appearance.

- The focus on whiteness in these lines has more to do with death than purity—can we understand that whiteness as being corpse-like rather than virtuous?

Well before the volta, Frost makes a "turn" away from nature as a retreat and haven; instead, he unearths its inherent dangers, making nature menacing. From three lines alone, we have a number of questions:

- Will whiteness play a role in the rest of the poem?
- How does "design"—an arrangement of these circumstances—fit with a scene of death?
- What other juxtapositions might we encounter?

These disruptions and dissonances recollect Frost's alteration to the standard Italian sonnet form: finding the ways and places in which form and word choice go together will help us begin to unravel some larger concepts the poem itself addresses.

# Theme

Put simply, themes are major ideas in a text. Many texts, especially longer forms like novels and plays, have multiple themes. That's good news when you are close reading because it means there are many different ways you can think through the questions you develop.

## Observations

So far, in our reading of "Design," our questions revolve around disruption: disruption of form, disruption of expectations in the description of certain images. Discovering a concept or idea that links multiple questions or observations you have made is the beginning of discovering theme.

## Questions

What is happening with disruption in "Design"? What point is Frost making? Observations about other elements in the text help you address the idea of disruption in more depth. Here is where we look back at the work we have already done: What is the text about? What is notable about the form, and how does it support or undermine what the words say? Does the specific language of the text highlight, or redirect, certain ideas?

In this example, we are looking to determine what kind(s) of disruption the poem contains or describes. We want to see what kind of disruption, or whether indeed Frost uses disruptions in form and language to communicate something opposite: design.

## Sample Analysis

After you make notes, formulate questions, and set tentative hypotheses, you must analyze the subject of your close reading. Literary analysis is another process of reading (and writing!) that allows you to make a claim about the text. It is also the point at which you turn a critical eye to your earlier questions and observations to find the most compelling points and discard the ones that are a "stretch" or are fascinating but have no clear connection to the text as a whole. (We recommend a separate document for recording the brilliant ideas that don't quite fit this time around.)

Here follows an excerpt from a brief analysis of "Design" based on the close reading above. This example focuses on some lines in great detail in order to unpack the meaning and significance of the poem's language. By commenting on the different elements of close reading we have discussed, it takes the results of our close reading and offers one particular way into the text. (In case you were thinking about using this sample as your own, be warned: it has no thesis and it is easily discoverable on the web. Plus, it doesn't have a title.)

### Excerpt

Frost's speaker brews unlikely associations in the first stanza of the poem. The "Assorted characters of death and blight / Mixed ready to begin the morning right" make of the grotesque scene an equally grotesque mockery of a breakfast cereal (4 – 5). These lines are almost singsong in meter, and it is easy to imagine them set to a radio jingle. A pun on "right"/"rite" slides the "characters of death and blight" into their expected concoction: a "witches' broth" (6). These juxtapositions—a healthy breakfast that is also a potion for dark magic—are borne out when our "fat and white" spider becomes "a snow-drop"—an early spring flower associated with renewal—and the moth as "dead wings carried like a paper kite" (1, 7, 8). Like the mutant heal-all that hosts the moth's death, the spider becomes a deadly flower; the harmless moth becomes a child's toy, but as "dead wings," more like a puppet made of a skull.

The volta offers no resolution for our unsettled expectations. Having observed the scene and detailed its elements in all their unpleasantness, the speaker turns to questions rather than answers. How did "The wayside blue and innocent heal-all" end up white and bleached like a bone (10)? How did its "kindred spider" find the white flower, which was its perfect hiding place (11)? Was the moth, then, also searching for camouflage, only to meet its end?

Using another question as a disguise, the speaker offers a hypothesis: "What but design of darkness to appall?" (13). This question sounds rhetorical, as though the only reason for such an unlikely combination of flora and fauna is some "design of darkness." Some force, the speaker suggests, assembled the white spider, flower, and moth to snuff out the moth's life. Such a design appalls, or horrifies. We might also consider the speaker asking what other force but dark design could use something as simple as appalling in its other sense (making pale or white) to effect death.

However, the poem does not close with a question, but with a statement. The speaker's "If design govern in a thing so small" establishes a condition for the octave's questions after the fact (14). There is no point in considering the dark design that brought together "assorted characters of death and blight" if such an event is too minor, too physically small to be the work of some force unknown. Ending on an "if" clause has the effect of rendering the poem still more uncertain in its conclusions: not only are we faced with unanswered questions, we are now not even sure those questions are valid in the first place.

Behind the speaker and the disturbing scene, we have Frost and his defiance of our expectations for a Petrarchan sonnet. Like whatever designer may have altered the flower and attracted the spider to kill the moth, the poet built his poem "wrong" with a purpose in mind. Design surely governs in a poem, however small; does Frost also have a dark design? Can we compare a scene in nature to a carefully constructed sonnet?

## A Note on Organization

Your goal in a paper about literature is to communicate your best and most interesting ideas to your reader. Depending on the type of paper you have been assigned, your ideas may need to be organized in service of a thesis to which everything should link back. It is best to ask your instructor about the expectations for your paper.

Knowing how to organize these papers can be tricky, in part because there is no single right answer—only more and less effective answers. You may decide to organize your paper thematically, or by tackling each idea sequentially; you may choose to order your ideas by their importance to your argument or to the poem. If you are comparing and contrasting two texts, you might work

thematically or by first addressing one text and then the other. One way to approach a text may be to start with the beginning of the novel, story, play, or poem, and work your way toward its end. For example, here is the rough structure of the example above: The author of the sample decided to use the poem itself as an organizational guide, at least for this part of the analysis.

- A paragraph about the octave.
- A paragraph about the volta.
- A paragraph about the penultimate line (13).
- A paragraph about the final line (14).
- A paragraph addressing form that suggests a transition to the next section of the paper.

You will have to decide for yourself the best way to communicate your ideas to your reader. Is it easier to follow your points when you write about each part of the text in detail before moving on? Or is your work clearer when you work through each big idea—the significance of whiteness, the effect of an altered sonnet form, and so on—sequentially?

We suggest you write your paper however is easiest for you, then move things around during revision if you need to.

Contributors:

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# 3.15: Analyzing Poetry

Poetry is a form of expression. The poet uses his/her own personal and private language, which leaves poetry open to different interpretations. Although the poet may have had one specific idea or purpose in mind, the reader's response may be completely different. All readers bring with them their various backgrounds and experiences. What might be interpreted one way by one person, may be be interpreted entirely differently by another. Nevertheless, this does not mean that you may interpret poetry any way you wish. All interpretations must be supported by direct reference to the text. As with any type of literary analysis, you need a basic knowledge of the elements of poetry. The following guide and questions will help you.

- Read the poem in its entirety three times.
  - Read it aloud once, so you can hear and feel the sounds of the words. Don't stop to try and understand it, just read.
  - Read it a second time to get a general impression.
    - What's happening in the poem?
    - What is the title of the poem?
    - Who is the speaker or narrative voice of the poem?
    - To whom is the speaker speaking?
    - What is the tone of the poem? Sad, happy, melancholy, bitter?
  - Read the poem a third time to dig deeper into its potential meanings.
    - What is the poem about?
    - What is the poem trying to convey (a mood, a feeling, an event, an idea, etc.)?
    - What is the purpose of the poem: to describe, amuse, entertain, criticize, narrate, inform, express grief, celebrate, or commemorate?
    - How does the poem convey what you think it's trying to convey?
    - How does the poem function? What makes it work? Not work?

Contributors:

ndla.no/en/subjects/subject:39/topic:1:189087/resource:1:14814

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# 3.16: Compare and Contrast Poetry Assignments

## Comparing and Contrasting

Frequently, you will find that an assignment asks you to 'compare and contrast' poems. There's a very good reason for this, for, often, it is only by considering different treatments of similar subjects that we become aware of a range of possibilities, and begin to understand why particular choices have been made. You may have noticed that, in the previous discussions, I've used a similar strategy. When I showed, for example, how we can describe the rhyme scheme of 'Love From the North' as simple, once we have looked at the more intricate patterning of Keats's, 'The Eve of St Agnes,' or Tennyson's, 'Mariana.' Anne Brontë's, 'Home,' and Grace Nichols's, 'Wherever I Hang,' treat the subject of exile in quite different ways—and looking at one, can sharpen our understanding of what the other does.

Consider examples in everyday life, whether it's sports, music, etc. If you take, for example, football or basketball (or almost any sport, really), an offensive-minded team and a defensive-minded team will, despite playing the same sport under the same rules and principles, have completely different philosophical approaches. These different approaches are made even clearer when we compare and contrast them from each other, allowing us to learn more about both types of teams and the sport as a whole. Looking at music, it's the same thing. Think about the similarities and differences—and how these similarities and differences highlight respective traits—between jazz and rock, metal and classical, hip hop and punk.

### 1) Read the opening lines from these two poems given below about death. How might you explain why they sound so very different?

#### Lycidas by John Milton (1637)

Yet once more, O ye Laurels, and once more
Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy never-sear,
I com to pluck your Berries harsh and crude,
And with forc'd fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. [ 5 ]
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due:
For *Lycidas* is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young *Lycidas*, and hath not left his peer:

#### Felix Randal by Gerard Manley Hopkins (written between 1876-1889)

Felix Randal the farrier, O is he dead then? my duty all ended,

Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome

Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it, and some

Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

## Discussion

If I had to identify one thing, I would say that the first begins more elaborately and with a more formal tone than the second. 'Felix Randal' tends to use language in an unusual way, but you would probably agree that the first sentence is quite straightforward and sounds colloquial (or informal), as if the speaker has just overheard someone talking about Randal's death and wants to confirm his impression. 'Lycidas' opens quite differently. It is not immediately apparent what evergreens have to do with anything (in fact, they work to establish an appropriately melancholy atmosphere or tone), and it isn't until line 8 that we learn of a death. The word 'dead' is repeated, and the following line tells us that Lycidas was a young man. While 'Felix Randal' has an immediacy, the

speaker of ‘Lycidas’ seems to find it hard to get going.

Both poems are elegies—poems written to commemorate/mourn a death—and both poets are aware of writing within this convention, although they treat it differently.

## 2) What do the titles of the poems tell us about each poem, and how might they help us understand the different uses of the elegiac convention?

I think it would be apparent to most readers that ‘Felix Randall’ is simply a man’s name, while ‘Lycidas’ is more mysterious. In fact, Lycidas is a traditional pastoral



name, but unless you know something about the classical pastoral tradition, it might mean very little to you. The young man whose death Milton was commemorating was actually called Edward King. However, at the time he was writing, elegies were formal, public, and impersonal poems, rather than private expressions of grief. ‘Lycidas’ commemorates a member of a prominent family rather than a close friend of the poet’s. Over two hundred years later, Hopkins, while working loosely within the same elegiac convention, adapts it. Felix Randal is an ordinary working man, not a public figure. In the seventeenth century, it would have been unlikely that he would have been considered worthy of a poem like this.

If you were making a special study of elegies, there would be a great deal more to say. That’s not the idea here, though. By comparing and contrasting the tone of the opening lines and titles, and considering when the poems were written, we have come up with several significant differences. These differences help offer insight into each poem.

https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-americanlit1/chapter/reading-approaching-poetry/

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# 3.17: Writing About Drama

## HOW TO REVIEW A PLAY

### PREPARING TO WRITE A PLAY REVIEW

Below are some tips to help you prepare to write a play review:

#### THE NATURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Because the performance of any play is such an ephemeral experience, writing a play review can be an exciting, though difficult, task. You have to be both spectator taking in and enjoying the performance and critical analyst of the production itself. You have to be able to provide a very brief summary of the play, a close objective analysis of the performance you attend, and an interpretation and evaluation of the entire ensemble of staging, acting, directing, and so on.

The review assignment asks you to analyze in an objective manner the relative success or failure of a given production. Note that you are not asked simply to summarize the plot or give an opinion regarding the text of the play being mounted; your review must be grounded in the production itself. Your job is to describe the production accurately, and then to render a value judgment of it based upon what you have seen and what you expected. The assignment will test your skill as a reader of the play and as an observer and critic of the production.

In addition to grounding your review on the production you witness, you must be careful to limit your review to a few essential observations in support of your thesis (which will be discussed below). You must concentrate on a few important ideas and aspects of the production and focus your attention on only what you consider the most significant parts of the production itself. Unlike a newspaper review, which can be loosely structured and superficial, your assignment is quite definite. You are not asked to cover a wide variety of production elements (i.e. performance of every actor, every costume change, every set change, every directorial decision, and so on); instead, the assignment demands that you develop a few key ideas in thoughtful detail.

Remember, too, that your stance is to be objective and critical, not impressionistic and merely nasty. A critic is not someone who simply “criticizes,” but a person who studies, analyzes, and then renders a rational judgment of what he/she has seen. Your tone will be very important in making your review reliable and intelligent.

#### BEFORE YOU ATTEND THE PRODUCTION

Read the play before going to the production. (It is important to be prepared for the production you plan to attend; otherwise, you run the risk of having to see it several times.)

- In your mind, have a good sense of how a “standard” production might look, complete with a sense of what the characters might look like, the type of costuming that might be used, a suitable set design, and an appropriate rendering of the theme and tone of the work.
- Pick out, as you read, several critical or problematic points within the play that may be of particular interest to watch for in the production you are about to attend. If your instructor has asked you to pay particular attention to certain elements, make sure that you are prepared to recognize them in performance.

#### ATTENDING THE PRODUCTION

**Attend** the play with an open mind, a willingness to accept the play as the director has presented it in production.

- Note any deviations from your concept of a “standard” production and try to find a good explanation for that deviation. (Is the director trying to “say” something new or different? Was your sense of the play somehow inaccurate, or were you shown new insights by the director’s production?)
- You may want to consider some of the following:
  - Why the choice of costumes, and why the set design?

- How did the actors deliver their lines (seriously, comically, realistically, formally)? Were there any significant actions or gestures that contributed to the play's meaning?
- Were any "special effects" utilized (consider lighting, sound, audience participation, machinery)?
- Were any significant cuts made in the script?

After the performance, jot down the details you recall and talk about the performance with friends. You'll need these details for your paper in order to substantiate your argument.

**Evaluate** the performance.

- Did the director miss any important opportunities to convey something you were able to see in your reading of the play?
- Would you have liked to have seen more attention paid to what you perceived as critical passages, passages the director seemed less interested in?
- Why would you have preferred this attention, and why do you think the director avoided giving the passage such attention?

**Consider** the following practical aspects:

- What kind of stage does the director have at his disposal? What kinds of restrictions does the stage impose on the director concerning movement and set design?
- Are the actors professionals, amateurs, or students? What restrictions does this impose on the director? Are the actors capable of dealing with the script's requirements? (Be fair to the actors in your assessment of their talents and the level of their "craftsmanship.")

## WRITING THE REVIEW

Below are some tips for writing play reviews:

### WRITING THE INTRODUCTION

The introduction should include the following:

- The title of the play, the name of the playwright, and any pertinent historical information regarding them (other similar works from this period? by this writer?).
- The name of the director, the place and date of the production you attended, and the name of the production company (again, do you know of any previous work by this company? this director?).
- The thesis of your review, which should include (possibly in more than a single statement) the following:
  - A general impression of the relative success or failure of the production, based on what you actually saw and on your initial impression of how the play should have been performed.
    - (Note that even if the production did not exactly coincide with your own conception of the play, you should not feel obliged to condemn the performance outright. Be open-minded and willing to weigh pros and cons.)
  - Examples: Papp's production of Lear captured all the horror of a world where love can't be counted on and where life is nasty, brutish, and appallingly short.
    - (Note that this thesis asserts that Papp captured the essence of what is in the text itself — the expectations set up by the thesis are that the reviewer will then analyze the methods by which the director achieved this effect.)
  - Examples: Smith's You Can't Take It With You made me sympathize with the notion that freedom must permit eccentricity and even, to a point, endorse it. Without that sympathy, the play would have been reduced to pure chaos and would have failed to portray an American ideal of freedom.
    - (This thesis suggests that "sympathy" was the director's intention. Note also that the reviewer gives a strong indication of what he/she expected to find in the production.)
  - Since you will not be expected to discuss all aspects of the production, focus your thesis on one or two major concerns that the performance has or has not addressed. Read your assignment carefully to find out which aspects of the performance are to be emphasized in your review.
    - Example: In You Can't Take It With You, the acting by the family members on the open, exposed stage displayed an innocent and vigorous freedom, as well as a proud independence in their confrontation with accepted norms of behavior.

## WRITING THE STATEMENT AND SUMMARY

Include a brief thematic summary (but not a plot summary) of the play, and support that summary with concrete evidence from the text.

You can include this summary in the introduction; or, if you wish to expand the summary, include it in a separate paragraph following the introduction.

## WRITING THE BODY OF THE PAPER: THE REVIEW

Remember that in the body of the paper you are obliged to deal specifically with each element of the production that you mentioned in the introduction and thesis.

In order to give your review a tight internal logic and cohesiveness, you should also discuss these elements in the order that you outlined in the introduction. Such points of discussion might include the non-technical (acting, directing) and/or the technical (lighting, scenery, costumes) aspects of the production.

For each element that you discuss:

- **Describe:** In as brief and precise a manner as possible, describe in detail the physical aspects of what you saw performed. Keep in mind at all times that whatever you include must in some way contribute to the assertion you made in your introduction and thesis. Focus on particular scenes or performances that will provide the evidence for your final evaluation of the play.
    - Example: The tempest scene in Lear utilized a particularly hostile set in order to universalize the suffering depicted throughout the play. The lights were dimmed and the backdrop was flat black. Against this backdrop were propped, in no particular order, seven skulls that looked out over the events to come.
        - (Note the vivid description of what was seen, and the use of detail to convey that vividness. The passage will work nicely as evidence for an overall, positive evaluation of the production.)
- **Interpret, Analyze, Evaluate**: This part of the paper requires the most thought and organization and consequently receives the most attention from your reader. After you have finished describing important elements of the production, proceed to evaluate them.

For example, you would need to answer the following questions regarding the last description of *Lear*:

- Why were the lights dimmed at the beginning of the scene? (shock effect? slow unfolding of horror?)
- Why was the backdrop painted black? (contrast? mood?)
- Why was there no order to the skulls? Why seven? (emblem of disorder or chaos? significance in number?)

In other words, assume that everything used in production has significance, but don't panic if you cannot find "answers" for all the questions raised by what you see in the production.

In the evaluation, you are given the opportunity to attack as well as commend the performance; if the production fails to answer questions that you feel need answers, then say so. If the question or problems are relatively minor, ignore them. Don't quibble at the expense of missing the more important concerns.

## WRITING THE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Your conclusion should not merely recapitulate your thesis in a mechanical way.

Rather, you should try to show why your response to the play is valid and significant, based on what you have described in the body of the paper.

Do not add any significant new material, but don't be afraid to leave your reader with something to think about.

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# 3.18: Literary Essay Titles

Like thesis statements, titles are a small but important part of your literary analysis essay. Why?

- They help readers determine the topic of your essay
- They help you as a writer focus your essay
- They let readers know what to expect from the essay

And, like your thesis statement, your title will likely change as you compose and revise your essay. It should reflect the topic, purpose, and content of your essay. It may hint at the thesis statement, but likely won't give it all away.

## Literary Title Basics

Titles are a creative subgenre of the literary analysis essay. There is a lot of creative freedom in crafting them. But there are some common features of effective titles.

- Precisely convey topic and text(s) essay will cover
- Catch readers' attention
- Usually between 4-14 words -- yes, you're right, scholarly titles are a bit longer than titles in other genres!
- Unique to your essay
- Differentiate from other essays on topic
- Hint at thesis statement
- May use a colon to link ideas
- May incorporate a striking quotation from your chosen text(s) which connects to your topic or thesis

## Bad Titles

Let's start with what *not to do* when crafting a title. While it can be difficult to determine what makes a good title, it can help to determine some "bad" titles first. And by bad, I don't mean the title has a curly mustache and ties innocent victims to railroad tracks while laughing "mwahahaha!"; I mean they may not quite fit with reader expectations. That is, a "bad" title does not do justice to your essay.

### The Missing Title

**Example:**

**Why it stinks:** titles help readers know what to expect. Without one, readers are not sure what to expect from the essay. They may feel the essay it starting off on the wrong foot because it's not following the expectations of the literary analysis genre. In terms of technical issues with missing titles, when it comes to publication, a title is necessary to catalogue a work of literary criticism. Without a title, readers won't be able to find your essay in the databases! (not to mention the essay probably wouldn't be published in the first place!)

### The Lazy Title

**Example 1:** "Literary Analysis Essay"

**Why it stinks:** while it is better than a missing title, there are millions of essays with this same title. It's so general as to be basically meaningless. Readers know your essay is a literary analysis; what they want to know is *what kind* of literary analysis essay you're writing.

**Example 2:** "Literary Analysis of *Hamlet*"

**Why it stinks:** This is better than "Literary Analysis Essay" because at least it tells us the text we will be reading about. However,

this title doesn't tell us anything about what aspect of *Hamlet* you're writing about. Plus, there are likely many, many, many essays with the same title. You want your essay to stand out!

## Ya Basic Title

**Example 1:** "*Hamlet* as Tragedy"

**Why it stinks:** this is much better than **The Missing Title** or **The Lazy Title**, because we know what text you're examining (*Hamlet*) and we have an aspect of that text that you are focusing on (Tragedy as genre). However, there is nothing new or interesting here for readers. Readers know that *Hamlet* is a Tragedy. This is well-accepted among scholars. When writing a literary analysis essay, you're trying to create new knowledge and tread new ground. Be more specific!

# Title Examples

So now that we have covered some "bad" titles, let's "Read Like a Writer" and think about what makes for an *effective* essay title. To do this, we will examine some essay titles written by literary scholars.

- "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" by Chinua Achebe (1977)
- "Shut up in prose: gender and genre in Austen's Juvenilia" from *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979)
- "Superhero from the Margins: Darna and the Hybridity of the Filipino Superhero Genre" by Cherish Aileen Aguilar Brillon (2021)

**Exercise 3.18.1**

Which of these titles looks the most interesting to you? What makes it an interesting or effective title?

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

# Title Formula

If you're having a tough time, you can use one of the following formulas

- "Short Representative Quotation": [Topic] in [Text Title(s)]

  **Example:** "golden daffodils": botanical economics in Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud"
- [Topic]: [Literary Device] in [Text Title(s)]

  **Example:** Extracted Bodies: Human/Land Metaphor in Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and LaValle's *Destroyer* (2017)
- [Topic] in [Author's name] [Text Title]: brief into to thesis

  **Example:** Biblical Allusion in Morrison's *Beloved*: The Limits of Hermeneutics

## Answers

**Exercise 3.18.1**

Regardless of which you chose, each of these titles gives you a strong sense of what topic(s) and text(s) will be the focus of the essay. They are specific enough to be unique. Each names the specific text, topic, genre, and/or time period. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" tells you will be will be examining Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. It also tells us that this will likely be an exploration of racism (topic); more specifically, racism in Conrad's depiction (image) of Africa. It hints at the thesis by presenting the start of its main argument (Conrad's images of Africa are racist). If you chose "Shut up in prose: gender and genre in Austen's Juvenilia", we know the text to be examined is Jane Austen's writings from when she was a teenager (juvenilia). We know the topics will be gender, genre, and prose. And we may have a hint of a thesis statement with "Shut up", which piques our curiosity because it is a brash and potentially offensive command that we can imagine will likely connect to gender representations. Lastly, "Superhero from the Margins: Darna and the Hybridity of the Filipino Superhero Genre" lets us know we will be examining a particular character (Darna) in the genre of the Superhero. It seems as if the topic will be "Hybridity" and marginalization.

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# 3.19: Research for Literary Analysis

## Module 6 – Research for Literary Analysis

### Module Introduction

#### Introduction

Writing analytically takes time, both for complex reasoning and for writing. Students and scholars alike strongly benefit from a writing process that involves multiple drafts—either through the creation of outlines, journaling, the writing of partial or full drafts, the preparation of abstracts, or a combination thereof—prior to final editing.

Approaching writing as a multi-phase process allows us to accomplish smaller steps along the way and build off our successes. By making time to focus on key aspects of analytical writing over several work sessions, we can build strong, well-developed final papers. In this module you will develop a literary analysis paper by completing pre-writing journal assignment in which you begin to develop a topic and thesis, by preparing a rough draft of your paper to submit to your instructor for feedback and research guidance, and finally by completing a final draft of your paper that includes appropriate academic citations and references.

This approach to writing and research as a process is not something only asked of students. Professional writers, whether journalists or literary authors, engage in similar multi-phase approaches to creating and polishing their best work. Most, if not all, professional writers will admit that frustration and fatigue will occur at some point during the writing process. Such feelings are deeply human and are not signs of limited ability. Indeed, the best writers learn to acknowledge and work with these feelings or perceptions as they steadily craft their next great piece. The activities in this module are designed to encourage you to work in at least a few stages to build your major essay for the course. Doing so will not only help ensure your final paper is of higher quality; working in this way also will help instill good habits for future writing, research and project completion [1].

#### Course Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking
- Demonstrate understanding of Global Sociocultural Responsibility
- Recognize the relationships between cultural expressions and their contexts
- Understand cultural expressions
- Interpret and evaluate cultural artifacts and/or their contexts for significance
- Understand basic literary elements of specific genres: short story, poetry, and drama
- Analyze and evaluate selected works of literature in classroom or online settings
- Analyze and evaluate both in class discussions (whether face-to-face or electronic) and in class writing, selected works of literature
- Recognize selected major critical approaches to works of literature
- Analyze selected text from one or more critical perspectives
- Demonstrate and understand how literature is relevant to their personal, social, and historical awareness [1]

#### Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Draft original thesis statements for analytical writing
- Identify relevant sources of quality through online research
- Incorporate diverse sources into a full-length essay
- Document sources using MLA, APA, or Chicago style
- Apply critical approaches to literature to specific texts [1]

## Readings and Resources

- No additional readings are required in this Module.

## Optional Further Reading


- Bate, Jonathan. *English Literature: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction* . Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008.



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# 3.20: Developing Analysis

## Developing Analysis

The root of the word **essay** comes from the French verb essayer, meaning 'to attempt' or 'to try.' Like anything we may 'attempt' or 'try,' effort — sometimes significant effort — is involved and it is highly unlikely our first attempt or first try will yield perfection, nor should it. If you can approach the writing of analysis more as a journey of discovery, a series of attempts or tries at more and more complex levels of understanding, then it will be more likely that you may feel some sense of satisfaction about wherever you find yourself in the process. Students who approach writing analytical essays as a task to complete or a thing to produce are less likely to find the twists and turns during the process of critical thinking, writing, research, and revision at all enjoyable.

As we discussed in the introductory module for this course, academic writing requires **active reading** and **complex reasoning** . That is, writing analysis, as opposed to writing summary, demands extended contemplation over multiple sittings. Discovering a specific interpretive challenge is an excellent way to begin to develop a writing topic. In addition to the questions for active reading we discussed in Module 2, when focusing on a literary text, you may also consider the following three questions as starting points for discovering the focus of your analysis:

- What theme is being expressed or represented in the literature?
- How does the author construct that expression or representation formally?
- Why might the author have chosen to create that particular literary work in that specific manner?

When it is time to sit down and write, one must approach the task with the intentions of an author. Even if writing a paper for class, this kind of focus can be helpful in discerning what to specifically discuss in your essay. Another way to think about the critical choices you're required to make in the drafting of an analytical essay is that they are creative choices. Consider the following organizational questions:

- What do you most want to express via a thesis or purpose statement?
- How will you accomplish expressing your thoughts? What organizational strategies and types of support will work best to develop your topic?
- What is at stake in this essay? What is the larger meaning or value for understanding the ideas presented in your writing? How does your analysis help your audience more fully comprehend the culture and/or cultural object about which you are writing?

Writing critical analysis takes time, both for critical thinking and for writing. Students and scholars strongly benefit from a writing process that involves **multiple drafts** — either the creation of outlines, journaling, the writing of partial or full drafts, the preparation of abstracts, or a combination thereof — prior to final editing. A multi-stage process is more than a required exercise; it is time invested in one's own development of thought that allows for connections to be made, ideas to become more advanced, and understanding evolve beyond original perceptions. [(1)]

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# 3.21: Preparing for Research — Knowing Your Thesis

## Preparing for Research — Knowing Your Thesis

If we truly are engaging writing and research as a process, then finding the **thesis** or purpose statement that will ground and drive your analysis essay will not be instant. Drafting different versions of what will be your thesis is advisable. The term 'thesis' has linguistic origins in the Greek word *tithenai* , which means to place, as in to place a proposition before an audience. Consider the preparation that would occur for other things you would place before an audience, like a business proposal or an invitation to a party; some refinement would be required.

For example, if your goal was to write an analysis of Mark Twain's novel *Huckleberry Finn* , it is likely that several ideas for a thesis statement would come to mind.

*The friendship between Huck and Jim reveals Twain's commentary on the moral dilemma of slavery.*

↓

This is a fair enough focus. It is analytical; it does more than summarize. It places a proposition before the reader and upon consideration of that proposition would lead to a richer understanding of the novel. However, slight alterations in this thesis statement may offer improvements or interesting variations. For instance, an emphasis on form could add to the analysis of the content of the novel.

*The friendship of Huck and Jim reveals Twain's commentary on the moral dilemma of slavery as revealed through the use of dialogue and interior monologue.*

↓

Further refinement might manage to incorporate form, content AND context. Notice that a fully developed thesis — a fully developed analytical proposition — may well require more than one long, run-on sentence.

*Mark Twain encourages the reading audience of his day to question the moral dilemma of slavery through his portrayal of the friendship between Huck and Jim. By revealing differing social perspectives and moral positions through the dialogue between the characters and the interior monologues of Huck, Twain allows his readers to have multiple opinions while nudging their sympathies toward a critique of slavery.*

The advantage of establishing your thesis before embarking upon outside research is that you are more likely to be focused on the kinds of sources that will be most useful and less likely to be overwhelmed or sidetracked by tangential information. You may want to look up general information, such as confirming historical dates or clarifying the use of certain vocabulary, but entering the process of looking for quality sources without a clear sense of the thesis you intend to place at the center of your analysis may muddle your thinking. Certainly, as you continue your research and draft and revise your essay, your thesis and/or your supporting ideas may shift somewhat. That is a natural part of the writing process, but that kind of adjustment in thinking deepens or refines your analysis. [1]

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# 3.22: Discovering and Documenting Sources

## Discovering Sources

Through your institution's library you can gain access to a wide range of academic sources for literature and the humanities. Be sure to search for sources through your library's website. This is important because your ability to access the full range of resources available in the databases depends upon you being recognized as a paying student at the college. Your library can provide detailed advice and tutorials for effectively locating resources for your research topic. Below, we will discuss, very generally, the main types of sources that you will encounter as you begin exploring your topic.

### Types of Sources

Researchers may encounter three general types of sources: **primary** , **secondary** and **tertiary** .

#### Tertiary sources

Sources that collect, summarize, and/or consolidate information from other sources into a more basic format, such as in an almanac or an encyclopedia, are considered tertiary sources. Tertiary sources are useful reference guides, particularly to confirm factual information; however, they often do not satisfy the aims of including "outside sources" in literary research. For example, if a professor asks for "three outside sources" and you want to use the Encyclopedia Britannica as a source on World War II, it would be acceptable to incorporate it as support and document it; however, it probably is not adding much scholarship to your analysis. To put it another way, if it is important to include a tertiary source in your analytical writing, consider that an additional source beyond the minimum number required. An exception to this advice would be if your desired tertiary source is providing collected statistical information (such as socio-economic demographics) that would be difficult to document otherwise. [1]

#### Secondary sources

These sources are published writing that discusses or draws upon material originally presented elsewhere with the benefit of hindsight, include journal articles, criticism, biographies, and textbooks. These sources are especially helpful in constructing an analysis of a particular literary work because they offer insight into established scholarly opinions. One of the goals in incorporating secondary sources into your own analysis is to demonstrate that you are able to place yourself in conversations with intermediate to advanced ideas on a subject.

#### Primary sources

The selected readings in this course are **primary sources** , for they are original material that may be used as direct evidence in discussing and analyzing a culture and its history. Primary sources include formal documents, such as essays and other published literature, yet may also be less polished writing such as letters and diaries, or more mass produced texts like newspaper advertisements, political pamphlets, and event brochures. Visual artifacts such as paintings, photographs, and other art forms also are considered to be primary sources if they are the original creations. The advantage of a primary source is its direct connection to the time period.

## Documenting Sources

All sources must be accurately referenced in analytical writing using a proper **citation** . A citation is a quotation from, or reference to, a book, article, or other source material that is formally documented. Professional organizations such as the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) have developed formal systems to document references when writing. Literary Studies is governed by the **Modern Language Association (MLA)** , a body of professionals including academics from the disciplines of English, Humanities, and Foreign Languages. The vast majority of literary scholarship is written according to MLA Style, the citation guide of the Modern Language Association. (Exceptions might be an article in an education journal that uses APA, for example.) Students always should confirm with their instructors which method of citation is preferred or

required for each specific course and write accordingly. Print and online manuals for all major citation guides also are available through your institution's library or writing center. There are a number of MLA guides available online. The exact details and format required varies slightly for each type of source, whether a book, an article, a film, a website, or an online video. **Do not guess** . Use the reference guides available to you — and double-check your work.

## Incorporating Quotations

Incorporating a quotation may be accomplished directly through the use of exact phrasing, clearly punctuated with quotation marks and documented, or indirectly through paraphrase. Instances of paraphrase cannot use the original language of the source (or the use of direct quotation would be the better choice), but must be documented as the idea has been borrowed.

Beyond the grammatical and punctuation requirements, the importance of working with quotations is to do more than simply quote a source. To fully develop analysis, explaining the connection of a quotation or reference to your focus, as well as commenting upon it in your own words, is key to demonstrating that your analysis is an example of mature writing. That means do not simply "parachute" a quotation or reference it without introduction. Nor should you dramatically insert an important quotation or reference at the end of one paragraph and assume that is speaks for itself; take the time to explain and develop how it is significant. [1]

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# 3.23: Approaches to Literary Analysis

## Approaches to Literary Analysis

Since the 1960s, a number of schools or approaches to literary analysis have emerged in the academy. Some of the sources you discover may seem to obviously derive from one of the following traditions. Others may be indirectly influenced by one or more of these approaches:

### Formalist

Formalist, or New Critic, analysis prioritizes close reading based solely on the text itself, its language, structure, symbols, and themes, and eschews interpretation based on the influence of outside information (such as personal history of the author, for example).

### New Historicist

New Historicist analysis values the particulars of the time period and location in which the author created the text, as well as any influencing circumstances of the author's life.

### Psychoanalytic

Psychoanalytic, or psycholinguistic, analysis emphasizes the interpretation of characters' mental and emotional states, narrative point-of-view, the unconscious potency of symbol and imagery, and/or the psychological implications of linguistic pattern, tone, and word usage.

### Feminist

Feminist analysis examines the text through the lens of women's experience and may also consider factors in the publishing or critical reception of the work when influenced by gender norms.

### Marxist

Marxist analysis addresses the text as a material product of the society from which it emerged, with particular attention to socio-economic issues.

### Queer

Queer analysis reads the text with strong consideration of "queer" identity and/or "queering" of characters, actions, and/or speech; for example, the cross-dressing and gender switching that occurs in some of Shakespeare's plays can take on more significance than mere dramatic convention.

### Reader-Response

Reader-Response analysis seeks to reveal the activity of the reader as contributing to — even completing — the meaning of the text by applying his or her own experiences, perspectives and cultural values; this approach is not done personally, but in consideration of "the reader" as a type or a social category.

Today, many literary scholars engage in the practice of **intersectionality** , that is the attention to the complexity of how cultural views and traditions often fall into more than one category. For example, while we might gain a great deal by interpreting a short story through a psychoanalytic lens, focusing only on this approach may foreclose the possibilities for our analysis to become as deeply grounded in formalist analysis, or may offer only a passing look at historical issues.

Analytical writers should not base their essays on a particular approach simply for the sake of following that school of thought, but rather to further their understanding of, and appreciation for, the literature in question, as well as the clarity of the interpretation offered. Often hybrid approaches, approaches than combine aspects of two or more of these analytical traditions, are very successful, so long as the thesis remains focused and the support specific and well-documented. As ever, consult with your professor about the specifics of your analytical project and the particular expectations he or she may have for a given assignment. [1]

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# 3.24: Writing as a Process - Breaking it Down

For many students, approaching a writing assignment can be overwhelming. They know that there are many tasks that must be completed, such as gathering information about the topic, forming a perspective on it, brainstorming ideas to be included in the paper, organizing those ideas, integrating the evidence, and articulating the argument with clarity and eloquence, not to mention accommodating the assigned format guidelines. This job is not unlike building a house. You look at the empty lot and imagine the beautiful house you want to build, but you know that the tasks necessary to get from nothing to the final product are many and varied. The prospect can certainly be overwhelming. Yet, any builder understands that the best approach to a big job like this one is breaking it down into a methodical and carefully scheduled process. In response to a challenging writing assignment, you are encouraged to do the same.

Let's consider the writing assignment Bill originally received from his English 1102 instructor:

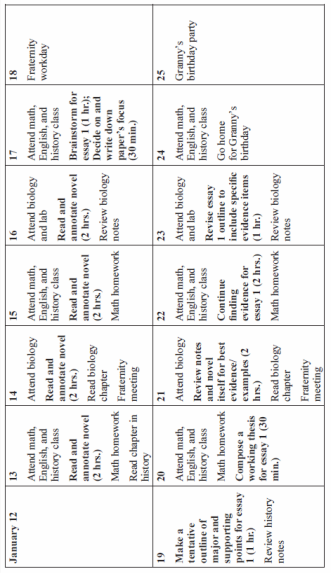
> *For this essay, write a literary analysis of Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises using a formalist 239 The Literary Analysis Essay approach. The essay should forward a specific perspective on the novel (articulated in your thesis), and the evidence for your argument should come from the novel itself. The essay should be three-four pages in length. Due date: February 3.*

Bill remembers that in his high school senior English class, he once procrastinated on a major paper assignment and ended up writing the whole essay in one night. The result was a "D" on the paper and a tendency to experience writer's block, which still plagued him all during his first semester of college. But he has one tool this second semester that he has not had before: his instructor's handout on "Writing as a Process." The literary analysis essay for this class is not due for three weeks, but he decides to review the handout now as a first step to avoiding writer's block and another low grade. Here is the advice recommended in his instructor's handout:

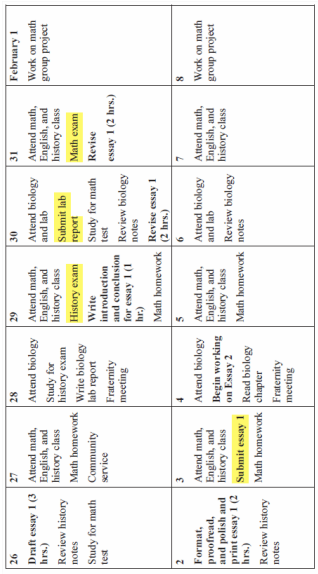
1. Investigate the general topic; in this case, read the novel and make notes and annotations as you go.
2. Brainstorm points of interest regarding what you've learned so far. As you brainstorm, do not try to write in full sentences or to organize your thoughts. Instead, simply write down everything that comes to mind.
3. Read back over your notes and decide on a focus. Considering this focus, decide what you think about this topic, based on your observations so far. Form a perspective on the topic.
4. Again considering your brainstorming notes, determine a very general organization for the major points on this topic. Once you have completed this basic outline, categorize all the leftover "smaller" items under the most relevant major points. If some items on your brainstorming page don't seem relevant, mark through them. Keep only the items that fit your paper's focus.
5. With the paper topic and its major supporting points in mind, write a working thesis. This thesis is not set in stone yet, but it will help you stay on track as you move forward.
6. Go back to your materials on the general topic now—in this case, comb through your notes on the novel, annotations, and highlighted passages. Would any of these words, ideas, and/ or passages make effective evidence to develop one or more of your major points? As you find fruitful items, jot down a quote, summary, or paraphrase of each item, along with the page number of the novel where you found it. Make a note to yourself indicating which major point each item supports.
7. Revise your paper outline now to include not only the working thesis and the major points, but also the pieces of evidence that will go under each major point.
8. Begin drafting the paper. If the introduction does not come quickly, skip it. Keep your working thesis in mind and write out the major sections of your paper which support that thesis.
9. Now go back to the introduction. Consider your audience. How are you trying to alter your audience's perspective on the novel with this paper? How can you use the introduction to (a) draw your reader's interest to your new way of looking at the novel and (b) lay the groundwork for your argument? The introduction should accomplish these goals. Write your conclusion with similar goals in mind. This is your last chance to persuade your reader that your perspective is convincing and important. How can you leave your reader with a strong and lasting impression?
10. Once you have drafted the entire essay, start at the beginning and revise. Pay particular attention to coherence during this phase. In a coherent paper, everything in the essay promotes its central purpose. During this phase, you may want to clarify and strengthen the relationships among ideas with transition words and explanations. A coherent paper exhibits a certain tightness that produces the desired impact on the reader. Imagine that you are reading the paper aloud to an actual audience of fellow students who have their own values and opinions. How can you shape the prose to (1) keep their attention, (2) clearly and persuasively convey your case, and (3) convince these readers that your perspective is a valuable one?
11. Final revision phase: Read through the essay as many times as you need to, checking grammar and spelling and giving the language its final polish. Read it aloud again, this time slowly, to be sure that the essay sounds as eloquent as you intended

for it to.

12. Be sure that the essay follows the format guidelines and is ready for submission. In class, after handing out this sheet, Bill's instructor told the students to take out their datebooks. She told the students to consult their schedules and assign "dummy" dates for each item on the task list. Here is how Bill divided up his time for addressing the tasks necessary for completing the paper:



| January 12 | 13<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>**Read and annotate novel (2 hrs.)**<br>Math homework<br>Read chapter in history | 14<br>Attend biology and lab<br>**Read and annotate novel (2 hrs.)**<br>Read biology chapter<br>Fraternity meeting | 15<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>**Read and annotate novel (2 hrs.)**<br>Math homework | 16<br>Attend biology and lab<br>**Read and annotate novel (2 hrs.)**<br>Review biology notes | 17<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>**Brainstorm for essay 1 (1 hr.); Decide on and write down paper's focus (30 min.)** | 18<br>Fraternity workday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 19<br>**Make a tentative outline of major and supporting points for essay 1 (1 hr.)**<br>Review history notes | 20<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>Math homework<br>Compose a working thesis for essay 1 (30 min.) | 21<br>Attend biology<br>**Review notes and novel looking for best evidence and examples (2 hrs.)**<br>Read biology chapter<br>Fraternity meeting | 22<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>Continue finding evidence for essay 1 (2 hrs.)<br>Math homework | 23<br>Attend biology and lab<br>**Revise essay 1 and locate specific evidence items (1 hr.)**<br>Review biology notes | 24<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>Go home for Granny's birthday | 25<br>Granny's birthday party |



| 26<br>**Draft essay 1 (3 hrs.)**<br>Review history notes<br>Study for math test | 27<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>Math homework<br>Community service | 28<br>Attend biology<br>Study for history exam<br>Write biology lab report<br>Fraternity meeting | 29<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>**History exam**<br>**Write introduction and conclusion for essay 1 (1 hr.)**<br>Math homework | 30<br>Attend biology and lab<br>**Submit lab report**<br>Study for math test<br>Review biology notes<br>**Revise essay 1 (2 hrs.)** | 31<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>**Math exam**<br>**Revise essay 1 (2 hrs.)** | **February 1**<br>Work on math group project |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2<br>**Format, proofread, and polish and print essay 1 (2 hrs.)**<br>Review history notes | 3<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>**Submit essay 1**<br>Math homework | 4<br>Attend biology<br>**Begin working on Essay 2**<br>Read biology chapter<br>Fraternity meeting | 5<br>Attend math, English, and history class<br>Math homework | 6<br>Attend biology and lab<br>Review biology notes | 7<br>Attend math, English, and history class | 8<br>Work on math group project |

To some students, the idea of working for an entire three weeks on a three to four page essay might seem extreme. Yet, anyone who writes for a living will attest that all of these tasks are necessary for a high quality product. Professional writers may allocate their time a bit differently, perhaps working for eight or nine hours in one day on a single project, and undoubtedly they gain speed over time at completing each stage of the process. Even so, they understand that for a product with the desired impact, one must spend time planning and crafting the piece. Since students are usually taking other classes in addition to English, and must often hold down jobs and fulfill personal obligations, Bill's Essay 1 plan is much more likely to work out than a twenty-hour writing marathon beginning two days before the paper's due-date. Notice that Bill did not schedule any Essay 1 tasks for January 18, 24-25, 27-28, and February 1. Looking ahead in his date book, he realized that he has fraternity events on January 18 and 27, and he wants to save time on the other dates to join his family for his grandmother's birthday celebration, as well as to study intensively for a history test and work with a group on a math project.

As Bill discovers in carrying out his plans, he experiences much less stress than before as he tackles the "small" daily writing

tasks he has assigned himself. On the day he does his brainstorming for Essay 1, he does not feel pressured by the fact that he still needs to write and revise the essay—he knows the time-slots for those tasks are already carved out in his calendar and he will be able to address those items on the designated dates. Let's look at the products of two of Bill's writing process tasks:

## Brainstorming Sheet:

1. the Sun Also Rises—Why this title?
2. Jake seems tough but does cry and feel bad often.
3. Brett shaky—an alcoholic?
4. Jake's wound—mysterious, his groin
5. Bullfights—gory but exciting; but gets ruined for Jake
6. World War I
7. Party-time all the time
8. But the characters don't always like each other—Jake and Robert's
9. fight, Mike can't stand Robert, Brett sleeps with three different guys
10. 9. Brett and Jake—the status of their relationship?
11. Mike is bankrupt
12. Jake is a journalist
13. Jake goes to church but can't focus
14. Brett says she can't pray
15. Loss of faith
16. Bill seems less messed up than the rest
17. Romero's innocence and youth
18. Montoya—aficionado, wants to protect Romero
19. The loud music and fireworks
20. The ending—what will happen now?

Jake's wound; everyone's wounds Loss of faith and hope More general—is the novel optimistic or not?

## Essay 1 Working Thesis and Basic Outline

Working thesis: The novel is not optimistic because Hemingway is emphasizing how badly war can damage our world, as it has for these characters. Focus on certain metaphors to prove that this is the novel's message.
I. Jake's wound
a. What it reveals about Jake
i. Physical effects
ii. Psychological effects
b. What it says as a metaphor for the other characters' "injuries"
i. They avoid really talking
i. They stay drunk all the time
II. Bull fight—One of the last "sacred" things for Jake before it
gets sullied
a. Montoya
b. Romero
c. Like loss of faith in everything else

In Chapter 5, we saw Bill's final draft of the essay. He did much work between composing the tentative outline, above, and completing the full, revised essay. With his task-list broken down and carefully scheduled, he was able to give each phase the attention and time necessary to produce a well-argued final essay.

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# 3.25: 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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# 3.26: 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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# 3.27: 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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# 3.28: 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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# 3.29: 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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# 3.30: 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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# 4: WRITING ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY

## 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: Feminist Theory- An Overview

4.2: Gender Criticism and Queer Theory

4.3: Gender Criticism- Masculinity Studies

4.4: Week X Women Writers at the end of the 19th Century

4.5: Sarah Orne Jewett (1849 - 1909)

4.6: Kate Chopin (1850 - 1904)

4.7: Chopin, Kate "The Story of an Hour" (1894)

4.8: Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852 - 1930)

4.9: Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860 - 1935)



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# 4.1: 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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# 4.2: 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. 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.

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.

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.

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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# 4.3: 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."

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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# 4.4: Week X Women Writers at the end of the 19th Century

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# 4.5: Sarah Orne Jewett (1849 - 1909)



**Image 2.5 | Sarah Orne Jewett, 1894**
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Born in 1849 in the coastal town of South Berwick, Maine, Sarah Orne Jewett grew up accompanying her father, a doctor, on rounds across the rural countryside. She was educated at South Berwick Academy, graduating in 1866. In spite of obstacles she would have faced as a woman seeking a medical education in the nineteenth century, Jewett harbored ambitions of becoming a doctor herself, but ill health prevented her from moving forward with the plan. Instead, she continued to educate herself by reading widely in her father's private library, eventually deciding upon a life of writing. She published a short story at age nineteen in *The Atlantic Monthly*, and her work was promoted by William Dean Howells, assistant editor at the magazine, who praised Jewett's ability to capture the distinctive voice of ordinary people in the New England region. As her reputation grew, she regularly traveled to Boston, where she enjoyed the company of other writers. Jewett never married but later in life befriended the widow of James Thomas Fields, Howells's predecessor at *The Atlantic Monthly*. Annie Adams Fields and Sarah Orne Jewett were companions for the rest of Jewett's life. Jewett died in 1909 after a long illness.

Jewett's most notable works are her novels and short stories that explore characters firmly rooted in the New England region, particularly *A Country Doctor* (1884); *A White Heron* (1886), a short story collection; and *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896). Jewett has been described as both a local colorist and a regionalist, and even as an early realist. The difficulty in labeling her work points to limits of categorizing literature using terms for distinct literary movements that developed at times parallel to one another and at other instances overlapped. Most literary critics, though, are comfortable describing Jewett's work as representative of American Literary Regionalism. Similar to fellow New England writer Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's fiction, Jewett's work does exhibit features of Local Color the important sense of locale in terms of geography and landscape, as well as the speech patterns and customs of the inhabitants. However, beyond the particulars of place, these stories focus on characterization, particularly in ways that plot or action in the story is filtered through the consciousness of a central protagonist, most often a young girl or a woman. In Jewett's work, as in Freeman's, there is evidence of three dimensional characters who must work through an internal conflict, and this dimensional characterization predicts the kind of psychological complexity of character that becomes even more refined and sophisticated in works by Realistic writers such as Howells and James. Additionally, her work, with its focus on the lives of women and the limitations placed on them by the cultural and historical moment, predicts an early feminist realism. In one of her most important short stories, *A White Heron*, Sylvy's internal conflict whether or not to give away the location of the heron's nest to the handsome male stranger forms the basis of the plot of the story. Sylvy's allegiance is challenged, then, in terms of whether she will protect the wild bird or please the young man. However, Sylvy must also decide a larger issue than whether she will be loyal to the bird or the ornithologist (and all each represents symbolically). She must determine who she is and whether she can be loyal to this new sense of self.

# 2.7.1 “A White Heron”

## I

The woods were already filled with shadows one June evening, just before eight o’clock, though a bright sunset still glimmered faintly among the trunks of the trees. A little girl was driving home her cow, a plodding, dilatory, provoking creature in her behavior, but a valued companion for all that. They were going away from whatever light there was, and striking deep into the woods, but their feet were familiar with the path, and it was no matter whether their eyes could see it or not.

There was hardly a night the summer through when the old cow could be found waiting at the pasture bars; on the contrary, it was her greatest pleasure to hide herself away among the huckleberry bushes, and though she wore a loud bell she had made the discovery that if one stood perfectly still it would not ring. So Sylvia had to hunt for her until she found her, and call Co’ ! Co’ ! with never an answering Moo, until her childish patience was quite spent. If the creature had not given good milk and plenty of it, the case would have seemed very different to her owners. Besides, Sylvia had all the time there was, and very little use to make of it. Sometimes in pleasant weather it was a consolation to look upon the cow’s pranks as an intelligent attempt to play hide and seek, and as the child had no playmates she lent herself to this amusement with a good deal of zest. Though this chase had been so long that the wary animal herself had given an unusual signal of her whereabouts, Sylvia had only laughed when she came upon Mistress Moolly at the swamp-side, and urged her affectionately homeward with a twig of birch leaves. The old cow was not inclined to wander farther, she even turned in the right direction for once as they left the pasture, and stepped along the road at a good pace. She was quite ready to be milked now, and seldom stopped to browse. Sylvia wondered what her grandmother would say because they were so late. It was a great while since she had left home at half-past five o’clock, but everybody knew the difficulty of making this errand a short one. Mrs. Tilley had chased the hornéd torment too many summer evenings herself to blame any one else for lingering, and was only thankful as she waited that she had Sylvia, nowadays, to give such valuable assistance. The good woman suspected that Sylvia loitered occasionally on her own account; there never was such a child for straying about out of doors since the world was made! Everybody said that it was a good change for a little maid who had tried to grow for eight years in a crowded manufacturing town, but, as for Sylvia herself, it seemed as if she never had been alive at all before she came to live at the farm. She thought often with wistful compassion of a wretched geranium that belonged to a town neighbor.

“‘Afraid of folks,’” old Mrs. Tilley said to herself, with a smile, after she had made the unlikely choice of Sylvia from her daughter’s houseful of children, and was returning to the farm. “‘Afraid of folks,’ they said! I guess she won’t be troubled no great with ‘em up to the old place!” When they reached the door of the lonely house and stopped to unlock it, and the cat came to purr loudly, and rub against them, a deserted pussy, indeed, but fat with young robins, Sylvia whispered that this was a beautiful place to live in, and she never should wish to go home.

The companions followed the shady wood-road, the cow taking slow steps and the child very fast ones. The cow stopped long at the brook to drink, as if the pasture were not half a swamp, and Sylvia stood still and waited, letting her bare feet cool themselves in the shoal water, while the great twilight moths struck softly against her. She waded on through the brook as the cow moved away, and listened to the thrushes with a heart that beat fast with pleasure. There was a stirring in the great boughs overhead. They were full of little birds and beasts that seemed to be wide awake, and going about their world, or else saying good night to each other in sleepy twitters. Sylvia herself felt sleepy as she walked along. However, it was not much farther to the house, and the air was soft and sweet. She was not often in the woods so late as this, and it made her feel as if she were a part of the gray shadows and the moving leaves. She was just thinking how long it seemed since she first came to the farm a year ago, and wondering if everything went on in the noisy town just the same as when she was there, the thought of the great red-faced boy who used to chase and frighten her made her hurry along the path to escape from the shadow of the trees.

Suddenly this little woods-girl is horror stricken to hear a clear whistle not very far away. Not a bird’s-whistle, which would have a sort of friendliness, but a boy’s whistle, determined, and somewhat aggressive. Sylvia left the cow to whatever sad fate might await her, and stepped discreetly aside into the bushes, but she was just too late. The enemy had discovered her, and called out in a very cheerful and persuasive tone, “Halloa, little girl, how far is it to the road?” and trembling Sylvia answered almost inaudibly, “A good ways.”

She did not dare to look boldly at the tall young man, who carried a gun over his shoulder, but she came out of her bush and again followed the cow, while he walked alongside.

“I have been hunting for some birds,” the stranger said kindly, “and I have lost my way, and need a friend very much. Don’t be afraid,” he added gallantly. “Speak up and tell me what your name is, and whether you think I can spend the night at your house, and go out gunning early in the morning.”

Sylvia was more alarmed than before. Would not her grandmother consider her much to blame? But who could have foreseen such an accident as this? It did not seem to be her fault, and she hung her head as if the stem of it were broken, but managed to answer “Sylvy,” with much effort when her companion again asked her name.

Mrs. Tilley was standing in the doorway when the trio came into view. The cow gave a loud moo by way of explanation.

“Yes, you’d better speak up for yourself, you old trial! Where’d she tucked herself away this time, Sylvy?” But Sylvia kept an awed silence; she knew by instinct that her grandmother did not comprehend the gravity of the situation. She must be mistaking the stranger for one of the farmer lads of the region.

The young man stood his gun beside the door, and dropped a lumpy game-bag beside it; then he bade Mrs. Tilley good evening, and repeated his wayfarer’s story, and asked if he could have a night’s lodging.

“Put me anywhere you like,” he said. “I must be off early in the morning, before day; but I am very hungry, indeed. You can give me some milk at any rate, that’s plain.”

“Dear sakes, yes,” responded the hostess, whose long slumbering hospitality seemed to be easily awakened. “You might fare better if you went out to the main road a mile or so, but you’re welcome to what we’ve got. I’ll milk right off, and you make yourself at home. You can sleep on husks or feathers,” she proffered graciously. “I raised them all myself. There’s good pasturing for geese just below here towards the ma’sh. Now step round and set a plate for the gentleman, Sylvy!” And Sylvia promptly stepped. She was glad to have something to do, and she was hungry herself.

It was a surprise to find so clean and comfortable a little dwelling in this New England wilderness. The young man had known the horrors of its most primitive housekeeping, and the dreary squalor of that level of society which does not rebel at the companionship of hens. This was the best thrift of an old-fashioned farmstead, though on such a small scale that it seemed like a hermitage. He listened eagerly to the old woman’s quaint talk, he watched Sylvia’s pale face and shining gray eyes with ever growing enthusiasm, and insisted that this was the best supper he had eaten for a month, and afterward the new-made friends sat down in the door way together while the moon came up.

Soon it would be berry-time, and Sylvia was a great help at picking. The cow was a good milker, though a plaguy thing to keep track of, the hostess gossiped frankly, adding presently that she had buried four children, so Sylvia’s mother, and a son (who might be dead) in California were all the children she had left. “Dan, my boy, was a great hand to go gunning,” she explained sadly. “I never wanted for pa’tridges or gray squer’ls while he was to home. He’s been a great wand’rer, I expect, and he’s no hand to write letters. There, I don’t blame him, I’d ha’ seen the world myself if it had been so I could.

“Sylvy takes after him,” the grandmother continued affectionately, after a minute’s pause. “There ain’t a foot o’ ground she don’t know her way over, and the wild creaturs counts her one o’ themselves. Squer’ls she’ll tame to come an’ feed right out o’ her hands, and all sorts o’ birds. Last winter she got the jay birds to bangeing here, and I believe she’d ‘a’ scanted herself of her own meals to have plenty to throw out amongst ‘em, if I hadn’t kep’ watch. Anything but crows, I tell her, I’m willin’ to help support though Dan he had a tamed one o’ them that did seem to have reason same as folks. It was round here a good spell after he went away. Dan an’ his father they didn’t hitch, but he never held up his head ag’in after Dan had dared him an’ gone off.”

The guest did not notice this hint of family sorrows in his eager interest in something else.

“So Sylvy knows all about birds, does she?” he exclaimed, as he looked round at the little girl who sat, very demure but increasingly sleepy, in the moonlight. “I am making a collection of birds myself. I have been at it ever since I was a boy.” (Mrs. Tilley smiled.) “There are two or three very rare ones I have been hunting for these five years. I mean to get them on my own ground if they can be found.”

“Do you cage ‘em up?” asked Mrs. Tilley doubtfully, in response to this enthusiastic announcement.

“Oh no, they’re stuffed and preserved, dozens and dozens of them,” said the ornithologist, “and I have shot or snared every one myself. I caught a glimpse of a white heron a few miles from here on Saturday, and I have followed it in this direction. They have never been found in this district at all. The little white heron, it is,” and he turned again to look at Sylvia with the hope of discovering that the rare bird was one of her acquaintances.

But Sylvia was watching a hop-toad in the narrow footpath.

“You would know the heron if you saw it,” the stranger continued eagerly. “A queer tall white bird with soft feathers and long thin legs. And it would have a nest perhaps in the top of a high tree, made of sticks, something like a hawk’s nest.”

Sylvia's heart gave a wild beat; she knew that strange white bird, and had once stolen softly near where it stood in some bright green swamp grass, away over at the other side of the woods. There was an open place where the sunshine always seemed strangely yellow and hot, where tall, nodding rushes grew, and her grandmother had warned her that she might sink in the soft black mud underneath and never be heard of more. Not far beyond were the salt marshes just this side the sea itself, which Sylvia wondered and dreamed much about, but never had seen, whose great voice could sometimes be heard above the noise of the woods on stormy nights.

"I can't think of anything I should like so much as to find that heron's nest," the handsome stranger was saying. "I would give ten dollars to anybody who could show it to me," he added desperately, "and I mean to spend my whole vacation hunting for it if need be. Perhaps it was only migrating, or had been chased out of its own region by some bird of prey."

Mrs. Tilley gave amazed attention to all this, but Sylvia still watched the toad, not divining, as she might have done at some calmer time, that the creature wished to get to its hole under the door step, and was much hindered by the unusual spectators at that hour of the evening. No amount of thought, that night, could decide how many wished-for treasures the ten dollars, so lightly spoken of, would buy.

The next day the young sportsman hovered about the woods, and Sylvia kept him company, having lost her first fear of the friendly lad, who proved to be most kind and sympathetic. He told her many things about the birds and what they knew and where they lived and what they did with themselves. And he gave her a jack knife, which she thought as great a treasure as if she were a desert-islander. All day long he did not once make her troubled or afraid except when he brought down some unsuspecting singing creature from its bough. Sylvia would have liked him vastly better without his gun; she could not understand why he killed the very birds he seemed to like so much. But as the day waned, Sylvia still watched the young man with loving admiration. She had never seen anybody so charming and delightful; the woman's heart, asleep in the child, was vaguely thrilled by a dream of love. Some premonition of that great power stirred and swayed these young creatures who traversed the solemn woodlands with soft footed silent care. They stopped to listen to a bird's song; they pressed forward again eagerly, parting the branches speaking to each other rarely and in whispers; the young man going first and Sylvia following, fascinated, a few steps behind, with her gray eyes dark with excitement.

She grieved because the longed-for white heron was elusive, but she did not lead the guest, she only followed, and there was no such thing as speaking first. The sound of her own unquestioned voice would have terrified her it was hard enough to answer yes or no when there was need of that. At last evening began to fall, and they drove the cow home together, and Sylvia smiled with pleasure when they came to the place where she heard the whistle and was afraid only the night before.

## II

Half a mile from home, at the farther edge of the woods, where the land was highest, a great pine-tree stood, the last of its generation. Whether it was left for a boundary mark, or for what reason, no one could say; the woodchoppers who had felled its mates were dead and gone long ago, and a whole forest of sturdy trees, pines and oaks and maples, had grown again. But the stately head of this old pine towered above them all and made a landmark for sea and shore miles and miles away. Sylvia knew it well. She had always believed that whoever climbed to the top of it could see the ocean; and the little girl had often laid her hand on the great rough trunk and looked up wistfully at those dark boughs that the wind always stirred, no matter how hot and still the air might be below. Now she thought of the tree with a new excitement, for why, if one climbed it at break of day, could not one see all the world, and easily discover from whence the white heron flew, and mark the place, and find the hidden nest?

What a spirit of adventure, what wild ambition! What fancied triumph and delight and glory for the later morning when she could make known the secret! It was almost too real and too great for the childish heart to bear.

All night the door of the little house stood open and the whippoorwills came and sang upon the very step. The young sportsman and his old hostess were sound asleep, but Sylvia's great design kept her broad awake and watching. She forgot to think of sleep. The short summer night seemed as long as the winter darkness, and at last when the whippoorwills ceased, and she was afraid the morning would after all come too soon, she stole out of the house and followed the pasture path through the woods, hastening toward the open ground beyond, listening with a sense of comfort and companionship to the drowsy twitter of a half-awakened bird, whose perch she had jarred in passing. Alas, if the great wave of human interest which flooded for the first time this dull little life should sweep away the satisfactions of an existence heart to heart with nature and the dumb life of the forest!

There was the huge tree asleep yet in the paling moonlight, and small and silly Sylvia began with utmost bravery to mount to the top of it, with tingling, eager blood coursing the channels of her whole frame, with her bare feet and fingers, that pinched and held like bird's claws to the monstrous ladder reaching up, up, almost to the sky itself. First she must mount the white oak tree that

grew alongside, where she was almost lost among the dark branches and the green leaves heavy and wet with dew; a bird fluttered off its nest, and a red squirrel ran to and fro and scolded pettishly at the harmless housebreaker. Sylvia felt her way easily. She had often climbed there, and knew that higher still one of the oak's upper branches chafed against the pine trunk, just where its lower boughs were set close together. There, when she made the dangerous pass from one tree to the other, the great enterprise would really begin.

She crept out along the swaying oak limb at last, and took the daring step across into the old pine-tree. The way was harder than she thought; she must reach far and hold fast, the sharp dry twigs caught and held her and scratched her like angry talons, the pitch made her thin little fingers clumsy and stiff as she went round and round the tree's great stem, higher and higher upward. The sparrows and robins in the woods below were beginning to wake and twitter to the dawn, yet it seemed much lighter there aloft in the pine-tree, and the child knew she must hurry if her project were to be of any use.

The tree seemed to lengthen itself out as she went up, and to reach farther and farther upward. It was like a great main-mast to the voyaging earth; it must truly have been amazed that morning through all its ponderous frame as it felt this determined spark of human spirit wending its way from higher branch to branch. Who knows how steadily the least twigs held themselves to advantage this light, weak creature on her way! The old pine must have loved his new dependent. More than all the hawks, and bats, and moths, and even the sweet voiced thrushes, was the brave, beating heart of the solitary gray-eyed child. And the tree stood still and frowned away the winds that June morning while the dawn grew bright in the east.

Sylvia's face was like a pale star, if one had seen it from the ground, when the last thorny bough was past, and she stood trembling and tired but wholly triumphant, high in the tree-top. Yes, there was the sea with the dawning sun making a golden dazzle over it, and toward that glorious east flew two hawks with slow moving pinions. How low they looked in the air from that height when one had only seen them before far up, and dark against the blue sky. Their gray feathers were as soft as moths; they seemed only a little way from the tree, and Sylvia felt as if she too could go flying away among the clouds. Westward, the woodlands and farms reached miles and miles into the distance; here and there were church steeples, and white villages, truly it was a vast and awesome world

The birds sang louder and louder. At last the sun came up bewilderingly bright. Sylvia could see the white sails of ships out at sea, and the clouds that were purple and rose colored and yellow at first began to fade away. Where was the white heron's nest in the sea of green branches, and was this wonderful sight and pageant of the world the only reward for having climbed to such a giddy height? Now look down again, Sylvia, where the green marsh is set among the shining birches and dark hemlocks; there where you saw the white heron once you will see him again; look, look! a white spot of him like a single floating feather comes up from the dead hemlock and grows larger, and rises, and comes close at last, and goes by the land mark pine with steady sweep of wing and outstretched slender neck and crestedhead. And wait! wait! do not move a foot or a finger, little girl, do not send an arrow of light and consciousness from your two eager eyes, for the heron has perched on a pine bough not far beyond yours, and cries back to his mate on the nest and plumes his feathers for the new day!

The child gives a long sigh a minute later when a company of shouting cat-birds comes also to the tree, and vexed by their fluttering and lawlessness the solemn heron goes away. She knows his secret now, the wild, light, slender bird that floats and wavers, and goes back like an arrow presently to his home in the green world beneath. Then Sylvia, well satisfied, makes her perilous way down again, not daring to look far below the branch she stands on, ready to cry sometimes because her fingers ache and her lamed feet slip. Wondering over and over again what the stranger would say to her, and what he would think when she told him how to find his way straight to the heron's nest.

"Sylvy, Sylvy!" called the busy old grandmother again and again, but nobody answered, and the small husk bed was empty and Sylvia had disappeared.

The guest waked from a dream, and remembering his day's pleasure hurried to dress himself that it might sooner begin. He was sure from the way the shy little girl looked once or twice yesterday that she had at least seen the white heron, and now she must really be made to tell. Here she comes now, paler than ever, and her worn old frock is torn and tattered, and smeared with pine pitch. The grandmother and the sportsman stand in the door together and question her, and the splendid moment has come to speak of the dead hemlock-tree by the green marsh.

But Sylvia does not speak after all, though the old grandmother fretfully rebukes her, and the young man's kind, appealing eyes are looking straight in her own. He can make them rich with money; he has promised it, and they are poor now. He is so well worth making happy, and he waits to hear the story she can tell.

No, she must keep silence! What is it that suddenly forbids her and makes her dumb? Has she been nine years growing and now, when the great world for the first time puts out a hand to her, must she thrust it aside for a bird's sake? Themurmur of the pine's

green branches is in her ears, she remembers how the white heron came flying through the golden air and how they watched the sea and the morning together, and Sylvia cannot speak; she cannot tell the heron's secret and give its life away.

Dear loyalty, that suffered a sharp pang as the guest went away disappointed later in the day, that could have served and followed him and loved him as a dog loves! Many a night Sylvia heard the echo of his whistle haunting the pasture path as she came home with the loitering cow. She forgot even her sorrow at the sharp report of his gun and the sight of thrushes and sparrows dropping silent to the ground, their songs hushed and their pretty feathers stained and wet with blood. Were the birds better friends than their hunter might have been, who can tell? Whatever treasures were lost to her, woodlands and summer-time, remember! Bring your gifts and graces and tell your secrets to this lonely country child!

## 2.7.2 Reading and Review Questions

1. What overlapping features of Local Color, Regionalism, and Realism can been seen in *A White Heron*?
2. What is the symbolic value in various elements of nature in the story, for example, of the tree, the cow, the heron, the sea, or even Sylvy (whose name means "the forest" or "woods")?
3. How does the story convey a feminist or proto-feminist theme?
4. Is Sylvy saving only the heron when she keeps the heron's location secret? Explain.
5. Even though Sylvy is only nine years old, how does Jewett explore the concept of heterosexual love in the story? How is the possibility of future love between Sylvy and the ornithologist portrayed?
6. What contrasts between the country and city are examined in terms of Sylvy's characterization?

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# 4.6: Kate Chopin (1850 - 1904)



**Image 2.6 | Kate Chopin, 1894**
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Katherine O'Flaherty Chopin was born in 1850 in St. Louis, Missouri, to an affluent family. She was formally educated in a Catholic school for girls. At age twenty, she married Oscar Chopin and moved with him to New Orleans. The couple eventually relocated to Cloutierville in 1879, an area where many members of the Creole community lived. The Chopins lived, worked, and raised their six children to gether until Oscar died unexpectedly in 1882, leaving his wife in serious debt. Chopin worked and sold the family business to pay off the debt, eventually moving back to St. Louis to be near her mother, who died soon after Chopin returned. After experiencing these losses, Chopin turned to reading and writing to deal with her grief. Her experiences in New Orleans and Cloutierville provided rich writing material, and during the 1890s, she enjoyed success as a writer, publishing a number of stories in the Local Color tradition. By 1899, her style had evolved, and her important work *The Awakening,* published that year, shocked the Victorian audience of the time in its frank depiction of a woman's sexuality. Unprepared for the negative critical reception that ensued, Chopin retreated from the publishing world. She died unexpectedly a few years later in 1904, from a brain hemorrhage.

In her lifetime, Chopin was known primarily as a Local Color writer who produced a number of important short stories, many of which were collected in *Bayou Folk* in 1894. Her ground breaking novel *The Awakening* published in 1899 was ahead of its time in the examination of the rigid cultural and legal boundaries placed on women which limited or prevented them from living authentic, fully self-directed lives. The novel offers a sensuous portrait of a young married woman and mother, Edna Pontellier, who awakens to herself as a dimensional human being with sexual longings and a strong will to live an authentic life, not the repressed half life she is assigned by tradition and culture, through the institutions of marriage and motherhood, to "perform."

Though today it is viewed as an important early feminist work, the novel shocked and offended the turn of the century reading audience. It was all but forgotten until interest in the novel and in Chopin's work in general was revived inthe 1960s. During this revival, an unpublished short story was discovered, "The Storm," written in 1898 but not published until 1969. The story, which offers an erotic depiction of sex between a man and a woman who are not married to each other, would have been unpublishable by most, if not all, major literary magazines in late nineteenth-century America. The story's title indicates that it was intended as a sequel to "At the 'Cadian Ball," first published in 1892 and reprinted in *Bayou Folk*. Read together, the linked stories concern two couples, one from the upper class Creoles (Alcée and Clarisse), and the other from the less prominent Acadians or Cajuns (Calixta and Bobinôt). What begins as a strong flirtation in the first story between Calixta and Alcée, both single at the time and from different social classes, culminates in torrid lovemaking years later in the second story, years after Calixta had married Bobinôt and Alcée had married Clarisse. Beyond the candid, natural depiction of sexual intimacy between the lovers during a stormy afternoon, including the scenes of a woman clearly enjoying an afternoon of passion, the story offers a non judgmental ending: no one appears to be hurt by the affair; in fact, after the storm passes, Alcée and Calixta go their separate ways, and everyone, the reader is told, is quite happy.

# 2.8.1 “At The ‘Cadian Ball”

Bobinôt, that big, brown, good-natured Bobinôt, had no intention of going to the ball, even though he knew Calixta would be there. For what came of those balls but heartache, and a sickening disinclination for work the whole week through, till Saturday night came again and his tortures began afresh? Why could he not love Ozéina, who would marry him to-morrow; or Fronie, or any one of a dozen others, rather than that little Spanish vixen? Calixta’s slender foot had never touched Cuban soil; but her mother’s had, and the Spanish was in her blood all the same. For that reason the prairie people forgave her much that they would not have overlooked in their own daughters or sisters.

Her eyes, Bobinôt thought of her eyes, and weakened, the bluest, the drowsiest, most tantalizing that ever looked into a man’s, he thought of her flaxen hair that kinked worse than a mulatto’s close to her head; that broad, smiling mouth and tip tilted nose, that full figure; that voice like a rich contralto song, with cadences in it that must have been taught by Satan, for there was no one else to teach her tricks on that ‘Cadian prairie. Bobinôt thought of them all as he plowed his rows of cane.

There had even been a breath of scandal whispered about her a year ago, when she went to Assumption, but why talk of it? No one did now. “C’est Espagnol, ça,” most of them said with lenient shoulder-shrugs. “Bon chien tient de race,” the old men mumbled over their pipes, stirred by recollections. Nothing was made of it, except that Fronie threw it up to Calixta when the two quarreled and fought on the church steps after mass one Sunday, about a lover. Calixta swore roundly in fine ‘Cadian French and with true Spanish spirit, and slapped Fronie’s face. Fronie had slapped her back; “Tiens, bocotte, va!” “Espèce de lionèse; prends ça, et ça!” till the curé himself was obliged to hasten and make peace between them. Bobinôt thought of it all, and would not go to the ball.

But in the afternoon, over at Friedheimer’s store, where he was buying a trace chain, he heard some one say that Alcée Laballèire would be there. Then wild horses could not have kept him away. He knew how it would be or rather he did not know how it would be if the handsome young planter came over to the ball as he sometimes did. If Alcée happened to be in a serious mood, he might only go to the card-room and play a round or two; or he might stand out on the galleries talking crops and politics with the old people. But there was no telling. A drink or two could put the devil in his head, that was what Bobinôt said to himself, as he wiped the sweat from his brow with his red bandanna; a gleam from Calixta’s eyes, a flash of her ankle, a twirl of her skirts could do the same. Yes, Bobinôt would go to the ball.

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That was the year Alcée Laballière put nine hundred acres in rice. It was putting a good deal of money into the ground, but the returns promised to be glorious. Old Madame Laballière, sailing about the spacious galleries in her white *volante*, figured it all out in her head. Clarisse, her goddaughter helped her a little, and together they built more air-castles than enough. Alcée worked like a mule that time; and if he did not kill himself, it was because his constitution was an iron one. It was an every-day affair for him to come in from the field well-nigh exhausted, and wet to the waist. He did not mind if there were visitors; he left them to his mother and Clarisse. There were often guests: young men and women who came up from the city, which was but a few hours away, to visit his beautiful kinswoman. She was worth going a good deal farther than that to see. Dainty as a lily; hardy as a sunflower; slim, tall, graceful, like one of the reeds that grew in the marsh. Cold and kind and cruel by turn, and everything that was aggravating to Alcée.

He would have liked to sweep the place of those visitors, often. Of the men, above all, with their ways and their manners; their swaying of fans like women, and dandling about hammocks. He could have pitched them over the levee into the river, if it hadn’t meant murder. That was Alcée. But he must have been crazy the day he came in from the ricefield, and, toil stained as he was, clasped Clarisse by the arms and panted a volley of hot, blistering love words into her face. No man had ever spoken love to her like that.

“Monsieur!” she exclaimed, looking him full in the eyes, without a quiver. Alcée’s hands dropped and his glance wavered before the chill of her calm, clear eyes. “*Par exemple*!” she muttered disdainfully, as she turned from him, deftly adjusting the careful toilet that he had so brutally disarranged.

That happened a day or two before the cyclone came that cut into the rice like fine steel. It was an awful thing, coming so swiftly, without a moment’s warning in which to light a holy candle or set a piece of blessed palm burning. Old madame wept openly and said her beads, just as her son Didier, the New Orleans one, would have done. If such a thing had happened to Alphonse, the Laballière planting cotton up in Natchitoches, he would have raved and stormed like a second cyclone, and made his surroundings unbearable for a day or two. But Alcée took the misfortune differently. He looked ill and gray after it, and said nothing. His speechlessness was frightful. Clarisse’s heart melted with tenderness; but when she offered her soft, purring words of condolence, he accepted them with mute indifference. Then she and her nénaine wept afresh in each other’s arms.

A night or two later, when Clarisse went to her window to kneel there in the moonlight and say her prayers before retiring, she saw that Bruce, Alcée's negro servant, had led his master's saddle-horse noiselessly along the edge of the sward that bordered the gravel-path, and stood holding him near by. Presently, she heard Alcée quit his room, which was beneath her own, and traverse the lower portico. As he emerged from the shadow and crossed the strip of moonlight, she perceived that he carried a pair of well-filled saddle-bags which he at once flung across the animal's back. He then lost no time in mounting, and after a brief exchange of words with Bruce, went cantering away, taking no precaution to avoid the noisy gravel as the negro had done.

Clarisse had never suspected that it might be Alcée's custom to sally forth from the plantation secretly, and at such an hour; for it was nearly midnight. And had it not been for the telltale saddle-bags, she would only have crept to bed, to wonder, to fret and dream unpleasant dreams. But her impatience and anxiety would not be held in check. Hastily unbolting the shutters of her door that opened upon the gallery, she stepped outside and called softly to the old negro.

"Gre't Peter! Miss Clarisse. I was n' sho it was a ghos' o' w'at, stan'in' up dah, plumb in de night, dataway."

He mounted halfway up the long, broad flight of stairs. She was standing at the top.

"Bruce, w'ere has Monsieur Alcée gone?" she asked.

"W'y, he gone 'bout he business, I reckin," replied Bruce, striving to be noncommittal at the outset.

"W'ere has Monsieur Alcée gone?" she reiterated, stamping her bare foot. "I won't stan' any nonsense or any lies; mine, Bruce."

"I don' ric'lic ez I eva tole you lie yit, Miss Clarisse. Mista Alcée, he all broke up, sho."

"W'ere has he gone? Ah, Sainte Vierge! faut de la patience! butor, va!"

"W'en I was in he room, a-breshin' off he clo'es to-day," the darkey began, settling himself against the stair-rail, "he look dat speechless an' down, I say, 'You 'pear tu me like some pussun w'at gwine have a spell o' sickness, Mista Alcée.' He say, 'You reckin?' 'I dat he git up, go look hisse'f stiddy in de glass. Den he go to de chimbly an' jerk up de quinine bottle an po' a gre't hoss-dose on to he han'. An' he swalla dat mess in a wink, an' wash hit down wid a big dram o' w'iskey w'at he keep in he room, aginst he come all soppin' wet outen de fiel'.

"He 'lows, 'No, I ain' gwine be sick, Bruce.' Den he square off. He say, 'I kin mak out to stan' up an' gi' an' take wid any man I knows, lessen hit 's John L. Sulvun. But w'en God A'mighty an' a 'omen jines fo'ces agin me, dat 's one too many fur me.' I tell 'im, 'Jis so,' while' I 'se makin' out to bresh a spot off w'at ain' dah, on he coat colla. I tell 'im, 'You wants li'le res', suh.' He say, 'No, I wants li'le fling; dat w'at I wants; an I gwine git it. Pitch me a fis'ful o' clo'es in dem 'ar saddle-bags.' Dat w'at he say. Don't you bodda, missy. He jis' gone a-caperin' yonda to de Cajun ball. Uh uh de skeeters is fair' a-swarmin' like bees roun' yo' foots!"

The mosquitoes were indeed attacking Clarisse's white feet savagely. She had unconsciously been alternately rubbing one foot over the other during the darkey's recital.

"The 'Cadian ball," she repeated contemptously. "Humph! *Par exemple*! Nice conduc' for a Laballière. An' he needs a saddle-bag, fill' with clothes, to go to the 'Cadian ball!"

"Oh, Miss Clarisse; you go on to bed, chile; git yo' soun' sleep. He 'low he come back in couple weeks o' so. I kiarn be repeatin' lot o' truck w'at young mans say, out heah face o' a young gal."

Clarisse said no more, but turned and abruptly reentered the house.

"You done talk too much wid yo' mouf already, you ole fool nigga, you," muttered Bruce to himself as he walked away.

***

Alcée reached the ball very late, of course too late for the chicken gumbo which had been served at midnight.

The big, low-ceiled room they called it a hall was packed with men and women dancing to the music of three fiddles. There were broad galleries all around it. There was a room at one side where sober-faced men were playing cards. Another, in which babies were sleeping, was called *le parc aux petits*. Any one who is white may go to a 'Cadian ball, but he must pay for his lemonade, his coffee and chicken gumbo. And he must behave himself like a 'Cadian. Grosboeuf was giving this ball. He had been giving them since he was a young man, and he was a middle-aged one, now. In that time he could recall but one disturbance, and that was

caused by American railroaders, who were not in touch with their surroundings and had no business there. “Ces maudits gens du raiderode,” Grosboeuf called them.

Alcée Laballière’s presence at the ball caused a flutter even among the men, who could not but admire his “nerve” after such misfortune befalling him. To be sure, they knew the Laballières were rich that there were resources East, and more again in the city. But they felt it took a *brave homme* to stand a blow like that philosophically. One old gentleman, who was in the habit of reading a Paris newspaper and knew things, chuckled gleefully to everybody that Alcée’s conduct was altogether *chic, mais chic*. That he had more panache than Boulanger. Well, perhaps he had.

But what he did not show outwardly was that he was in a mood for ugly things to-night. Poor Bobinôt alone felt it vaguely. He discerned a gleam of it in Alcée’s handsome eyes, as the young planter stood in the doorway, looking with rather feverish glance upon the assembly, while he laughed and talked with a ‘Cadian farmer who was beside him.

Bobinôt himself was dull-looking and clumsy. Most of the men were. But the young women were very beautiful. The eyes that glanced into Alcée’s as they passed him were big, dark, soft as those of the young heifers standing out in the cool prairie grass.

But the belle was Calixta. Her white dress was not nearly so handsome or well made as Fronie’s (she and Fronie had quite forgotten the battle on the church steps, and were friends again), nor were her slippers so stylish as those of Ozéina; and she fanned herself with a handkerchief, since she had broken her red fan at the last ball, and her aunts and uncles were not willing to give her another. But all the men agreed she was at her best to-night. Such animation! and abandon! such flashes of wit!

“Hé, Bobinôt! *Mais* w’at’s the matta? W’at you standin’ *planté là* like ole Ma’ame Tina’s cow in the bog, you?”

That was good. That was an excellent thrust at Bobinôt, who had forgotten the figure of the dance with his mind bent on other things, and it started a clamor of laughter at his expense. He joined good-naturedly. It was better to receive even such notice as that from Calixta than none at all. But Madame Suzonne, sitting in a corner, whispered to her neighbor that if Ozéina were to conduct herself in a like manner, she should immediately be taken out to the mule-cart and driven home. The women did not always approve of Calixta.

Now and then were short lulls in the dance, when couples flocked out upon the galleries for a brief respite and fresh air. The moon had gone down pale in the west, and in the east was yet no promise of day. After such an interval, when the dancers again assembled to resume the interrupted quadrille, Calixta was not among them.

She was sitting upon a bench out in the shadow, with Alcée beside her. They were acting like fools. He had attempted to take a little gold ring from her finger; just for the fun of it, for there was nothing he could have done with the ring but replace it again. But she clinched her hand tight. He pretended that it was a very difficult matter to open it. Then he kept the hand in his. They seemed to forget about it. He played with her ear-ring, a thin crescent of gold hanging from her small brown ear. He caught a wisp of the kinky hair that had escaped its fastening, and rubbed the ends of it against his shaven cheek.

“You know, last year in Assumption, Calixta?” They belonged to the younger generation, so preferred to speak English.

“Don’t come say Assumption to me, M’sieur Alcée. I done yeard Assumption till I ‘m plumb sick.”

“Yes, I know. The idiots! Because you were in Assumption, and I happened to go to Assumption, they must have it that we went together. But it was nice hein, Calixta? in Assumption?”

They saw Bobinôt emerge from the hall and stand a moment outside the lighted doorway, peering uneasily and searchingly into the darkness. He did not see them, and went slowly back.

“There is Bobinôt looking for you. You are going to set poor Bobinôt crazy. You’ll marry him some day; hein, Calixta?”

“I don’t say no, me,” she replied, striving to withdraw her hand, which he held more firmly for the attempt.

“But come, Calixta; you know you said you would go back to Assumption, just to spite them.”

“No, I neva said that, me. You mus’ dreamt that.”

“Oh, I thought you did. You know I ‘m going down to the city.”

“W’en?”

“To-night.”

“Betta make has’e, then; it ‘s mos’ day.”

“Well, to-morrow ‘ll do.”

“W’at you goin’ do, yonda?”

“I don’t know. Drown myself in the lake, maybe; unless you go down there to visit your uncle.”

Calixta’s senses were reeling; and they well-nigh left her when she felt Alcée’s lips brush her ear like the touch of a rose.
“Mista Alcée! Is dat Mista Alcée?” the thick voice of a negro was asking; he stood on the ground, holding to the banister-rails near which the couple sat. “W’at do you want now?” cried Alcée impatiently. “Can’t I have a moment of peace?”

“I ben huntin’ you high an’ low, suh,” answered the man. “Dey dey some one

in de road, onda de mulbare-tree, want see you a minute.”
“I would n’t go out to the road to see the Angel Gabriel. And if you come back

here with any more talk, I ‘ll have to break your neck.” The negro turned mumbling away.

Alcée and Calixta laughed softly about it. Her boisterousness was all gone. They talked low, and laughed softly, as lovers do.

“Alcée! Alcée Laballière!”

It was not the negro’s voice this time; but one that went through Alcée’s body like an electric shock, bringing him to his feet.

Clarisse was standing there in her riding-habit, where the negro had stood. For an instant confusion reigned in Alcée’s thoughts, as with one who awakes suddenly from a dream. But he felt that something of serious import had brought his cousin to the ball in the dead of night.

“W’at does this mean, Clarisse?” he asked.

“It means something has happen’ at home. You mus’ come.”

“Happened to maman?” he questioned, in alarm.

“No; nénaine is well, and asleep. It is something else. Not to frighten you. But you mus’ come. Come with me, Alcée.”

There was no need for the imploring note. He would have followed the voice anywhere.

She had now recognized the girl sitting back on the bench. “Ah, c’est vous, Calixta? Comment ça va, mon enfant?”“Tcha va b’en; et vous, mam’zélle?”

Alcée swung himself over the low rail and started to follow Clarisse, without a word, without a glance back at the girl. He had forgotten he was leaving her there. But Clarisse whispered something to him, and he turned back to say “Good-night, Calixta,” and offer his hand to press through the railing. She pretended not to see it.

***

“How come that? You settin’ yere by yo’se’f, Calixta?” It was Bobinôt who had found her there alone. The dancers had not yet come out. She looked ghastly in the faint, gray light struggling out of the east.

“Yes, that ‘s me. Go yonda in *the parc aux petits* an’ ask Aunt Olisse fu’ my hat. She knows w’ere ‘t is. I want to go home, me.”

“How you came?”

“I come afoot, with the Cateaus. But I ‘m goin’ now. I ent goin’ wait fu’ ‘em. I ‘m plumb wo’ out, me.”

“Kin I go with you, Calixta?”

“I don’ care.”

They went together across the open prairie and along the edge of the fields, stumbling in the uncertain light. He told her to lift her dress that was getting wet and bedraggled; for she was pulling at the weeds and grasses with her hands.

“I don’ care; it ‘s got to go in the tub, anyway. You been sayin’ all along you want to marry me, Bobinôt. Well, if you want, yet, I don’ care, me.”

The glow of a sudden and overwhelming happiness shone out in the brown, rugged face of the young Acadian. He could not speak, for very joy. It choked him. “Oh well, if you don’ want,” snapped Calixta, flippantly, pretending to be piqued at his silence.

“*Bon Dieu*! You know that makes me crazy, w’at you sayin’. You mean that,

Calixta? You ent goin’ turn roun’ agin?”

“I neva tole you that much yet, Bobinôt. I mean that. *Tiens*,” and she held out her hand in the business-like manner of a man who clinches a bargain with a hand-clasp. Bobinôt grew bold with happiness and asked Calixta to kiss him. She turned her face, that was almost ugly after the night’s dissipation, and looked steadily into his.

“I don’ want to kiss you, Bobinôt,” she said, turning away again, “not to-day. Some other time. *Bonté divine*! ent you satisfy, yet!”

“Oh, I ‘m satisfy, Calixta,” he said.

***

Riding through a patch of wood, Clarisse’s saddle became ungirted, and she and Alcée dismounted to readjust it.

For the twentieth time he asked her what had happened at home. “But, Clarisse, w’at is it? Is it a misfortune?”

“Ah Dieu sait!” It ‘s only something that happen’ to me.”

“To you!”

“I saw you go away las night, Alcée, with those saddle-bags,” she said, haltingly, striving to arrange something about the saddle, “an’ I made Bruce tell me. He said you had gone to the ball, an’ wouldn’ be home for weeks an’ weeks. I thought, Alcée maybe you were going to to Assumption. I got wild. An’ then I knew if you didn’t come back, now, to-night, I could n’t stan’ it,again.”

She had her face hidden in her arm that she was resting against the saddle when she said that.

He began to wonder if this meant love. But she had to tell him so, before he believed it. And when she told him, he thought the face of the Universe was changed just like Bobinôt. Was it last week the cyclone had well-nigh ruined him? The cyclone seemed a huge joke, now. It was he, then, who, an hour ago was kissing little Calixta’s ear and whispering nonsense into it. Calixta was like a myth, now. The one, only, great reality in the world was Clarisse standing before him, telling him that she loved him.

In the distance they heard the rapid discharge of pistol-shots; but it did not disturb them. They knew it was only the negro musicians who had gone into the yard to fire their pistols into the air, as the custom is, and to announce “*le bal est fini*.”

## 2.8.2 ”The Storm”

### I

The leaves were so still that even Bibi thought it was going to rain. Bobinôt, who was accustomed to converse on terms of perfect equality with his little son, called the child’s attention to certain sombre clouds that were rolling with sinister intention from the west, accompanied by a sullen, threatening roar. They were at Friedheimer’s store and decided to remain there till the storm had passed. They sat within the door on two empty kegs. Bibi was four years old and looked very wise.

“Mama’ll be ‘fraid, yes, he suggested with blinking eyes.

“She’ll shut the house. Maybe she got Sylvie helpin’ her this evenin’,” Bobinôt responded reassuringly.

“No; she ent got Sylvie. Sylvie was helpin’ her yistiday,’ piped Bibi.

Bobinôt arose and going across to the counter purchased a can of shrimps, of which Calixta was very fond. Then he returned to his perch on the keg and sat stolidly holding the can of shrimps while the storm burst. It shook the wooden store and seemed to be ripping great furrows in the distant field. Bibi laid his little hand on his father’s knee and was not afraid.

## II

Calixta, at home, felt no uneasiness for their safety. She sat at a side window sewing furiously on a sewing machine. She was greatly occupied and did not notice the approaching storm. But she felt very warm and often stopped to mop her face on which the perspiration gathered in beads. She unfastened her white sacque at the throat. It began to grow dark, and suddenly realizing the situation she got up hurriedly and went about closing windows and doors.

Out on the small front gallery she had hung Bobinôt’s Sunday clothes to dry and she hastened out to gather them before the rain fell. As she stepped outside, Alcée Laballière rode in at the gate. She had not seen him very often since her marriage, and never alone. She stood there with Bobinôt’s coat in her hands, and the big rain drops began to fall. Alcée rode his horse under the shelter of a side projection where the chickens had huddled and there were plows and a harrow piled up in the corner.

“May I come and wait on your gallery till the storm is over, Calixta?” he asked.

Come ‘long in, M’sieur Alcée.”

His voice and her own startled her as if from a trance, and she seized Bobinôt’s vest. Alcée, mounting to the porch, grabbed the trousers and snatched Bibi’s braided jacket that was about to be carried away by a sudden gust of wind. He expressed an intention to remain outside, but it was soon apparent that he might as well have been out in the open: the water beat in upon the boards in driving sheets, and he went inside, closing the door after him. It was even necessary to put something beneath the door to keep the water out.

“My! what a rain! It’s good two years sence it rain’ like that,” exclaimed Calixta as she rolled up a piece of bagging and Alcée helped her to thrust it beneath the crack.

She was a little fuller of figure than five years before when she married; but she had lost nothing of her vivacity. Her blue eyes still retained their melting quality; and her yellow hair, dishevelled by the wind and rain, kinked more stubbornly than ever about her ears and temples.

The rain beat upon the low, shingled roof with a force and clatter that threatened to break an entrance and deluge them there. They were in the dining room the sitting room the general utility room. Adjoining was her bed room, with Bibi’s couch along side her own. The door stood open, and the room with its white, monumental bed, its closed shutters, looked dim and mysterious.

Alcée flung himself into a rocker and Calixta nervously began to gather up from the floor the lengths of a cotton sheet which she had been sewing.

If this keeps up, Dieu sait if the levees goin’ to stan it!” she exclaimed.

“What have you got to do with the levees?”

“I got enough to do! An’ there’s Bobinôt with Bibi out in that storm if he only didn’ left Friedheimer’s!”

“Let us hope, Calixta, that Bobinôt’s got sense enough to come in out of a cyclone.”

She went and stood at the window with a greatly disturbed look on her face.

She wiped the frame that was clouded with moisture. It was stiflingly hot. Alcée got up and joined her at the window, looking over her shoulder. The rain was coming down in sheets obscuring the view of far-off cabins and enveloping the distant wood in a gray mist. The playing of the lightning was incessant. A bolt struck a tall chinaberry tree at the edge of the field. It filled all visible space with a blinding glare and the crash seemed to invade the very boards they stood upon.

Calixta put her hands to her eyes, and with a cry, staggered backward. Alcée’s arm encircled her, and for an instant he drew her close and spasmodically to him.

“Bont!” she cried, releasing herself from his encircling arm and retreating from the window, “the house’ll go next! If I only knew w’ere Bibi was!” She would not compose herself; she would not be seated. Alcée clasped her shoulders and looked into her face. The contact of her warm, palpitating body when he had unthinkingly drawn her into his arms, had aroused all the old-time infatuation and desire for her flesh.

“Calixta,” he said, “don’t be frightened. Nothing can happen. The house is too low to be struck, with so many tall trees standing about. There! aren’t you going to be quiet? say, aren’t you?” He pushed her hair back from her face that was warm and steaming. Her lips were as red and moist as pomegranate seed. Her white neck and a glimpse of her full, firm bosom disturbed him powerfully. As she glanced up at him the fear in her liquid blue eyes had given place to a drowsy gleam that unconsciously betrayed a sensuous desire. He looked down into her eyes and there was nothing for him to do but to gather her lips in a kiss. It reminded him of Assumption.

“Do you rememberin Assumption, Calixta?” he asked in a low voice broken by passion. Oh! she remembered; for in Assumption he had kissed her and kissed and kissed her; until his senses would well nigh fail, and to save her he would resort to a desperate flight. If she was not an immaculate dove in those days, she was still inviolate; a passionate creature whose very defenselessness had made her defense, against which his honor forbade him to prevail. Now well, now her lips seemed in a manner free to be tasted, as well as her round, white throat and her whiter breasts.

They did not heed the crashing torrents, and the roar of the elements made her laugh as she lay in his arms. She was a revelation in that dim, mysterious chamber; as white as the couch she lay upon. Her firm, elastic flesh that was knowing for the first time its birthright, was like a creamy lily that the sun invites to contribute its breath and perfume to the undying life of the world.

The generous abundance of her passion, without guile or trickery, was like a white flame which penetrated and found response in depths of his own sensuous nature that had never yet been reached.

When he touched her breasts they gave themselves up in quivering ecstasy, inviting his lips. Her mouth was a fountain of delight. And when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life’s mystery.

He stayed cushioned upon her, breathless, dazed, enervated, with his heart beating like a hammer upon her. With one hand she clasped his head, her lips lightly touching his forehead. The other hand stroked with a soothing rhythm his muscular shoulders.

The growl of the thunder was distant and passing away. The rain beat softly upon the shingles, inviting them to drowsiness and sleep. But they dared not yield.

## III

The rain was over; and the sun was turning the glistening green world into a palace of gems. Calixta, on the gallery, watched Alcée ride away. He turned and smiled at her with a beaming face; and she lifted her pretty chin in the air and laughed aloud.

Bobinôt and Bibi, trudging home, stopped without at the cistern to make themselves presentable.

“My! Bibi, w’at will yo’ mama say! You ought to be ashame’. You oughta’ put on those good pants. Look at ‘em! An’ that mud on yo’ collar! How you got that mud on yo’ collar, Bibi? I never saw such a boy!” Bibi was the picture of pathetic resignation. Bobinôt was the embodiment of serious solicitude as he strove to remove from his own person and his son’s the signs of their tramp over heavy roads and through wet fields. He scraped the mud off Bibi’s bare legs and feet with a stick and carefully removed all traces from his heavy brogans. Then, prepared for the worst the meeting with an over-scrupulous housewife, they entered cautiously at the back door.

Calixta was preparing supper. She had set the table and was dripping coffee at the hearth. She sprang up as they came in.

“Oh, Bobinôt! You back! My! But I was uneasy. W’ere you been during the rain? An’ Bibi? he ain’t wet? he ain’t hurt?” She had clasped Bibi and was kissing him effusively. Bobinôt’s explanations and apologies which he had been composing all along the way, died on his lips as Calixta felt him to see if he were dry, and seemed to express nothing but satisfaction at their safe return.

“I brought you some shrimps, Calixta,” offered Bobinôt, hauling the can from his ample side pocket and laying it on the table.

“Shrimps! Oh, Bobinôt! you too good fo’ anything!” and she gave him a smacking kiss on the cheek that resounded, “J’vous rponds, we’ll have a feas’ to-night! umph-umph!”

Bobinôt and Bibi began to relax and enjoy themselves, and when the three seated themselves at table they laughed much and so loud that anyone might have heard them as far away as Laballière's.

### IV

Alcée Laballière wrote to his wife, Clarisse, that night. It was a loving letter, full of tender solicitude. He told her not to hurry back, but if she and the babies liked it at Biloxi, to stay a month longer. He was getting on nicely; and though he missed them, he was willing to bear the separation a while longer realizing that their health and pleasure were the first things to be considered.

### V

As for Clarisse, she was charmed upon receiving her husband's letter. She and the babies were doing well. The society was agreeable; many of her old friends and acquaintances were at the bay. And the first free breath since her marriage seemed to restore the pleasant liberty of her maiden days. Devoted as she was to her husband, their intimate conjugal life was something which she was more than willing to forego for a while.

So the storm passed and every one was happy.

## 2.8.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. How do either (or both) stories represent elements of Realistic or Naturalistic fiction?
2. In "At the 'Cadian Ball," what is the relationship between social classes presented in the story (Creoles and Acadians)?
3. In "The Storm," what does the title suggest in terms of figurative meaning?
4. In "The Storm," is it reasonable to accept that at the end "everyone was happy"? Or are consequences possible or inevitable beyond the ending of the story?
5. What does a reading of the stories in sequence provide readers in terms of interpretation of "The Storm" that a reading of the second story alone might not?
6. Examine the role social class plays in both stories.

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# 4.7: Chopin, Kate "The Story of an Hour" (1894)

# The Story of an Hour

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will--as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under hte breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him--sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhold, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door--you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease--of the joy that kills.

Exercise 5.2.1

**Questions**

1. What is the significance of Mrs. Mallard's "heart trouble"?
2. What is the significance of freedom in the story? How does the author portray this idea?
3. Describe Mrs. Mallard's reaction to the death of her husband. Why do you think she feels this way?
4. What does Richards represent in the story?
5. What does Josephine represent in the story?
6. What view of marriage is portrayed in the story? Can this view still apply today?
7. Describe Mrs. Mallard's journey in the story.

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# 4.8: Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852 - 1930)



**Image 2.7 | Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, 1900**
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Mary E. Wilkins Freeman was born in 1852 in Randolph, Massachusetts. After high school, Freeman attended Mount Holyoke Female Seminary and later completed her studies at West Brattleboro Seminary while she pursued writing as a career. By her mid-thirties, Freeman's parents had died, and she was alone with only a small inheritance. She lived with family friends and continued her writing, eventually supporting herself by publishing important works recognized and praised by William Dean Howells, Henry James, and other major writers of the day. While she wrote a number of novels, she is best known for her short stories, especially those that focused on the New England region. How-ever, Freeman expanded her scope and produced a variety of fictional genres, including mysteries and ghost stories. *A New England Nun and Other Stories* (1891) stands as her most critically acclaimed achievement, a collection of regional stories focusing primarily on women and New England life. At forty-nine, Freeman married a physician, Dr. Charles Freeman from New Jersey. However, the marriage was marred by her husband's alcoholism, and she eventually separated from him. He was ultimately committed to the New Jersey State Hospital for the mentally ill. She died in 1930 at the age of seventy-eight after suffering a heart attack.

While Freeman was a prolific writer, she is best remembered for two important collections of short stories, *A Humble Romance and Other Stories* (1887) and *A New England Nun and Other Stories* (1891). The stories in these collections concern rural New England life and focus, in particular, on the domestic concerns of women. Like Sarah Orne Jewett, Freeman has been labeled a local colorist. However, the fiction of Jewett and Freeman generally is considered more representative of American Literary Regionalism, especially since both authors develop in their work dimensional characters whose internal conflicts are explored. Freeman's focus in "A New England Nun" and "The Revolt of Mother" is on women's redefining their place in the domestic sphere. In "A New England Nun," Louisa rejects having her domestic world invaded or controlled by a male presence. She preserves dominion over her small home, gently suggesting to her betrothed Joe Daggett that they may not be a good match after all. Her choice is courageous she forgoes the role of wife and mother that her culture pressures her to accept and the peace, solitude, and self-determination that she claims in return are worth the price of her rebellion against cultural norms. In "The Revolt of Mother," Sarah Penn is a New England woman who has accepted the traditional role of wife and mother for herself; nevertheless, like Louisa, she revolts against established cultural expectations for women. Sarah refuses to accept her husband's dismissive attitude when she argues that the farming family needs a new house. Instead, she enacts a revolt where she, through action likened to a military general storming a fortress, makes the statement that her work on the family farm within the domestic sphere is just as important as her husband's work as a farmer. Freeman's fiction, as does Jewett's, often moves beyond simply regional concerns to explore wider issues of women's roles in late nineteenth-century America, thus approaching an early feminist realism.

## 2.9.1 "A New England Nun"

It was late in the afternoon, and the light was waning. There was a difference in the look of the tree shadows out in the yard. Somewhere in the distance cows were lowing, and a little bell was tinkling; now and then a farm-wagon tilted by, and the dust flew;

some blue-shirted laborers with shovels over their shoulders plodded past; little swarms of flies were dancing up and down before the peoples' faces in the soft air. There seemed to be a gentle stir arising over everything, for the mere sake of subsidences very premonition of rest and hush and night.

This soft diurnal commotion was over Louisa Ellis also. She had been peacefully sewing at her sitting-room window all the afternoon. Now she quilted her needle carefully into her work, which she folded precisely, and laid in a basket with her thimble and thread and scissors. Louisa Ellis could not remember that ever in her life she had mislaid one of these little feminine appurtenances, which had become, from long use and constant association, a very part of her personality.

Louisa tied a green apron round her waist, and got out a flat straw hat with a green ribbon. Then she went into the garden with a little blue crockery bowl, to pick some currants for her tea. After the currants were picked she sat on the back door-step and stemmed them, collecting the stems carefully in her apron, and afterwards throwing them into the hen-coop. She looked sharply at the grass beside the step to see if any bad fallen there.

Louisa was slow and still in her movements; it took her a long time to prepare her tea; but when ready it was set forth with as much grace as if she bad been a veritable guest to her own self. The little square table stood exactly in the centre of the kitchen, and was covered with a starched linen cloth whose border pattern of flowers glistened. Louisa had a damask napkin on her tea-tray, where were arranged a cut lass tumbler full of teaspoons, a silver cream-pitcher, a china sugar-bowl, and one pink china cup and saucer. Louisa used china every day-something which none of her neighbors did. They whispered about it among themselves. Their daily tables were laid with common crockery, their sets of best china stayed in the parlor closet, and Louisa Ellis was no richer nor better bred than they. Still she would use the china. She had for her supper a glass dish full of sugared currants, a plate of little cakes, and one of little white biscuits. Also a leaf or two of lettuce, which she cut up daintily. Louisa was very fond of lettuce, which she raised to perfection in her little garden. She ate quite heartily, though, in a delicate, pecking, way; it seemed almost surprising that any considerable bulk of the food should vanish.

After tea she filled a plate with nicely baked thin corncakes, and carried them out into the back-yard.

"Caesar!" she called. "Caesar! Caesar!"

There was a little rush, and the clank of a chain, and a large yellow and white dog appeared at the door of his tiny hut, which was half hidden among the tall grasses and flowers. Louisa patted him and gave him the corn-cakes. Then shereturned to the house and washed the tea-things, polishing the china carefully. The twilight had deepened; the chorus of the frogs floated in at the open window wonderfully loud and shrill, and once in a while a long sharp drone from a treetoad pierced it. Louisa took off her green gingham apron, disclosing a shorter one of pink and white print. She lighted her lamp, and sat down again with her sewing.

In about half an hour Joe Dagget came. She heard his heavy step on the walk, and rose and took off her pink and white apron. Under that was still another white linen with a little cambric edging on the bottom; that was Louisa's company apron. She never wore it without her calico sewing apron over it unless she had a guest. She had barely folded the pink and white one with methodical haste and laid it in a table-drawer when the door opened and Joe Dagget entered.

He seemed to fill up the whole room. A little yellow canary that had been asleep in his green cage at the south window woke up and fluttered wildly, beating his little yellow wings against the wires. He always did so when Joe Dagget came into the room.

"Good-evening," said Louisa. She extended her hand with a kind of solemn cordiality.

"Good-evening, Louisa," returned the man, in a loud voice.

She placed a chair for him, and they sat facing each other, with the table between them. He sat bolt upright, toeing out his heavy feet squarely, glancing with a good humored uneasiness around the room. She sat gently erect, folding her slender hands in her white linen lap.

"Been a pleasant day," remarked Dagget.

"Real pleasant," Louisa assented, softly.

"Have you been haying?" she asked, after a little while.

"Yes, I've been baying all day, down in the ten-acre lot. Pretty hot work."

"It must be."

“Yes, it’s pretty hot work in the sun.”

“Is your mother well to-day?”

“Yes, mother’s pretty well.”

“I suppose Lily Dyer’s with her now?”

Dagget colored. “Yes, she’s with her,” he answered, slowly.

He was not very young, but there was a boyish look about his large face. Louisa was not quite as old as he, her face was fairer and smoother, but she gave people the impression of being older.

“I suppose she’s a good deal of help to your mother,” she said, further.

“I guess she is; I don’t know how mother’d get along without her,” said Dagget, with a sort of embarrassed warmth.

“She looks like a real capable girl. She’s pretty-looking too,” remarked Louisa. “Yes, she is pretty fair looking.”

Presently Dagget began fingering the books on the table. There was a square red autograph album, and a Young Lady’s Gift Book which had belonged to Louisa’s mother. He took them up one after the other and opened them then laid them down again, the album on the Gift Book.

Louisa kepteying them with mild uneasiness. Finally she rose and changed the position of the books, putting the album underneath. That was the way they had been arranged in the first place.

Dagget gave an awkward little laugh. “ Now what difference did it make which book was on top?” said he.

Louisa looked at him with a deprecating smile. “ I always keep them that way,” murmured she.

“You do beat everything,” said Dagget, trying to laugh again. His large face was flushed.

He remained about an hour longer, then rose to take leave. Going out, he stumbled over a rug, and trying to recover himself, hit Louisa’s work-basket on the table, and knocked it on the floor.

He looked at Louisa, then at the rolling spools; he ducked himself awkwardly toward them, but she stopped him. “ Never mind,” said she I’ll pick them up after you’re gone.”

She spoke with a mild stiffness. Either she was a little disturbed, or his nervousness affected her, and made her seem constrained in her effort to reassure him.

When Joe Dagget was outside he drew in the sweet evening air with a sigh, and felt much as an innocent and perfectly well-intentioned bear might after his exit from a china shop.

Louisa, on her part, felt much as the kind-hearted, long suffering owner of the china shop might have done after the exit of the bear.

She tied on the pink, then the green apron, picked up all the scattered treasures and replaced them in her workbasket, and straightened the rug. Then she set the lamp on the floor, and began sharply examining the carpet. She even rubbed her fingers over it, and looked at them.

“He’s tracked in a good deal of dust,” she murmured. “I thought he must have.” Louisa got a dust-pan and brush, and swept Joe Dagget’s track carefully.
If he could have known it, it would have increased his perplexity and Uneasiness, although it would not have disturbed his loyalty in the least. He came twice a week to see Louisa Ellis, and every time, sitting there in her delicately sweet room, he felt as if surrounded by a hedge of lace. He was afraid to stir lest he should put a clumsy foot or hand through the fairy web, and he had always the consciousness that Louisa was watching fearfully lest he should.

Still the lace and Louisa commanded perforce his perfect respect and patience and loyalty. They were to be married in a month, after a singular courtship which had lasted for a matter of fifteen years. For fourteen out of the fifteen years the two had not once

seen each other, and they bad seldom exchanged letters. Joe had been all those years in Australia, where he had gone to make his fortune, and where be had stayed until be made it. He would have stayed fifty years if it had taken so long, and come home feeble and tottering, or never come home at all, to marry Louisa.

But the fortune had been made in the fourteen years, and he had come home now to marry the woman who had been patiently and unquestioningly waiting for him all that time.

Shortly after they were engaged he had announced to Louisa his determination to strike out into new fields, and secure a competency before they should be married. She had listened and assented with the sweet serenity which never failed her, not even when her lover set forth on that long and uncertain journey. Joe, buoyed up as he was by his sturdy determination, broke down a little at the last, but Louisa kissed him with a mild blush, and said good-by.

“It won’t be for long,” poor Joe had said, huskily; but it was for fourteen years.

In that length of time much had happened. Louisa’s mother and brother had died, and she was all alone in the world. But greatest happening of all a subtle happening which both were too simple to understand Louisa’s feet had turned into a path, smooth maybe under a calm, serene sky, but so straight and unswerving that it could only meet a check at her grave, and so narrow that there was no room for any one at her side.

Louisa’s first emotion when Joe Dagget came home (he had not apprised her of his coming) was consternation, although she would not admit it to herself, and he never dreamed of it. Fifteen years ago she had been in love with him at least she considered herself to be. Just at that time, gently acquiescing with and falling into the natural drift of girlhood, she had seen marriage ahead as a reasonable feature and a probable desirability of life. She had listened with came docility to her mother’s views upon the subject. Her mother was remarkable for her cool sense and sweet, even temperament. She talked wisely to her daughter when Joe Dagget presented himself, and Louisa accepted him with no hesitation. He was the first lover she had ever had.

She had been faithful to him all these years. She had never dreamed of the possibility of marrying any one else. Her life, especially for the last seven years, had been full of a pleasant peace, she had never felt discontented nor impatient over her lover’s absence; still she had always looked forward to his return and their marriage as the inevitable conclusion of things. However she had fallen into a way of placing it so far in the future that it was almost equal to placing it over the boundaries of another life.

When Joe came she had been expecting him, and expecting to be married for fourteen years, but she was as much surprised and taken aback as if she had never thought of it.

Joe’s consternation came later. He eyed Louisa with an instant confirmation of his old admiration. She had changed but little. She still kept her pretty manner and soft grace, and was, he considered, every whit as attractive as ever. As for himself, his stent was done; he had turned his face away from fortune seeking, and the old winds of romance whistled as loud and sweet as ever through his ears. All the song which he had been wont to hear in them was Louisa; he had for a long time a loyal belief that he heard it still, but finally it seemed to him that although the winds sang always that one song, it had another name. But for Louisa the wind had never more than murmured; now it hid gone down, and everything was still. She listened for a little while with half-wistful attention then she turned quietly away and went to work on her wedding clothes.

Joe had made some extensive and quite magnificent alterations in his house. It was the old homestead; the newly married couple would live there, for Joe could not desert his mother, who refused to leave her old home. So Louisa must leave hers. Every morning rising and going about among her neat maidenly possessions, she felt as one looking her last upon the faces of dear friends. It was true that in a measure she could take them with her, but, robbed of their old environments, they would appear in such new guises that they would almost cease to be themselves. Then there were some peculiar features of her happy solitary life which she would probably be obliged to relinquish altogether. Sterner tasks than these graceful but half needless ones would probably devolve upon her. There would be a large house to care for; there would be company to entertain; there would be Joe’s rigorous and feeble old mother to wait upon; and it would be contrary to all thrifty village traditions for her to keep more than one servant. Louisa had a little still, and she used to occupy herself pleasantly in summer weather with distilling the sweet and aromatic essences from roses and peppermint and spear mint. By and by her still must be laid away. Her store of essences was already considerable, and there would be no time for her to distil for the mere pleasure of it. Then Joe’s mother would think it foolishness; she had already hinted her opinion in the matter. Louisa dearly loved to sew a linen scam, not always for use, but for the simple, mild pleasure which she took in it. She would have been loath to confess how more than once she had ripped a seam for the mere delight of sewing it together again. Sitting at her window during long sweet afternoons, drawing her needle gently through the dainty fabric, she was peace itself. But there was small chance of such foolish comfort in the future. Joe’s mother, domineering, shrewd old matron that she was even in her old age, and very likely even Joe himself, with his honest masculine rudeness, would laugh and frown down all these pretty but senseless old maiden ways.

Louisa had almost the enthusiasm of an artist over the mere order and cleanliness of her solitary home. She had throbs of genuine triumph at the sight of the windowpanes which she had polished until they shone like jewels. She gloated gently over her orderly bureau drawers, with their exquisitely folded contents redolent with lavender and sweet clover and very purity. Could she be sure of the endurance of even this? She had visions, so startling that she half repudiated them as indelicate, of coarse masculine belongings strewn about in endless litter; of dust and disorder arising necessarily from a coarse masculine presence in the midst of all this delicate harmony. Among her forebodings of disturbance, not the least was with regard to Caesar. Caesar was a veritable hermit of a dog. For the greater part of his life he had dwelt in his secluded hut, shut out from the society of his kind and all innocent canine joys. Never had Caesar since his early youth watched at a woodchuck's hole; never had he known the delights of a stray bone at a neighbor's kitchen door. And it was all on account of a sin committed when hardly out of his puppy hood. No one knew the possible depth of remorse of which this mild visaged, altogether innocent-looking old dog might be capable but whether or not he had encountered remorse, he had encountered a full measure of righteous retribution. Old Caesar seldom lifted up his voice in a growl or a bark; he was fat and sleepy; there were yellow rings which looked like spectacles around his dim old eyes; but there was a neighbor who bore on his hand the imprint of several of Caesar's sharp white youthful teeth, and for that be had lived at the end of a chain, all alone in a little but, for fourteen years. The neighbor, who was choleric and smarting with the pain of his wound, had demanded either Caesar's death or complete ostracism. So Louisa's brother, to whom the dog had belonged, had built him his little kennel and tied him up. It was now fourteen years since, in a flood of youthful spirits, he had inflicted that memorable bite, and with the exception of short excursions, always at the end of the chain, under the strict guardianship of his master or Louisa, the old dog had remained a close prisoner. It is doubtful if, with his limited ambition, he took much pride in the fact, but it is certain that lie was possessed of considerable cheap fame, He was regarded by all the children in the village and by many adults as a very monster of ferocity. St. George's dragon could hardly have surpassed in evil repute Louisa Ellis's old yellow dog. Mothers cleared their children with solemn emphasis not to go too near to him, and the children listened and believed greedily, with a fascinated appetite for terror, and ran by Louisa's house stealthily, with many sidelong and backward glances at the terrible dog. If perchance he sounded a hoarse bark, there was a panic. Wayfarers chancing into Louisa's yard eyed him with respect, and inquired if the chain were stout. Caesar at large might have seemed a very ordinary dog, and excited no comment whatever chained, his reputation overshadowed him, so that he lost his own proper outlines and looked darkly vague and enormous. Joe Dagget, however, with his good humored sense and shrewdness, saw him as he was. He strode valiantly up to him and patted him on the bead, in spite of Louisa's soft clamor of warning, and even attempted to set him loose. Louisa grew so alarmed that he desisted, but kept announcing his opinion in the matter quite forcibly at intervals. "There ain't a better-natured dog in town," be would say, " and it's down-right cruel to keep him tied up there. Some day I'm going to take him out."

Louisa had very little hope that be would not, one of these days, when their interests and possessions should be more completely fused in one. She pictured to herself Caesar on the rampage through the quiet and unguarded village. She saw innocent children bleeding in his path. She was herself very fond of the old dog, because he had belonged to her dead brother, and he was always very gentle with her; still she had great faith in his ferocity. She always warned people not to go too near him. She fed him on ascetic fare of corn-mush and cakes, and never fired his dangerous temper with heating and sanguinary diet of flesh and bones. Louisa looked at the old dog munching his simple fare, and thought of her approaching marriage and trembled. Still no anticipation of disorder and confusion in lieu of sweet peace and harmony, no forebodings of Caesar on the rampage, no wild fluttering of her little yellow canary, were sufficient to turn her a hairsbreadth. Joe Dagget had been fond of her and working for her all these years. It was not for her, whatever came to pass, to prove untrue and break his heart. She put the exquisite little studies into her wedding garments, and the time went on until it was only a week before her wedding day. It was a Tuesday evening, and the wedding was to be a week from Wednesday.

There was a full moon that night. About nine o'clock Louisa strolled down the road a little way. There were harvest fields on either hand, bordered by low stone walls. Luxuriant clumps of bushes grew beside the wall, and trees wild cherry and old apple-trees-at intervals. Presently Louisa sat down on the wall and looked about her with mildly sorrowful reflectiveness. Tall shrubs of blueberry and mead ow sweet, all woven together and tangled with blackberry vines and horsebriers, shut her in on either side. She had a little clear space between them. Opposite her, on the other side of the road, was a spreading tree; the moon shone between its boughs, and the leaves twinkled like silver. The road was be spread with a beautiful shifting dapple of silver and shadow; the air was full of a mysterious sweetness. "I wonder if it's wild grapes?" murmured Louisa. She sat there some time. She was just thinking of rising, when she beard footsteps and low voices, and remained quiet. It was a lonely place, and she felt a little timid. She thought she would keep still in the shadow and let the persons, whoever they might be, pass her.

But just before they reached her the voices ceased, and the footsteps. She understood that. their owners had also found seats upon the stone wall. She was wondering if she could not steal away unobserved, when the voice broke the stillness. It was Joe Dagget's. She sat still and listened.

The voice was announced by a loud sigh, which was as familiar as itself. "Well," said Dagget, "you've made up your mind, then, I suppose ?"

“Yes,” returned another voice; “I’m going, day after tomorrow.”

“That’s Lily Dyer,” thought Louisa to herself. The voice embodied itself in her mind. She saw a girl tall and full-figured, with a firm, fair face, looking fairer and firmer in the moonlight, her strong yellow hair braided in a close knot. A girl full of a calm rustic strength and bloom, with a masterful way which might have be seemed a princess. Lily Dyer was a favorite with the village folk; she had just the qualities to arouse the admiration. She was good and handsome and smart. Louisa had often heard her praises sounded.

“Well,” said Joe Dagget, “I ain’t got a word to say.”

“I don’t know what you could say,” returned Lily Dver.

“Not a word to say,” repeated Joe, drawing out the words heavily. Then there was a silence. “ I ain’t sorry,” he began at last, “that that happened yesterday that we kind of let on how we felt to each other. I guess it’s just as well we knew. Of course I can’t do anything any different. I’m going right on an’ get married next week. I ain’t going back on a woman that’s waited for me fourteen years, an’ break her heart.”

“If you should jilt her to-morrow, I wouldn’t have you,” spoke up the girl, with sudden vehemence.

“Well, I ain’t going to give you the chance,” said he; “but I don’t believe you would, either.”

“You’d see I wouldn’t. Honor’s honor, an’ right’s right. An’ I’d never think anything of any man that went against ‘em for me or any other girl you’d find that out, Joe Dagget.”

“Well, you’ll find out fast enough that I ain’t going against ‘em for you or any other girl,” returned he. Their voices sounded almost as if they were angry with each other. Louisa was listening eagerly.

“I’m sorry you feel as if you must go away,” said Joe, “but I don’t know but it’s best.”

“Of course it’s best. I hope you and I have got common-sense.”

“Well, I suppose you’re right.” Suddenly Joe’s voice got an undertone of tenderness. “Say, Lily,” said he, “I’ll get along well enough myself, but I can’t bear to think You don’t suppose you’re going to fret much over it?”

“I guess you’ll find out I sha’n’t fret much over a married man.”

“Well, I hope you won’t-I hope you won’t, Lily. God knows I do. And I hope one of these days you’ll -come across somebody else ”

“I don’t see any reason why I shouldn’t.” Suddenly her tone changed. She spoke in a sweet, clear voice, so loud that she could have been heard across the street. “No, Joe Dagget,” said she, “I’ll never marry any other man as long as I live. I’ve got good sense, an’ I ain’t going to break my heart nor make a fool of myself; but I’m never going to be married, you can be sure of that. I ain’t that sort of a girl to feel this way twice.”

Louisa heard an exclamation and a soft commotion behind the bushes; then Lily spoke again-the voice sounded as if she had risen. “This must be put a stop to,” said she. “We’ve stayed here long enough. I’m going home.”

Louisa sat there in a daze, listening to their retreating steps. After a while she got up and slunk softly home herself. The next day she did her housework methodically; that was as much a matter of course as breathing; but she did not sew on her wedding-clothes. She sat at her window and meditated. In the evening Joe came. Louisa Ellis had never known that she had any diplomacy in her, but when she came to look for it that night she found it, although meek of its kind, among her little feminine weapons. Even now she could hardly believe that she had heard aright, and that she would not do Joe a terrible injury should she break her troth plight. She wanted to sound him without betraying too soon her own inclinations in the matter. She did it successfully, and they finally came to an understanding but it was a difficult thing, for he was as afraid of betraying himself as she.

She never mentioned Lily Dyer. She simply said that while she had no cause of complaint against him, she had lived so long in one way that she shrank from making a change.

“Well, I never shrank, Louisa,” said Dagget. “I’m going to be honest enough to say that I think maybe it’s better this way; but if you’d wanted to keep on, I’d have stuck to you till my dying day. I hope you know that.”

“Yes, I do,” said she.

That night she and Joe parted more tenderly than they had done for a long time. Standing in the door, holding each other’s hands, a last great wave of regretful memory swept over them.

“Well, this ain’t the way we’ve thought it was all going to end, is it, Louisa?” said Joe.

She shook her head. There was a little quiver on her placid face.

“You let me know if there’s ever anything I can do for you,” said he. “I ain’t ever going to forget you, Louisa.” Then he kissed her, and went down the path.

Louisa, all alone by herself that night, wept a little, she hardly knew why, but the next morning, on waking, she felt like a queen who, after fearing lest her domain be wrested away from her, sees it firmly insured in her possession. Now the tall weeds and grasses might cluster around Caesar’s little hermit hut, the snow might fall on its roof year in and year out, but he never would go on a rampage through the unguarded village. Now the little canary might turn itself into a peaceful yellow ball night after night, and have no need to wake and flutter with wild terror against its bars. Louisa could sew linen seams, and distil roses, and dust and polish and fold away in lavender, as long as she listed. That afternoon she sat with her needle-work at the window, and felt fairly steeped in peace. Lily Dyer, tall and erect and blooming, went past; but she felt no qualm. If Louisa Ellis had sold her birthright she did not know it, the taste of the pottage was so delicious, and had been her sole satisfaction for so long. Serenity and placid narrowness had become to her as the birthright itself. She gazed ahead through a long reach of future days strung together like pearls in a rosary, every one like the others, and all smooth and flawless and innocent, and her heart went up in thankfulness. Outside was the fervid sunnier afternoon; the air was filled with the sounds of the busy harvest of men and birds and bees; there were halloos, metallic clattering, sweet calls, and long hummings. Louisa sat, prayerfully numbering her days, like an uncloistered nun.

## 2.9.2 “The Revolt of ‘Mother’”

“Father!”

“What is it?”

“What are them men diggin’ over there in the field for?”

There was a sudden dropping and enlarging of the lower part of the old man’s face, as if some heavy weight had settled therein; he shut his mouth tight, and went on harnessing the great bay mare. He hustled the collar on to her neck with a jerk.

“Father!”

The old man slapped the saddle upon the mare’s back.

“Look here, father, I want to know what them men are diggin’ over in the field for, an’ I’m goin’ to know.”

“I wish you’d go into the house, mother, an’ ‘tend to your own affairs,” the old man said then. He ran his words together, and his speech was almost as inarticulate as a growl.

But the woman understood; it was her most native tongue. “I ain’t goin’ into the house till you tell me what them men are doin’ over there in the field,” said she. Then she stood waiting. She was a small woman, short and straight-waisted like a child in her brown cotton gown. Her forehead was mild and benevolent between the smooth curves of gray hair; there were meek downward lines about her nose and mouth; but her eyes, fixed upon the old man, looked as if the meekness had been the result of her own will, never of the will of another.

They were in the barn, standing before the wide open doors. The spring air, full of the smell of growing grass and unseen blossoms, came in their faces. The deep yard in front was littered with farm wagons and piles of wood; on the edges, close to the fence and the house, the grass was a vivid green, and there were some dandelions. The old man glanced doggedly at his wife as he tightened the last buckles on the harness. She looked as immovable to him as one of the rocks in his pasture-land, bound to the earth with generations of blackberry vines. He slapped the reins over the horse, and started forth from the barn.

“*Father!*” said she.

The old man pulled up. “What is it?”

“I want to know what them men are diggin’ over there in that field for.” “They’re diggin’ a cellar, I s’pose, if you’ve got to know.”

“A cellar for what?”

“A barn.”

“A barn? You ain’t goin’ to build a barn over there where we was goin’ to have a house, father?”

The old man said not another word. He hurried the horse into the farm wagon, and clattered out of the yard, jouncing as sturdily on his seat as a boy.

The woman stood a moment looking after him, then she went out of the barn across a corner of the yard to the house. The house, standing at right angles with the great barn and a long reach of sheds and out-buildings, was infinitesimal compared with them. It was scarcely as commodious for people as the little boxes under the barn eaves were for doves.

A pretty girl’s face, pink and delicate as a flower, was looking out of one of the house windows. She was watching three men who were digging over in the field which bounded the yard near the road line. She turned quietly when the woman entered.

“What are they diggin’ for, mother?” said she. “Did he tell you?” “They’re diggin’ for a cellar for a new barn.”

“Oh, mother, he ain’t goin’ to build another barn?”

“That’s what he says.”

A boy stood before the kitchen glass combing his hair. He combed slowly and painstakingly, arranging his brown hair in a smooth hillock over his forehead. He did not seem to pay any attention to the conversation.

“Sammy, did you know father was goin’ to build a new barn?” asked the girl. The boy combed assiduously.

“Sammy!”

He turned, and showed a face like his father’s under his smooth crest of hair.

“Yes, I s’pose I did,” he said, reluctantly.

“How long have you known it?” asked his mother.

“‘Bout three months, I guess.”

“Why didn’t you tell of it?”

“Didn’t think ‘twould do no good.”

“I don’t see what father wants another barn for,” said the girl, in her sweet, slow voice. She turned again to the window, and stared out at the digging men in the field. Her tender, sweet face was full of a gentle distress. Her forehead was as bald and innocent as a baby’s, with the light hair strained back from it in a row of curl-papers. She was quite large, but her soft curves did not look as if they covered muscles.

Her mother looked sternly at the boy. “Is he goin’ to buy more cows?” said she. The boy did not reply; he was tying his shoes.

“Sammy, I want you to tell me if he’s goin’ to buy more cows.”

“I s’pose he is.”

“How many?”

“Four, I guess.”

His mother said nothing more. She went into the pantry, and there was a clatter of dishes. The boy got his cap from a nail behind

the door, took an old arithmetic from the shelf, and started for school. He was lightly built, but clumsy. He went out of the yard with a curious spring in the hips, that made his loose home-made jacket tilt up in the rear.

The girl went to the sink, and began to wash the dishes that were piled up there. Her mother came promptly out of the pantry, and shoved her aside. “You wipe ‘em,” said she; “I’ll wash. There’s a good many this mornin’.”

The mother plunged her hands vigorously into the water, the girl wiped the plates slowly and dreamily. “Mother,” said she, “don’t you think it’s too bad father’s goin’ to build that new barn, much as we need a decent house to live in?”

Her mother scrubbed a dish fiercely. “You ain’t found out yet we’re women-folks, Nanny Penn,” said she. “You ain’t seen enough of men-folks yet to. One of these days you’ll find it out, an’ then you’ll know that we know only what men-folks think we do, so far as any use of it goes, an’ how we’d ought to reckon men-folks in with Providence, an’ not complain of what they do any more than we do of the weather.”

“I don’t care; I don’t believe George is anything like that, anyhow,” said Nanny. Her delicate face flushed pink, her lips pouted softly, as if she were going to cry.

“You wait an’ see. I guess George Eastman ain’t no better than other men. You hadn’t ought to judge father, though. He can’t help it, ‘cause he don’t look at things jest the way we do. An’ we’ve been pretty comfortable here, after all. The roof don’t leak ain’t never but once that’s one thing. Father’s kept it shingled right up.”

“I do wish we had a parlor.”

“I guess it won’t hurt George Eastman any to come to see you in a nice clean kitchen. I guess a good many girls don’t have as good a place as this. Nobody’s ever heard me complain.”

“I ain’t complained either, mother.”

“Well, I don’t think you’d better, a good father an’ a good home as you’ve got. S’pose your father made you go out an’ work for your livin’? Lots of girls have to that ain’t no stronger an’ better able to than you be.”

Sarah Penn washed the frying-pan with a conclusive air. She scrubbed the outside of it as faithfully as the inside. She was a masterly keeper of her box of a house. Her one livingroom never seemed to have in it any of the dust which the friction of life with inanimate matter produces. She swept, and there seemed to be no dirt to go before the broom; she cleaned, and one could see no difference. She was like an artist so perfect that he has apparently no art. To day she got out a mixing bowl and a board, and rolled some pies, and there was no more flour upon her than upon her daughter who was doing finer work. Nanny was to be married in the fall, and she was sewing on some white cambric and embroidery. She sewed industriously while her mother cooked, her soft milk white hands and wrists showed whiter than her delicate work.

“We must have the stove moved out in the shed before long,” said Mrs. Penn.

“Talk about not havin’ things, it’s been a real blessin’ to be able to put a stove up in that shed in hot weather. Father did one good thing when he fixed that stove-pipe out there.”

Sarah Penn’s face as she rolled her pies had that expression of meek vigor which might have characterized one of the New Testament saints. She was making mince-pies. Her husband, Adoniram Penn, liked them better than any other kind. She baked twice a week. Adoniram often liked a piece of pie between meals. She hurried this morning. It had been later than usual when she began, and she wanted to have a pie baked for dinner. However deep a resentment she might be forced to hold against her husband, she would never fail in sedulous attention to his wants.

Nobility of character manifests itself at loop-holes when it is not provided with large doors. Sarah Penn’s showed itself to-day in flaky dishes of pastry. So she made the pies faithfully, while across the table she could see, when she glanced up from her work, the sight that rankled in her patient and steadfast soul the digging of the cellar of the new barn in the place where Adoniram forty years ago had promised her their new house should stand.

The pies were done for dinner. Adoniram and Sammy were home a few minutes after twelve o’clock. The dinner was eaten with serious haste. There was never much conversation at the table in the Penn family. Adoniram asked a blessing, and they ate promptly, then rose up and went about their work.

Sammy went back to school, taking soft sly lopes out of the yard like a rabbit. He wanted a game of marbles before school, and

feared his father would give him some chores to do. Adoniram hastened to the door and called after him, but he was out of sight.

“I don’t see what you let him go for, mother,” said he. “I wanted him to help me unload that wood.”

Adoniram went to work out in the yard unloading wood from the wagon. Sarah put away the dinner dishes, while Nanny took down her curl-papers and changed her dress. She was going down to the store to buy some more embroidery and thread.

When Nanny was gone, Mrs. Penn went to the door. “Father!” she called. “Well, what is it!”

“I want to see you jest a minute, father.”

“I can’t leave this wood nohow. I’ve got to git it unloaded an’ go for a load of gravel afore two o’clock. Sammy had ought to helped me. You hadn’t ought to let him go to school so early.”

“I want to see you jest a minute.”

“I tell ye I can’t, nohow, mother.”

“Father, you come here.” Sarah Penn stood in the door like a queen; she held her head as if it bore a crown; there was that patience which makes authority royal in her voice. Adoniram went.

Mrs. Penn led the way into the kitchen, and pointed to a chair. “Sit down, father,” said she; “I’ve got somethin’ I want to say to you.”

He sat down heavily; his face was quite stolid, but he looked at her with restive eyes. “Well, what is it, mother?”

“I want to know what you’re buildin’ that new barn for, father?”

“I ain’t got nothin’ to say about it.”

“It can’t be you think you need another barn?”

“I tell ye I ain’t got nothin’ to say about it, mother; an’ I ain’t goin’ to say nothin’.” “Be you goin’ to buy more cows?”

Adoniram did not reply; he shut his mouth tight.

“I know you be, as well as I want to. Now, father, look here” Sarah Penn had not sat down; she stood before her husband in the humble fashion of a Scripture woman “I’m goin’ to talk real plain to you; I never have sence I married you, but I’m goin’ to now. I ain’t never complained, an’ I ain’t goin’ to complain now, but I’m goin’ to talk plain. You see this room here, father; you look at it well. You see there ain’t no carpet on the floor, an’ you see the paper is all dirty, an’ droppin’ off the walls. We ain’t had no new paper on it for ten year, an’ then I put it on myself, an’ it didn’t cost but ninepence a roll. You see this room, father; it’s all the one I’ve had to work in an’ eat in an’ sit in sence we was married. There ain’t another woman in the whole town whose husband ain’t got half the means you have but what’s got better. It’s all the room Nanny’s got to have her company in; an’ there ain’t one of her mates but what’s got better, an’ their fathers not so able as hers is. It’s all the room she’ll have to be married in. What would you have thought, father, if we had had our weddin’ in a room no better than this? I was married in my mother’s parlor, with a carpet on the floor, an’ stuffed furniture, an’ a mahogany card-table. An’ this is all the room my daughter will have to be married in. Look here, father!”

Sarah Penn went across the room as though it were a tragic stage. She flung open a door and disclosed a tiny bedroom, only large enough for a bed and bureau, with a path between. “There, father,” said she “there’s all the room I’ve had to sleep in forty year. All my children were born there the two that died, an’ the two that’s livin’. I was sick with a fever there.”

She stepped to another door and opened it. It led into the small, ill-lighted pantry. “Here,” said she, “is all the buttery I’ve got every place I’ve got for my dishes, to set away my victuals in, an’ to keep my milk pans in. Father, I’ve been takin’ care of the milk of six cows in this place, an’ now you’re goin’ to build a new barn, an’ keep more cows, an’ give me more to do in it.”

She threw open another door. A narrow crooked flight of stairs wound upward from it. “There, father,” said she, “I want you to look at the stairs that go up to them two unfinished chambers that are all the places our son an’ daughter have had to sleep in all their lives. There ain’t a prettier girl in town nor a more ladylike one than Nanny, an’ that’s the place she has to sleep in. It ain’t so good as your horse’s stall; it ain’t so warm an’ tight.”

Sarah Penn went back and stood before her husband. “Now, father,” said she, “I want to know if you think you’re doin’ right an’ accordin’ to what you profess. Here, when we was married, forty year ago, you promised me faithful that we should have a new house built in that lot over in the field before the year was out. You said you had money enough, an’ you wouldn’t ask me to live in no such place as this. It is forty year now, an’ you’ve been makin’ more money, an’ I’ve been savin’ of it for you ever since, an’ you ain’t built no house yet. You’ve built sheds an’ cow-houses an’ one new barn, an’ now you’re goin’ to build another. Father, I want to know if you think it’s right. You’re lodgin’ your dumb beasts better than you are your own flesh an’ blood. I want to know if you think it’s right.”

“I ain’t got nothin’ to say.”

“You can’t say nothin’ without ownin’ it ain’t right, father. An’ there’s another thing I ain’t complained; I’ve got along forty year, an’ I s’pose I should forty more, if it wa’n’t for that if we don’t have another house. Nanny she can’t live with us after she’s married. She’ll have to go somewheres else to live away from us, an’ it don’t seem as if I could have it so, noways, father. She wa’n’t ever strong. She’s got considerable color, but there wa’n’t never any backbone to her. I’ve always took the heft of everything off her, an’ she ain’t fit to keep house an’ do everything herself. She’ll be all worn out inside of a year. Think of her doin’ all the washin’ an’ ironin’ an’ bakin’ with them soft white hands an’ arms, an’ sweepin’! I can’t have it so, noways, father.”

Mrs. Penn’s face was burning; her mild eyes gleamed. She had pleaded her little cause like a Webster; she had ranged from severity to pathos; but her opponent employed that obstinate silence which makes eloquence futile with mocking echoes. Adoniram arose clumsily.

“Father, ain’t you got nothin’ to say?” said Mrs. Penn.

“I’ve got to go off after that load of gravel. I can’t stan’ here talkin’ all day.” “Father, won’t you think it over, an’ have a house built there instead of a barn?” “I ain’t got nothin’ to say.”

Adoniram shuffled out. Mrs. Penn went into her bedroom. When she came out, her eyes were red. She had a roll of unbleached cotton cloth. She spread it out on the kitchen table, and began cutting out some shirts for her husband. The men over in the field had a team to help them this afternoon; she could hear their halloos. She had a scanty pattern for the shirts; she had to plan and piece the sleeves.

Nanny came home with her embroidery, and sat down with her needlework. She had taken down her curl-papers, and there was a soft roll of fair hair like an aureole over her forehead; her face was as delicately fine and clear as porcelain. Suddenly she looked up, and the tender red flamed all over her face and neck. “Mother,” said she.

“What say?”

“I’ve been thinking I don’t see how we’re goin’ to have any wedding in this room. I’d be ashamed to have his folks come if we didn’t have anybody else.”

“Mebbe we can have some new paper before then; I can put it on. I guess you won’t have no call to be ashamed of your belongin’s.”

“We might have the wedding in the new barn,” said Nanny, with gentle pettishness. “Why, mother, what makes you look so?”

Mrs. Penn had started, and was staring at her with a curious expression. She turned again to her work, and spread out a pattern carefully on the cloth. “Nothin’,” said she.

Presently Adoniram clattered out of the yard in his two-wheeled dump cart, standing as proudly upright as a Roman charioteer. Mrs. Penn opened the door and stood there a minute looking out; the halloos of the men sounded louder.

It seemed to her all through the spring months that she heard nothing but the halloos and the noises of saws and hammers. The new barn grew fast. It was a fine edifice for this little village. Men came on pleasant Sundays, in their meeting suits and clean shirt bosoms, and stood around it admiringly. Mrs. Penn did not speak of it, and Adoniram did not mention it to her, although sometimes, upon a return from inspecting it, he bore himself with injured dignity.

“It’s a strange thing how your mother feels about the new barn,” he said, confidentially, to Sammy one day.

Sammy only grunted after an odd fashion for a boy; he had learned it from his father.

The barn was all completed ready for use by the third week in July. Adoniram had planned to move his stock in on Wednesday; on Tuesday he received a letter which changed his plans. He came in with it early in the morning. “Sammy’s been to the post-office,” said he, “an’ I’ve got a letter from Hiram.” Hiram was Mrs. Penn’s brother, who lived in Vermont.

“Well,” said Mrs. Penn, “what does he say about the folks?”

“I guess they’re all right. He says he thinks if I come up country right off there’s a chance to buy jest the kind of a horse I want.” He stared reflectively out of the window at the new barn.

Mrs. Penn was making pies. She went on clapping the rolling-pin into the crust, although she was very pale, and her heart beat loudly.

“I dun’ know but what I’d better go,” said Adoniram. “I hate to go off jest now, right in the midst of hayin’, but the ten-acre lot’s cut, an’ I guess Rufus an’ the others can git along without me three or four days. I can’t get a horse round here to suit me, nohow, an’ I’ve got to have another for all that wood-haulin’ in the fall. I told Hiram to watch out, an’ if he got wind of a good horse to let me know. I guess I’d better go.”

“I’ll get out your clean shirt an’ collar,” said Mrs. Penn calmly.

She laid out Adoniram’s Sunday suit and his clean clothes on the bed in the little bedroom. She got his shaving-water and razor ready. At last she buttoned on his collar and fastened his black cravat.

Adoniram never wore his collar and cravat except on extra occasions. He held his head high, with a rasped dignity. When he was all ready, with his coat and hat brushed, and a lunch of pie and cheese in a paper bag, he hesitated on the threshold of the door. He looked at his wife, and his manner was defiantly apologetic. “*If* them cows come to-day, Sammy can drive ‘em into the new barn,” said he; “an’ when they bring the hay up, they can pitch it in there.”

“Well,” replied Mrs. Penn.

Adoniram set his shaven face ahead and started. When he had cleared the door-step, he turned and looked back with a kind of nervous solemnity. “I shall be back by Saturday if nothin’ happens,” said he.

“Do be careful, father,” returned his wife.

She stood in the door with Nanny at her elbow and watched him out of sight. Her eyes had a strange, doubtful expression in them; her peaceful forehead was contracted. She went in, and about her baking again. Nanny sat sewing. Her wedding-day was drawing nearer, and she was getting pale and thin with her steady sewing. Her mother kept glancing at her.

“Have you got that pain in your side this mornin’?” she asked.

“A little.”

Mrs. Penn’s face, as she worked, changed, her perplexed forehead smoothed, her eyes were steady, her lips firmly set. She formed a maxim for herself, although incoherently with her unlettered thoughts. “Unsolicited opportunities are the guide-posts of the Lord to the new roads of life,” she repeated in effect, and she made up her mind to her course of action.

“S’posin’ I *had* wrote to Hiram,” she muttered once, when she was in the pantry “s’posin’ I had wrote, an’ asked him if he knew of any horse? But I didn’t, an’ father’s goin’ wa’n’t none of my doin’. It looks like a providence.” Her voice rang out quite loud at the last.

“What you talkin’ about, mother?” called Nanny.

“Nothin’.”

Mrs. Penn hurried her baking; at eleven o’clock it was all done. The load of hay from the west field came slowly down the cart track, and drew up at the new barn. Mrs. Penn ran out. “Stop!” she screamed “stop!”

The men stopped and looked; Sammy upreared from the top of the load, and stared at his mother.

“Stop!” she cried out again. “Don’t you put the hay in that barn; put it in the old one.”

“Why, he said to put it in here,” returned one of the haymakers, wonderingly. He was a young man, a neighbor’s son, whom Adoniram hired by the year to help on the farm.

“Don’t you put the hay in the new barn; there’s room enough in the old one, ain’t there?” said Mrs. Penn.

“Room enough,” returned the hired man, in his thick, rustic tones. “Didn’t need the new barn, nohow, far as room’s concerned. Well, I s’pose he changed his mind.” He took hold of the horses’ bridles.

Mrs. Penn went back to the house. Soon the kitchen windows were darkened, and a fragrance like warm honey came into the room.

Nanny laid down her work. “I thought father wanted them to put the hay into the new barn?” she said, wonderingly.

“It’s all right,” replied her mother.

Sammy slid down from the load of hay, and came in to see if dinner was ready. “I ain’t goin’ to get a regular dinner to-day, as long as father’s gone,” said his mother. “I’ve let the fire go out. You can have some bread an’ milk an’ pie. I thought we could get along.” She set out some bowls of milk, some bread, and a pie on the kitchen table. “You’d better eat your dinner now,” said she. “You might jest as well get through with it. I want you to help me afterward.”

Nanny and Sammy stared at each other. There was something strange in their mother’s manner. Mrs. Penn did not eat anything herself. She went into the pantry, and they heard her moving dishes while they ate. Presently she came out with a pile of plates. She got the clothes basket out of the shed, and packed them in it. Nanny and Sammy watched. She brought out cups and saucers, and put them in with the plates.

“What you goin’ to do, mother?” inquired Nanny, in a timid voice. A sense of something unusual made her tremble, as if it were a ghost. Sammy rolled his eyes over his pie.

“You’ll see what I’m goin’ to do,” replied Mrs. Penn. “If you’re through, Nanny, I want you to go up stairs an’ pack up your things; an’ I want you, Sammy, to help me take down the bed in the bedroom.”

“Oh, mother, what for?” gasped Nanny.

“You’ll see.”

During the next few hours a feat was performed by this simple, pious New England mother which was equal in its way to Wolfe’s storming of the Heights of Abraham. It took no more genius and audacity of bravery for Wolfe to cheer his wondering soldiers up those steep precipices, under the sleeping eyes of the enemy, than for Sarah Penn, at the head of her children, to move all their little household goods into the new barn while her husband was away.

Nanny and Sammy followed their mother’s instructions without a murmur; indeed, they were overawed. There is a certain uncanny and superhuman quality about all such purely original undertakings as their mother’s was to them. Nanny went back and forth with her light loads, and Sammy tugged with sober energy.

At five o’clock in the afternoon the little house in which the Penns had lived for forty years had emptied itself into the new barn.

Every builder builds somewhat for unknown purposes, and is in a measure a prophet. The architect of Adoniram Penn’s barn, while he designed it for the comfort of four-footed animals, had planned better than he knew for the comfort of humans. Sarah Penn saw at a glance its possibilities. Those great box-stalls, with quilts hung before them, would make better bedrooms than the one she had occupied for forty years, and there was a tight carriage-room. The harness-room, with its chimney and shelves, would make a kitchen of her dreams. The great middle space would make a parlor, by-and-by, fit for a palace. Up stairs there was as much room as down. With partitions and windows, what a house would there be! Sarah looked at the row of stanchions before the allotted space for cows, and reflected that she would have her front entry there.

At six o’clock the stove was up in the harness-room, the kettle was boiling, and the table set for tea. It looked almost as home-like as the abandoned house across the yard had ever done. The young hired man milked, and Sarah directed him calmly to bring the milk to the new barn. He came gaping, dropping little blots of foam from the brimming pails on the grass. Before the next morning he had spread the story of Adoniram Penn’s wife moving into the new barn all over the little village. Men assembled in the store and talked it over, women with shawls over their heads scuttled into each other’s houses before their work was done. Any deviation from the ordinary course of life in this quiet town was enough to stop all progress in it. Everybody paused to look at the staid, independent figure on the side track. There was a difference of opinion with regard to her. Some held her to be insane;

some, of a lawless and rebellious spirit.

Friday the minister went to see her. It was in the forenoon, and she was at the barn door shelling pease for dinner. She looked up and returned his salutation with dignity, then she went on with her work. She did not invite him in. The saintly expression of her face remained fixed, but there was an angry flush over it.

The minister stood awkwardly before her, and talked. She handled the pease as if they were bullets. At last she looked up, and her eyes showed the spirit that her meek front had covered for a lifetime.

“There ain’t no use talkin’, Mr. Hersey,” said she. “I’ve thought it all over an’ over, an’ I believe I’m doin’ what’s right. I’ve made it the subject of prayer, an’ it’s betwixt me an’ the Lord an’ Adoniram. There ain’t no call for nobody else to worry about it.”

“Well, of course, if you have brought it to the Lord in prayer, and feel satisfied that you are doing right, Mrs. Penn,” said the minister, helplessly. His thin gray-bearded face was pathetic. He was a sickly man; his youthful confidence had cooled; he had to scourge himself up to some of his pastoral duties as relentlessly as a Catholic ascetic, and then he was prostrated by the smart.

“I think it’s right jest as much as I think it was right for our forefathers to come over from the old country ‘cause they didn’t have what belonged to ‘em,” said Mrs. Penn. She arose. The barn threshold might have been Plymouth Rock from her bearing. “I don’t doubt you mean well, Mr. Hersey,” said she, “but there are things people hadn’t ought to interfere with. I’ve been a member of the church for over forty year. I’ve got my own mind an’ my own feet, an’ I’m goin’ to think my own thoughts an’ go my own ways, an’ nobody but the Lord is goin’ to dictate to me unless I’ve a mind to have him. Won’t you come in an’ set down? How is Mis’ Hersey?”

“She is well, I thank you,” replied the minister. He added some more perplexed apologetic remarks; then he retreated.

He could expound the intricacies of every character study in the Scriptures, he was competent to grasp the Pilgrim Fathers and all historical innovators, but Sarah Penn was beyond him. He could deal with primal cases, but parallel ones worsted him. But, after all, although it was aside from his province, he wondered more how Adoniram Penn would deal with his wife than how the Lord would. Everybody shared the wonder. When Adoniram’s four new cows arrived, Sarah ordered three to be put in the old barn, the other in the house shed where the cooking-stove had stood. That added to the excitement. It was whispered that all four cows were domiciled in the house.

Toward sunset on Saturday, when Adoniram was expected home, there was a knot of men in the road near the new barn. The hired man had milked, but he still hung around the premises. Sarah Penn had supper all ready. There were brown bread and baked beans and a custard pie; it was the supper that Adoniram loved on a Saturday night. She had on a clean calico, and she bore herself imperturbably. Nanny and Sammy kept close at her heels. Their eyes were large, and Nanny was full of nervous tremors. Still there was to them more pleasant excitement than anything else. An inborn confidence in their mother over their father asserted itself.

Sammy looked out of the harness-room window. “There he is,” he announced, in an awed whisper. He and Nanny peeped around the casing. Mrs. Penn kept on about her work. The children watched Adoniram leave the new horse standing in the drive while he went to the house door. It was fastened. Then he went around to the shed. That door was seldom locked, even when the family was away. The thought how her father would be confronted by the cow flashed upon Nanny. There was a hysterical sob in her throat. Adoniram emerged from the shed and stood looking about in a dazed fashion. His lips moved; he was saying something, but they could not hear what it was. The hired man was peeping around a corner of the old barn, but nobody saw him.

Adoniram took the new horse by the bridle and led him across the yard to the new barn. Nanny and Sammy slunk close to their mother. The barn doors rolled back, and there stood Adoniram, with the long mild face of the great Canadian farm horse looking over his shoulder.

Nanny kept behind her mother, but Sammy stepped suddenly forward, and stood in front of her.

Adoniram stared at the group. “What on airth you all down here for?” said he. “What’s the matter over to the house?”

“We’ve come here to live, father,” said Sammy. His shrill voice quavered out bravely.

“What” Adoniram sniffed “what is it smells like cookin’?” said he. He stepped forward and looked in the open door of the harness room. Then he turned to his wife. His old bristling face was pale and frightened. “What on airth does this mean, mother?” he gasped.

“You come in here, father,” said Sarah. She led the way into the harness-room and shut the door. “Now, father,” said she, “you needn’t be scared. I ain’t crazy. There ain’t nothin’ to be upset over. But we’ve come here to live, an’ we’re goin’ to live here. We’ve got jest as good a right here as new horses an’ cows. The house wa’n’t fit for us to live in any longer, an’ I made up my mind I wa’n’t goin’ to stay there. I’ve done my duty by you forty year, an’ I’m goin’ to do it now; but I’m goin’ to live here. You’ve got to put in some windows and partitions; an’ you’ll have to buy some furniture.”

“Why, mother!” the old man gasped.

“You’d better take your coat off an’ get washed there’s the wash-basin an’ then we’ll have supper.”

“Why, mother!”

Sammy went past the window, leading the new horse to the old barn. The old man saw him, and shook his head speechlessly. He tried to take off his coat, but his arms seemed to lack the power. His wife helped him. She poured some water into the tin basin, and put in a piece of soap. She got the comb and brush, and smoothed his thin gray hair after he had washed. Then she put the beans, hot bread, and tea on the table. Sammy came in, and the family drew up. Adoniram sat looking dazedly at his plate, and they waited.

“Ain’t you goin’ to ask a blessin’, father?” said Sarah.

And the old man bent his head and mumbled.

All through the meal he stopped eating at intervals, and stared furtively at his wife; but he ate well. The home food tasted good to him, and his old frame was too sturdily healthy to be affected by his mind. But after supper he went out, and sat down on the step of the smaller door at the right of the barn, through which he had meant his Jerseys to pass in stately file, but which Sarah designed for her front house door, and he leaned his head on his hands.

After the supper dishes were cleared away and the milk-pans washed, Sarah went out to him. The twilight was deepening. There was a clear green glow in the sky. Before them stretched the smooth level of field; in the distance was a cluster of hay-stacks like the huts of a village; the air was very cool and calm and sweet. The landscape might have been an ideal one of peace.

Sarah bent over and touched her husband on one of his thin, sinewy shoulders. “Father!”

The old man’s shoulders heaved: he was weeping.

“Why, don’t do so, father,” said Sarah.

“I’ll put up the partitions, an’ everything you want, mother.”

Sarah put her apron up to her face; she was overcome by her own triumph. Adoniram was like a fortress whose walls had no active resistance, and went down the instant the right besieging tools were used. “Why, mother,” he said, hoarsely, “I hadn’t no idee you was so set on’t as all this comes to.”

## 2.9.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. In Freeman’s “A New England Nun,” analyze the confinement or restraint of the bird and the dog in the story and examine how such images contribute to the story’s theme.
2. In “A New England Nun,” compare Louisa Ellis and Lily Dyer. How are they similar or different?
3. Examine the concept of “order” in Freeman’s “A New England Nun.” Why is Louisa so concerned with order?
4. In “A New England Nun,” why is Louisa likened to an “artist” and later a “queen” in the story?
5. In Freeman’s “Revolt of Mother,” examine the term “revolt” in the title. What does it mean in terms of the story’s theme?
6. Examine the central conflict in “Revolt of Mother.” Who is revolting, and what is he or she rebelling against both literally and symbolically?
7. What happens to Adoniram when he changes his mind at the end of the story? What kind of conversion does he experience?

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# 4.9: Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860 - 1935)



**Image 2.9 | Charlotte Perkins Gilman, circa 1900**
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As she writes in her autobiography, Charlotte Perkins Gilman had one overriding goal in her life: "the improvement of the human race." The niece of both the abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe and the suffragist Isabella Beecher Hooker, Gilman was one of the most important feminist writers, editors, and activists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She led an unconventional life that directly inspired her poetry, fiction, and nonfiction alike. At the age of thirty-four, she divorced a husband who sought to "domesticate" her, leaving both him and her daughter to pursue an independent career authoring works of poetry, fiction, and social criticism; editing and publishing her own feminist magazine, *Forerunner*; and lecturing for the **American Woman Suffrage Association** and other organizations on the need for social reform to ensure equality between men and women. In the 1890s, Gilman published three works that solidified her reputation as both a major American writer and a groundbreaking feminist theorist: a well-received collection of feminist poems, *In This Our World* (1893); the groundbreaking work of social theory, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (1898), in which she criticized the economic dependency of women upon men; and the shocking short story included in this chapter, "The Yellow Wall Paper" (1892). Gilman remarried in 1900 and over the course of the first three decades of the twentieth century continued to edit, lecture, and publish works that advocated for the progressive reform of society. In her utopian novel *Herland* (1915), for example, she imagines a peaceful and ecologically sustainable society comprised solely of women who use technology and not men to reproduce.

While presented in the guise of a gothic tale of terror, "The Yellow Wall Paper" is a fine example of political realism. Through this terrifying story of a woman locked in an ancient manor and haunted by a shadowy figure, Gilman shows that the real relationship between married men and women in her time is not one of equality but of domination and dependency. Gilman based the story on her own life. After giving birth to her daughter, Gilman fell into a state of depression and was sent to a clinic for treatment. Her doctor, a world famous neurologist, advised her to quit all creative and intellectual activity and instead dedicate herself wholly to a private domestic routine. However, this so called "**rest-cure**" only further deepened Gilman's depression and so she sought and found a cure for herself in her true callings: the literary and political work to which she dedicated the rest of her life.

## 2.11.1 "The Yellow Wall-Paper"

It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer.

A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity but that would be asking too much of fate!

Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it.

Else, why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted? John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.

John is a physician, and PERHAPS (I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind) PERHAPS that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see he does not believe I am sick!

And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression a slight hysterical tendency what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing.

So I take phosphates or phosphites whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again.

Personally, I disagree with their ideas.

Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.

But what is one to do?

I did write for a while in spite of them; but it DOES exhaust me a good deal having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition.

I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad.

So I will let it alone and talk about the house.

The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people.

There is a DELICIOUS garden! I never saw such a garden large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape covered arbors with seats under them.

There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now.

There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and coheirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years.

That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don't care there is something strange about the house I can feel it.

I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a DRAUGHT, and shut the window.

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition.

But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself before him, at least, and that makes me very tired.

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it.

He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.

He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more.

He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. “Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear,” said he, “and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time.” So we took the nursery at the top of the house.

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys’ school had used it. It is stripped off the paper in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life.

One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.

It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.

The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others.

No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long.

There comes John, and I must put this away, he hates to have me write a word.

We have been here two weeks, and I haven’t felt like writing before, since that first day.

I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious nursery, and there is nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength.

John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious.

I am glad my case is not serious!

But these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing.

John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no REASON to suffer, and that satisfies him.

Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!

I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!

Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able, to dress and entertain, and order things.

It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!

And yet I CANNOT be with him, it makes me so nervous.

I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wall-paper!

At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterwards he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies.

He said that after the wall-paper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs, and so on. “You know the place is doing you good,” he said, “and really, dear, I don’t care to renovate the house just for a three months’ rental.”

“Then do let us go downstairs,” I said, “there are such pretty rooms there.”

Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down to the cellar, if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain.

But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things.

It is an airy and comfortable room as any one need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim.

I’m really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.

Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deepshaded arbors, the riotous old-fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees.

Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a little private wharf belonging to the estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.

I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me.

But I find I get pretty tired when I try.

It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work. When I get really well, John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says he would as soon put fireworks in my pillow-case as to let me have those stimulating people about now.

I wish I could get well faster.

But I must not think about that. This paper looks to me as if it KNEW what a vicious influence it had!

There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down.

I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breadths didn’t match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other.

I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy store.

I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big, old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.

I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe.

The furniture in this room is no worse than inharmonious, however, for we had to bring it all from downstairs. I suppose when this was used as a playroom they had to take the nursery things out, and no wonder! I never saw such ravages as the children have made here.

The wall paper, as I said before, is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother they must have had perseverance as well as hatred.

Then the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.

But I don’t mind it a bit only the paper.

There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing.

She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!

But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows.

There is one that commands the road, a lovely shaded winding road, and one that just looks off over the country. A lovely country, too, full of great elms and velvet meadows.

This wall-paper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then.

But in the places where it isn't faded and where the sun is just so I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.

There's sister on the stairs!

Well, the Fourth of July is over! The people are gone and I am tired out. John thought it might do me good to see a little company, so we just had mother and Nellie and the children down for a week.

Of course I didn't do a thing. Jennie sees to everything now.

But it tired me all the same.

John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall. But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so!

Besides, it is such an undertaking to go so far.

I don't feel as if it was worth while to turn my hand over for anything, and I'm getting dreadfully fretful and querulous.

I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.

Of course I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone. And I am alone a good deal just now. John is kept in town very often by serious cases, and Jennie is good and lets me alone when I want her to.

So I walk a little in the garden or down that lovely lane, sit on the porch under the roses, and lie down up here a good deal.

I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wall-paper. Perhaps BECAUSE of the wall-paper.

It dwells in my mind so!

I lie here on this great immovable bed it is nailed down, I believe and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we'll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I WILL follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of.

It is repeated, of course, by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes a kind of "debased Romanesque" with delirium tremens go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity.

But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.

The whole thing goes horizontally, too, at least it seems so, and I exhaust myself in trying to distinguish the order of its going in that direction.

They have used a horizontal breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion.

There is one end of the room where it is almost intact, and there, when the crosslights fade and the low sun shines directly upon it, I can almost fancy radiation after all, the interminable grotesques seem to form around a common centre and rush off in headlong plunges of equal distraction.

It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap I guess. I don't know why I should write this.

I don't want to.

I don't feel able.

And I know John would think it absurd. But I MUST say what I feel and think in some way it is such a relief!

But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief.

Half the time now I am awfully lazy, and lie down ever so much.

John says I musn't lose my strength, and has me take cod liver oil and lots of tonics and things, to say nothing of ale and wine and rare meat.

Dear John! He loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick. I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia.

But he said I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there; and I did not make out a very good case for myself, for I was crying before I had finished.

It is getting to be a great effort for me to think straight. Just this nervous weakness I suppose.

And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head.

He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of myself for his sake, and keep well.

He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me.

There's one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wallpaper.

If we had not used it, that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn't have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds.

I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all, I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

Of course I never mention it to them any more I am too wise, but I keep watch of it all the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.

Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.

It is always the same shape, only very numerous.

And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern.

I don't like it a bit. I wonder I begin to think I wish John would take me away from here!

It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so.

But I tried it last night.

It was moonlight. The moon shines in all around just as the sun does.

I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another.

John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wall-paper till I felt creepy.

The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.

I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper DID move, and when

I came back John was awake.

“What is it, little girl?” he said. “Don’t go walking about like that you’ll get cold.”

I though it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished he would take me away.

“Why darling!” said he, “our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can’t see how to leave before.

“The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now.

Of course if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you.”

“I don’t weigh a bit more,” said I, “nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening when you are here, but it is worse in the morning when you are away!”

“Bless her little heart!” said he with a big hug, “she shall be as sick as she pleases! But now let’s improve the shining hours by going to sleep, and talk about it in the morning!”

“And you won’t go away?” I asked gloomily.

“Why, how can I, dear? It is only three weeks more and then we will take a nice little trip of a few days while Jennie is getting the house ready. Really dear you are better!”

“Better in body perhaps ” I began, and stopped short, for he sat up straight and looked at me with such a stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word.

“My darling,” said he, “I beg of you, for my sake and for our child’s sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?”

So of course I said no more on that score, and we went to sleep before long. He thought I was asleep first, but I wasn’t, and lay there for hours trying to decide whether that front pattern and the back pattern really did move together or separately.

On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind.

The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing.

You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well underway in following, it turns a back-somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.

The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions why, that is something like it.

That is, sometimes!

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.

When the sun shoots in through the east window I always watch for that first long, straight ray it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it.

That is why I watch it always.

By moonlight the moon shines in all night when there is a moon I wouldn't know it was the same paper.

At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candle light, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.

I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman.

By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.

I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can. Indeed he started the habit by making me lie down for an hour after each meal. It is a very bad habit I am convinced, for you see I don't sleep.

And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake O no!

The fact is I am getting a little afraid of John.

He seems very queer sometimes, and even Jennie has an inexplicable look.

It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis, that perhaps it is the paper!

I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times LOOKING AT THE PAPER! And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once.

She didn't know I was in the room, and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper she turned around as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry asked me why I should frighten her so!

Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow smooches on all my clothes and John's, and she wished we would be more careful!

Did not that sound innocent? But I know she was studying that pattern, and I am determined that nobody shall find it out but myself!

Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet than I was.

John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wall-paper.

I turned it off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was

BECAUSE of the wall-paper he would make fun of me. He might even want to take me away.

I don't want to leave now until I have found it out. There is a week more, and I think that will be enough.

I'm feeling ever so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime.

In the daytime it is tiresome and perplexing.

There are always new shoots on the fungus, and new shades of yellow all over it. I cannot keep count of them, though I have tried conscientiously.

It is the strangest yellow, that wall-paper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things. But there is something else about that paper the smell! I noticed it the moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open or not, the smell is here. It creeps all over the house.

I find it hovering in the dining-room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs.

It gets into my hair.

Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like.

It is not bad at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful, I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me.

It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house to reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the COLOR of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mopboard. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even SMOOCH, as if it had been rubbed over and over.

I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round round and round and round it makes me dizzy!

I really have discovered something at last.

Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out. The front pattern DOES move and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it! Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over.

Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard.

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads.

They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and makes their eyes white!

If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.

I think that woman gets out in the daytime!

And I'll tell you why privately I've seen her!

I can see her out of every one of my windows!

It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.

I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines.

I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight!

I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know

John would suspect something at once.

And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another room! Besides, I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.

I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once.

But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time.

And though I always see her, she MAY be able to creep faster than I can turn! I have watched her sometimes away off in the open

country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind.

If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little.

I have found out another funny thing, but I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much.

There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes.

And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give.

She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.

John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet!

He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind. As if I couldn't see through him!

Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months.

It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are secretly affected by it. Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John is to stay in town over night, and won't be out until this evening.

Jennie wanted to sleep with me the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her. I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

A strip about as high as my head and half around the room.

And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me, I declared I would finish it to day!

We go away to-morrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before.

Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing.

She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired. How she betrayed herself that time!

But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me not ALIVE!

She tried to get me out of the room it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it.

We shall sleep downstairs to-night, and take the boat home to-morrow. I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.

How those children did tear about here!

This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work.

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path.

I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes. I want to astonish him.

I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her!

But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on!

This bed will NOT move!

I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner but it hurt my teeth.

Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing on the floor. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it! All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek with derision!

I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try.

Besides I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued.

I don't like to LOOK out of the windows even there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.

I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did?

But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope you don't get ME out in the road there!

I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard!

It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please!

I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jennie asks me to.

For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow.

But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way. Why there's John at the door!

It is no use, young man, you can't open it!

How he does call and pound!

Now he's crying for an axe.

It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door!

"John dear!" said I in the gentlest voice, "the key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf!"

That silenced him for a few moments.

Then he said very quietly indeed, "Open the door, my darling!"

"I can't," said I. "The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!" And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it of course, and came in. He stopped short by the door.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "For God's sake, what are you doing!"

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

"I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!

## 2.11.2 Reading and Review Questions

1. As you read "The Yellow Wall-Paper," you will be tempted to diagnose the narrator as suffering from postpartum depression. However, does the source of the narrator's lingering illness reside entirely in her body? Consider other causes for her ongoing malaise. Why isn't she getting better?

2. Consider how the narrator's loving doctor-husband John talks to and controls her. What does John allow and, more importantly, forbid his sick wife to think and do?
3. The narrator of this story is unreliable as she is suffering from mental illness, which leads her to misinterpret the nature of her confinement. For instance, the narrator presumes that she is confined within a child's former playroom. Close-read the details of the story's setting, contrasting the narrator's interpretation of the details of her room the bars on the windows, for instance with your own sense of what these things mean.

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

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

5.3: Strategies for Starting Your Cultural Identity Paper

5.4: Writing about History and Culture from a New Historical Perspective

5.5: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Exercises)

5.6: Writing about Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Identity (Summary)



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# 5.1: 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 5.1.1: 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 5.1.2: 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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# 5.2: 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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# 5.3: 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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# 5.4: 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.

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# 5.5: 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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# 5.6: 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


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- 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.
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- LaCapra, Dominick, ed. *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.
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- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Vintage, 1993.


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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Subjects: Spanish (sorted by popularity) - Project Gutenberg


**6.01: Front Matter**

Table of Contents

TitlePage

InfoPage

Licensing

6.1: Introduction to Chicano Literature- Mexican-American Narrative

6.2: Historical Antecedents

6.3: Literatura prehispánica

6.4: Hispanoamérica 1930-1969

6.5: Tomás Rivera

6.6: Sandra Cisneros

6.7: Richard Vásquez

6.8: Hispanoamérica 1970-2010

6.9: Mexican-American Poetry- Los Chicanos

6.10: Cómo leer la poesía

6.11: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales

6.12: Alurista

6.13: Francisco X. Alarcón

6.14: Historical Antecedents

6.15: El corrido mexicano

6.16: Poemas nahuas y quechuas

6.17: Literary Tendencies

6.18: Movimientos vanguardistas

6.19: Mexican-American Essayists

6.20: Rudolfo Anaya

6.21: Gloria Anzaldúa

6.22: Sergio Troncoso

6.23: Sandra Cisneros

Index

Glossary

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# 6.1: Introduction to Chicano Literature- Mexican-American Narrative

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# 6.2: Historical Antecedents

In this section we will look at some elements of the historical contexts that informs Mexican-American narrative. This course will have a primary focus on 20th century Mexican-American literature, but it will be important to first begin with the Pre-hispanic literary traditions, because of the importance of indigenous roots and cultural symbols in Chicano literature. We will then take a look at some of the major literary movements and tendencies in 20th century Hispanic-American literature to locate Mexican-American narrative within a larger historical and literary context.

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# 6.3: Literatura prehispánica

(Translated from Spanish)

## Introduction

When Europeans arrived in the Americas, they found various ways of preserving knowledge among the continent's peoples. Knowledge and historical events were transmitted through oral tradition, symbolic drawings or hieroglyphs, and colored knots or quipus. These forms of knowledge transmission were displaced with the introduction of the Latin alphabet. In the following decades, religious figures and humanists began to instruct a select group of Native Americans in the Spanish language and culture. At the same time, the catechizing friars dedicated themselves to studying the various native languages and published the first dictionaries to facilitate the catechization and Hispanization of the American population. Written versions, using the Latin alphabet, of narratives and poems in Maya-Quiché, Nahuatl, and Quechua are products of these efforts. The influence of pre-Columbian literature on such distinguished writers as Octavio Paz, Pablo Neruda, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Carlos Fuentes, Ernesto Cardenal, Gustavo Sainz, Rosario Castellanos, José María Arguedas, and Augusto Roa Bastos, among others, indicates the profound impact that pre-Hispanic works have had on contemporary Latin American literature. Currently, thanks to the work of researchers of the pre-Columbian world (Ángel María Garibay and Miguel León Portilla in the Nahuatl region; Jesús Lara and Edmundo Bendezú in the Quechua region; and Adrián Recinos, Demetrio Sodi, and León Portilla in the Mayan region), it is possible not only to understand the ideological and cultural aspects of pre-Hispanic peoples but also to appreciate their rich literature, whose beauty and uniqueness have enriched contemporary Latin American literature.

## Nahuatl literature

Although commonly classified under the genre of Aztec literature, Nahuatl literature encompasses not only the Aztecs who inhabited the city of Tenochtitlan, Mexico, but also the many peoples who comprised this empire and who maintained the Nahuatl language as a common denominator. The *Nahuatl* word means "clear" or "luminous." These qualities are especially evident in their poetry, considered the most sublime of their artistic expressions. Through poetry, the Nahua people sought to communicate with their deities; therefore, it was an activity performed with great solemnity by nobles and rulers. Nahuatl poetry was often accompanied by music, which explains why the Nahuatl equivalent of the word for poetry is "inxóchitl," meaning "flower and song." The experience of listening to poetic words—metaphorically described as “the flowers of the Giver of Life”—took place in special rooms of princes and kings or in royal gardens. The listeners were part of an *icniuhyotl* , a kind of brotherhood gathered around poetry.

Because poetry was one of the most valued arts among the ancient Mexicans, there are multiple branches of this genre. Among the most prominent are:

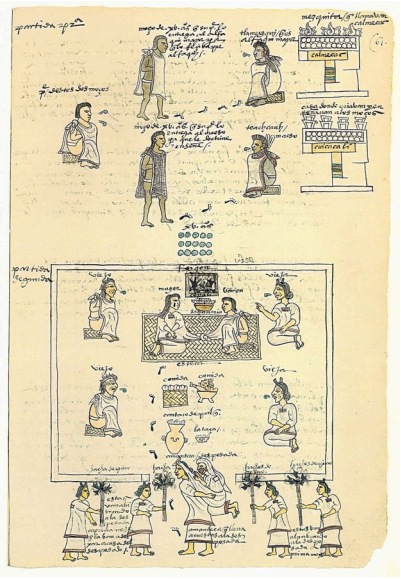
*Yaocuícatl* , war songs dedicated to extolling the warlike feats of a people.

*Teocuícatl* , songs to the gods glorifying the importance of the various deities that made up the religion of the ancient Mexicans. They also narrate the origins of humanity. One of the most representative examples is the myth known as "The Five Suns," which recounts the five cosmic periods of the Earth.

*Xoxxixuícatl* , songs that frequently allude to flowers. Flowers are a symbol of great importance to the literary expression of the Nahua peoples. The use of flowers in poetry serves as a metaphor for works of divine origin; sometimes flowers also appear as a metaphor for battles in war songs.

*Icnocuícatl* , sad and philosophical songs that express the innermost aspects of the soul. The greatest representatives of this tradition are the ruler of the people of Texcoco, the poet-king Netzahualcóyotl (1402-1472), Moctezuma, the Aztec ruler at the time of the conquest, and Macuilxochitl, one of the few Nahua poets, born in 1435 and daughter of the famous warrior Tlacaélel. This poetic genre was also used in the songs that describe the tragic fall of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán. It is at this time (1521) that the painful subjugation of the indigenous people to Spanish culture begins.

These four branches of Nahuatl poetry are not the only ones; new subdivisions have been discovered, such as cosmogonic songs, songs to animals, songs to spring, mischievous songs, etc. However, these four branches are the main and most representative.



Calemac, del Códice Mendoza

Poetry was taught in the *Calmecac* , schools for the ruling class, and also in educational centers dedicated exclusively to teaching songs, called *Cuicalli* . Nahuatl poetry abounds in *parallelism* (repetition of the same idea throughout a stanza or paragraph), *difrasismo* (the combination of two complementary concepts to express the same idea), particular symbols and imagery, emphasis on certain words and phrases, as well as the use of metaphors and similes. All these stylistic devices characterize the speech and expression of the ancient Mexicans.

Specialist Birgitta Leander has compiled a list of *difrasismos* found in Nahuatl poetic expression, making their meanings more comprehensible to the reader. She highlights, for example, that to express the idea of beauty, the concepts of "jade and fine feathers" were combined, objects highly valued by Mexican nobles; to express the idea of woman, the words "skirt and blouse" were added; the idea of a person was conveyed by combining the words "face and heart," and so on. In this way, artistic expression was achieved through allusions, resulting in a high degree of metaphorical language in poetic language. The *Yaocuícatl* , or war song, provides a good example of parallelism. The first two lines, “from where the eagles perch/from where the tigers stand tall,” create, through two parallel phrases, the idea of war, since the most prominent militia groups were the Eagle Knights and the Tiger Knights; naming them established a clear, always parallel, allusion to war. Regarding the versification of Nahuatl poetry, James Lockhart and Frances Karttunen state that Nahua verses are “units of expression.” That is, the verses are not constructed based on a linear structure that progresses rigidly and orderly from verse to verse, but rather the verses can be arranged and rearranged in different parts of the poem because they are independent. The verses are related by belonging to the same central theme; therefore, linear ordering is not necessary.

*Huehuetlaohtolli* , or the prose of the elders, who were considered the keepers of wisdom and knowledge. In these texts, we find speeches where parents advise their children on how to lead a dignified life, as well as the responses that young people give to their parents or grandparents in gratitude for their advice. This prose also reveals descriptions of what a *tlamatini* (a wise person) or a *temachtiani* (a teacher) should be. Miguel León Portilla, the foremost researcher of the Nahuatl world, has identified the main categories of *huehuetlaohtolli* , highlighting five basic variants. Finally, the *tlahtolli* are documents that showcase both the literary language of the ancient Nahua people and their beliefs and philosophies. Thanks to the impressive work of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún [1] , who dedicated himself to the study of the Nahuatl world for seventy years, we now possess examples of a literary expression that enriches the current landscape of Mexican literature.

## Mayan literature

The literature of the Maya-Quiché peoples that we know today includes three fundamental works:

- 1) The Books of *Chilam Balam* , which, according to Miguel León Portilla, number eighteen, of which only three have been studied in depth: the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel* , the *Chilam Balam of Tizimín* , and the *Chilam Balam of Maní* . These books were written by the *chilamoob* —high-ranking Mayan priests in the Yucatán region—and symbolically recreate mythological events and compile religious, historical, literary, and astronomical knowledge from various periods. Their stories also have a prophetic character, as is the case with the legend of Vucub-Caquix, which narrates the arrival of the *dzules* , that

is, the Spanish foreigners.

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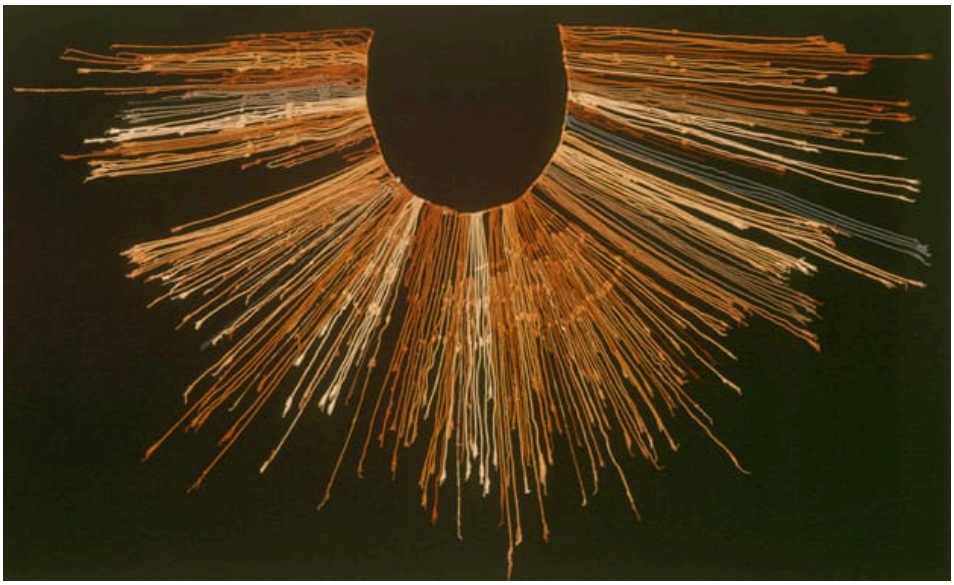
Plato Blom. Representación de escena del Popol Vuh

- 2) The *Book of the Council* , or *Popol Vuh,* named after a priest who lived shortly before the conquest and predicted the arrival of the Europeans, is the most representative literary text of pre-Hispanic literatures due to its widespread dissemination throughout the world. This book was transcribed after the massacre ordered by the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado in a region of Guatemala. Witnessing such bloody destruction, the priests of the area set out to transcribe their stories into the Latin alphabet, fearing the destruction of their codices (collections of documents) by the conquistadors. The *Popol Vuh* is divided into three parts. The first part recounts the creation of the world and the various attempts by the gods to create humankind. The second part narrates the war between the true gods and the false gods. The third part describes the various migrations and genealogies of the Quiché people. Since they possessed a cyclical conception of the universe in which the stars and time were considered deities, it can be assumed that their scientific interest arose from the need to better understand these deities in order to facilitate earthly life.

- 3) The play *Rabinal-Achí* narrates the fight between two warriors: Rabinal Achí and Quiché Achí. Rabinal wins the battle and leads his opponent before the king, Rabinal's father. The characters begin to argue, and the drama ends with the death of Quiché Achí. This lengthy play abounds in parallelism, polite expressions, and repetitions characteristic of pre-Columbian speech. However, due to the complexity of its writing, it has not been fully deciphered.

## Quechua literature

Quechua literature, or *Runasimi* , the language of the Incas and the peoples under their dominion, presents a significant obstacle: the lack of a pictographic or ideographic writing system. The only known system of signs consists of quipus: cords with colored knots arranged in such a way that information could be stored through their arrangement and colors.



Quipu inca del Museo Larco (Lima)

Researchers have not yet been able to decipher any of the quipus and postulate that they are accounting instruments, due to the decimal arrangement of their knots. Consequently, no known documents remain that allow for in-depth study of their literature; therefore, it is necessary to rely on other sources to recover their humanistic contributions. The only existing accounts belong to the colonial period and come from chroniclers. Among the main chroniclers are: Cieza de León, Guamán Poma, Cristóbal de Molina, Blas Valera, Juan de Santa Cruz Pachakuti, and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. In contemporary times, the prominent Bolivian anthropologist Jesús Lara spurred the investigation of the literary evidence contained in the various chronicles. Lara also maintained that the quipus actually comprise a language that has not yet been deciphered but that contains historical, geographical, literary, astronomical, legal, and economic knowledge of Inca society.

From the information gleaned from colonial texts, it is possible to observe some parallels with the organization of the Nahua world. The Incas, like the Nahua people of the central valley of Mexico, placed great importance on poetry; their songs were present in funeral ceremonies, agricultural work, and official celebrations. Just as the Nahua had elders and wise men, or *tlamatinimes,* who transmitted philosophical and religious knowledge, the Incas had amautas, historians and philosophers who disseminated knowledge and were in charge of dramatic performances. Since the *amautas* were part of the imperial retinue, they created compositions to celebrate military victories, the ascension to the throne of the new Inca, the most important events of his reign, as well as religious hymns to venerate the rulers and their deities. Alongside them were the *haravicus* , or "poetry inventors," who often recited their verses accompanied by the audience. Another interesting parallel between the Incas and the ancient Mexicans can be seen in the education of the elite. Just as nobles in the Nahua world attended the *Calmecac* , Inca nobles attended the *Yachayhuasi* , where they received a literary education. However, despite their similarities, there is a fundamental difference between these two pre-Hispanic cultural organizations. Jesús Lara points out that poetry was not, for the Quechua, the exclusive domain of the nobility, as it was in the case of the ancient Mexicans, but could be studied and composed by members of the lower strata of the Inca social structure.

Regarding his poetry, the following classification can be established:

*Jailli* were triumphal songs sung to glorify the gods, with Viracoch being the principal deity. The second classification of *jailli* comprises heroic songs that extolled war and the valor of battles. The third classification refers to the agricultural song variant, which was sung to celebrate sowing and harvesting.

*Wawaki* are songs in the form of a dialogue, sung by a male and a female chorus that alternate throughout the composition. Jesús Lara mentions that *wawaki* were sung during festivities in honor of the moon.

*Arawi* , songs that refer to intimate life—love, loneliness, sadness—and imprisonment. A representative work of this genre is the dramatic work known as *Ollantay* , a play that continues to be performed in Andean villages today. Although its indigenous authenticity is questioned, it may be a dramatic adaptation of a legend that circulated orally among the Quechua people.

*Wayñu* , this genre of poetry was accompanied by a musical and dance troupe and was of a collective nature.

In contrast to the poetry of ancient Mexico, the few surviving examples of Inca poetry are primarily religious in nature. The most abundant and varied compositions of Inca culture are found in the *Primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno (First New Chronicle and Good Government)* by the Andean chronicler Guamán Poma. Likewise, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega dedicated a chapter of his *Comentarios Reales* (Royal Commentaries ) to describing Inca poetry (Book 11, Chapter XXVII).

The literary expressions of pre-Hispanic cultures capture the pride of their peoples, their diverse epistemologies, and express their aspirations for a better future. Their narratives reaffirm the resilience of Indigenous peoples and the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of the Latin American continent. Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin, a bilingual poet in Nahuatl and Spanish, has expressed the dynamic between pre-Hispanic and Spanish heritage. He compares Spanish to the ahuehuete tree, which provides shelter and shade. This tree, that is, Spanish, is nourished by the Indigenous languages that give Latin American Spanish its distinctive characteristics. His literature reaffirms the resilience of diverse Indigenous groups and the cultural plurality of their peoples.

# Activities on the introduction

## Vocabulary in context

After reading the introduction, define the following terms in English and in your own words:

- Quipus:
- Native Americans:
- Catechist friars:
- Pre-Columbian/Pre-Hispanic Literature:
- Nahuatl:
- Inxóchitl:
- Parallelisms (include an example different from those in the text):
- Difrasismos (include an example different from those in the text):
- Codices (do an internet search to expand on the definition given in the text and include some examples of codices):
- Quechua:
- Calmecac and School:
- Tlamatinime:
- Pictographic or ideographic writing:

## General comprehension questions

1) Why can indigenous testimonies be considered colonial documents? Who was involved in their collection during the first decades of the colony and for what purpose did they do so?

2) What were some ways of preserving knowledge in indigenous cultures?

3) What is the importance of pre-Hispanic literatures in the contemporary world?

4) What function did poetry have in the area of ancient Mexico? Explain its content.

5) What are the characteristics of the metaphorical language of Nahuatl poetry?

6) Who were the **amautas** and the **haravicus** and how are they related to the development of indigenous poetry?

7) What do you understand by “cultural heterogeneity” and what role do indigenous literatures play in defining this concept?

# Primary texts

## Reading: Nahuatl Literature

### The flowers and the songs [2]

**Xochicuícatl**

Version by Miguel León Portilla

From within the sky they come

The beautiful flowers, the beautiful songs. [3]

Our longing makes them ugly,

Our inventiveness spoils them, [4]

except for those of the Chichimec prince Tecayehuatzin.

Rejoice with his people!

Friendship is a shower of precious flowers.

White tufts [5] of heron feathers,

They are intertwined with beautiful red flowers:

on the branches of the trees,

They walk and drink beneath them

the lords and the nobles.

Your beautiful song:

A golden rattlesnake, you raise it up so beautifully. [6]

You are in a flower enclosure.

You sing on the flowering branches.

Are you perhaps a precious bird of the Giver of Life?

Have you spoken to God?

As soon as you saw the dawn,

You started to sing.

Strive, my heart desires,

the flowers on the shield,

the flowers of the Giver of Life.

What can my heart do?

We have come here in vain,

we have sprouted from the earth.

Is this the only way I have to leave?

like the flowers that perished?

Will nothing remain of my name? [7]

None of my fame here on earth?

At least flowers, at least songs!

What can my heart do?

We have come here in vain,

we have sprouted from the earth.

Let us rejoice, oh friends,

There will be hugs here.

Now we walk on the flowery land.

Nobody will end this here

the flowers and the songs

They endure in the house of the Giver of life.

Here on earth is the region of the fleeting moment.

Is it also like that in the place

where one somehow lives?

Is one happy there?

Is there friendship there?

Or only here on Earth

Have we come here to see our faces?

## Reflection and analysis questions

1) Comment on the emotional and philosophical attitude that is derived from this poem.

2) Explain the importance of the repeated image of flowers in Nahuatl poetry.

3) What is the concept of fame? And according to the poem, what is the only thing that should endure on earth?

4) How is nature described and what does it tell us about the relationship of the ancient Mexicans and their environment?



Excavación en El Mirador, Petén, Guatemala – El panel representa otra escena del Popol Vuh

# Reading: Mayan Literature

**From Popol Vuh**

## The legend of Vucub-Caquix [8]

Translation by Adrián Recinos

There was then very little light on the face of the earth. There was still no sun. However, there was a being proud of himself who was called Vucub-Caquix. [9] The sky and the earth already existed, but the face of the sun and the moon was hidden. And he (Vucub-Caquix) said: [10] -Truly, they are a clear example of those men who drowned, and their nature is like that of supernatural beings.

"I will now be great above all created and formed beings. I am the sun, I am the light, the moon," he exclaimed. "Great is my splendor. Through me, men will walk and conquer. For my eyes are silver, resplendent like precious stones, like emeralds; my teeth gleam like fine stones, like the face of the sky. My nose shines from afar like the moon, my throne is silver, and the face of the earth is illuminated when I appear before my throne."

Thus, I am the sun, I am the moon, for the human race. So it shall be, for my sight reaches far.

This is how Vucub-Caquix spoke. But in truth, Vucub-Caquix was not the sun; he only boasted of his feathers and riches. But his vision reached only the horizon and did not extend over the whole world.

The face of the sun, the moon, and the stars was not yet visible, and dawn had not yet broken. For this reason, Vucub-Caquix boasted as if he were the sun and the moon, because the light of the sun and the moon had not yet appeared or been displayed. His only ambition was to aggrandize himself and dominate. And it was then that the flood occurred because of the wooden figures. [11]

Now we will tell how Vucub Caquix died and was defeated, and how man was made by the Creator and Former.

This is the beginning of the defeat and ruin of Vucub Caquix's glory at the hands of the two boys, the first of whom was named Hunahpú [12] and the second Ixbalanqué. These were truly gods. Seeing the evil that the proud one was doing, and that he wanted to do it in the presence of the Heart of Heaven, the boys said to one another

"It is not right that things should be this way, when man does not yet live here on earth. So, we will try shooting him with the blowgun while he is eating; we will shoot him and cause him to have a disease, and then his riches, his green stones, his precious metals, his emeralds, his jewels of which he is so proud will be gone. And so all men will do, for they should not become vain

because of power or wealth."

"That's how it will be," said the boys, each slinging his blowgun over his shoulder.

## Reflection and analysis questions

1) What does “The Legend of Vucub-Caquix” tell? What is its moral or lesson?

2) Explain the need that all cultures express to create their own mythology.

3) Are there any similarities between the myths in your culture and the indigenous myths described in the reading?



Ejemplar del Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel en el Museo de Antropología de México.

## From the Books of Chilam Balam of Chumayel

**The Dzules** [13]

Translation by Demetrio Sodi

This is what I write: In 1541 was the first arrival of the Dzules, the foreigners, from the East. They came to Ecab, that is its name. And it happened that they came to the Water Gate, to Ecab, to the town of Nacom Balam, in the beginning of the days of the years of the eleventh katun. [14] Fifteen twenty-year periods [15] before the arrival of the Dzules, the Itzáes [16] dispersed. The town of Zaciahtun was abandoned, the town of Kinchil Coba was abandoned, Chichén Itzá was abandoned, Uxmal was abandoned, and south of Uxmal, Kabah, that is its name, was abandoned. Zeye, Pakam, Homtun, the town of Tixcalomkin, and Ake, the one with the stone gates, were abandoned. [17]

The town where the rain falls, Etzemal, was abandoned, there where the son of the All-God descended, the lord of heaven, the lord-lady, the miraculous virgin. [18] And the lord said: “Lower the shields of Kinich Kakmo.” One can no longer reign here. But the Miraculous One, the Merciful One, remains. “Lower the ropes, lower the belts fallen from heaven. Lower the word fallen from heaven.” And thus the other peoples paid homage to his lordship; thus it was said that the lord-gods of Etzemal were of no use.

And then the great Itzáes departed. Thirteen times four hundred times four hundred thousand and fifteen times four hundred times four hundred hundreds the Itzáes lived as heretics. [19] But they departed and with them their disciples, who sustained them and who were very numerous. Thirteen measures was Iximal and the head of the count of those of Iximal there were nine almudes and three oc. [20] And the children of the people went with their gods before and behind.

Their spirits rejected the Dzules and their Christianity. They offered no tribute, neither the spirits of the birds, nor the precious stones, nor the carved stones, nor the tigers that protected them. Sixteen hundred and three hundred years, and their lives would

end. They knew how to measure time, even within themselves. The moon, the wind, the year, the day: everything moves, but also passes. All blood reaches its resting place, just as all power reaches its throne. The time was measured when the greatness of the Three would be praised. [21] Measured was the time of the sun's goodness, of the lattice formed by the stars, from where the gods contemplate us. The good lords of the stars, all of them good. [22]

They possessed wisdom, holiness; there was no evil in them. There was health, devotion; there was no sickness, no bone pain, no fever or smallpox, no chest or stomach pain. [23] They walked upright. But the Dzules came and destroyed everything. They taught fear, withered the flowers, sucked the lifeblood out of others so that their own might live. They killed the flower of the Nacxit Xuchit. There were no longer any priests to teach us. And so the second era settled, began to reign, and was the cause of our death. Without priests, without wisdom, without courage, and without shame, all were equal. There was no great wisdom, no word, no teaching from the lords. The gods who came here were of no use. The Dzules had come only to castrate the Sun! And their children's children remained among us, receiving only their bitterness.

### Reflection and analysis questions

1) What does the Mayan legend of “The dzules” tell us?

2) What historical and literary importance does the fragment of “Los dzules” have?

3) What feelings emerge from this passage? What was the Mayan view of the Spanish?

4) How are the Spanish and Mayan cultures contrasted in the legend?

5) Discuss the literary importance of this Mayan testimony.

## Reading: Quechua Literature

### First prayer to the maker Jailli [24]

Version of Jesus Lara

Root of being, Viracocha,
God always near,
Lord of garments

dazzling
God who governs and preserves,
Who creates simply by saying:
“Let there be man,

"Let it be a woman."
The being you placed
and raised.

Let him live free.

And without danger.

Where are you?

Outside the world,
inside the world,

In the midst of the clouds
or in the midst of the shadows?

Listen to me,

Answer me.
Make me live.

For many days,
until the age when I must
turn gray.
Lift me up
, take me in your arms.

And in my weariness,

Help me
wherever you are,

Father Viracocha

### Reflection and analysis questions

1) What is the role of religion in Quechua culture and how is the importance of religion manifested in the *jailli* ?

2) What images are used to allude to divinity?

3) What relationship between the person and the divinity does the poetic voice propose?

4) What does the poetic voice ask of the Creator? What fear does the poetic voice express?

5) Can you relate this *jailli* to another religious prayer?

## Topics to develop

1) In groups of four, imagine you belong to the ancient Aztec nobility and want to write a poem to present to your friends. Choose a variant of Nahuatl poetry and, using rhetorical devices such as difrasismo, parallelism, and metaphor, write a short poem. You can choose one of the following themes: a eulogy to the gods of nature, a love song, a war song, or the experience of the fall of the great city of Tenochtitlán to Hernán Cortés's troops. Be prepared to share.

2) **The Role of Missionaries in Relation to Ancient American Knowledge -** Which were the most well-known religious orders that arrived in the New World? What was the purpose of these missions? What kind of religious instruction did they offer? Why the interest in studying native languages? What role did they play in preserving indigenous culture? How can the impact of these missionaries be seen in Latin American culture?

3) **The Impact of the Latin Alphabet on the Amerindian World** – As we know, when the Spanish arrived in America, they introduced various aspects of Western culture to the pre-Columbian cultures. One of these aspects was the introduction of the Spanish language. Considering the status given to Spanish in relation to indigenous languages, answer the following questions: What were the consequences of the contact between Spanish and indigenous languages such as Quechua in Bolivia, Guarani in Paraguay, or Nahuatl in Mexico? How were the native cultures affected, and how is this reflected to this day? What were the advantages and disadvantages of having only ONE official language?

4) **Modes of Indigenous Resistance to Colonization -** Bearing in mind that acts of resistance against invasion and colonial domination can unfold in diverse ways, explore one of the methods and forms of Indigenous resistance from the arrival of Europeans to the American continent in the 16th century until the emancipation of the colonies in the 18th century. You can choose one of the following topics: Military tactics (rebellions), cultural resistance (syncretism of religion/language/traditions), use of legal systems (such as appeals in the courts), writing of chronicles and accounts (Felipe Guamán Poma, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, Hernando de Alvarado Tezozómoc, etc.).

5) **Function and Importance of Indigenous Myths -** All cultures throughout history have developed a worldview based on myths. Explore their importance in the creation of a cultural identity. You can use these questions as a guide: What is a myth? Who invents them and for whom? How were they transmitted and preserved? What is their purpose? What are their teachings? Is there an aspect that is consistently repeated in different myths? What is their cultural value? Are there any myths in your culture that

resemble any indigenous myths? Why is it important to learn about them? What is their significance in indigenous cultures and identities today?

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1. Friar Bernardino de Sahagún (Sahagún, Spain, 1499 or 1500 – Mexico, 1590) was a catechist of the Franciscan Order. In 1529, he traveled to Mexico and there worked on the conversion of the indigenous Mexicans. He learned the Nahuatl language and researched Mayan culture and beliefs. He translated his research into Spanish and wrote his fundamental work: General History of the Things of New Spain. This text contains twelve volumes and narrates aspects of Mayan culture such as their gods, their festivals, their beliefs about the immortality of the soul, their astrological knowledge, and their intellectual and political life. It also contains a dictionary of the Nahuatl language and recounts the conquest of Mexico from the indigenous perspective.

2. The poem belongs to the text Dialogue of the Flower and the Song and is part of the manuscript Mexican Songs, folio 14. Its author is Prince Tecayehuatzin.

3. “The beautiful flowers, the beautiful songs” is the most frequently repeated metaphor in Nahuatl poetry .

4. The poet's limited literary skill is what detracts from the beauty of the songs, which are intrinsically beautiful. The poet displays a position of humility before such magnificent art .

5. designates friendship ↵

6. The poet describes poetic song as a golden rattlesnake. Note the high esteem the ancient Mexicans placed on the beauty of birds .

7. This philosophical question echoes the concerns expressed by other Nahua poets in their poetry. The answer exemplifies the position of poetry in the Nahua world: if everything else must disappear, at least let the songs survive.

8. Passage from the Popol Vuh, a book containing narratives of the Maya-Quiché people collected by Father Francisco Ximénez. This Andalusian priest arrived in Guatemala in 1688 and was appointed parish priest of Chichicastenango, a region of Guatemala. It was during this time that he discovered the manuscript written in Latin characters known as the Chichicastenango Manuscript, which contained the text of the Popol Vuh. Ximénez translated it into Spanish and dedicated himself to recovering the histories of the Maya people. This passage narrates the struggle between the true gods and the false gods .

9. The name Vucub-Caquix has been translated by Adrián Recinos as “Seven Macaws”, while Miguel Ángel Asturias translates it as “Main Macaw” .

10. Vucub-Caquix, who is admiring the monkeys, is alluding to the flood narrated earlier. In this flood, human beings were transformed into monkeys by the gods. Vucub-Caquix, being the only man to survive the flood who was not turned into a monkey, becomes arrogant and proclaims himself a god.

11. The stick figures: the human beings created by the gods before the flood. These beings were exterminated for not praising the gods. In Mayan mythology, there were several attempts by the gods to create true human beings .

12. Hunahpú is translated as “Master Magician” and Ixbalanqué as “Wizard” ↵

13. This fragment comes from the Chilam Balam of Chuyamel, one of the eighteen versions or books of Chilam Balam known to this day. These books were written after the Spanish Conquest and narrate the beliefs, mythologies, and genealogies of the Maya-Quiché people. Chilam is the Maya name the community gave to priests, and balam means sorcerer and also jaguar. Chuyamel is the name of the Yucatecan region where the manuscript originates, a facsimile edition of which was published in 1913 .

14. Date given in Mayan numerals. The katun refers to a 20-year cycle that recurs in 160-year periods ; the sign “eleven ahau” is a period of years ruled by hardship. The date “katun eleven ahau” pinpoints the moment when Spanish rule was firmly established in Yucatán (1541).

15. The Mayan numerical system was vigesimal; the number mentioned (1241) refers to the time when the Maya abandoned their main cities. Many theories explain this abandonment by religious, historical, political, and/or agricultural causes; however, the definitive cause for the abandonment of the main Mayan cities is still unknown .

16. Maya who refused to accept the Christianity brought by colonization. They lived independently until 1697, when they were subjected to Spanish rule .

17. A detailed description of the towns and ceremonial centers abandoned by the Maya before the arrival of the Spanish .

18. The Lord of the Sky exhibits the feminine-masculine duality characteristic of the supreme Mayan and Nahua gods.

19. The complex figure is meant to express that the Itzaes decided categorically not to accept any religion other than their own. Above all, they rejected, as far as possible, the Christian religion .

20. old measure that approximates five liters ↩

21. Reference to the deity known as the Heart of Heaven, who, in the Popol Vuh passage, is the one who determines Vucub-Caquix's punishment. This deity possessed a triptych configuration: Caculhá-Huaracán, Chipi-Caculhá, and Raxa-Caculhá .

22. This elegy to the Mayan gods reveals the grief of the ancient Mexicans at the extinction of their culture .

23. Smallpox did not exist among the pre-Hispanic peoples. When this disease arrived, it caused devastating epidemics and high mortality rates .

24. Poem recovered by Father Cristóbal de Molina in 1575, included in his book Fables and Rites of the Incas .

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# 6.4: Hispanoamérica 1930-1969




From the 1930s to the early 1970s, Latin America experienced an intense confrontation between aspirations for radical, communist-inspired social change and the maintenance of capitalist development within existing structures. The nationalist era, which until the 1950s even manifested itself in import restrictions to strengthen local industry, gave way to a "Latin Americanist" era, characterized by enthusiasm for social change and debate over which side to take during the Cold War.

The triumph of the Cuban Revolution (1959) became a touchstone for both left-wing and right-wing ideologies in the debate about the place of Latin American countries in the global power structure and what their sociopolitical model should be. Consequently, Latin American artistic and literary production received significant international attention during those years.



Mural c
This mural illustrates the c
guerrillas) with which o
which another part of t

# Nacionalismo y populismo

**superar:** *to overcome*
**lograr:** *to attain*
**soberanía:** *sovereignty*
**debilitarse:** *to weaken*
**materias primas:** *raw materials*
**terrateniente:** *large land owner*
**a menudo:** *often*
**ejército:** *army*
**golpe (militar):** *coup*

**desempleo:** *unemployment*
**escasez:** *scarcity*
**impuestos:** *taxes*

**dueño:** *owner*
**sindicato:** *labor union*
**ventaja:** *advantage*
**obrero:** *industry worker*

**empresario**: *business owner*
**receta**: *recipe*
**hasta cierto punto**: *to a certain extent*

**tarde o temprano**: *sooner or later*
**peligrar**: *to be in danger*
**amenazar**: *to threaten*
**empresa**: *enterprise, company*
**cada vez más**: *ever more*

Following the economic expansion of the first three decades of the 20th century, the expo
1930s. International demand for agricultural products and raw materials was halved. The p
of the government, repressing leftist activism, often with the support of the military. During
Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvado
this militarism and the economic crisis, several nationalist wars reminiscent of those of th
(1941-42).

To address unemployment and shortages of imported goods, the strategy of incentivizing
substitution industrialization" (ISI). To this end, governments raised import taxes, establis
propaganda was also promoted, along with efforts to regain domestic control of natural re

Industrial owners grew wealthier and could influence politics, but labor unions also grew la
be negotiated primarily among three power groups:
1) the interests of the traditional landowning elite, often associated with the Church;
2) the emerging commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, with increasing economic and s
and 3) the working class and the unions, whose support (or control) was crucial for conti
In many cases, the balance tipped in favor of the sector that secured military and/or Wash
in Chile during the 1950s and 60s.

The different forms of government in Latin America during these decades represent divers
alliance that attempted to incorporate the interests of business owners while simultaneou
This was the recipe for *populism* , applied by Perón in Argentina, Vargas in Brazil, Rojas P
in Mexico. The problem was that they tried to represent two emerging groups with conflict
systems were unsustainable in times of economic austerity. Their stability was also jeopar
different political parties included both emerging groups (Chile), while others excluded the
middle class, workers, and peasants for armed resistance (Colombia, El Salvador). In some
1936 revolution in Paraguay, the 1944 revolution in Guatemala, and the 1952 revolution in
aggressive US policy of securing the continent's loyalty during the Cold War.

[1] The great exception has been Costa Rica, whose party government established a progressive social security and worker protection system and, a decade later, eliminated the national army.

## Cold War and left-wing activism

**cuantioso**: *quite large*
**inversión:** *investment*
**a medida que**: *as (process)*
**lograr**: *to achieve*

**sede**: *headquarters*

**doblaje**: *dubbing*
**encubierto**: *under cover*
**de parte de:** *in favor of*

**derrocamiento:** *overthrow*

**entre tanto**: *in the meantime*
**gabinete**: *cabinet*

**a partir de**: *starting in*

**duradero:** *lasting*
**así como**: *as well as*

**ambiente:** *climate, environment*
**ámbito:** *sphere, field*

**Evangelio**: *Gospel*

**a largo plazo:** *in the long run*

The most significant impact of World War II on Latin America was its definitive inclusion v
investments in the Americas to finance the war, and its influence was considerably reduce
military power, with substantial investments throughout the continent. As relations with the
ties with the Soviet Union and several governments to outlaw local communist parties—a r
States (OAS), headquartered in Washington, was established in Bogotá to promote commo
over Latin American militaries, reinforcing and expanding its military bases in the region. T
American television and film productions, with their efficient dubbing systems, flooded ma
carried out by the elite and against popular movements. Two of these interventions—which
Árbenz of Guatemala in 1954 and of Salvador Allende of Chile in 1973, despite both having

Meanwhile, popular support for communist parties grew in many Latin American countries
governments during the 1940s. Armed resistance in the form of guerrilla warfare, already u
onward: the “liberation” from U.S. imperialism and capitalist exploitation. And from the 19
sphere of influence, helping to finance revolutionary guerrilla movements in the region. Th
elites, as well as a catalyst for the proliferation of “national liberation struggles” in rural an
time possible that workers and peasants could seize control of the state and obtain the rig

As with the student movement in France or the civil rights struggles in the United States, r
worldwide. The most famous intellectuals of the time depicted in their works the history of
participatory societies. One of the most widely disseminated books was *Open Veins of La
and human exploitation on the continent. In Chile, a left-wing coalition (the “Popular Unity
were in the hands of foreign companies, raised workers' wages, and froze the prices of bas
to spread socialism throughout the Americas with substantial Soviet funding. But both failu

## Latin Americanism of the 1960s

As we have seen, the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 became a driving force behind the proliferation of “liberation struggles” in rural and urban guerrilla movements throughout Central and South America. The term “Latin America,” understood as a unity of peoples with shared aspirations and a history of oppression, then served to foster the struggle for social change and for political and cultural sovereignty, particularly along leftist lines. This utopian spirit was also manifested in the conviction that, from Mexico to the Southern Cone, these peoples shared a colonial past, a present of dependency, and a common destiny of liberation (the “Latin American identity” or “Latin Americanism”) and therefore should unite in a common struggle against two enemies: the interests of Washington in the service of Wall Street, and the local ruling class associated with those interests. Thus, the 1960s marked a period of immense creativity, enthusiastic unification, and international dissemination in the arts and intellectual production for Latin America. A large number of young people across the continent sang along to musical movements like South American protest songs and Cuban Nueva Trova , sympathized with leftist groups in their countries, and participated in avant-garde poetry movements. They read with admiration novels that translated these ideals into a novel, vibrant, and critical narrative. All of this led many Latin Americans to feel they possessed an innovative and distinctive voice that captured European and North American attention because of its uniqueness.

The type of discourse that prevailed during these years is summarized in one of Che Guevara's speeches at the beginning of the decade:

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|---|---|
| **prevalecer**: *to predominate*<br>**desdeñable**: *insignificant*<br>**aislado**: *isolated*<br>**padecer**: sufrir<br>**albergar**: *to house*<br>**abundar**: *exist in abundance* | “There is no small enemy nor any force to be underestimated, because there are no<br>weak, because it is part of a family of two hundred million brothers and sisters who s<br>destiny, and count on the solidarity of all the honest men and women of the world. Th<br>workers, to the progressive masses, to the honest and brilliant intellectuals who abou |

Workers', peasants', and guerrilla movements gained strength in many countries. In fact, there was a spirit of unification among the middle and lower classes around the ideal of building sociopolitical models—like the triumphant Cuban revolution or Salvador Allende's democratic socialism in Chile—that would benefit the majority of the population and not just the elite.

Liberation theology, developed by Christian philosophers from Central and South America such as the Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez and the Brazilian Leonardo Boff, proposed applying Gospel principles to the active pursuit of social justice. Liberation pedagogy, proposed by the Brazilian Paulo Freire, created an educational practice designed to promote political action and value the knowledge of people who have suffered socioeconomic oppression for generations. Thinkers like Leopoldo Zea (Mexico) and Enrique Dussel (Argentina) developed a rigorous and alternative philosophy for understanding Latin America in its specificity and dignity. Economists and sociologists such as Enrique Cardoso (Brazil) and Alonso Quijano (Peru) produced a systematic critique of development understood as the imitation of European or American modernization, elaborating an alternative thesis called Dependency Theory, which emphasized the structural change in economic relations at both the global and national levels. For their part, the most famous writers, composers, filmmakers and artists of the time represented in their works the history of marginalization and repression of the people as well as their creative force and aspirations towards more egalitarian and participatory societies.

# The "Boom" of narrative

| | |
|---|---|
| **apenas**: *barely*<br>**lanzar**: *to launch*<br><br>**hasta entonces**: *until then*<br>**convertirse en**: *to become*<br><br><br><br>**cúspide**: *peak*<br>**rayuela**: *hopscotch*<br><br><br><br><br>**acaparar**: *to capture, to monopolize*<br><br><br>**habían logrado**: *had accomplished*<br><br><br>**inaudito**: *unheard of, extraordinary*<br>**primermundista**: *form the first world*<br><br>**trama**: *plot*<br>**telenovela**: *soap opera* | Latin America then captured the world's attention from 1961 onward, when the communist hegemony in the hemisphere. The region had become a battleground in the Cold War. In k knowledge about that part of the continent which, just a few years earlier, had been barely the (capitalist) development or modernization of Latin America, and began appointing Pue region.<br><br>The year 1967 was pivotal for Latin American literature, which until then had been largely i Latin American novelist to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature (Chilean Gabriela Mistral h Solitude by Colombian Gabriel García Márquez (1927-2014) was published, becoming a wo had begun a few years earlier with the immense popularity of Hopscotch (1963) by Argen (1936-) and Mexican Carlos Fuentes (1928-2012), among others. For the first time in histo 2000, four other writers had received the Nobel Prize for Literature: Pablo Neruda (Chile)<br><br>The writers who formed the Latin American Boom, almost all of them left-leaning, capture elements of Latin American life and culture. The jungle, myth, oral tradition, the indigenous were all integrated into monumental novels whose poetic language captured many of the way, a replica of what Mexican painters like Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and José Clemento<br><br>What was "normal" for Europeans and North Americans appeared as something "magical" ordinary everyday life: "García Márquez conjured up a world in his native Colombia where assimilated the influence of international literature as well as modern mass culture, with n the heterogeneous and diverse experience of its peoples and to propose alternative mode unity. |

Years earlier, in the prologue to the novel The Kingdom of This World (1949)—which narrated the Haitian Revolution—the Cuban musicologist and novelist Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980) had proposed the term "marvelous realism" to designate this new fiction that recreated American historical reality in its fertile combination of mythologies and cultural models, from indigenous and African to European and mestizo. Carpentier said:

| | |
|---|---|
| **por**: *because of*<br>**paisaje**: *landscape*<br>**fáustico**: *like Goethe's Faust, tragic, debased*<br>**agotar**: to exhaust | "Because of the virginity of the landscape, because of the formation, because of the ontology its recent discovery, because of the fertile mestizaje that it fostered, America is far from havi marvelous real?" (12). |

The Guatemalan writer Miguel Ángel Asturias (1899-1974) had published his novel **Men of Maize** (1949) that same year , which shared this effort to find a language appropriate to the "magical" or surreal experience and to express the need for social transformation. This novel combined surrealist techniques with traditional legends to create a magical reality capable of representing the history of Mayan resistance against the advance of Western culture, interpreting it in their own terms. Meanwhile, Juan Rulfo (1918-1986) and Elena Garro (1916-1998) had explored the bittersweet legacy of the Mexican Revolution, which had not lifted the majority of the population out of poverty, in a narrative that questioned the divisions between the fantastical and the historical. Similar to Octavio Paz, the Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) differed in his political views from left-wing writers, seeking universal themes in his fiction and poems. His work, however, had an undeniable influence on the Latin American Boom generation, both in its questioning of a unified reality and in its experimentation with labyrinthine narratives that combined cultural heritages as diverse as the Latin American population itself.

By the beginning of the 1960s, a large reading public already existed in Latin America. The expansion of cities and educational

opportunities ensured that a growing middle class of professionals and university students avidly read the novels of their favorite authors, with whom they shared ideals of radical transformation of social structures. This enthusiasm was reinforced by the apparent success of the Cuban Revolution, which helped spread a "Latin Americanist" spirit across the continent, transcending national borders and creating a consciousness of political change among the masses. Several Spanish and French publishing houses also launched a major promotional campaign that favored leftist writers and fostered plurinational forums. Thus, three factors combined in the 1960s: first, painting, poetry, and the novel had cultivated a Latin Americanist consciousness and an eager reading public; second, the political left gained considerable strength in many countries of the continent; Third, European publishers encouraged the publication of Latin American works due to public interest in following the processes of change in Latin America during the Cold War.

It was this combination of factors that allowed brilliant novelists like Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, Gabriel García Márquez, Ernesto Sábato (Argentina 1911-2011), Juan Carlos Onetti (Uruguay 1909-1994), and José Donoso (Chile 1924-1996) to disseminate their works to hundreds of thousands of readers in Latin America, Europe, Asia, and the United States, becoming global stars. Like Borges, they criticized the "provincial" novels of social realism and embraced literary experimentation in dialogue with the most daring trends of the First World.

Unlike Borges, a central theme of the Latin American Boom was Latin American history, a critique of the continent's sociopolitical conditions, and the promotion of a regional identity. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* can be read as an allegory of Colombian history in the story of the Buendía family, and Macondo has been interpreted as a metaphor for Latin America.

By the mid-1970s, military repression had become more brutal throughout the region, Fidel Castro's government was less popular, and revolutionary fervor had waned. The writers of the Latin American Boom then delved deeper into historical themes and the figure of the dictator. Carlos Fuentes, in *Terra Nostra* (1975), criticized the use of history to legitimize present-day injustice. The Paraguayan Augusto Roa Bastos (1917-2005) ridiculed historical documentation and explored the figure of the caudillo José Gaspar de Francia—who had ruled his country for forty years in the 19th century—as a metaphor for the Stroessner dictatorship in his copious novel *I, the Supreme* (1974). Gabriel García Márquez also parodied the endless rhetoric of caudillismo in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975). From the 1980s onward, the era of literary experimentalism and grand collective metaphors came to an end, and all these writers adopted a more realistic and accessible style, in keeping with the commercial demands of the global age. An example of this ideological and aesthetic diversity is the career of Vargas Llosa, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2010. His narrative included social commentary in the 1960s and 70s, and later incorporated humor, historical research, and neoliberal ideas.

The legacy of the Latin American Boom continues to be present in various manifestations today associated with the ambiguous "magical realism," a term that has been used to describe the combination of orality and writing in other parts of the world, such as in the novels of Toni Morrison in the United States. During the 1980s and 1990s, a significant number of women writers also enjoyed international recognition. Luisa Valenzuela in Argentina, Isabel Allende and Marcela Serrano in Chile, Laura Restrepo in Colombia, Laura Esquivel in Mexico, Gioconda Belli in Nicaragua, and Nélida Piñón in Brazil are some of the narrators who maintain international attention on Latin American literature and have taken over a literary scene that was traditionally dominated by male figures.

According to many contemporary Latin American writers, it no longer makes sense to associate the continent with a specific style, as it comprises diverse, complex, and pluralistic cultures, in which the so-called "magical realism"—fascinated with the exotic—is just one possibility among many for literary expression of the heterogeneous experience of each region and each individual. Moreover, most of these cultures are now primarily urban and intimately connected to the processes of commercialization and openness of the 21st century.

Nevertheless, Dependency Theory, the Philosophy, Theology, and Pedagogy of Liberation, and the aesthetics of “magical realism” or the Latin American Boom were important instances where intellectual production from Latin America influenced First World thought during the 1960s and 70s, promoting processes of cultural and political decolonization. All three were cases where a substantial group of Latin Americans saw themselves, understood themselves, and defined themselves as subjects (agents) of knowledge, instead of the traditional position of the colonized, who are seen, understood, and named by others as objects (patients) of knowledge. While this Latin Americanism did not produce the radical socioeconomic changes that many hoped for, it marked a fundamental milestone in the trajectory of collective self-definition in the region. Even today, hip hop groups like *Calle 13* (Puerto Rico) celebrate "Latin American identity" by revisiting the themes of the "Nueva Canción" movement of the 1960s ( http://youtu.be/rqlmJdsfCJc ). Many continue working toward that Latin American unification and justice that the Chilean poet Violeta Parra summarized in 1964:

> My life, the American people,
> my life, feel distressed,

my life, because the governors,
my life, have them so separated.

When will that moment come, Mr. Prosecutor,
when America will be just one pillar?
Just one pillar, oh yes, and one flag,
when the border disputes will finally end.

I don't want war over a handful of land.

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## For review and reflection

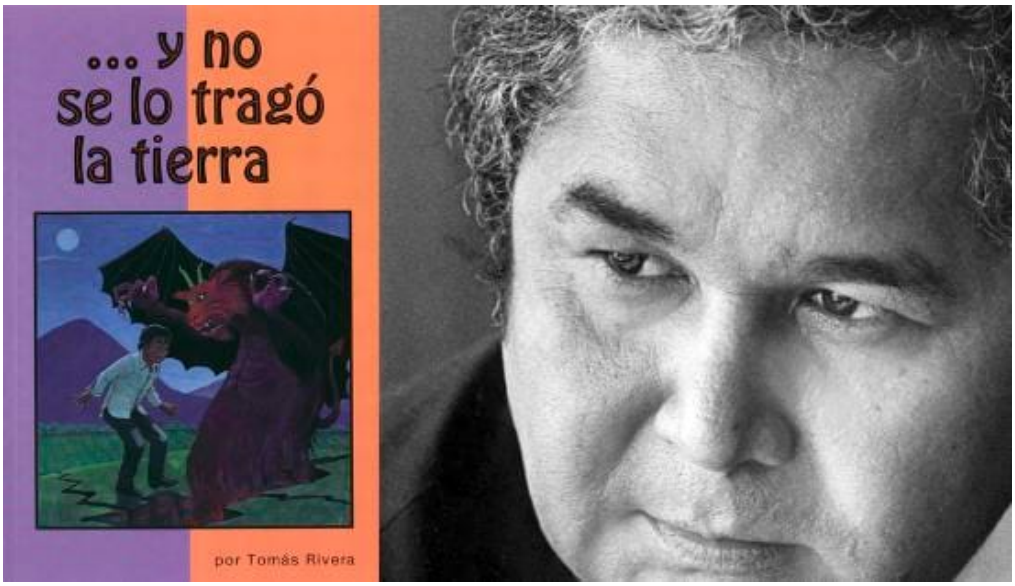
1. What values and circumstances created the Latin Americanist enthusiasm of the 1960s?
2. How could the concept of "Latin Americanism" be defined or explained? What ideological movements does it encompass in theology, philosophy, pedagogy, sociology, etc.? What values and drawbacks does it have as a political ideal?
3. What were some of the reasons why Latin American novels were so successful in Europe and the United States during the 1960s? In what sense(s) is this phenomenon paradoxical?
4. How could the concept of "Magical Realism" be defined or explained? What values and problems does it have as an aesthetic characterization of Latin America?
5. What were some of the writers and musical movements that became famous during the novel "Boom" of the 1960s? How has this landscape changed in subsequent decades?

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# 6.5: Tomás Rivera

**Tomás Rivera (1935-1984)**

Tomás Rivera was a child of migrant farm workers who overcame tremendous challenges to pursue his education. He wrote about the harsh conditions faced by Mexican farm laborers in his novel *Y no se lo tragó la tierra*. Read the article about the life of Tomás Rivera by Humanities Texas [Website]. And read an excerpt from "y no se lo tragó la tierra" below.




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# 6.6: Sandra Cisneros

ucJoXwhLajAdNzHA7Sandra Cisneros (1954 - )



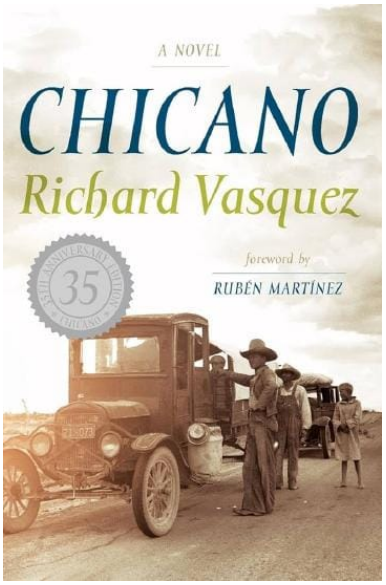
Read about the life and work of Sandra Cisneros in her own words [Website].

Read an excerpt from The House on Mango Street in the file attached below.

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# 6.7: Richard Vásquez

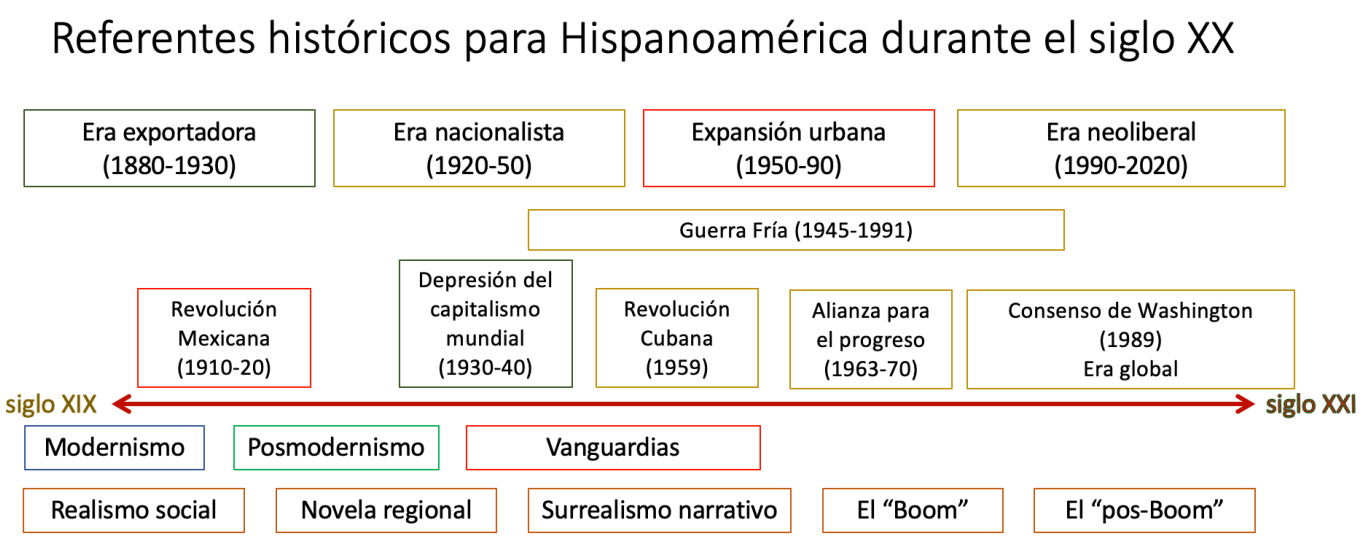
Richard Vasquez (1928-1990)




Read his article Mapping Out the Border Lands in the file attached below.

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# 6.8: Hispanoamérica 1970-2010




The last decades of the 20th century marked a progressive integration of Latin America into the "global era," and at the same time, a growing diversity in the history and cultural production of each country and region. From an era of dictatorships in the 1970s, the region gradually transitioned to a period of democratic governments that favored foreign investment, in what was called the "neoliberal era" or economic liberalization of the 1990s. These predominantly urban societies continue to face the challenge of ensuring that the majority of the population has access to employment, education, healthcare, and consumer goods.

Cinema is one of the fields of cultural production with the widest international reach since the late 20th century, and it serves as a good indicator of sociocultural changes, especially since the 1960s. The film *Señora de nadie* (1982), for example, represents in Leonor, the main character, the growing participation of women in personal and social destinies, as well as the will—and difficulty—of the inhabitants of Latin America to build autonomous societies. At the same time, it symbolizes in Fernando, her husband, the difficulty in trusting governments that, like an unfaithful husband, frequently betray the interests of their own countries for the benefit of foreign investors.

*Señora*

# The 1970s

**dueño**: *owner*
**empresa**: *business, enterprise*
**apoyo**: *support*
**enfrentado**: *conflicting*

**tras**: *after*

**allanamiento**: *raid*
**amenaza**: *threat*
**marcharse**: *to leave*
**prensa**: *press*
**medidas**: *measures*

**prestamista:** *lending (adj.)*
**en buena medida**: *to a large extent*
**endeudamiento**: *debts*
**petróleo**: *oil (for gas)*
**préstamo**: *loan*
**tasa**: *rate*
**evitar**: *to avoid*

As we have seen, the global atmosphere of the Cold War from the 1960s to the 1980s fost lay not in reforming capitalist institutions, but in replacing them with a socialist system of rightists, the only way to preserve institutions and businesses was by suppressing leftist m world powers (the United States and the Soviet Union).

Following the Latin Americanist movement and revolutionary fervor of the 1960s, Latin Am military was in control of almost every Latin American country, some populist (Peru), other Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela, with their limited democratic participatio repression—the activism of popular sectors under the "National Security Doctrine." During were reported, many of whom went into exile (Argentine Adolfo Pérez Esquivel received th Cuba lost credibility as a "free territory of the Americas" because it was unable to eliminat against internal dissent, increasing the number of political prisoners and becoming increa region. In the most aggressive and best-funded dictatorships, such as those in Chile and A did not experience the industrial or urban development of other regions, the rural left-wing peasantry.

In the economic sphere, the governments of the 1970s sought to control inflation—with th corporations (IBM, Philips, Volkswagen, Bayer, ITT). In response to the lending willingness American Development Bank (IDB), economic growth during these years depended largely magnates due to high oil prices and sought reliable clients in need of capital to provide lo finance the social control efforts of Latin American governments to prevent them from fall 1970s from $27 billion to $231 billion.

# The 1980s

**tamaño**: *size*
**sede**: *headquarters*

**empeorar**: *to worsen*
**caldo de cultivo**: *breeding ground*
**narcotráfico**: *drug trafficking*

**alfabetización**: *literacy*
**analfabetismo**: *illiteracy*

**invertir**: *to invest*
**empobrecido**: *impoverished*

**por su parte**: *in turn*
**derrota**: *defeat*
**acuerdo**: *agreement*

In the early 1980s, international banks raised interest rates to limit lending to Latin Ameri
Brazil, and Mexico) declared themselves unable to pay, and the region's overall economy e
reforms: dismantling domestic protectionism, reducing the size of the state (privatizing pu
investment. These reforms are known as neoliberalism or the "Washington Consensus" (na

The political and economic strategies of the previous decade worsened the living conditio
organized crime and terrorism. Drug trafficking, for example, a transnational, multi-billion-
prosperity in the late 1970s, has had a tremendous corrosive impact on societies like thos
extreme left or right emerged or gained new strength in Colombia (FARC, paramilitaries) a




The event that popular activism greeted with the most enthu
over the dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979, and the new government initiated a series of
support from the United States, Cuba, Germany, France, and Spain. But the Cold War still
Sandinista takeover of Nicaragua" (trade embargo, military and financial support for the c
resources in defending itself than in improving the conditions of the impoverished majorit
1990 elections. Initially encouraged by the Nicaraguan victory, revolutionaries in El Salvad
was now providing more support to right-wing governments). However, the Sandinista defe
mid-1990s, the Salvadoran and Guatemalan guerrillas had demobilized and signed peace
Costa Rican President Óscar Arias received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987.

Almost 80% of the Hispanic American population lives in cities, several of which are among the most populated in the world.

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| 9 de julio (Buenos Aires)<br>Buenos Aires, argentina<br>user:Sking, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons | Ciudad.de.Mexico.City.Distrito.Federal.DF.Paseo.Reforma.Skyline<br>Ciudad de México<br>Alejandro Islas Photograph AC, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons | Las Condes (39756096392)<br>Santiago, Chile<br>Deensel, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons |

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# The 1990s and 2000s

**a medida que**: *as*

**habituado**: *familiar, accustomed*

**fortalecer**: *to strengthen*
**ampliar**: *to widen*
**altibajos**: *ups and downs*

**tras**: *after*

As global communism lost credibility and the Soviet Union dissolved, dictatorships were le
one of the neoliberal premises (and a condition of the IMF) was to attract foreign investme
rights also exerted internal and external pressure toward democracy. Thus, almost all Latir
governments as accustomed to dictatorship as Haiti and Paraguay.

In the following years, almost all of these democracies strengthened and expanded, with u
be identified. (1) On the one hand, there are the most open governments, with generally fa
Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Chile. (2) At the other extreme, there are very restricted and unst
partial democracies with more or less limited civil rights. Notable examples of presidents
and Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in the 2000s. However, the trend in many democratically e
candidates, many from the middle class, participate. Political reforms have been made tov
in the nineties, or in the electoral opening of Mexico, which for the first time "dethroned" t

**partidos**: *political parties*

**poner de relieve**: *to highlight*
**destacable**: *remarkable, of note*

Another factor in this democratic expansion has been the resurgence of social activism, w
groups, LGBTQ+ groups, human rights defenders, and many others have highlighted the re
needs (revolution, socialism). The most notable is the Indigenous movement, which, now s
organizations, has become a pressure group that the state cannot ignore in countries like
1999 and the rise of President Evo Morales in La Paz in 2006. A comparable phenomenor
a significant influence on the power dynamics in that country since 1994. The Nobel orgar
1992 to Rigoberta Menchú-Tum, a Maya-Quiché activist from Guatemala. This increased n
intellectuals and activists to question the use of the adjective "Latino" to describe this par

A barometer of the dynamism of popular movements has been the electoral strength of le
Washington would not have allowed in previous decades. This trend of the first decade of
than the “red” communism of the 20th century. The political tone differs in each case, but
nationalist initiatives, authoritarian tactics, and acts of accelerated constitutional transfor
maintain economic growth, favor private investment, and gradually improve wealth distribu
regions with comparable economies (Caricom, Mercosur), but are wary of free trade agree

**viraje**: *turn, swerve*
**equidad**: *equity, fairness*

This shift to the left is related to the mixed results of the neoliberal reforms imposed by in
included strengthening free trade agreements and increasing foreign investment (Spain al
on average for Latin America in the 1990s. On the other hand, unemployment did not decr
and housing services, for example), the overall number of homeless people increased, and
wealth distribution in the world: in the 1990s, the richest 10% of households received 40%
greater social equity. The Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano summarized this sentiment a

| | |
|---|---|
| Para nosotros, el capitalismo no es un sueño a realizar, sino una pesadilla realizada. Nuestro desafío no consiste en privatizar al Estado, sino en desprivatizarlo. [...] Y el mercado no es, para nosotros, más que una nave de piratas: cuanto más libre, peor. [...] Vivimos en una región de precios europeos y salarios africanos, donde [...] el capitalismo es antidemocrático, con o sin elecciones: la mayoría de la gente está presa de la necesidad y está condenada a la violencia” (*Apuntes para el fin del milenio*. Ecuador: El Conejo, 1979. 71). | *Capita made how to ship o Europe antide prey to* |

| | |
|---|---|
| **desempleo**: *unemployment*<br><br>**eje**: *axis*<br><br><br><br>**medidas**: *measures*<br>**el propio**: *itself*<br>**añadir**: *to add*<br><br><br><br>**cifra**: *figure*<br>**ingreso**: *income* | Unemployment and rising poverty have also contributed to the increase in drug trafficking<br>the Americas has been responding to these two phenomena, which were unintentionally e<br>the 1980s and 1990s gave the Pentagon a justification for maintaining some of its militar<br>Panama was justified in these terms. In the 2000s, however, the "war on terror" provided t<br>But its increase along the Mexican border led to a renewed analysis of the issue from the<br><br>Adding another dimension to the concept of “globalization,” the large number of Latin Am<br>Europe and Asia since the 1990s, is also changing the very concept of Latin America. The<br>speakers, surpassed only by Mexico, Colombia, and (possibly) Argentina. [1] To give just or<br>these emigrants sent approximately US$62.3 billion from the United States to their home<br>1). For some nations, this income is almost as significant as export revenue. Politically anc<br>transformative, as it alters the American electoral game and fosters a continental conscio<br>harmonious.<br><br>[1] Some of these 40 million did not immigrate, but are descended from those who lived i<br>Mexico, etc.). |

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# 6.9: Mexican-American Poetry- Los Chicanos

## El término “chicano/a”



Chicano Park en San Diego. **kellinahandbasket**

En su libro *Chicano Folklore*, Rafaela Castro explica que un **chicano** es una persona de ascendencia mexicana nacida en los EE.UU. Muchos mexicano-americanos nacidos en los Estados Unidos se consideran chicanos para enfatizar e identificar su **herencia** mexicana e indígena. Castro señala que hay varios mitos del **origen** de la palabra. Algunos dicen que el término viene del estado mexicano *Chihuahua* y la palabra *mexicano* (*Chihuahua* / *Mexicano* → Chicano) (46). Otras personas piensan que la palabra “chicano” es de **origen** náhuatl, el idioma principal de los aztecas. Ellos le llamaban a su territorio Mexica (pronunciado [me'shi.ka]), una palabra que suena muy similar a “chicano”.

En los 1960s los jóvenes y los estudiantes universitarios empezaron a utilizar “chicano/a” en sus movimientos políticos para demostrar su **identidad** cultural. Como señala Castro, Chicano/a “has become an ideologically loaded symbolic code word that expresses cultural pride in a common Mexican heritage. To call oneself Chicano symbolizes a solidarity with the Spanish language and with a pre-Columbian indigenous past, and an understanding of American racial oppression and discrimination against Mexican-Americans” (46). Por esto, el término tiene tanto que ver con ser mexicano-americano como con la posición política de una persona.

## El movimiento chicano

El Movimiento Chicano comenzó en los años 1960s con el deseo de mejorar el tratamiento de mexicano-americanos en varios sectores: la política, la educación, y el trabajo –– especialmente en los campos agrícolas. Este movimiento se inspiró en parte por el movimiento de derechos civiles dirigido por Martin Luther King Jr. y ganó mucho apoyo entre los estudiantes universitarios, quienes empezaron a interesarse en su **identidad** y a valorar su herencia indígena mexicana. Uno de estos grupos se llama MEChA, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán. Aztlán es el nombre del antiguo territorio de los aztecas.

Un líder importante en el movimiento de los trabajadores agrícolas fue César Chávez, quien luchó durante toda su vida por los derechos de mexicano-americanos. Chávez nació en Yuma, Arizona de padres que vivían como campesinos migratorios. En 1962, él creó el sindicato “United Farm Workers” (UFW) para mejorar los derechos y las condiciones de los trabajadores. En 1965 organizó una huelga para obtener mejores contratos para los trabajadores. El Movimiento Chicano promociona la **identidad** de los mexicano-americanos e intenta corregir los estereotipos negativos de los mexicanos en los Estados Unidos sin emplear la violencia. Aunque Chávez falleció en 1993, UFW sigue trabajando para mejorar las condiciones en los campos.

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# Expresiones artísticas chicanas



Chicano Batman Raph_PH

Desde 1960, las expresiones artísticas chicanas han sido herramientas de activismo político y han ayudado a crear un sentido de comunidad entre los mexicano-americanos. Los enlaces a continuación incluyen ejemplos de los artistas que jugaron un papel importante cuando el movimiento comenzó en 1960 pero también de artistas más recientes que rompen con los moldes tradicionales.

## El arte chicano

La meta de la nueva generación de chicanos es criticar y denunciar los estereotipos negativos sobre los mexicano-americanos y defender los derechos de los inmigrantes.

- Art as Resistance: Chicano Artists in the Time of Trump
- 'Bridges in a Time of Walls' Brings Chicano Art to Mexico City
- 8 Influential Chicano and Chicano Artists in LA
- Chicano Mural Movement

## La música chicana

- Chicano Batman: 'Four Latinos Breaking into Rock Music and Succeeding'
- The New Generation of Chicano Soul Wave
- Songs of the Chicano Movement
- Documental: Chicano Rock! The Sounds of East Los Angeles

## La literatura chicana

Tradicionalmente, la literatura chicana explora temas como la identidad, el biculturalismo, el bilingüismo, y la vida en la frontera. Autores chicanos incluyen a Rudolfo Anaya, Sandra Cisneros, y Lorna Dee Cervantes. En 2003, Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez publicó una novela de "Chica lit' que se llama *The Dirty Girls Social Club*. Esta novela representa una ruptura con la literatura chicana

tradicional. Como dice Valdes-Rodriguez en el artículo, “"I'm an Ivy League graduate, middle-class person who just lives a regular American life — you know, born and raised here, don't speak all that much Spanish — and there are lots and lots of people like me."”

- Fall and Rise of Dirty Girls’ Author
- A Chicano Poem by Lorna Dee Cervantes
- 13 Chicano-Lit Must Reads
- Chicano Literature: The Theme of Cultural Resistance

## El cine chicano

- What Does It Mean To Be Chicano?
- History of Chicano Cinema’s Rise
- Stereotypes in the Media
- What Coco Means to Mexican-Americans

(Fuentes: Castro, Rafaela. *Chicano Folklore*. Oxford UP, 2000).

Almanaque creado por **Karen Acosta** y modificado por Mirla González.

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# 6.10: Cómo leer la poesía

(Translated from Spanish)

## Why express oneself through poetry?

Poetry is a genre that can respond to any human circumstance to express how we feel or experience the world. By communicating through poetry, the poet engages with a long tradition, with both formal and informal patterns and practices. There are three broad categories of poetry: dramatic (plays in verse), epic (narrative, often with heroic themes), and lyric (more subjective, contemplative—this style is what usually comes to mind when one thinks of poetry). Some poets seek the challenge of writing within certain inherited forms, such as the sonnet, the epigram, the elegy, or an ode. Others employ poetic devices within free verse. Poetic expression has its roots in orality and maintains these ties through time through the ballads and romances of the Middle Ages; the gaucho payadas of the 19th and 20th centuries in the Southern Cone; improvised and sung poetry throughout the centuries; and the more recent spoken word poetry or rap. In poetry there is generally more emphasis on connotation, or the figurative implications of words, the meaning beyond the literal or explicit sense.

The examples of poetry included in this text come from a variety of countries and historical periods and exemplify distinct forms and themes. Some deal explicitly with health, while others show the range of experiences that can be addressed through poetry. In the field of medicine, poetry sometimes appears as an activity or therapy that "can enhance resilience and reduce anxiety in people with cancer," [1] a way of negotiating one's place and purpose in society, or an activity of self-representation and creativity that can contribute to "grassroots expressions of public health." [2] It can even be useful for those working in the medical field itself to express the successes and difficulties of working with the boundaries between illness and health, as illustrated by the poems and essays of Rafael Campo, a Cuban-American poet and physician. [3]

Examples of poetic expression appear in almost every section of this book; Chapter 5, "Body, Gender, and Sexuality," in particular, allows us to explore poetic expressions in depth. You may refer to the ideas and terms explained here as you explore how poetry expresses a multitude of human situations and feelings.

## Basic terms for talking about poetry

- **Poetry** is a cultural form; **a poem** is a poetic text. The word is masculine, despite ending in "a", thanks to its Greek origin.
- **The poet** and **the poetess** are the terms used to refer to the person who writes the poem. They can also refer to the poetic voice.
- **The poetic speaker (poetic I, lyric speaker, poetic voice, poet):** These words are used to refer to the "person" who speaks within the poem; he or she has a role parallel to the narrator in fiction.
- To talk about the **content of the poem, terms such as theme** , **message** , **story** , and **ideas** can be used.

## Poetry is evocative: it communicates through connotation

Language can be **denotative** or **connotative . Denotative** language refers objectively to something; for example, a star is literally a celestial body. **Connotative** language carries, in addition to its literal meaning, another expressive sense; the connotations of "star" include someone who excels in their field or destiny. The resources mentioned here infuse language with connotations and can communicate directly to the emotions of readers and listeners. They communicate an effect or idea more intensely, often by drawing a comparison between the poem's new idea and an experience the readers have shared.

An **image** is something perceived through one of the five senses—sight, hearing, taste, touch, or smell. It is also the representation in words or in the mind of a sensation. Images lend sensuality to a text. The more detailed and precise the description of an image, the more sensuality it adds to the text. Sometimes its literary value lies in the sensuality itself and the pleasure it evokes.

## Figurative language: analogy, tropes, and other figures

- **Analogy** refers to the similarity between different things. Poetry uses various forms of analogy, including **metaphor, simile, symbol, archetype, synecdoche, and metonymy.** These uses of language are also called **figurative language** , language whose meaning differs from the literal meaning.

- Perhaps the most central trope in poetry is **the metaphor.** Images often carry a **metaphorical** meaning . With a metaphor, the poet unites two objects and suggests a new relationship between them through a perceived resemblance. In José Martí's "Verse V" (below), the poet employs a metaphor when he refers to his verse as "a mountain of foam," attributing to it the qualities of lightness, abundance, and transience.

- **A simile** also makes a comparison, but unlike a metaphor, the comparison is made explicit with the word "like" or "as." Martí also uses a simile in "Verse V" when he says, "My verse is like a dagger."

- **A symbol** compares two elements, often based on an image, but it does so with reference to the cultural world in which the poet lives. The symbol generally has a "universal" meaning, that is, a widely recognized meaning. In dominant European and American cultures, for example, the rose has come to be understood as a symbol of beauty and the color white as a symbol of purity.

- **An archetype** is a fundamental model, a paradigm of a concept: the hero, the orphan, the widow, the fairy godmother, the witch, God, Heaven, Hell. It is a concept that we may carry in our subconscious and that affects how we understand the world and how we react to cultural texts.

- Synecdoche also involves a culturally determined comparison, in which a part or example represents the whole object or group. In the expression "daily bread," bread—a staple food—represents everything necessary for life. When it is said that "Spain won the match," the name of the nation—Spain—represents a sports team made up of Spanish players **.**

- In **metonymy,** which is also culturally determined, there is a close association between the object or concept being named and the idea, person, or process to which it refers. In the expression "the sword and the pen," for example, it refers to a person's capacity to perform military duties (the sword) and intellectual activities (the pen). In the following sentence, the word "crown" is a metonym referring to the power to govern: "The marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand united the crowns of Castile and Aragon."

## Other transformations and turns of language

There are other poetic resources that give language an additional or different meaning than the literal one.

- **The apostrophe** represents a " turn " in language, as it marks a moment when the poetic voice addresses a person, animal, idea, or object directly, whether inside or outside the poem. The poetic voice shifts from speaking in the third person to using the second person—you. The poetic voice can use the apostrophe to intensify the expression of emotions, to address an absent being intimately, or to create personification. Several poems in this collection feature a continuous apostrophe—the entire poem is addressed to a "you"—such as the poems by César Vallejo and Rosario Castellanos in Part II (chapter 5). In others, the apostrophe interrupts and expresses a change in the poetic voice's attitude, as in "The Grandfather" by Nicolás Guillén (chapter 5). Here the poet begins by speaking of a woman in the third person, "This angelic woman with northern eyes," but in the first tercet he addresses her directly, "Ah, my lady!"

- In **antithesis,** two elements or ideas are contrasted—such as cold and heat or honesty and corruption. The expressive force of antithesis is greater if it is presented with parallel syntax, as in Enrique Lihn's poem (Part II (Chapter 3) "There are only two countries": "There are only two countries: the country of the healthy and the country of the sick") and in "To Julia de Burgos," where the poet says: "You are a cold doll of social lies, / and I, a virile flash of human truth"; the parallelism is seen in the structure of adjective (cold/virile) + noun (doll / flash) + of + quality to be contrasted (social lie / human truth).

- **Hyperbole** is exaggeration, as in saying, "I almost died of fright."

- In **irony,** the poet seeks to communicate something different from what is literally said, sometimes even its opposite, as if exclaiming after a car accident, "How fabulously lucky I am!" Irony requires a relationship of mutual understanding between the speaker and the listener; otherwise, the meaning fails.

- In **a paradox,** the two parts of an opposition or antithesis are united in a seemingly impossible way, yet they communicate a complex conceptual truth. Saint Teresa of Ávila conveys the impossibility of describing mystical experience through paradox: “I live without living in myself / and such a high life I await / that I die because I do not die.”

- In **personification,** the speaker attributes human qualities to an animal or inanimate object. In “Sonnet XXIII”, Garcilaso personifies spring with the adjective “joyful” and time with the adjective “angry” (arrogant).

## Poetry is music: it organizes sound

- **Rhyme** is the matching of sounds at the end of lines of verse or, with **internal rhyme** , within a line. Rhyme lends musicality to a poem. It can link two or more words to enrich meaning. It can help a spoken poet remember and create verses spontaneously. It can also draw attention to the poet's wit.

- **Consonant rhyme** is a rhyme that includes both vowels and consonants.

- **Assonant rhyme** includes only the vowels.

- **A blank verse** does not rhyme with others.

## Versification

- **A verse** is a single line of poetry. It does not have the same meaning as the word "*verse*" in English.

- **An acute verse** has the accent on the last syllable: “I live without living in **myself** ” (Saint Teresa of Jesus).

- **A plain verse** has the accent on the penultimate syllable. “And such a high life is **but** ” (“I live without living in myself” by Saint Teresa of Jesus).

- **A proparoxytone verse** has the accent on the antepenultimate syllable. “And your slender and agile shadow / fine and **languid** ” (“Nocturne III by José Asunción Silva, Part II, Chapter 5).

- **Meter** is the measure or length of a verse. **A verse of minor art** has fewer than 9 syllables. **A verse of major art has** 9 or more syllables.

- **A caesura** is a pause in the voice within a line of verse. **A hemistich** is half a line of verse divided in two by a caesura. **A synalepha** is the merging of the last vowel of one word with the first vowel of the next. **Enjambment** is the way in which the voice continues without pause from one line of verse to the next because the syntax links the meaning of the words.

The “Verse V” of *Versos sencillos* by the poet José Martí is a quatrain, a stanza of four verses.

Each verse has eight syllables:

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Rhyme |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yo | soy | un | hom | bre | sin | ce | ro | A |
| | de | don | de | cre | ce | la | pal | ma. | B |
| | Y_an | tes | de | mo | rir | me | quie | ro | A |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | E | char | los | ver | sos | del | al | ma. | B |
| | | | | | | | | | |

The quatrain has an ABAB **consonant rhyme:**

- ero
- alma
- ero
- alma

**How to count syllables:**

- If there is a consonant between two vowels, the consonant goes with the second vowel: cre / ce, mo / rir.
- They cannot be separated: p, b, f, c, g plus l or r: a/pro/piar, a/flo/jar.
- They also cannot be separated: t, d plus r: cua/tro, cua/dro, pie/dra.
- In other cases of 2 consonants, the two are divided: ár/bol, es/pan/to, car/ne.
- When three or more consonants appear between two vowels, the last two form a group: in/fla/mar, con/tra/er, em/ple/a/dos. But if the first consonants are ns, they stay together: cons/tar, ins/tau/rar.
- The contact between two low vowels (a, e, o) requires 2 distinct syllables: a/é/re/o, pe/le/ar, le/a.
- If a low vowel and a high vowel (i, u) form a diphthong, it constitutes one syllable: ai/re, a/sia, bue/no.
- A triphthong forms a separate syllable: a/so/ciáis, buey.
- A high accented vowel + a low unaccented vowel = two distinct syllables: ha/bí/a, pa/ís.

**The stanzas**

- **A stanza** is a group of several lines of verse. A poem may have stanzas with a structure defined by the number of lines, their length (meter), and their rhyme scheme. Others have flexible stanzas or no stanzas at all.
- **A quatrain** is a stanza of four verses.
- **Un romance** es un poema de avess octosílabos con rima asonante de los aves pares.
- **A sonnet** is a poem of fourteen lines. The lines are generally hendecasyllabic (11 syllables) or alexandrine (14 syllables) with consonant rhyme. The rhyme scheme varies, but it typically groups the lines into two quatrains and two tercets. Examples include ABAB CDCD EFE FEF and ABBA CDDC EFG EFG.
- **Free verse** is poetry that does not have a clear rhyme or meter pattern.

## Figures that contribute to the musicality of poetry

- **Alliteration** is the repetition of consonant sounds to create an auditory effect. In “Cuerpo de mujer” (chapter 5), Blas de Otero uses alliteration with the letter “t” in the first tercet of the sonnet:

> Cuerpo de la mujer, fuen**t**e de llan**t**o
> donde, después de **t**anta luz, de **t**an**t**o
> **t**ac**t**o su**t**il, de **T**án**t**alo es la pena.
>
> In English: "*Woman's body, source of tears*

*where , after so much light, so much*

*subtle touch , the pain of Tantalus is found.*"

Alliteration can contribute to the meaning and effect of a poem in many different ways. In this case, the alliteration seems to connect the meanings of the words *tanta/tanto*, *tacto*, and *Tantalus*. Tantalus is the name of a son of the god Zeus who suffered the punishment of eternal thirst and hunger: although he had to stand by a lake and was very close to the fruit of a tree, whenever he tried to drink the water or pick the fruit, they moved away from him. The alliteration in Otero's verses connects Tantalus's punishment with touch—the inability to touch the woman—and with the word *tanta/tanto*, which indicates abundance: with such abundance, the poet cannot touch the woman's body.

- **Anaphora** also involves repetition, but of one or more words at the beginning of a phrase, verse, or clause. The repetition of the words “en tanto” in Garcilaso de la Vega’s “Sonnet XXIII” (chapter 4) is an example of anaphora: the two instances of the expression occur at the beginning of two adjacent clauses. The effects of anaphora are diverse: it can add emphasis, draw attention, create acceleration or deceleration, soothe, or intensify emotion. It is a common figure of speech in political rhetoric. Consider, for example, Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech. What effect does it have on Garcilaso’s sonnet?

- **Hyperbaton** changes the usual word order. Hyperbaton is often used to give the poet flexibility to place emphasis where they wish in a verse and to aid with rhyme, by placing a certain word at the end of the line even if it means inverting the word order. The exaggerated use of hyperbaton in the Spanish Baroque period—in the 17th century—was also related to the desire to showcase the poet's wit. The first two lines of Garcilaso's "Sonnet XXIII," in which the poet admires his beloved, are:

  En tanto que de rosa y azucena
  se muestra la color en vuestro gesto
  y que vuestro mirar ardiente, honesto
  Enciende al corazón y lo refrena...[4]

  *In English: "While the color of rose and lily*

  *is shown in your gesture*
  *and your ardent, honest gaze*
  *ignites the heart and restrains it...*"

The conventional word order would be, “En tanto que la color de rosa y azucena se muestra en vuestro gesto ...” Hyperbaton allows Garcilaso to arrange two hendecasyllabic verses and create a consonant rhyme between“azucena (lily)” and “refrena (restrain),” and “gesto (gesture)” and “honesto (honest)”. It allows the emphasis at the end to fall on “refrenar" that is, halting the man’s advances toward the woman. It also allows the words “gesto” and “honesto” to be associated through the rhyme and their placement at the end of verses 2 and 3, thus linking honesty with the lady’s face.

# The application of poetic concepts



José Martí (1853-1895)

José Julián Martí Pérez (1853-1895) is a national hero in Cuba, renowned for his poetry, essays, journalism, and political activism. He was imprisoned at the age of 16 on charges of treason by the Spanish government. He served two years of his sentence and was exiled to Spain at the age of 18. With an anti-imperialist ideology, he fought for Cuban independence throughout his life but never actually returned to live there. Instead, he traveled and lived in Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela, and the United States. According to Eugenio de Florit, he wrote the poetry collection *Versos sencillos (Simple Verses)* at the foot of the Catskill Mountains in New York, seeking simplicity through formal elegance at the beginning of the literary movement known as Spanish American Modernism. [5] Martí returned to his country and died at the Battle of Dos Ríos about four years after the publication of this book.

## de José Martí

Si ves un monte de espumas,
Es mi verso lo que ves:
Mi verso es un monte, y es
Un abanico de plumas.

Mi verso es como un puñal
Que por el puño echa flor:
Mi verso es un surtidor
Que da agua de coral.

Mi verso es de un verde claro
Y de un carmín encendido:
Mi verso es un ciervo herido
Que busca en el monte amparo.

Mi verso al valiente agrada:
Mi verso, breve y sincero,
Es del vigor del acero
Con que se funde la espada.

*Versos sencillos* (1891)

> *If you see a mountain of foam,*
> *it is my verse you see:*

*My verse is a mountain, and it is*
*a fan of feathers.*

*My verse is like a dagger*
*That blossoms from its hilt:*
*My verse is a fountain*
*That gives forth coral water.*

*My verse is light green*
*and bright crimson:*
*My verse is a wounded deer*
*that seeks refuge in the mountains.*

*My verse pleases the brave:*
*My verse, brief and sincere,*
*Is of the vigor of the steel*
*With which the sword is forged.*

*Simple Verses (1891)*

## How to read the poem:

1. Begin by reading the entire poem to grasp its overall meaning. Don't forget the importance of the title: *Simple Verses* .

2. Look up the words you don't know.

3. Who is the poetic speaker? Where are they? What do we learn about them in the poem? (Note: if the speaker is going to state that they are a woman or a man, there must be indications of gender in the text.) The poetic voice may be almost entirely absent from the poem; what does this distance imply? *In "V" we learn that the speaker is a poet ("my verse") and we learn a great deal about their philosophy of poetry, what they want to do with their verse.*

4. What is the tone of the poem? What are the central themes? *Here, the theme is poetry, its role in life. The tone is strong and confident: the speaker makes a series of assertions about the nature of their poetry.*

5. What are some of the poetic devices used? It helps to make a list of some of these based on the terms already presented. Other devices the author uses are: parallelism; oppositions; repetitions of sounds, words, ideas, and images; symbols (and we learn what they represent according to the context within the poem and the cultural context); and similar and contrasting words. *Each stanza begins with "my verse is" (anaphoric repetition); the repetition draws attention to his multiple attempts to define his poetry. In "V," there are a series of comparisons, and therefore, it seems that his poetry is many things or fulfills many roles at once. Many of these comparisons are metaphors ("my verse is...") and relate his verse to a mountain and a fan of feathers in the first stanza.*

6. What do these images have in common? Their placement in the poem suggests a relationship between them (a certain parallelism). Are they similar or different? *There is a shift in the series of metaphors, however, in the second stanza, which becomes apparent when one begins to connect one metaphor to another: "My verse is like a dagger." Now we see a simile; perhaps the shift indicates a different relationship between the elements in this instance. Is there anything different about this comparison?*

7. What is the rhythm, rhyme, and versification like here? What does it have to do with the poem's meaning? *Here, the poem deals with poetry itself, and when the speaker describes what their poetry is, they support this within the poem. It's simple, with a strong consonant rhyme scheme (abba) that lends a certain unity to each stanza and a strong, song-like rhythm. That's why it's easy to remember. The rhyme also creates an association between terms: foams/feathers, you see/ are (linked by both meaning and sound). Supported by the relatively simple language, the regular rhyme makes the poem seem more straightforward.*

8. What is the poem's trajectory? Are there different parts, changes, pauses, or other units within the poem itself? What is the relationship between the poem and the book in which it appears? (Is it part of a series?) What is the relationship between the poem and what we know about the author? What is its relationship to the historical moment and literary tradition?

9. Does seeking more information about the cultural and historical context in which this poem was produced change how we understand it?

## Créditos

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1. Mi traducción, Tegner, et al. *Journal of Poetry Therapy* 22:3; 121-131. ↩
2. Crawford, et. al. 129 Crawford, Paul, Brian Brown, Carly Baker, Victoria Tischler, Brian Abrams. *Health Humanities*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2015. ↩
3. In his book *The Healing Art* , Campo distinguishes between the activity of remedying ( mend ) versus curing or healing in his own practice and in the poems of others. ↩
4. While rose and lily color your face, and your ardent and honest gaze ignite the heart and restrain it... ↩
5. de Florit, Eugenio. “Los versos de Martí.” En *José Martí, Versos*, editado por de Florit. Las Américas Publishing Co., 1962: 7-63. ↩

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# 6.11: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales

Click here to read the poem "I am Joaquín" [Website] by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales.

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# 6.12: Alurista

Read the poem ***Pa' Césary Corky*** by Alurista here [Website].

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# 6.13: Francisco X. Alarcón

Francisco X. Alarcòn (1954-2016) Selected Poems Mexican-American Contemporary Literature Francisco Alarcòn was a Chicano poet, who gained success in both the U.S. and Spanish-speaking nations, even though he wrote primarily in Spanish. Alarcòn was born in California but lived in Guadalajara, Mexico from the age of 6 until he returned to California at age 18. After working in California restaurants and as a migrant farm worker, Alarcòn graduated from California State University, Long Beach with a B.A. in Spanish and History. At Stanford University, he studied contemporary Latin American literature. While studying at Stanford, Alarcòn became part of the area literary community and began doing poetry readings. In 1985, he published his first book of poems, *Tattoos*. Studying on a Fulbright scholarship in Mexico City, he discovered Aztec incantations, which became the basis for his third volume of poetry, *Snake Poems: An Aztec Invocation*. In 1985, Alarcòn also became one of the founders of *Las Cuarto Espinas*, the first gay Chicano poets collective, which published the collection *Ya Vas Carnal*. Alarcòn taught Spanish at UC-Davis and co-authored the textbook *Mundo 21*, still a popular text, published by Cengage. Alarcòn published poems in three languages: Spanish, English, and Nahuatl. His style is considered minimalist, though lyrical, with short lines and stanzas. According to the website for the Academy of American Poets, the poems "explore mestizo culture and identity, American identity, sexuality, Mesoamerican history, and mythology." Alarcòn won the 1993 American Book Award, Carlos Pellicer-Robert Frost Poetry Honor Award, Chicano Literary Prize, Fred Cody Lifetime Achievement Award, and the 1993 PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Award. At the time of his death, in January 2016, Alarcòn was lecturer of Spanish and director of the Spanish for Native Speakers program at UC-Davis. "To Those Who Have Lost Everything" (2002), "Prayer" (2002), and "'Mexican' is not a Noun" (2002) were published in Alarcòn's 2002 collection *The Other Side of Night* [*Del otro lado de la noche*]. All are characteristic of Alarcòn's style, written as a series of brief, unpunctuated verses with little capitalization. Each of the three poems also focuses on an aspect of Chicano culture: the experience of crossing the border into the United States, discrimination faced by Mexican-Americans, and efforts to protest unfair treatment. Consider while reading:

1. Identify the speaker in each poem—what is the tone of the poem? What emotion is the speaker expressing?
2. Although these poems are brief, Alarcòn uses poetic techniques and figurative language. Identify the crafted elements you notice.
3. What political or social statements does Alarcòn make in these three poems?

Written by Anita Turlington

Read "*Mexican*" *Is Not a Noun* here [Website].

Read *Prayer* here [Website].

Read *To Those Who Have Lost Everything* here [Website].

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# 6.14: Historical Antecedents

In the next section, you will learn about some of the historical antecedents that form the cultural context and provide inspiration for modern Mexican-American poetry.

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# 6.15: El corrido mexicano

## Step 1

Read this summary of the history of the Mexican corrido, and its subgenre, the narcocorrido.



Los Tigres del Norte at the Apollo Theater
**(Alterna2)**

The corrido is a musical genre in Mexico that tells the true story of a real and/or mythical figure. These epic compositions narrate important moments to pay homage and show respect to a person or a people.

The corrido originated in the early 19th century during the War of Independence and gained immense popularity during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) because it recounted the adventures of revolutionaries and their leaders. Corridos remain popular today. They continue to tell the heartfelt stories of community members and their most pressing issues, such as immigration. Instead of focusing on revolutionary leaders, they now tell the stories of unsung heroes who die trying to cross the border into the United States. Another popular theme in contemporary corridos is drug trafficking; these corridos are called “narcocorridos.”

Narcocorridos are heavily influenced by norteño music, incorporating the accordion rhythm and drawing inspiration from the waltz and polka. Traditionally, they were music of rural areas, but recently corridos have become popular in Mexican and American cities. According to Elijah Wald, author of the book *Narcocorrido* (2002), in the 1990s more than two-thirds of the Latin music records sold in the United States were by Mexican narcocorrido artists. Thus, in the U.S., Los Angeles became the epicenter of the genre.

After the death of narcocorrido singer “Chalino” Sánchez in 1992, some people began to criticize the music because it glorified violent and illegal activity. In fact, in 2002, during Vicente Fox's presidency, corridos were banned on some local radio stations, especially in the north and central parts of the country, as a measure to help eradicate the growing violence in these regions. However, narcocorridos remain popular today and have a devoted following.

Fuente: BBC News

## Step 2

Now listen to the narcocorrido “Contrabando y Traición” by Los Tigres del Norte , one of the most well-known groups in this

musical style. As you listen, follow along with the lyrics to better understand the words and the message. We will discuss the song in class.

YouTube Video

*This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.*

View this YouTube Video online

Transcripción (.docx)

## Contrabando y Traición

Salieron de San Isidro procedentes de Tijuana
Traían las llantas del carro repletas de hierba mala
Eran Emilio Barela y Camelia la Tejana

Pasaron por San Clemente, los paró la inmigración
Les pidió sus documentos, les dijo ¿de dónde son?
Ella era de San Antonio, una hembra de corazón

Una hembra si quiere a un hombre por él puede dar la vida
Pero hay que tener cuidado si esa hembra se siente herida
La traición y el contrabando son cosas incompartidas

A Los Ángeles llegaron, a Hollywood se pasaron
En un callejón oscuro las 4 llantas cambiaron
Allí entregaron la hierba y ahí también les pagaron

Emilio dice a Camelia hoy te das por despedida
Con la parte que te toca tú puedes rehacer tu vida
Yo me voy pa' San Francisco con la dueña de mi vida

Sonaron siete balazos Camelia a Emilio mataba
La policía sólo halló una pistola tirada
Del dinero y de Camelia... nunca más se supo nada.

Fuente: arlindo-correia.com

## In English: Smuggling and Treason

They left San Ysidro, coming from Tijuana.
They were bringing tires full of weed.
They were Emilio Barela and Camelia la Tejana.

Passing through San Clemente, immigration stopped them.
He asked for their documents, he asked them where they were from.
She was from San Antonio, a woman at heart.

A woman who loves a man can give her life for him.
But one must be careful if that woman feels hurt.
Betrayal and smuggling are things that cannot be shared.

They arrived in Los Angeles, they went to Hollywood.
In a dark alley they changed all four tires.
There they delivered the weed and there they got paid.

Emilio tells Camelia, "Today you're done.
With your share, you can rebuild your life.
I'm going to San Francisco with the love of my life."

Seven shots rang out when Camelia killed Emilio.
The police only found a gun lying on the ground.
Of the money and of Camelia... nothing more was ever heard.

## Otras actividades

1. Analyze the lyrics of “Contrabando y Traición”: Where does the action take place? What are the main themes? (violence, love, migration, betrayal, money, etc.); Why do you think narcocorridos are popular? Do you think this music is problematic? Should narcocorridos be censored? Are there similar themes or styles in the U.S.?

2. BBC Mundo invited readers to write a unique corrido, with **lyrics** against **drug trafficking** , and some can be heard here in the article “Write a Corrido Against Drug Trafficking .” Listen to other corridos, and then write (in groups) the **lyrics** to your own anti-drug corrido (or another type of corrido).

Almanaque creado por Megan Thornton.

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- 4.4.4: ¿Qué es el corrido mexicano? by Amy Rossomondo, editor is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0. Original source: https://acceso.ku.edu/.

# 6.16: Poemas nahuas y quechuas

(Translated from Spanish)

**Más poemas en: Muestra de poesía en náhuatl y en quechua.**

When Europeans arrived in the Americas in 1492, there were numerous groups of people with very different ways of life and thought. All of these civilizations had their own songs, poetry, and stories. Two civilizations that greatly impressed Europeans at the time were the Aztec civilization in the Valley of Mexico (whose official language was Nahuatl, also spoken by other neighboring cultures and with almost two million speakers today), and the Inca civilization (whose language is Quechua or Runasimi, spoken today by almost ten million people), in what is now Peru, northern Chile and Argentina, Ecuador, southern Colombia, and parts of Bolivia.

Although it is virtually impossible to access the original version of this poetry (which was primarily transmitted orally), from the 16th century to the present day there have been efforts to transcribe, reconstruct, and partially translate numerous texts from pre-Columbian cultures. The relevance of these literary works is not only social—to acknowledge the cultural and political presence of Indigenous groups today—but also aesthetic and cultural: part of the current Latin American identity is influenced by this cultural heritage, and many 20th- and 21st-century writers have incorporated this heritage into their literary experimentation, such as Octavio Paz of Mexico (Nobel Prize 1992), Miguel Ángel Asturias of Guatemala (Nobel Prize 1967), José María Arguedas of Peru, and Elicura Chihuailaf of Chile, among many others.

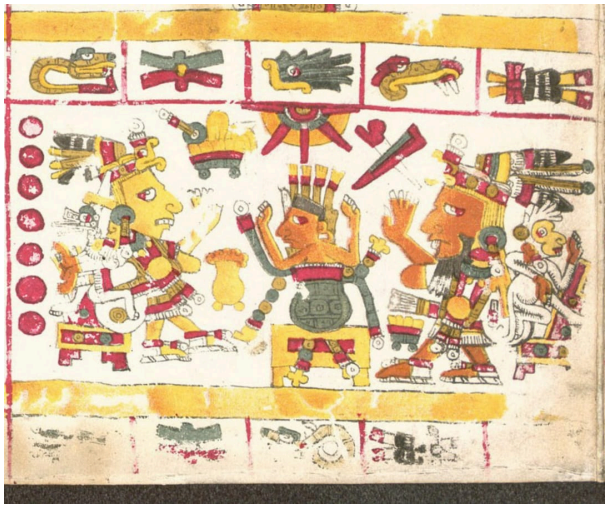
## Nahuatl poetry

"I have understood at last:
I hear a song; I see a flower:
oh, may they never wither!"

- Attributed to Nezahualcóyotl, ca. 1450

In Nahuatl, poetry was called "flower and song" ( *in xochitl* , *in cuicatl* ), a rich compound name that simultaneously described several aspects of poetic activity: a natural, visual, spontaneous, and expressive aesthetic of the sacred and of hope (the flower), and at the same time, an elaborate, collective, ritual, and musical one (the song) [1] . "Flower and song" consisted of a dialogue with one's own heart, with the divine, with the world, and with the people, and it held great importance in Aztec society. Poets were princes or priests who represented the feelings of the community through words, music, and dance. For them, art was the way to imitate the divine creator, Omeotéotl, a dual entity, father (Ometecuhtli) and mother (Omecíhuatl), also called Lord and Lady of the intimate and the near. Although the songs celebrated love, beauty, and heroism in war, among other themes, the fundamental objective of the poetry was to discuss the value of life: "only for a brief time are we borrowed from one another on Earth." *Remembering* the ephemeral nature of life on Earth and affirming the possibility of transcendence and endurance are two essential goals of Nahuatl poetry.

[1] Nahuatl is characterized by this type of double and metaphorical expression. Other examples are: "the face and the heart" = personality; "the black ink and the red ink" = wisdom; "to *carve* faces" = to educate.



"Nowhere can
the home of the supreme arbiter be;
everywhere he is invoked,
everywhere he is venerated.
Only by his side and beside him
can there be life on earth." ("Song to Ometéotl," by the
poet Moyocatzín)

Left: Representation of Ometecuhtli and Omecíhuatl in the Borgia Codex. Unknown author , Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The songs and stories were memorized, but there were also large posters (the codices) with designs and phonetic symbols that the priest-poet indicated with his finger while reciting the corresponding poem. This choreographed activity was called "singing paintings," and it was presented as a mandatory spectacle for the people on special days.

These performances were of great social importance. For this reason, from the age of twelve, many young Aztecs of both sexes, if they did not dedicate themselves to war or agriculture, studied in a very rigorous institution for the teaching of poetry (music, language and dance) called the *cuicacalli* (“house of song”).

Nahuatl poetry has very ancient roots, possibly dating back to the Olmec era (400 BC). However, most of the poems we know today were composed in the century before the Spanish conquest (15th century). Its most frequent imagery includes flowers—symbols of beauty, hope, and divine creation—precious stones—symbols of wealth and power—and birds, symbols of divine wisdom. Two basic stylistic elements were difrasismo (the expression of concepts through two more or less equivalent terms: “let us live in peace, in harmony”) and parallelism (presenting two consecutive phrases that are repeated and complement each other: “let us go, we will look for flowers; let us go, we will cut flowers”). There were also compositions of various genres:

- The *Teotlatolli* dealt with the origins of the world and the divine universe.
- The *Teocuícatl* were hymns in honor of the gods.
- The *Xopancuícatl* were songs to life, to joy and to the beauty of the world.
- The *Xochicuícatl* were an exaltation of friendship and human nobility.
- The *Yaocuícatl* were warrior and heroic songs.
- The *Icnocuícatl* expressed anguish, sadness, and reflection on death.

As an exercise, and while enjoying Nahuatl poetry, can you identify the genre of the following three fragments? What images or ideas do you find interesting and why? What characteristics of Nahuatl poetry are present in each fragment? (From *Anthology of Pre-Columbian Indigenous Poetry* , ed. Jorge Eduardo Paniagua).

**Excerpt 1.** Genre: _____

[**acaso**: tal vez - **colibrí**: *hummingbird*. - **esmeraldino**: color de esmeralda - **áureo**: color de oro - **corola**: el grupo de pétalos de una flor]

*I consult my own heart:*
*Where shall I find beautiful, fragrant flowers?*
*Whom shall I ask?*
*Shall I ask the shimmering green hummingbird,*
*the emerald-green flycatcher?*
*Shall I ask the golden butterfly?*
*Yes, they will know: they know where*
*the beautiful, fragrant flowers open their corollas.*

**Excerpt 2.** Genre: _____

[**mazorca**: el fruto del maíz - **azorarse**: confundirse o emocionarse - **mata**: planta - **primerizo**: primero, que comienza - **robustecerse**: hacerse fuerte]

*My God Mazorca, with his face held high,*
*is troubled for no reason.*
*I am the tender cornstalk:*
*from your mountains I come to see you, I am your God.*
*My life will be refreshed:*
*the firstborn man grows strong,*
*he who commands in war is born!*

**Excerpt 3.** Genre: _____

**cual**: como - **quetzal**: pájaro centroamericano de hermosas plumas verdes, sagrado entre los aztecas y mayas - **penacho**: ornamento de plumas - **plumas**: *feathers* - **préstamo**: *loan*

*Though we are united with each other in this world,*
*like quetzal feathers in a headdress,*
*though we are like stones on the same necklace,*
. . . . . .
*our life passes only once.*
*In a day we depart,*
*in a night we belong to the realm of the dead.*
*Alas, we have only come here to know each other,*
*we have only borrowed this earth.*
*Let us live thus in peace, let us live in harmony.*

## Song of the women of Chalco

The "Song of the Women of Chalco" is attributed to the poet Aquiauhtzin, considered a wise man, who lived in the 15th century, before the arrival of the Spanish. Here are some excerpts. As you read them, can you consider what they reveal about gender relations and eroticism? (from Mexican Songs, trans. Miguel León Portilla):

| | |
|---|---|
| **levantaos**: *get up!*<br>**se extienden**: *spread around*<br>**escudo**: *shield*<br>**se antojan a los hombres**: *are desired by men* | Rise up, my little sisters,<br>let us go, let us go, we will seek flowers,<br>let us go, let us go, we will cut flowers.<br>Here they spread, here they spread<br>the flowers of water and fire,<br>the flowers of the shield,<br>those that men crave,<br>those that give prestige: those of war. |
| **anhelo**: *longing*<br>**hilar**: *to thread, to spin* | They are beautiful flowers,<br>with the flowers that are upon me I adorn myself,<br>they are my flowers, I am from Chalco, I am a woman!<br>I desire and desire the flowers,<br>I desire and desire the songs.<br><br>I am longingly here in the place where we spin,<br>in the place where our life goes. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **entonar**: *to intone*<br>**entretejer**: *to entwine*<br>**circundar**: *to surroind,* rodear<br>**lecho**: *bed* | I sing his song to the lord, little Axayácatl.<br><br>I weave it with flowers, I surround it with them.<br>Like a painting is the beautiful song,<br>like fragrant flowers that bring joy,<br>my heart cherishes them on earth.<br>So too I cherish your word,<br>companion in bed, you, little Axayácatl.<br><br>I weave it with flowers, I surround it with flowers.<br>Thus I will give pleasure to my companion in bed. |
| **haz que se yerga lo que me hace mujer**: *have what makes me a worman rise*<br>**de veras**: *truly*<br>**encenderse**: *to fire up*<br>**deleite**: *delight*<br>**desflorar**: *ejaculate, penetrate*<br>**mamar**: *breast-feed* | Companion, little companion, Mr. Axayácatl.<br><br>Let what makes me a woman rise up,<br>let much truth ignite.<br>We will laugh, we will rejoice,<br>there will be delight, I will have glory.<br><br>But no, don't deflower me yet,<br>My friend, you, my lord, little Axayácatl.<br>You want to suckle at my breasts,<br>almost at my heart |
| **acomódate**: *get comfortable*<br>**acaso**: *by any chance*<br>**lograr**: *to accomplish* | My companion, my little boy,<br>let's be together, settle down by my side,<br>let your manly self speak.<br>Don't I know, don't I have any experience<br>of your enemies, my little boy?<br>But now surrender yourself to my side.<br>Even though we are women,<br>perhaps you will achieve nothing as a man. |
| **revuélveme**: *stir me*<br>**por completo**: completamente<br>**estera**: *mat*<br>**entrégate**: *give yourself* | Flowers and songs of the companion of pleasure,<br>you, lord, companion, my little boy,<br>stir me like corn dough.<br>I offer myself to you completely.<br>I have come to give pleasure to my flowery vulva,<br>my small mouth.<br>I desire the lord, the little Axayácatl.<br>Look at my flowery painting, my breasts,<br>let us have pleasure on your mat of flowers.<br>And where you exist, little companion,<br>little by little surrender to sleep,<br>be at peace, my little boy,<br>you, lord Axayácatl. |

## Quechua Poetry

The official language of the Incas and the peoples belonging to their empire was Quechua (from *qishwa* , "temperate zone"), also called Runasimi ( *runa* : people, *simi* : speech, mouth). This culture, like the Aztec, also placed great importance on poetry, which was present in all social activities: agriculture, funerals, official ceremonies, and love. However, unlike the Nahua codices, the Incas did not have a known writing system, so there is no clear documentation of their original literature.

The only system of signs known to date is that of the *quipus* , which were cords with knots of colors and shapes distributed in such a way that they could be “read” to record historical information, numbers, etc. Thus, the only documents we have today about Quechua poetry come from colonial chronicles, for example, those of Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, Father Cristóbal de Molina, or Inca Garcilaso de la Vega.

Left: Inca Quipu.
Unknown authorUnknown author , Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

According to accounts recorded by chroniclers, Inca nobles also received a rigorous literary education at an institution called the *Yachayhuasi* . There, they were taught by *amautas* , historians and philosophers who also created historical, epic, and sacred poetry. Finally, the *haravicus* , or "inventors of poetry," were specialists in the art of language and music. The *haravicus* did not necessarily belong to the noble class, and they not only contributed to embellishing epic or sacred poems, but also composed other types of more lyrical, personal, or popular poetry. Among the poetic genres of the Incas were: the *Jailli* , a sacred hymn to the gods, heroism, and agricultural tasks; the *Arawi* , intimate, amorous, or melancholic poetry; the *Wawaki* , a dialogue poem between the sexes; the *Qhashwa* , a song of dance and joy; and the *Wayñu* , a collective poem that included dance and music.

As an exercise, and while enjoying Inca poetry, can you identify the genre of the following three fragments? What images or ideas do you find interesting and why? What characteristics of Inca poetry are present in each fragment? What similarities and differences do you find with the Nahuatl poetic style? (From *Anthology of Pre-Columbian Indigenous Poetry* , ed. Jorge Eduardo Paniagua).

**Fragment 1.** Genre: _____ (Transcribed by Guamán Poma, 1615)

[**entre tanto**: *meanwhile* - “**tuya**”: extracción de una semilla. - **paloma**: *dove* - **prado**: *meadow]*

*The time will come to bring joy to our Inca.*
*We will dance with him under the full moon.*
*We will sing the sweetest song.*
*The time will come to dance with our Inca.*

*Meanwhile, my darling , my golden dove,*
*do not fear the full moon.*
*Let us meet in the flowery meadow*
*to play beneath the golden star.*

**Fragment 2.** Genre: _____(Transcribed by Molina, 1575)

[**Viracocha**: Creador, Dios supremo de los incas. - **el ser**: *the being* - **con solo**: *just by* - **sea**: *may it be (command)* - **que viva**: *may I live (request)*]

*Cause of being, Viracocha,*
*ever-present God,*
*Judge who is in all,*
*God who governs and provides,*
*Who creates simply by saying:*

*“Let there be man, let there be woman.”*
*May the being you placed and nurtured live free and in peace.*
*Where are you?*
*Outside or inside?*
*In the cloud or in the shadow?*

**Fragment 3.** Genre: _____(Transcribed by Guamán Poma, 1615)

[**tierno**: *tender* - **manjar**: comida deliciosa - **lágrima**: *tear* - **arrastrar**: *drag* - **empujar**: *push*]

*My dark-haired beauty, my dark-haired beauty,*
*tender delicacy, smile of the water,*
*your heart knows no sorrows*
*and your eyes know no tears.*

*Because you are the most beautiful woman,*
*because you are my queen,*
*because you are my princess,*
*I let the water of love*
*carry me away in its current,*
*I let the storm*
*of passion push me.*

## A Wawaki

The following is an example of *Wawaki* , which was sung by two choirs, one of men and one of women.
As you read, think about how gender roles are defined and understood in this poem:

| | |
|---|---|
| **fulgurar**: *to shine,* brillar | **The princes**<br>Because you are a star, yes!<br>You shine at night, yes!<br>For under the fire of the sun, yes!<br>I seek you in vain. Yes! |
| **entornar los ojos**: *half-close one's eyes* | **The princesses.**<br>If I am a star, no!<br>Open your heart, no!<br>And under the fire of the sun, no!<br>Close your eyes. No! |
| **simular**: *to pretend*<br>**acercarse**: *to get close*<br>**trocarse**: *to change into* | **The princes.**<br>Only by moonlight, yes!<br>You pretend to call me, yes!<br>And when I approach, yes!<br>You turn into snow. Yes! |
| **presuroso acude:** *please rush to respond*<br>**echar**: *to pour into* | **The princesses.**<br>And if I pretend to call you, no!<br>Come quickly. No!<br>If I turn into snow, no!<br>Throw your fire on me. No! |

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The rich poetic production of Indigenous peoples is part of Latin American cultural tradition, not only as history but also as a source of contemporary creativity. Famous poets of the 20th and 21st centuries have incorporated this tradition into their literary work. Furthermore, Indigenous cultures today continue to develop their collective experience through poetry, literature, and art in general.

## Review questions

1. What language did the Aztecs speak? In what region did they live?
2. What language did the Incas speak? In what region did they live?
3. What was the name of poetry in Nahuatl? What ideas does this name evoke?
4. What was the fundamental purpose of Nahuatl poetry? Give an example.
5. What was the social importance of Nahuatl poetry? How was it disseminated?
6. What are some characteristics of the style and imagery of Nahuatl poetry?
7. What was the social importance of Quechua poetry? How was it disseminated?
8. What was an *amauta* ? What was a *haravicus* ?
9. What are some characteristics of the style and imagery of Quechua poetry?

**Más poemas en: Muestra de poesía en náhuatl y en quechua.**

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# 6.17: Literary Tendencies

In this section you will learn about some of the literary movements that have influenced 20th century Mexican-American poetry, including the avant-garde movement *(el movimiento vanguardista*), the Chicano nationalist movement, and the importance of bilingual texts for the Chicano community.

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# 6.18: Movimientos vanguardistas




(Translated from Spanish)

During the first half of the 20th century in Latin America, a significant portion of artistic production reflected the impact of social activism and the profound ideological shifts that occurred in the Western world during those years. These movements, parallel to their European counterparts, were grouped under the generic term " **avant** *-garde* , " sharing characteristics with what is known in the English-speaking world as *Modernism* in the field of aesthetics.

The painting on the left illustrates the rich development of avant-garde aesthetics in Latin America. With surrealist elements that draw on the symbolism of the unconscious, dreams, and ancestral heritage, it depicts the complex relationship between social classes, cultural roots, and visions of personal and collective identity that characterized the experimentation of avant-garde movements, in dialogue with innovations from diverse geographies, fields of knowledge, and historical sources.



"The

## Ideological-political context

**materias primas:** *raw materials*
**obrero:** *industry worker*
**apoyo:** *support*
**fortalecimiento:** *strengthening*
**huelga:** *strike*
**así como:** *as well as*

As we have seen ( §5.1 ), the 20th century began in many Latin American countries with an e
an increase in the size of the middle and working classes. Some sectors of the merchant elit
worker and peasant activism had a particularly strong influence, not only because it was con
infrastructure had a crucial impact on the economies of Latin American countries. Thus, labo
by the working classes, as well as the impression that the European model was not necessari
nations.

This redefinition of national identities and the arts was partly a response to the changes that Western Europe underwent in the first decades of the 20th century. Until the end of the 19th century, Western culture imagined itself as a superior civilizing force for progress and social harmony, with technological advances transforming transportation, communication, and mass production. But the horrors of the First World War (1914-18) dealt a major blow to this positivist vision and generated distrust of science and rationalism. Even before this, especially with Karl Marx (1818-1883), the principles of capitalism and bourgeois society were being strongly questioned. Scholars of consciousness like Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) challenged the dominance of reason (the Enlightenment idea that man was a rational animal) and emphasized the importance of other aspects of the psyche, which the father of psychoanalysis demonstrated in dreams and the erotic aspects of the unconscious, as in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). In 1905 and 1915, Albert Einstein (1879-1955) published his theories of relativity, which integrated time with the three dimensions of space, generating a complete revision of how reality was conceived. Meanwhile, *The Decline of the West* (1918-22), a work by the German philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), postulated the aging of European civilization and its need to renew itself through contact with other cultures. The nightmare of the First World War confirmed these theories and also called into question the value of expansionist, colonialist, or imperial projects. All of this contributed to a radical self-examination of Western culture and the arts.

In connection with workers' activism and this cultural re-evaluation, certain values became prevalent in the intellectual and urban world: "being at the forefront," innovating, protesting, fighting for rights, issuing manifestos, breaking with tradition, being cosmopolitan, and challenging bourgeois comfort. Artistic production visibly reflected this impact through movements grouped under the generic name of " **the** *Avant-garde* , " an appropriately military and militant term that became fashionable in France to indicate this combative desire to be at the forefront of change and participate in social transformation.

Many groups of artists and poets drafted their manifestos or organized themselves into movements. Famous in Europe were Fauvism (1905), Cubism (1907), Futurism (1909), Dadaism (1916), and Surrealism (1924). Each of these “-isms” defined its own aesthetic priorities, but all were driven by the enthusiasm to propose new expressive possibilities that would keep pace with the rapid rhythm of sociocultural change. The following predominated in avant-garde aesthetics:

- experimentation with forms and expressive possibilities (breaking rules, playful sense);
- a level of activism or emancipation against the traditional or conventional;
- self-definition: each movement produces its own definition of “what is art”;
- questioning of the “self” as a unit and of authority as something just or desirable;
- and an inquiry into the processes of representation:
- They seek to affect and "shock" the public (reader, spectator), they are anti-sentimental;
    - to show how the medium (words, painting, etc.) influences what is represented, and
    - to show how social relationships influence what is acceptable, beautiful, or artistic.

Four European avant-garde movements that had widespread dissemination in Latin America were:

***Cubism*** . In its analytical phase (1907-12), Cubism sought to depict the object from diverse perspectives, exploring the limits of realism by fragmenting and recomposing the image with paintings dominated by a geometric vision. In its synthetic phase (1913-30), forms were simplified; more vibrant colors were used, and the recreated object became more abstract. A famous exponent of Cubism was the Spaniard Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), formerly a member of the Fauvist group. [1]

***Futurism.*** In 1909, the "Futurist Manifesto" appeared in Italy, mimicking political activism to defend an artistic movement against traditionalism and in celebration of modernization, speed, technology, violence, youth, and industry. It was a movement in literature and the visual arts launched by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944). It sought to portray the dynamic character of the 20th century by glorifying war, danger, and machines. In literature, it championed free imagination, the breaking of syntax, the subversion of punctuation, the use of inks of various colors, and the disordered arrangement of letters, words, and verses. In 1918, the "Futurist Political Party" joined Mussolini's fascism.

***Expressionism.*** From the early years of the 20th century, several German and Northern European artists sought to represent the pain and violence before and after the world wars, exploring subjective perception to evoke ideas and moods and to innovate in creative possibilities. Their aesthetic emphasizes individual freedom, emotional expression, irrationalism, and shocking or taboo themes such as the morbid, demonic, fantastical, or sexual. In several of these characteristics, it resembles French Fauvism [1] .

***Surrealism*** . As a movement, it was founded with a manifesto promoted in 1924 by the Frenchman André Breton (1896-1966). The name comes from a work by the poet Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), a staunch critic of World War II, which he subtitled "surrealist drama" *(Les Mamelles de Tiresias,* 1917). Influenced by the discoveries of psychoanalysis, the Surrealists were particularly interested in free association, dreams, inner life, alternative understandings of reality, and the mythological perception of the world (archetypes). The Spanish painters Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) and Joan Miró (1893-1983),

and the director Luis Buñuel (1900-1983), are some of its most influential representatives. In Latin America, Surrealism developed its own distinct character, enriched by indigenous and African cultural sources. In the paintings of Cuban Wilfredo Lam (1902-1982) and Mexican Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), one finds this type of Latin American or "postcolonial" surrealism which, by taking the implications of the European movement further, breaks with it and affirms the creative force of previously undervalued cultural sources.

Of all these movements, the one that had the most lasting impact on 20th-century literature in general, and on the Hispanic world in particular, was Surrealism. This is partly explained by its less restrictive formal tenets: it is more interested in investigating a type of experience than in imposing a specific mode of representing it. Its aesthetic also articulates the three basic critiques of modern societies: 1) social injustice and violence; 2) rationalism; and 3) Eurocentrism or colonialism. Furthermore, it explores the aspects of human experience most relevant to artistic and literary production as understood in the contemporary era: subjectivity, consciousness, and identity. Most influential is its conception of the work, not as an expression of emotions or the rational authorial self, but as a space for experimentation and discovery, in which other forces manifest themselves (the unconscious, cultural archetypes, the mechanics of language). Among the many names that could be mentioned in the development of Latin American surrealism, the Cuban painter Wilfredo Lam (1902-1982), the Guatemalan novelist Miguel Ángel Asturias (1899-1974), the Chilean writer María Luisa Bombal (1910-1980), and the Mexican painters Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) and Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991) stand out. The latter is also associated with the expressionist aesthetic, which was championed by artists such as Débora Arango (Colombia 1907-2005) and Oswaldo Guayasamín (Ecuador 1919-1999), among many others.

Detalle del mural de Oswaldo Guayasamín (Palacio Legislativo, Quito) 001

Detail of a mural by Ecuadorian artist Oswaldo Guayasamín, an example of the muralist art movement that developed from the 1920s onward, following the Mexican Revolution, and spread throughout Latin America with a mixed, avant-garde aesthetic.
H3kt0r , CC BY-SA 4.0 , via Wikimedia Commons

[1] Fauvism ( 1905 ) emphasized emotional intensity through the distortion of forms and the dissonant use of colors. Its most prominent exponent was Henri Matisse (1869-1954).

## Avant-garde Hispanic American poetry

The poetics immediately following Modernism can be grouped into two directions. The first, known as **Latin American postmodernism, emphasizes** *formal* imagerysimplification with a localist spirit; the second, of an avant-garde type, **radicalizes** the exploration of the critical place of art in modern societies with intense formal *experimentation* and a cosmopolitan spirit.

Much of the Latin American intelligentsia participated in the process of aesthetic and cultural self-revision that took place in the West during the first half of the 20th century. For example, the renewal fervor in Spain during the Second Republic (1931-39) was fueled by important Latin American poets such as Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo. To give another example, Mexican Surrealism was as vibrant as its Parisian counterpart, with world-renowned figures like the painter Frida Kahlo, the filmmaker Luis Buñuel (who lived in Mexico from 1949), and the poet Octavio Paz (1914-1998). While journals were created to disseminate these ideas, numerous manifestos were written and published to defend them. In most cases, however, the norms of the "-isms" were not strictly followed, but rather their innovative and experimental spirit was adopted to break conventional molds and open fruitful paths to poetry: the importance of studying non-European art, which had been promoted by Cubists and Fauvists, the introduction of technological language, which was defended by the Futurists, and the revolutionary or liberating value of non-conscious creativity, which was invigorated by the Surrealists, among other directions.

In 1914, the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro presented his poetic manifesto " *Non serviam"* in Santiago, where he laid the foundations for the movement he later called **Creationism** , which conceived of poetry as the creation of reality, not as its representation. His proposals became more radical when, with avant-garde artists from Paris, he collaborated on the magazine *Nord* -Sud ( 1917-18). Works from this period, such as "Paisaje" (Landscape), experiment with the visual dimension of the poem to expand its possibilities for representation and the suggestion of multiple meanings.

**Paysage** [de *Horizon Carré*, 1917]




*Paisaje*

AL ATARDECER NOS PASEAREMOS POR RUTAS PARALELAS

La Luna
donde
te miras

EL ÁRBOL
ERA
MÁS
ALTO
QUE LA
MONTAÑA

PERO LA
MONTAÑA
ERA TAN ANCHA
QUE EXCEDÍA
LOS EXTREMOS
DE LA TIERRA

EL
RÍO
QUE
CORRE
NO
LLEVA
PECES

CUIDADO CON
JUGAR EN EL PASTO
RECIÉN PINTADO

UNA CANCIÓN CONDUCE A LAS OVEJAS HACIA EL APRISCO

VICENTE HUIDOBRO

In 1918, in Madrid, Huidobro helped found **Ultraism** , a movement also joined by the Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), who was living in Spain at the time. Upon returning to Argentina, Borges and other young writers disseminated Ultraism with the premise of eliminating (modernist) ornamentation and reducing poetry to its fundamental elements: imagery, typography, and linguistic innovation. The movement also sought to capture modernization through neologisms, references to technological advances, parody, and the incorporation of regional experiences. Borges later abandoned this aesthetic in favor of philosophical meditation and dialogue with universal culture.

Latin American avant-garde movements spread primarily through literary journals that fostered debate and celebrated striking innovation. In Argentina, notable publications included *Prisma* (1921), *Proa* (1922-25), *Martín Fierro* (1924-27), and, a few years later, *Sur* , founded by the writer Victoria Ocampo (1890-1979); in Cuba, *Revista de Avance* (1927-30); and in Peru, *Amauta (1926-30), founded by the Marxist and indigenist thinker José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930). Around this time,* **Stridentism** also emerged in Mexico (c. 1922), with an aesthetic influenced by Futurism, whose most prominent exponent was the poet Manuel Maples Arce (1898-1981). Shortly afterward, the "Contemporáneos" group formed, centered around two important journals: *Ulises* (1927-28) and *Contemporáneos* (1928-31). Among them were Carlos Pellicer (1897-1977), José Gorostiza (1901-73), Jaime Torres Bodet (1902-74), Xavier Villaurrutia (1903-50), and Salvador Novo (1904-1974), several of whom were also playwrights. This group embraced the avant-garde impulse, proposing thought-provoking directions for the dialogue between poetry, the other arts, the psyche, and society.

In the early stages of avant-garde poetry in Latin America, the Mexican modernist José Juan Tablada (1871-1945) stands out, having introduced the plasticity of the Japanese haiku; the Argentinians Silvina Ocampo (1903-1993), Norah Lange (1905-1972), and Oliverio Girondo (1891-1967), who explored cubist concepts and surrealist possibilities in a cosmopolitan and self-aware poetry; Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948), the theorist and most constant defender of creationism, visual poems, and the radical search—for life and aesthetics—that avant-garde movements represent worldwide; and the Peruvian César Vallejo (1892-1938), whose varied work, which connects avant-garde combativeness with the aspirations of the proletariat in a profoundly personal and suggestive way, continues to have a deep influence on Latin American (and world) poetic production to this day. The Negrista and Indigenista movements also incorporate avant-garde aesthetics into their proposals.

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# 6.19: Mexican-American Essayists

In this final chapter, we will turn to the genre of the literary essay. In this section you will read essays by some of the most influential writers of the Mexican-American essay, including Rudolfo Anaya and Gloria Anzaldúa.

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# 6.20: Rudolfo Anaya

"Best known for his novel *Bless Me, Ultima*, which established him as one of the founders of Chicano literature, Rudolfo Anaya displays his gift for storytelling and deep connection to the land and its history in *The Essays*. These intimate and contemplative essays explore censorship, immigration, urban development, the Southwest as a region, and personal identity." - Open Road Media From the Introduction to The Essays by Rudolfo Anaya.

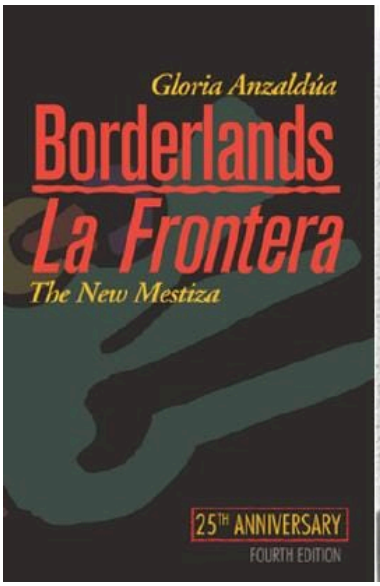
In the attached excerpt, you will find his essays on machismo, as well as the mythological *La Llorona*.

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# 6.21: Gloria Anzaldúa

"Gloria E. Anzaldúa was a queer Chicana poet, writer, and feminist theorist...Her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) and her essay “La Prieta” are considered groundbreaking works in cultural, feminist, and queer theories." Source: Poetry Foundation

Read an excerpt from *Borderlands/La Frontera* here [Website].



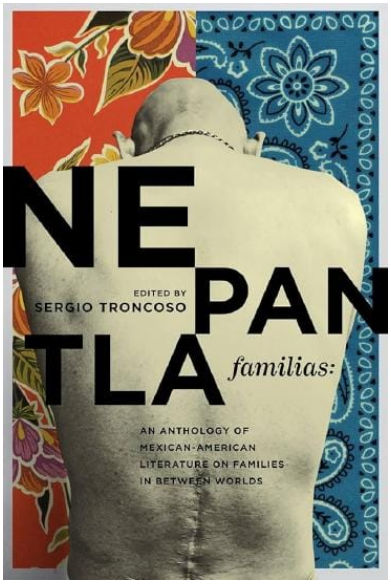



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# 6.22: Sergio Troncoso

*The following essay is the Introduction from "Nepantla Familias: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature on Families in Between Worlds" (Texas A&M University Press), a collection of essays, short stories, and poems edited by award-winning author and scholar Sergio Troncoso, who was born in El Paso and raised in Ysleta. "Nepantla Familias" includes the work of acclaimed Mexican American writers and emerging voices, including El Paso's own Daniel Chacon, Sheryl Luna, David Dorado Romo, and Octavio Solis.*

Read the essay here [Website].




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# 6.23: Sandra Cisneros

## Only Daughter by Sandra Cisneros

From Latina: *Women's Voices From the Borderlands*. Edited by Lillian Castillo-Speed. New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Once, several years ago, when I was just starting out my writing career, I was asked to write my own contributor's note for an anthology I was part of. I wrote: "I am the only daughter in a family of six sons. That explains everything."

Well, I've thought about that ever since, and yes, it explains a lot to me, but for the reader's sake I should have written: "I am the only daughter in a Mexican family of six sons." Or even: "I am the only daughter of a Mexican father and a Mexican-American mother." Or: "I am the only daughter of a working-class family of nine." All of these had everything to do with who I am today.

I was/am the only daughter and only a daughter. Being an only daughter in a family of six sons forced me by circumstance to spend a lot of time by myself because my brothers felt it beneath them to play with a girl in public. But that aloneness, that loneliness, was good for a would-be writer—it allowed me time to think and think, to imagine, to read and prepare myself.

Being only a daughter for my father meant my destiny would lead me to become someone's wife. That's what he believed. But when I was in the fifth grade and shared my plans for college with him, I was sure he understood. I remember my father saying, "Que bueno, mi'ha, that's good." That meant a lot to me, especially since my brothers thought the idea hilarious. What I didn't realize was that my father thought college was good for girls—good for finding a husband. After four years in college and two more in graduate school, and still no husband, my father shakes his head even now and says I wasted all that education.

In retrospect, I'm lucky my father believed daughters were meant for husbands. It meant it didn't matter if I majored in something silly like English. After all, I'd find a nice professional eventually, right? This allowed me the liberty to putter about embroidering my little poems and stories without my father interrupting with so much as a "What's that you're writing?"

But the truth is, I wanted him to interrupt. I wanted my father to understand what it was I was scribbling, to introduce me as "My only daughter, the writer." Not as "This is only my daughter. She teaches." Es maestra—teacher. Not even profesora.

In a sense, everything I have ever written has been for him, to win his approval even though I know my father can't read English words, even though my father's only reading includes the brown-ink *Esto* sports magazines from Mexico City and the bloody *¡Alarma!* magazines that feature yet another sighting of La Virgen de Guadalupe on a tortilla or a wife's revenge on her philandering husband by bashing his skull in with a molcajete (a kitchen mortar made of volcanic rock). Or the fotonovelas, the little picture paperbacks with tragedy and trauma erupting from the characters' mouths in bubbles.

My father represents, then, the public majority. A public who is disinterested in reading, and yet one whom I am writing about and for, and privately trying to woo.

When we were growing up in Chicago, we moved a lot because of my father. He suffered bouts of nostalgia. Then we'd have to let go of our flat, store the furniture with mother's relatives, load the station wagon with baggage and bologna sandwiches and head south. To Mexico City.

We came back, of course. To yet another Chicago flat, another Chicago neighborhood, another Catholic school. Each time, my father would seek out the parish priest in order to get a tuition break, and complain or boast: "I have seven sons."

He meant *siete hijos*, seven children, but he translated it as "sons." "I have seven sons." To anyone who would listen. The Sears Roebuck employee who sold us the washing machine. The short-order cook where my father ate his ham-and-eggs breakfasts. "I have seven sons." As if he deserved a medal from the state.

My papa. He didn't mean anything by that mistranslation, I'm sure. But somehow I could feel myself being erased. I'd tug my father's sleeve and whisper: "Not seven sons. Six! and one daughter."

When my oldest brother graduated from medical school, he fulfilled my father's dream that we study hard and use this—our heads, instead of this—our hands. Even now my father's hands are thick and yellow, stubbed by a history of hammer and nails and twine

and coils and springs. “Use this,” my father said, tapping his head, “and not this,” showing us those hands. He always looked tired when he said it.

Wasn’t college an investment? And hadn’t I spent all those years in college? And if I didn’t marry, what was it all for? Why would anyone go to college and then choose to be poor? Especially someone who had always been poor.

Last year, after ten years of writing professionally, the financial rewards started to trickle in. My second National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. A guest professorship at the University of California, Berkeley. My book, which sold to a major New York publishing house.

At Christmas, I flew home to Chicago. The house was throbbing, same as always: hot tamales and sweet tamales hissing in my mother’s pressure cooker, and everybody—my mother, six brothers, wives, babies, aunts, cousins—talking too loud and at the same time. Like in a Fellini film, because that’s just how we are.

I went upstairs to my father’s room. One of my stories had just been translated into Spanish and published in an anthology of Chicano writing and I wanted to show it to him. Ever since he recovered from a stroke two years ago, my father likes to spend his leisure hours horizontally. And that’s how I found him, watching a Pedro Infante movie on Galavisión and eating rice pudding.

There was a glass filled with milk on the bedside table. There were several vials of pills and balled Kleenex. And on the floor, one black sock and a plastic urinal that I didn’t want to look at but looked at anyway. Pedro Infante was about to burst into song, and my father was laughing.

I’m not sure if it was because my story was translated into Spanish, or because it was published in Mexico, or perhaps because the story dealt with Tepeyac, the colonia my father was raised in and the house he grew up in, but at any rate, my father punched the mute button on his remote control and read my story.

I sat on the bed next to my father and waited. He read it very slowly. As if he were reading each line over and over. He laughed at all the right places and read lines he liked out loud. He pointed and asked questions: “Is this So-and-so?” “Yes,” I said. He kept reading.

When he was finally finished, after what seemed like hours, my father looked up and asked: “Where can we get more copies of this for the relatives?”

Of all the wonderful things that happened to me last year, that was the most wonderful.

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# 7: NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE


**7.1: Catharine Maria Sedgwick**

7.1.1: From Hope Leslie (5000 words)

7.1.2: Reading and Review Questions

**7.2: William Apess**

7.2.1: “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (3500 words)

7.2.2: Reading and Review Questions

**7.3: James Fenimore Cooper**

7.3.1: from The Pioneers (10000 words)

7.3.2: Reading and Review Questions

7.4: The Peyote Cult (Plains)

7.5: Of the Girl who Married Mount Katahdin (Penobscot)

7.6: How Glooskap went to England and France (Passamaquoddy)

7.7: The Origin of Disease and Medicine

7.8: Viracocha and The Coming of the Incas

7.9: The Magic Feather

7.10: The Island of Skeletons


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# 7.1: CATHARINE MARIA SEDGWICK

Catharine Maria Sedgwick was born after the Revolutionary War into a respected Massachusetts family. Her father, Theodore Sedgwick, served in the House of Representatives and in the Massachusetts Supreme Court. Sedgwick was educated at home and then at Payne's Finishing School, a boarding school in Boston, and New York.



**Image** 7.1.1: Catharine Maria Sedgwick

After her mother died and her father remarried in 1813, Sedgwick lived with her brothers, alternating between their respective households in Boston and New York. In 1821, she took the unusual step of converting to Unitarianism. The next year, she published her first novel, A New-England Tale. It established some constants in her writing: a New England setting, interest in the benefits of the Unitarian faith, and focus on domesticity.

In most of her works, Sedgwick considers women's lives, both within and outside of marriage. In Married or Single? (1857), she asked her readers not to consider women as mere extensions of men or as vessels of civilization and virtue best confined to the domestic realm. She also wrote of minority groups, including Native Americans. Hope Leslie (1827) sympathetically depicts the religious and social customs of Native Americans, a depiction based on her own research on the Mohawks. She had a public life through her activities in various reform movements tied to Unitarianism. She also had a public life as a very well-received writer. Indeed, in a September 1846 notice of "The Literati of New York City," Edgar Allan Poe described Sedgwick as "one of our most celebrated and meritorious writers." Besides her six novels, Sedgwick published biographies and children's literature. She never married.

### 7.1.1: From Hope Leslie (5000 words)

### 7.1.2: Reading and Review Questions

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- 4.4: Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789–1867) has no license indicated.

# 7.1.1: From Hope Leslie (5000 words)

## Volume I, Chapter IV

> “The sisters’ vows, the hours that we have spent,
> When we have chid the hasty-footed time
> For parting us—oh, and is all forgot?”
>
> Midsummer Night’s Dream

On quitting Everell, our heroine, quite unconscious that she was the subject of painful suspicion or affectionate anxiety, sought a sequestered spot, where she might indulge and tranquillize her feelings.

It has been said that the love of a brother and sister is the only platonic affection. This truth (if it be a truth) is the conviction of an experience far beyond our heroine’s. She had seen in Esther the pangs of repressed and unrequited love, and, mistaking them for the characteristic emotions of that sentiment, it was no wonder that she perceived no affinity to it in the joyous affection that had animated her own soul. “After a little while,” she said, “I shall feel as I did when we lived together in Bethel; if all that I love are happy, I must be happy too.” If the cold and selfish laugh to scorn what they think the reasoning of ignorance and inexperience, it is because they have never felt that to meditate the happiness of others is to enter upon the ministry and the joy of celestial spirits. Not one envious or repining thought intruded into the heaven of Hope Leslie’s mind. Not one malignant spirit passed the bounds of that paradise, that was filled with pure and tender affections, with projects of goodness, and all their cheerful train.

Hope was longer absorbed in her revery than perhaps was quite consistent with her philosophy; and when she was roused from it by Digby’s voice, she blushed from the consciousness that her thoughts had been too long withdrawn from the purpose of her visit to the island. Digby came to say that his wife’s supper-table was awaiting Miss Leslie. Hope embraced the opportunity, as they walked together towards his dwelling, to make her arrangements for the evening. “Digby,” she said, “I have something to confide to you, but you must ask me no questions.”

“That’s crossing human nature,” replied the good fellow; “but I think I can swim against the current for you. Miss Hope.”

“Thank you, Digby. Then, in the first place, you must know, I expect some friends to meet me here this evening; all that I ask of you is to permit me to remain out unmolested as long as I may choose. You may tell your wife that I like to stroll in the garden by moonlight, or to sit and listen to the waves breaking on the shore— as you know I do, Digby.”

“Yes, Miss Hope, I know your heart always linked into such things; but it will be heathen Greek to my wife—so you must make out a better reason for her.”

“Then tell her that I like to have my own way.”

“Ah, that will I,” replied Digby, chuckling; “that is what every woman can understand. I always said, Miss Hope, it was a pure mercy you chose the right way, for you always had yours.”

“Perhaps you think, Digby, I have been too headstrong in my own way.”

“Oh, no! my sweet mistress, no; why, this having our own way is what everybody likes; it’s the privilege we came to this wilderness world for; and though the gentles up in town there, with the governor at their head, hold a pretty tight rein, yet I can tell them that there are many who think what blunt Master Blackstone said, ‘That he came not away from the Lord’s-bishops to put himself under the Lord’sbrethren.’ No, no. Miss Hope, I watch the motions of the straws—I know which way the wind blows. Thought and will are set free, it was but the other day, so to speak—in the days of good Queen Bess, as they called her—when, if her majesty did but raise her hand, the Parliament folk were all down on their knees to her; and now, thank God, the poorest and the lowest of us only kneel to Him who made us. Times are changed—there is a new spirit in the world—chains are broken—fetters are knocked off—and the liberty set forth in the blessed Word is now felt to be every man’s birthright. But shame on my prating, that wags so fast when I might hear your nightingale voice.”

Hope’s mind was preoccupied, and she found it difficult to listen to Digby’s speculations with interest, or to respond with animation; but she was too benignant to lose herself in sullen abstraction; and when they arrived at the cottage, she roused her

faculties to amuse the children, and to listen to the mother's stories of their promising smartness. She commended the good wife's milk and cakes, and sat for half an hour after the table was removed, talking of the past, and brightening the future prospects of her good friends with predictions of their children's prosperity and respectability: predictions which, Digby afterward said, the dear young lady's bounty brought to pass.

Suddenly she sprang from her chair: " Digby," she exclaimed, "I think the east is lighting up with the rising moon—is it not ?"

"If it is not, it soon will," replied Digby, understanding and favouring her purpose.

"Then," said Hope, "I will take a walk around the island; and do not you, Betsy, sit up for me." Betsy, of course, remonstrated. The night air was unwholesome; and, though the sky overhead was clear, yet she had heard distant thunder; the beach-birds had been in flocks on Shore all the day; and the breakers on the east side of the island made a boding sound. These and other signs were 'urged as arguments against the unseasonable walk. Of course they were unheeded by our heroine, who, declaring that, with shelter so near, she was in no danger, muffled herself in her cloak and sallied forth. She bent her steps around the cliff which rises at the western extremity of the island, leaving at its base a few yards of flat, rocky shore, around which the waters of the bay sweep, deeply indenting it, and forming a natural cove or harbour for small boats. As Hope passed around a ledge of rocks, she fancied she saw a shadow cast by a figure that seemed flying before her. "They are here already," she thought, and hastened forward, expecting to catch a glimpse of them as soon as she should turn the angle of the rock; but no figure appeared; and though Hope imagined she heard stones rattling, as if displaced by hurried steps, she was soon convinced the sound was accidental. Alive only to one expectation, she seated herself, without any apprehension, to await in this solitude the coming of her sister.

The moon rose unclouded, and sent her broad stream of light across the beautiful bay, kindling in her beams the islands that gemmed it, and disclosing with a dim, indefinite light, the distant town, rising over this fair domain of sea and land: hills, heights, jutting points, and islands then unknown to fame, but now consecrated in domestic annals, and illustrious in the patriot's story.

Whatever charms the scene might have presented to our heroine's eye at another moment, she was now only conscious of one emotion of feverish impatience. She gazed and listened till her senses ached; and at last, when anticipation had nearly yielded to despair, her ear caught the dash of oars, and at the next moment a canoe glanced around the headland into the cove: she darted to the brink of the water— she gazed intently on the little bark; her whole soul was in that look. Her sister was there. At this first assurance that she really beheld this loved, lost sister, Hope uttered a scream of joy; but when, at a second glance^ she saw her in her savage attire, fondly leaning on Oneco's shoulder, her heart died within her; a sickening feeling came over her—an unthought of revolting of nature; and, instead of obeying the first impulse, and springing forward to clasp her in her arms, she retreated to the cliff, leaned her head against it, averted her eyes, and pressed her hands on her heart, as if she would have bound down her rebel feelings.

Magawisca's voice aroused her. "Hope Leslie," she said, "take thy sister's hand."

Hope stretched out her hand without lifting her eyes; but when she felt her sister's touch, the energies of nature awoke; she threw her arms around her, folded her to her bosom, laid her cheek on hers, and wept as if her heart would burst in every sob. Mary (we use the appellative by which Hope had known her sister) remained passive in her arms. Her eye was moistened, but she seemed rather abashed and confounded than excited; and when Hope released her, she turned towards Oneco with a look of simple wonder. Hope again threw her arm around her sister, and intently explored her face for some trace of those infantine features that were impressed on her memory." It is—it is my sister !" she exclaimed, and kissed her cheek again and again. "Oh, Mary! do you not remember when we sat together on mother's knee? Do you not remember when, with her own burning hand, the very day she died, she put those chains on our necks ? Do you not remember when they held us up to kiss her cold lips?"

Mary looked towards Magawisca for an explanation of her sister's words." Look at me, Mary; speak to me," continued Hope.

"No speak Yengees," replied Mary, exhausting in this brief sentence all the English she could command.

Hope, in the impetuosity of her feelings, had forgotten that Magawisca had forewarned her not to indulge the expectation that her sister could speak to her; and the melancholy truth, announced by her own lips, seemed to Hope to open a new and impassable gulf between them. She wrung her hands: "Oh, what shall I do? what shall I say?" she exclaimed.

Magawisca now advanced to her, and said, in a compassionate tone, "Let me be thy interpreter, Hope Leslie, and be thou more calm. Dost thou not see thy sister is to thee as the feather borne on the torrent?"

"I will be more calm, Magawisca; but promise me you will interpret truly for me."

A blush of offended pride overspread Magawisca's cheek. "We hold truth to be the health of the soul," she said: "thou mayst speak, maiden, without fear that I will abate one of thy words."

"Oh, I fear nothing wrong from you, Magawisca; forgive me—forgive me—I know not what I say or do." She drew her sister to a rock, and they sat down together. Hope knew not how to address one so near to her by nature, so far removed by habit and education. She thought that if Mary's dress, which was singularly and gaudily decorated, had a less savage aspect, she might look more natural to her; and she signed to her to remove the mantle she wore, made of birds' feathers, woven together with threads of the wild nettle. Mary threw it aside, and disclosed her person, light and agile as a fawn's, clothed with skins, neatly fitted to her waist and arms, and ambitiously embellished with embroidery in porcupine's quills and beads. The removal of the mantle, instead of the effect designed, only served to make more striking the aboriginal peculiarities; and Hope, shuddering and heart-sick, made one more effort to disguise them by taking off her silk cloak and wrapping it close around her sister. Mary seemed instantly to comprehend the language of the action; she shook her head, gently disengaged herself from the cloak, and resumed her mantle. An involuntary exclamation of triumph burst from Oneco's lips. "Oh, tell her," said Hope to Magawisca; "that I want once more to see her in the dress of her own people—of her own family—from whose arms she was torn to be dragged into captivity."

A faint smile curled Magawisca's lip, but she interpreted faithfully Hope's communication and Mary's reply: "'She does not like the English dress,' she says."

"Ask her," said Hope, "if she remembers the day when the wild Indians sprung upon the family at Bethel like wolves upon a fold of lambs? If she remembers when Mrs. Fletcher and her innocent little ones were murdered, and she stolen away?"

"She says 'she remembers it well, for then it was Oneco saved her life.'"

Hope groaned aloud. "Ask her," she continued, with unabated eagerness," if she remembers when we played together, and, read together, and knelt together at our mother's feet; when she told us of the God that made us, and the Saviour that redeemed us?"

"She remembers something of all this, but she says 'it is faint and distant, like the vanishing vapour on the far-off mountain.'"

"Oh, tell her, Magawisca, if she will come home and live with me, I will devote my life to her. I will watch over her in sickness and health. I will be mother— sister—friend to her: tell her that our mother, now a saint in heaven, stoops from her happy place to entreat her to return to our God and our father's God."

Mary shook her head in a manner indicative of a more determined feeling than she had before manifested, and took from her bosom a crucifix, which she fervently pressed to her lips.

Every motive Hope offered was powerless, every mode of entreaty useless, and she leaned her head despondently on Mary's shoulder. The contrast between the two faces thus brought together was most striking. Hope's hat had slipped back, and her rich brown tresses fell about her neck and face; her full eye was intently fixed on Mary, and her cheek glowing with impassioned feeling, she looked like an angel touched with some mortal misery; while Mary's face, pale and spiritless, was only redeemed from absolute vacancy by an expression of gentleness and modesty. Hope's hand was lying on her sister's lap, and a brilliant diamond ring caught

Mary's attention. Hope perceived this, and instantly drew it from her own finger and placed it on Mary's; "and here is another—and another—and another," she cried, making the same transfer of all her rings. "Tell her, Magawisca, if she will come home with me, she shall be decked with jewels from head to foot; she shall have feathers from the most beautiful birds that wing the air, and flowers that never fade: tell her that all I possess shall be hers."

"Shall I tell her so ?" asked Magawisca, with a mingled expression of contempt and concern, as if she herself despised the lure, but feared that Mary might be caught by it; for the pleased girl was holding her hand before her, turning it, and gazing with childlike delight on the gems, as they caught and reflected the moonbeams. "Shall I ask your sister to barter truth and love—the jewels of the soul, that grow brighter and brighter in the land of spirits—for these poor perishing trifles? Oh, Hope Leslie, I had better thoughts of thee."

"I cannot help it, Magawisca; I am driven to try every way to win back my sister: tell her, I entreat you, tell her what I have said."

Magawisca faithfully repeated all the motives Hope had urged, while Hope herself clasped her sister's hand, and looked in her face with a mute supplication more earnest than words could express. Mary hesitated, and her eye turned quickly to Oneco, to Magawisca, and then again rested on her sister. Hope felt her hand tremble in hers; Mary, for the first time, bent towards her, and laid her cheek to Hope's. Hope uttered a scream of delight: "Oh, she does not refuse; she will stay with me," she exclaimed. Mary

understood the exclamation, and suddenly recoiled, and hastily drew the rings from her fingers. “Keep them—keep them,” said Hope, bursting into tears; “if we must be cruelly parted again, they will sometimes speak to you of me.”

At this moment a bright light, as of burning flax, flamed up from the cliff before them, threw a momentary flash over the water, and then disappeared. Oneco rose: “I like not this light,” he said; “we must be gone; we have redeemed our promise;” and he took Hope’s cloak from the ground, and gave it to her as a signal that the moment of separation had arrived.

“Oh, stay one moment longer,” cried Hope. Oneco pointed to the heavens, over which black and threatening clouds were rapidly gathering, and Magawisca said, “Do not ask us to delay; my father has waited long enough.” Hope now, for the first time, observed there was an Indian in the canoe, wrapped in skins, and listlessly awaiting, in a recumbent position, the termination of the scene. “

Is that Mononotto?” she said, shuddering at the thought of the bloody scenes with which he was associated in her mind; but, before her inquiry was answered, the subject of it sprang to his feet, and uttering an exclamation of surprise, stretched his hand towards the town. All at once perceived the object towards which he pointed. A bright strong light streamed upward from the highest point pf land, and sent a ruddy glow over the bay. Every eye turned inquiringly to Hope. “It is nothing,” she said to Magawisca, “but the light that is often kindled on Beacon Hill to guide the ships into the harbour. The night is becoming dark, and some vessel is expected in; that is all, believe me.”

Whatever trust her visiters might have reposed in Hope’s good faith, they were evidently alarmed by an appearance which they did not think sufficiently accounted for; and Oneco hearing, or imagining he heard, approaching oars, said, in his own language, to Magawisca, “We have no time to lose; I will not permit my white bird to remain any longer within reach of the net.”

Magawisca assented: “We must go,” she said, “we must no longer hazard our father’s life.” Oneco sprang into the canoe, and called to Mary to follow him.

“Oh, spare her one single moment!” said Hope, imploringly, to Magawisca; and she drew, her a few paces from the shore, and knelt down with her, and, in a half articulate prayer, expressed the tenderness and sorrow of her soul, and committed her sister to God. Mary understood her action, and feeling that their separation was forever, nature for a moment asserted her rights; she returned Hope’s embrace, and wept on her bosom.

While the sisters were thus folded in one another’s arms, a loud yell burst from the savages; Magawisca caught Mary by the arms, and Hope, turning, perceived that a boat filled with armed men had passed the projecting point of land, and, borne in by the tide, it instantly touched the beach, and in another instant Magawisca and Mary were prisoners. Hope saw the men were in the uniform of the governor’s guard. One moment before she would have given worlds to have had her sister in her power; but now, the first impulse of her generous spirit was an abhorrence of her seeming treachery to her friends. “Oh! Oneco,” she cried, springing towards the canoe, “I did not—indeed I did not know of it.” She had scarcely uttered the words, which fell from her neither understood nor heeded, when Oneco caught her in his arms, and shouting to Magawisca to tell the English that, as they dealt by Mary, so Would he deal by her sister, he gave the canoe the first impulse, and it shot out like an arrow, distancing and defying pursuit.

Oneco’s coup-de-main seemed to petrify all present. They were roused by Sir Philip Gardiner, who, coming round the base of the cliff, appeared among them; and, learning the cause of their amazement, he ordered them, with a burst of passionate exclamation, instantly to man the boat, and proceed with him in pursuit. This one and all refused. “Daylight and calm water,” they said, “would be necessary to give any hope to such a pursuit, and the storm was now gathering so fast as to render it dangerous to venture out at all.”

Sir Philip endeavoured to alarm them with threats of the governor’s displeasure, and to persuade them with offers of high reward; but they understood too well the danger and hopelessness of the attempt to risk it, and they remained inexorable. Sir Philip then went in quest of Digby, and at the distance of a few paces met him. Alarmed by the rapid approach of the storm, he was seeking Miss Leslie; when he learned her fate from Sir Philip’s hurried communication, he uttered a cry of despair. “Oh! I would go after her,” he said, “if I had but a cockle-shell; but it seems as if the foul fiends were at work:. my boat was this morning sent to town to be repaired. And yet, what could we do?” He added, shuddering, “The wind is rising to that degree, that I think no boat could live in the bay; and it is getting as dark as Egypt. O God, save my precious young lady! God have mercy on her!” he continued. A sudden burst of thunder heightened his alarm: “ Man can do nothing for her. Why, in the name of Heaven,” he added, with a natural desire to appropriate the blame of misfortune, “why must they be forever meddling; why not let the sisters meet and part in peace?”

“Oh, why not ?” thought Sir Philip, who would have given his right hand to have retraced the steps that had led to this most

unlooked-for and unhappy issue of the affair. They were now joined by the guard with their prisoners. Digby was requested to lead them instantly to a shelter. He did so; and, agitated as he was with fear and despair for Miss Leslie, he did not fail to greet Magawisca as one to whom all honour was due. She heeded him not; she seemed scarcely conscious of the cries of Faith Leslie, who was weeping like a child, and clinging to her. The treachery that had betrayed her rapt her soul in indignation, and nothing roused her but the blasts of wind and flashes of lightning, that seemed to her the deathknell of her father.

The storm continued for the space of an hour, and then died away as suddenly as it had gathered. In another hour the guard had safely landed at the wharf, and were conveying their prisoners to the governor. He and his confidential counsellors, who had been awaiting at his house the return of their emissaries, solaced themselves with the belief that all parties were safely sheltered on the island, and probably would remain there during the night. While they were whispering this conclusion to one another at one extremity of the parlour, Everell sat beside Miss Downing in the recess of a window that overlooked the garden. The huge projecting chimney formed a convenient screen for the lovers. The evening was warm, the windowsash thrown up. The moon had come forth, and shed a mild lustre through the dewy atmosphere; the very light that the young and sentimental, and, above all, young and sentimental lovers, most delight in. But in vain did Everell look abroad for inspiration; in vain did he turn his eyes to Esther's face, now more beautiful than ever, flushed as it was with the first dawn of happiness; in Tain did he try to recall his truant thoughts, to answer words to her timid but bright glances; he would not, he could not say what he did not feel, and the few sentences he uttered fell on his own ear like cold abstractions. While he was in this durance, his father was listening—if a man stretched on a rack can be said to listen—to Madam Winthrop's whispered and reiterated assurances of her entire approbation of her niece's choice.

This was the position of all parties, when a bustle was heard in the court, and the guard entered. The foremost advanced to the governor, and communicated a few sentences in a low tone. The governor manifested unusual emotion, turned round suddenly, and exclaimed, "Here, Mr. Fletcher—Everell;" and then motioning to them to keep their places, he said, in an under voice, to those near to him, "We must first dispose of our prisoner: come forward, Magawisca."

"Magavnsca!" echoed Everell, springing at one bound into the hall. But Magawisca shrunk back and averted her face. "Now God be praised!" he exclaimed, as he caught the first glance of a form never to be forgotten; "it is—it is Magawisca!" She did not speak, but drew away, and leaned her head against the wall. "What means this?" he said, now for the first time espying Faith Leslie, and then looking round on the guard; "what means it, sir?" he demanded, turning somewhat imperiously to the governor.

"It means, sir," replied the governor, coldly, "that this Indian woman is the prisoner of the Common wealth"

"It means that I am a prisoner, lured to the net, and betrayed."

"You a prisoner—here, Magawisca!" Everell exclaimed. "Impossible! Justice, gratitude, humanity forbid it. My father—Governor Winthrop, you will not surely suffer this outrage?"

The elder Fletcher had advanced, and, scarcely less perplexed and agitated than his son, was endeavouring to draw forth Faith Leslie, who had shrunk behind Magawisca. Governor Winthrop seemed not at all pleased with Everell's interference. "You will do well, young Mr. Fletcher, to bridle your zeal; private feelings must yield to the public good: this young woman is suspected of being an active agent in brewing the conspiracy forming against us among the Indian tribes; and it is somewhat bold in you to oppose the course of justice—to intermeddle with the public welfare—to lift your feeble judgment against the wisdom of Providence, which has led, by peculiar means, to the apprehension of the enemy. Conduct your prisoner to the jail," he added, turning to the guard, "and bid Barnaby have her in close and safe keeping till farther orders."

"For the love of God, sir," cried Everell, "do not this injustice. At least suffer her to remain in your own house, on her promise—more secure than the walls of a prison." Governor Winthrop only replied by signing to the guards to proceed to their duty.

"Stay one moment," exclaimed Everell; "permit her, I beseech you, to remain here; place her in any one of your apartments, and I will remain before it, a faithful warder, night and day. But do not—do not, I beseech you—sully your honour by committing this noble creature to your jail."

"Listen to my son, I entreat you," said the elder Fletcher, unable any longer to restrain his own feelings;" certainly we owe much to this woman."

"You owe much, undoubtedly," replied the governor; "but it yet remains to be proved, my friend, that your son's redeemed life is to be put in the balance against the public weal."

Esther, who had observed the scene with an intense interest, now overcame her timidity so far as to penetrate the circle that

surrounded the governor, and to attempt to enforce Everell's prayer. "May not Magawisca," she said, "share our apartment—Hope's and mine? She will then, in safe custody, await your farther pleasure."

"Thanks, Esther—thanks," cried Everell, with an animation that would have rewarded a far more difficult effort: but all efforts were unavailing, but not useless; for Magawisca said to Everell, "You have sent light into my darkened soul—you have truth and gratitude; and for the rest, they are but what I deemed them; Send me," she continued, proudly turning to the governor, "to your dungeon; all places are alike to me while I am your prisoner; but, for the sake of Everell Fletcher, let me tell you, that she who is dearer to him than his own soul, if, indeed, she has lived out the perils of this night, must answer for my safe keeping."

"Hope Leslie!" exclaimed Everell; "what has happened? What do you mean, Magawisca?"

"She was the decoy bird," replied Magawisca, calmly; "and she, too, is caught in the net."

"Explain, I beseech you!" The governor answered Everell's appeal by a brief explanation. A bustle ensued: every other feeling was now lost in concern for Hope Leslie; and Magawisca was separated from her weeping and frightened companion, and conducted away without farther opposition; while the two Fletchers, as if life and death hung on every instant, were calling on the governor to aid them in the way and means of pursuit.

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# 7.1.2: Reading and Review Questions

1. How does Digby's view of Native Americans in general, and of Mascawisca in particular, frame the reader's understanding of Mascawisca's character?
2. How does the theme of treachery and betrayal work in this chapter? Who are the guilty? Who are the innocent? Why do you think Mascawisca doesn't tell Everell about her father's intentions?
3. What positive, even utopian, aspects does Mascwisca's tribal home possess? What negative aspects?
4. What impact does Mascawisca's comment on Samoset's death's belying Christian law have on Everell? Why?
5. Mascawisca tells the "loser's" side of the Pequod War. Why does Everell think it's the true version?

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# 7.2: WILLIAM APESS

William Apess is credited as the first Native American to publish an extensive autobiography, A Son of the Forest (1829). In it, he writes that his father was a white man and his mother was the granddaughter of Metacom, or King Philip (instigator of King Philips War of 1676). His mother may have been part African American. It is possible that Apess was indeed a descendent of Metacom; he may also have descended from the Pequot tribe, a tribe that Apess's father joined. Apess was born in Colrain, Massachusetts. His autobiography describes his childhood as painful, as he was left to the care of poor, alcoholic, and physically-abusive grandparents. He attributed their abuse in good part to the whites who introduced alcohol to Native Americans. At the age of five, Apess was indentured as a laborer. The family to which he was indentured sent him to school in the winters; his schooling lasted six years. He was also introduced to Christianity during this time.



**Image** 7.2.1: William Apess

During the War of 1812, Apess joined the American militia and participated in the American attack on Montreal. From 1816 to 1818, he lived once more among the Pequots. Apess came to appreciate the egalitarian views of evangelical Methodism; being particularly drawn to the enthusiasm of their camp revivals and services, he chose to be baptized a Methodist. After obtaining a license to "exhort" at church services, he became an itinerant preacher. According to his autobiography, he encountered barriers placed between himself—as a Native American—and the church hierarchy, only later being ordained as a Methodist minister.

He certainly resented the prevalent mistreatment of Native Americans by whites, lamenting their unjust laws and lack of Christian fellowship. Preaching across the state of Massachusetts, Apess became involved in the ultimately successful Mashpee Revolt of 1833 against the state government, with the Mashpee protesting their being treated as wards of the state. With Apess' help, the Mashpee petitioned the state government, declaring their refusal to allow any whites to "come upon our plantation, to cut or carry off wood, or hay, or any other article without our permission." They claimed their right to self-governance, as they possessed the constitutional rights of freedom and equality.

Besides his autobiography, Apess wrote sermons, conversion narratives, and political commentaries. His An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man insists that whites look at their racial prejudice and mistreatment of people of color, especially Native Americans. It joins a line of protest that would lead to civil rights writers like Henry David Thoreau and to Abolitionist writers like Frederick Douglass.

### 7.2.1: "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man" (3500 words)

### 7.2.2: Reading and Review Questions

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- 4.8: William Apess (1798–1839) has no license indicated.

# 7.2.1: “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (3500 words)

Having a desire to place a few things before my fellow creatures who are travelling with me to the grave, and to that God who is the maker and preserver both of the white man and the Indian, whose abilities are the same, and who are to be judged by one God, who will show no favor to outward appearances, but will judge righteousness. Now I ask if degradation has not been heaped long enough upon the Indians? And if so, can there not be a compromise; is it right to hold and promote prejudices? If not, why not put them all away? I mean here amongst those who are civilized. It may be that many are ignorant of the situation of many of my brethren within the limits of New England. Let me for a few moments turn your attention to the reservations in the different states of New England, and, with but few exceptions, we shall find them as follows: The most mean, abject, miserable race of beings in the world—a complete place of prodigality and prostitution.

Let a gentleman and lady, of integrity and respectability visit these places, and they would be surprised; as they wandered from one hut to the other they would view with the females who are left alone, children half starved, and some almost as naked as they came into the world. And it is a fact that I have seen them as much so—while the females are left without protection, and are seduced by white men, and are finally left to be common prostitutes for them, and to be destroyed by that burning, fiery curse, that has swept millions, both of red and white men, into the grave with sorrow and disgrace—Rum. One reason why they are left so is, because their most sensible and active men are absent at sea. Another reason is, because they are made to believe they are minors and have not the abilities given them from God, to take care of themselves, without it is to see to a few little articles, such as baskets and brooms. Their land is in common stock, and they have nothing to make them enterprising.

Another reason is because those men who are Agents, many of them are unfaithful, and care not whether the Indians live or die; they are much imposed upon by their neighbors who have no principle. They would think it no crime to go upon Indian lands and cut and carry off their most valuable timber, or any thing else they chose; and I doubt not but they think it clear gain. Another reason is because they have no education to take care of themselves; if they had, I would risk them to take care of their own property.

Now I will ask, if the Indians are not called the most ingenious people amongst us? And are they not said to be men of talents? And I would ask, could there be a more efficient way to distress and murder them by inches than the way they have taken? And there is no people in the world but who may be destroyed in the same way. Now if these people are what they are held up in our view to be, I would take the liberty to ask why they are not brought forward and pains taken to educate them? to give them all a common education, and those of the brightest and first-rate talents put forward and held up to office. Perhaps some unholy, unprincipled men would cry out, the skin was not good enough; but stop friends—I am not talking about the skin, but about principles. I would ask if there cannot be as good feelings and principles under a red skin as there can be under a white? And let me ask, is it not on the account of a bad principle, that we who are red children have had to suffer so much as we have? And let me ask, did not this bad principle proceed from the whites or their forefathers? And I would ask, is it worth while to nourish it any longer? If not, then let us have a change; although some men no doubt will spout their corrupt principles against it, that are in the halls of legislation and elsewhere. But [ presume this kind of talk will seem surprising and horrible. I do not see why it should so long as they (the whites) say that they think as much of us as they do of themselves.

This I have heard repeatedly, from the most respectable gentlemen and ladies—and having heard so much precept, I should now wish to see the example. And I would ask who has a better right to look for these things than the naturalist himself—the candid man would say none.

I know that many say that they are willing, perhaps the majority of the people, that we should enjoy our rights and privileges as they do. If so, I would ask why are not we protected in our persons and property throughout the Union? Is it not because there reigns in the breast of many who are leaders, a most unrighteous, unbecoming and impure black principle, and as corrupt and unholy as it can be— while these very same unfeeling, self-esteemed characters pretend to take the skin as a pretext to keep us from our unalienable and lawful rights? I would ask you if you would like to be disfranchised from all your rights, merely because your skin is white, and for no other crime? I’ll venture to say, these very characters who hold the skin to be such a barrier in the way, would be the first to cry out, injustice! awful injustice!

But, reader, I acknowledge that this is a confused world, and I am not seeking for office; but merely placing before you the black inconsistency that you place before me—which is ten times blacker than any skin that you will find in the Universe. And now let me exhort you to do away that principle, as it appears ten times worse in the sight of God and candid men, than skins of color—more

disgraceful than all the skins that Jehovah ever made. If black or red skins, or any other skin of color is disgraceful to God, it appears that he has disgraced himself a great deal—for he has made fifteen colored people to one white, and placed them here upon this earth.

Now let me ask you, white man, if it is a disgrace for to eat, drink and sleep with the image of God, or sit, or walk and talk with them? Or have you the folly to think that the white man, being one in fifteen or sixteen, are the only beloved images of God? Assemble all nations together in your imagination, and then let the whites be seated amongst them, and then let us look for the whites, and I doubt not it would be hard finding them; for to the rest of the nations, they are still but a handful. Now suppose these skins were put together, and each skin had its national crimes written upon it—which skin do you think would have the greatest? I will ask one question more. Can you charge the Indians with robbing a nation almost of their whole Continent, and murdering their women and children, and then depriving the remainder of their lawful rights, that nature and God require them to have? And to cap the climax, rob another nation to till their grounds, and welter out their days under the lash with hunger and fatigue under the scorching rays of a burning sun? I should look at all the skins, and 1 know that when I cast my eye upon that white skin, and if I saw those crimes written upon it, I should enter my protest against it immediately, and cleave to that which is more honorable. And I can tell you that I am satisfied with the manner of my creation, fully—whether others are or not.

But we will strive to penetrate more fully into the conduct of those who profess to have pure principles, and who tell us to follow Jesus Christ and imitate him and have his Spirit. Let us see if they come any where near him and his ancient disciples. The first thing we are to look at, are his precepts, of which we will mention a few. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two precepts hang all the law and the prophets.— Matt. xxii. 37, 38, 39, 40. By this shall all men know that they are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'—John xiii. 35. Our Lord left this special command with his followers, that they should love one another.

Again, John in his Epistles says, 'He who loveth God, loveth his brother also.'— iv. 21. ' Let us not love in word but in deed.'—iii. 18. 'Let your love be without dissimulation. See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.'—1. Peter, viii. 22. 'If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.'—John iv. 20, 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.' The first thing that, takes our attention, is the saying of Jesus, 'Thou shalt love,' &,c. The first question I would ask my brethren in the ministry, as well as that of the membership. What is love, or its effects? Now if they who teach are not essentially affected with pure love, the love of God, how can they teach as they ought? Again, the holy teachers of old said, 'Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'—Rom. viii. 9. Now my brethren in the ministry, let me ask you a few sincere questions. Did you ever hear or read of Christ teaching his disciples that they ought to despise one because his skin was different from theirs? Jesus Christ being a Jew, and those of his Apostles certainly were not whites,—and did not he who completed the plan of salvation complete it for the whites as well as for the Jews, and others? And were not the whites the most degraded people on the earth at that time, and none were more so; for they sacrificed their children to dumb idols! And did not St. Paul labor more abundantly for building up a christian nation amongst you than any of the Apostles. And you know as well as I that you are not indebted to a principle beneath a white skin for your religious services, but to a colored one.

What then is the matter now; is not religion the same now under a colored skin as it ever was? If so I would ask why is not a man of color respected; you may say as many say, we have white men enough. But was this the spirit of Christ and his Apostles? If it had been, there would not have been one white preacher in the world—for Jesus Christ never would have imparted his grace or word to them, for he could forever have withheld it from them. But we find that Jesus Christ and his Apostles never looked at the outward appearances. Jesus in particular looked at the hearts, and his Apostles through him being discerners of the spirit, looked at their fruit without any regard to the skin, color or nation; as St. Paul himself speaks, 'Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free—but Christ is all and in all.' If you can find a spirit like Jesus Christ and his Apostles prevailing now in any of the white congregations, I should like to know it. I ask, is it not the case that every body that is not white is treated with contempt and counted as barbarians? And I ask if the word of God justifies the white man in so doing? When the prophets prophesied, of whom did they speak? When they spoke of heathens, was it not the whites and others who were counted Gentiles? And I ask if all nations with the exception of the Jews were not counted heathens? and according to the writings of some, it could not mean the Indians, for they are counted Jews. And now I would ask, why is all this distinction made among these christian societies? I would ask what is all this ado about Missionary Societies, if it be not to christianize those who are not christians? And what is it for? To degrade them worse, to bring them into society where they must welter out their days in disgrace merely because their skin is of a different complexion. What folly it is to try to make the state of human society worse than it is. How astonished some may be at this—but let me ask, is it not so? Let me refer you to the churches only. And my brethren, is there any agreement? Do brethren and sisters love one another?—Do they not rather hate one another. Outward forms and ceremonies, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye and pride of life is of more value to many professors, than the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, or an attachment to his altar, to his ordinances or to his children. But you may ask who are the children of God? perhaps you may say none but white. If so, the word of the Lord is not true.

I will refer you to St. Peter's precepts—Acts 10. 'God is no respecter of persons'— &c. Now if this is the case, my white brother, what better are you than God? And if no belter, why do you who profess his gospel and to have his spirit, act so contrary to it? Let me ask why the men of a different skin are so dispised, why are not they educated and placed in your pulpits? I ask if his services well performed are not as good as if a white man performed them? I ask if a marriage or a funeral ceremony, or the ordinance of the Lord's house would not be as acceptable in the sight of God as though he was white? And if so, why is it not to you? I ask again, why is it not as acceptable to have men to exercise their office in one place as well as in another? Perhaps you will say that if we admit you to all of these privileges you will want more. I expect that I can guess what that is—Why, say you, there would be intermarriages. How that would be 1 am not able to say—and if it should be, it would be nothing strange or new to me; for I can assure you that I know a great many that have intermarried, both of the whites and the Indians—and many are their sons and daughters—and people too of the first respectability. And I could point to some in the famous city of Boston and elsewhere. You may now look at the disgraceful act in the statute law passed by the Legislature of Massachusetts, and behold the fifty pound fine levied upon any Clergyman or Justice of the Peace that dare to encourage the laws of God and nature by a legitimate union in holy wedlock between the Indians and whites. I would ask how this looks to your law makers. I would ask if this corresponds with your sayings—that you think as much of the Indians as you do of the whites. 1 do not wonder that you blush many of you while you read; for many have broken the ill-fated laws made by man to hedge up the laws of God and nature. I would ask if they who have made the law have not broken it—but there is no other state in New England that has this law but Massachusetts; and I think as many of you do not, that you have done yourselves no credit.

But as I am not looking for a wife, having one of the finest cast, as you no doubt would understand while you read her experience and travail of soul in the way to heaven, you will see that it is not my object. And if I had none, I should not want any one to take my right from me and choose a wife for me; for I think that I or any of my brethren have a right to choose a wife for themselves as well as the whites—and as the whites have taken the liberty to choose my brethren, the Indians, hundreds and thousands of them as partners in life, I believe the Indians have as much right to choose their partners amongst the whites if they wish. I would ask you if you can see any thing inconsistent in your conduct and talk about the Indians? And if you do, I hope you will try to become more consistent. Now if the Lord Jesus Christ, who is counted by all to be a Jew, and it is well known that the Jews are a colored people, especially those living in the East, where Christ was born—and if he should appear amongst us, would he not be shut out of doors by many, very quickly? and by those too, who profess religion?

By what you read, you may learn how deep your principles are. I should say they were skin deep. I should not wonder if some of the most selfish and ignorant would spout a charge of their principles now and then at me. But I would ask, how are you to love your neighbors as yourself? Is it to cheat them? is it to wrong them in any thing? Now to cheat them out of any of their rights is robbery. And I ask, can you deny that you are not robbing the Indians daily, and many others } But at last you may think I am what is called a hard and uncharitable man. But not so. I believe there are many who would not hesitate to advocate our cause; and those too who are men of fame and respectability—as well as ladies of honor and virtue. There is a Webster, an Everett, and a Wirt, and many others who are distinguished characters—besides an host of my fellow citizens, who advocate our cause daily. And how I congratulate such noble spirits—how they are to be prized and valued; for they are well calculated to promote the happiness of mankind. They well know that man was made for society, and not for hissing stocks and outcasts. And when such a principle as this lies within the hearts of men, how much it is like its God—and how it honors its Maker—and how it imitates the feelings of the good Samaritan, that had his wounds bound up, who had been among thieves and robbers.

Do not get tired, ye noble-hearted—only think how many poor Indians want their wounds done up daily; the Lord will reward you, and pray you stop not till this tree of distinction shall be levelled to the earth, and the mantle of prejudice torn from every American heart—then shall peace pervade the Union.

William Apes.

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# 7.2.2: Reading and Review Questions

1. What are some of the causes Apess identifies as the causes for the misery of Native Americans? What, if anything, do these causes have in common?
2. How will Native Americans and whites be equal in the sight of God? What transcendent vision is Apess advocating for whites, who claim to be Christians?
3. How does Apess undermine whites' assumptions of their superiority to Native Americans? To what effect?
4. Why, and in what way, does Apess use rhetorical tropes and phrases deriving from white European discourse (like the King James Bible)?
5. What "Christian" virtues does Apess claim for Native Americans, and why?

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# 7.3: JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

James Fenimore Cooper, author of the Leatherstocking novels, beginning with The Pioneers (1823), and seafaring tales like The Pathfinder (1840), was himself a pioneer and pathfinder for later writers like Herman Melville and Mark Twain. Cooper dramatized unique American experiences, such as the fast vanishing wilderness, and unique American characters, such as Natty Bumpo, who was based in part on the explorer Daniel Boone (1734–1820). Influenced by the historical romances of Sir Walter Scott, Cooper wrote of the uncommon common man, sprung almost from untouched nature itself but certainly from the fast-changing American landscape, in a time and place where he seemed an anachronism but also a touchstone of American ideals.



**Image** 7.3.1: James Fenimore Cooper

Cooper was born into a well-to-do family, growing up in Cooperstown, a frontier village on the southern shore of Ostego Lake developed by his father William Cooper (1754–1809). William Cooper was a judge and member of Congress who, after Fenimore Cooper was expelled from Yale for misconduct (perhaps a brawl), would obtain a position for him in the United States Navy. After William's death, Cooper inherited part of his father's large fortune. He left the Navy in 1808 and married Susan Augusta de Lancey—daughter of a wealthy Westchester family— three years later. He turned to writing to recoup financial losses, likely due to his own poor management.

After a poor showing in Precaution (1820), a novel of manners, Cooper found his stride in The Spy (1821), a historical novel set during the American Revolution. He did not plan to write the Leatherstocking novels as a series, but The Pioneers was so popular that he followed it three years later with The Last of the Mohicans (1826). Set during the French and Indian War, this novel has a quality of nostalgia for chivalry embodied in the simple nobility of Natty Bumpo and his friendship with the Native American Chingachgook. It also considers such social issues as miscegenation and racial conflict. In much of his work, Cooper exalted the American way of life, democracy, and individual rights. Yet he faced unpleasant truths about America, including growing demagoguery, unfair property rights, and too-rapid urbanization.

From 1826 to 1833, Cooper lived in Europe, where he was acclaimed as "the American Scott." He wrote novels set in medieval Europe and contrasted American and European governments in travelogues, including his Gleanings in Europe series (1836–1838). This attention to Europe tarnished Cooper's reputation in America, yet he continued to write prolifically until his death in Cooperstown in 1851.

### 7.3.1: from The Pioneers (10000 words)

### 7.3.2: Reading and Review Questions

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# 7.3.1: from The Pioneers (10000 words)

## Volume I, Chapter I

> See, Winter comes, to rule the varied year,
> Sullen and sad, with all his rising train;
> Vapours, and clouds, and storms.—
>
> Thompson.

Near the centre of the great State of New-York lies an extensive district of country, whose surface is a succession of hills and dales, or, to speak with greater deference to geographical definitions, of mountains and valleys. It is among these hills that the Delaware takes its rise; and flowing from the limpid lakes and thousand springs of this country, the numerous sources of the mighty Susquehanna meander through the valleys, until, uniting, they form one of the proudest streams of which the old United States could boast. The mountains are generally arable to the top, although instances are not wanting, where the sides are jutted with rocks, that aid greatly in giving that romantic character to the country, which it so eminently possesses. The vales are narrow, rich, and cultivated; with a stream uniformly winding through each, now gliding peacefully under the brow on one of the hills, and then suddenly shooting across the plain, to wash the feet of its opposite rival. Beautiful and thriving villages are found interspersed along the margins of the small lakes, or situated at those points of the streams which are favourable to manufacturing; and neat and comfortable farms, with every indication of wealth about them, are scattered profusely through the vales, and even to the mountain tops. Roads diverge in every direction, from the even and graceful bottoms of the valleys, to the most rugged and intricate passes of the hills. Academies and minor edifices for the encouragement of learning, meet the eye of the stranger, at every few miles, as he winds his way through this uneven territory; and places for the public worship of God abound with that frequency which characterizes a moral and reflecting people, and with that variety of exterior and canonical government which flows from unfettered liberty of conscience. In short, the whole district is hourly exhibiting how much can be done, in even a rugged country, and with a severe climate, under the dominion of mild laws, and where every man feels a direct interest in the prosperity of a commonwealth, of which he knows himself to form a distinct and independent part. The expedients of the pioneers who first broke ground in the settlement of this country, are succeeded by the permanent improvements of the yeoman, who intends to leave his remains to moulder under the sod which he tills, or, perhaps, of the son, who, born in the land, piously wishes to linger around the grave of his father. Only forty years have passed since this whole territory was a wilderness.

Very soon after the establishment of the independence of the States by the peace of 1783, the enterprise of their citizens was directed to a development of the natural advantages of their widely extended dominions. Before the war of the revolution the inhabited parts of the colony of New-York were limited to less than a tenth of her possessions. A narrow belt of country, extending for a short distance on either side of the Hudson, with a similar occupation of fifty miles on the banks of the Mohawk, together with the islands of Nassau and Staten, and a few insulated settlements on chosen land along the margins of streams, composed the country, that was then inhabited by less than two hundred thousand souls. Within the short period we have mentioned, her population has spread itself over five degrees of latitude and seven of longitude, and has swelled to the powerful number of nearly a million and a half, who are maintained in abundance, and can look forward to ages before the evil day must arrive when their possessions will become unequal to their wants.

Our tale begins in 1793, about seven years after the commencement of one of the earliest of those settlements, which have conduced to effect that magical change in the power and condition of the state, to which we have alluded.

It was near the setting of the sun, on a clear, cold day in December of that year, when a sleigh was moving slowly up one of the mountains in the district which we have described. The day had been fine for the season, and but two or three large clouds, whose colour seemed brightened by the light reflected from the mass of snow that covered the earth, floated in a sky of the purest blue. The road wound along the brow of a precipice, and on one side was upheld by a foundation of logs, piled for many feet, one upon the other, while a narrow excavation in the mountain, in the opposite direction, had made a passage of sufficient width for the ordinary travelling of that day. But logs, excavation, and every thing that did not reach for several feet above the earth, lay promiscuously buried under the snow. A single track, barely wide enough to receive the sleigh, denoted the route of the highway, and this was sunken near two feet below the surrounding surface. In the vale, which lay at a distance of several hundred feet beneath them, there was what in the language of the country was called a clearing, and all the usual improvements of a new settlement; these even extended up the hill to the point where the road turned short and ran across the level land, which lay on the summit of the mountain; but the summit itself yet remained a forest. There was glittering in the atmosphere, as if it were filled with

innumerable shining particles, and the noble bay horses that drew the sleigh were covered, in many parts, with a coat of frost. The vapour from their nostrils was seen to issue like smoke; and every object in the view, as well as every arrangement of the travellers, denoted the depth of a winter in the mountains. The harness, which was of a deep dull black, differing from the glossy varnishing of the present day, was ornamented with enormous plates and buckles of brass, that shone like gold in those transient beams of the sun, which found their way obliquely through the tops of the trees. Huge saddles, studded with nails of the same material, and fitted with cloths that admirably served as blankets to the shoulders of the animals, supported four high, square-topped turrets, through which the stout reins led from the mouths of the horses to the hands of the driver, who was a negro, of apparently twenty years of age. His face, which nature had colored with a glistening black, was now mottled with the cold, and his large shining eyes were moistened with a liquid that flowed from the same cause; still, there was a smiling expression of good humour in his happy countenance, that was created by the thoughts of his home, and a Christmas fireside, with its Christmas frolics. The sleigh was one of those large, comfortable, old-fashioned conveyances, which would admit a whole family within its bosom, but which now contained only two passengers besides the driver. Its outside was of a modest green, and its inside of a fiery red, that was intended to convey the idea of heat in that cold climate. Large buffalo skins, trimmed around the edges with red cloth, cut into festoons, covered the back of the sleigh, and were spread over its bottom, and drawn up around the feet of the travellers—one of whom was a man of middle age and the other a female, just entering upon womanhood. The former was of a large stature; but the precautions he had taken to guard against the cold, left but little of his person exposed to view. A great-coat, that was abundantly ornamented, if it were not made more comfortable, by a profusion of furs, enveloped the whole of his figure, excepting the head, which was covered with a cap of martin skins, lined with morocco, the sides of which were made to fall, if necessary, and were now drawn close over the ears, and were fastened beneath his chin with a black riband; its top was surmounted with the tail of the animal whose skin had furnished the materials for the for the cap, which fell back not ungracefully, a few inches behind the head. From beneath this masque were to be seen part of a fine, manly face, and particularly a pair of expressive, large blue eyes, that promised extraordinary intellect, covert humour, and great benevolence. The form of his companion was literally hid beneath the multitude and variety of garments which she wore. There were furs and silks peeping from under a large camblet cloak, with a thick flannel lining, that, by its cut and size, was evidently intended for a masculine wearer. A huge hood of black silk, that was quilted with down, concealed the whole of her head, except at a small opening in front for breath, through which occasionally sparkled a pair of animated eyes of the deepest black.

Both the father and daughter (for such was the connexion between the two travellers) were too much occupied with their different reflections to break a stillness, that received little or no interruption from the easy gliding of the sleigh, by the sound of their voices. The former was thinking of the wife that had held this their only child to her bosom, when, four years before, she had reluctantly consented to relinquish the society of her daughter, in order that the latter might enjoy the advantages which the city could afford to her education. A few months afterwards death had deprived him of the remaining companion of his solitude; but still he had enough real regard for his child, not to bring her into the comparative wilderness in which he dwelt, until the full period had expired, to which he had limited her juvenile labours. The reflections of the daughter were less melancholy, and mingled with a pleased astonishment at the novel scenery that she met at every turn in the road.

The mountain on which they were journeying was covered with pines, that rose without a branch seventy or eighty feet, and which frequently towered to an additional height, that more than equalled that elevation. Through the innumerable vistas that opened beneath the lofty trees, the eye could penetrate until it was met by a distant inequality in the ground, or was stopped by a view of the summit of the mountain which lay on the opposite side of the valley to which they were hastening. The dark trunks of the trees rose from the pure white of the snow, in regularly formed shafts, until, at a great height, their branches shot forth their horizontal limbs, that were covered with the meager foliage of an evergreen, affording a melancholy contrast to the torpor of nature below. To the travellers there seemed to be no wind; but these pines waved majestically at their topmost boughs, sending forth a dull, sighing sound, that was quite in consonance with the scene.

The sleigh had glided for some distance along the even surface, and the gaze of the female was bent in inquisitive, and, perhaps, timid glances, into the recesses of the forest, which were lighted by the unsullied covering of the earth, when a loud and continued howling was heard, pealing under the long arches of the woods, like the cry of a numerous pack of hounds. The instant the sounds reached the ear of the gentleman, whatever might have been the subject of his meditations, he forgot it; for he cried aloud to the black—

“Hold up, Aggy; there is old Hector; I should know his bay among ten thousand. The Leather-stocking has put his hounds into the hills this clear day, and they have started their game, you hear. There is a deer-track a few rods ahead;—and now, Bess, if thou canst muster courage enough to stand fire, I will give thee a saddle for thy Christmas dinner.”

The black drew up, with a cheerful grin upon his chilled features, and began thrashing his arms together, in order to restore the circulation to his fingers, while the speaker stood erect, and, throwing aside his outer covering, stept from the sleigh upon a bank of snow, which sustained his weight without yielding more than an inch or two. A storm of sleet had fallen and frozen upon the surface a few days before, and but a slight snow had occurred since to purify, without weakening its covering.

In a few moments the speaker succeeded in extricating a double-barrelled fowling-piece from amongst a multitude of trunks and bandboxes. After throwing aside the thick mittens which had encased his hands, that now appeared in a pair of leather gloves tipped with fur, he examined his priming, and was about to move forward, when the light bounding noise of an animal plunging through the woods was heard, and directly and a fine buck darted into the path, a short distance ahead of him. The appearance of the animal was sudden, and his flight inconceivably rapid; but the traveller appeared to be too keen a sportsman to be disconcerted by either. As it came first into view he raised the fowling-piece to his shoulder and, with a practised eye and steady hand, drew a trigger; but the deer dashed forward undaunted, and apparently unhurt. Without lowering his piece, the traveller turned its muzzle toward his intended victim, and fired again. Neither discharge, however, seemed to have taken effect.

The whole scene had passed with a rapidity that confused the female, who was unconsciously rejoicing in the escape of the buck, as he rather darted like a meteor, than ran across the road before her, when a sharp, quick sound struck her ear, quite different from the full, round reports of her father's gun, but still sufficiently distinct to be known as the concussion produced by fire-arms. At the same instant that she heard this unexpected report, the buck sprang from the snow, to a great height in the air, and directly a second discharge, similar in sound to the first, followed, when the animal came to the earth, falling headlong, and rolling over on the crust once of twice with its own velocity. A loud shout was given by the unseen marksman, as triumphing in his better aim; and a couple of men instantly appeared from behind the trunks of two of the pines, where they had evidently placed themselves in expectation of the passage of the deer.

"Ha! Natty, had I known you were in ambush, I would not have fired," cried the traveller, moving towards the spot where the deer lay—near to which he was followed by the delighted black, with the sleigh; "but the sound of old Hector was too exhilarating to let me be quiet; though I hardly think I struck him, either."

"No—no—Judge," returned the hunter, with an inward chuckle, and with that look of exultation, that indicates a consciousness of superior skill; "you burnt your powder, only to warm your nose this cold evening. Did ye think to stop a full-grown buck, with Hector and the slut open upon him, within sound, with that robin popgun in your hand? There's plenty of pheasants amongst the swamps; and the snow birds are flying round your own door, where you may feed them with crumbs, and shoot enough for a potpie any day; but if you're for a buck, or a little bear's meat, Judge, you'll have to take the long rifle, with a greased wadding, or you'll waste more powder than you'll fill stomachs, I'm thinking."

As the speaker concluded, he drew his bare hand across the bottom of his nose, and again opened his enormous mouth with a kind of inward laugh.

"The gun scatters well, Natty, and has killed a deer before now," said the traveller, smiling good-humouredly. "One barrel was charged with buck shot; but the other was loaded for birds only.—Here are two hurts that he has received; one through the neck, and the other directly through the heart. It is by no means certain, Natty, but I gave him one of the two.

"Let who will kill him," said the hunter, rather surily, "I suppose the cretur is to be eaten." So saying, he drew a large knife from a leathern sheath, which was stuck through his girdle or sash, and cut the throat of the animal, "If there is two balls through the deer, I want to know if there wasn't two rifles fired—besides, who ever saw such a ragged hole from a smooth-bore, as this is through the neck?—and you will own yourself, Judge, that the buck fell at the last shot, which was sent from a truer and a younger hand than your'n or mine 'ither; but for my part, although I am a poor man, I can live without the venison, but I don't love to give up my lawful dues in a free country. Though, for the matter of that, might often makes right here, as well as in the old country, for what I can see."

An air of sullen dissatisfaction pervaded the manner of the hunter during the whole of this speech; yet he thought it prudent to utter the close of the sentence in such an under tone as to leave nothing audible but the grumbling sounds of his voice.

"Nay, Natty," rejoined the traveller, with undisturbed good humour, "it is for the honour that I contend. A few dollars will pay for the venison; but what will requite me for the lost honour of a buck's tail in my cap? Think, Natty, how I should triumph over that quizzing dog, Dick Jones, who has failed seven times this season already, and has only brought in one wood-chuck and a few gray squirrels."

"Ah! The game is becoming hard to find, indeed, Judge, with your clearings and betterments," said the old hunter, with a kind of disdainful resignation. "The time has been, when I have thirteen deer, without counting the fa'ns standing in the door of my own hut;—and for bear's meat, if one wanted a ham or so from the cretur, he had only to watch a-nights, and he could shoot one by moonlight, through the cracks of the logs; no fear of his over-sleeping himself, n'ither, for the howling of the wolves was sartin to keep his eyes open. There's old Hector,"—patting with affection a tall hound, of black and yellow spots, with white belly and legs, that just then came in on the scent, accompanied by the slut he had mentioned; "see where the wolves bit his throat, the night I druve them from the venison I was smoking on the chimbey top—that dog is more to be trusted nor many a Christian man; for he

never forgets a friend, and loves the hand that gives him bread."

There was a peculiarity in the manner of the hunter, that struck the notice of the young female, who had been a close and interested observer of his appearance and equipments, from the moment he first came into view. He was tall, and so meagre as to make him seem above even the six feet that he actually stood in his stockings. On his head, which was thinly covered with lank, sandy hair, he wore a cap made of fox-skin, resembling in shape the one we have already described, although much inferior in finish and ornaments. His face was skinny and thin almost to emaciation; but yet bore no signs of disease;—on the contrary, it had every indication of the most robust and enduring health. The cold and the exposure had, together, given it a colour of uniform red; his gray eyes were glancing under a pair of shaggy brows, that overhung them in long hairs of gray mingled with their natural hue; his scraggy neck was bare, and burnt to the same tint with his face; though a small part of a shirt collar, made of the country check, was to be seen above the over-dress he wore. A kind of coat, made of dressed deer-skin, with the hair on, was belted close to his lank body, by a girdle of coloured worsted. On his feet were deer-skin moccasins, ornamented with porcupines' quills, after the manner of the Indians, and his limbs were guarded with long leggings of the same material as the moccasins, which, gartering over the knees of his tarnished buck-skin breeches, had obtained for him, among the settlers, the nick-name of Leather-stocking, notwithstanding his legs were protected beneath, in winter, by thick garments of woollen, duly made of good blue yarn. Over his left shoulder was slung a belt of deer-skin, from which depended an enormous ox horn, so thinly scraped, as to discover the dark powder that it contained. The larger end was fitted ingeniously and securely with a wooden bottom, and the other was stopped tight by a little plug. A leathern pouch hung before him, from which, as he concluded his last speech, he took a small measure, and, filling it accurately with powder, he commenced reloading the rifle, which as its butt rested on the snow before him, reached nearly to the top of his fox-skin cap.

The traveller had been closely examining the wounds during these movements, and now, without heeding the ill humour of the hunter's manner, he exclaimed—

"I would fain establish a right, Natty, to the honour of this capture; and surely if the hit in the neck be mine it is enough; for the shot in the heart was unnecessary— what we call an act of supererogation, Leather-stocking."

"You may call it by what larned name you please, Judge," said the hunter, throwing his rifle across his left arm, and knocking up a brass lid in the breech, from which he took a small piece of greased leather, and wrapping a ball in it, forced them down by main strength on the powder, where he continued to pound them while speaking. "It's far easier to call names, than to shoot a buck on the spring; but the cretur came by his end from a younger hand than 'ither your'n or mine, as I said before."

"What say you, my friend," cried the traveller, turning pleasantly to Natty`s companion; "shall we toss up this dollar for the honour, and you keep the silver if you lose —what say you, friend?"

"That I killed the deer," answered the young man, with a little haughtiness, as he leaned on another long rifle similar to that of Natty's.

"Here are two to one, indeed," replied the Judge, with a smile; "I am out voted— overruled, as we say on the bench. There is Aggy, he can't vote being a slave; and Bess is a minor—so I must even make the best of it. But you'll sell me the venison; and the deuse is in it, but I make a good story about its death."

"The meat is none of mine to sell," said Leather-stocking, adopting a little of his companion's hauteur; "for my part, I have known animals travel days with shots in the neck, and I'm none of them who'll rob a man of his rightful dues."

"You are tenacious of your rights, this cold evening, Natty," returned the Judge, with unconquerable good nature; "but what say you, young man, will three dollars pay you for the buck?"

"First let us determine the question of right to the satisfaction of us both," said the youth, firmly but respectfully, and with a pronunciation and language vastly superior to his appearance; "with how many shot did you load your gun?"

"With five, sir," said the Judge, gravely, a little struck with the other`s manner; "are they not enough to slay a buck like this?"

"One would do it; but," moving to the tree from behind which he had appeared, "you know, sir, you fired in this direction—here are four of the bullets in the tree."

The Judge examined the fresh marks in the rough bark of the pine, and, shaking his head, said with a laugh—

"You are making out the case against yourself, my young advocate—where is the fifth?"

“Here,” said the youth, throwing aside the rough over-coat that he wore, and exhibiting a hole in his under garment, through which large drops of blood were oozing.

“Good God!” exclaimed the Judge, with horror; “have I been trifling here about an empty distinction, and a fellow-creature suffering from my hands without a murmur? But hasten—quick—get into my sleigh—it is but a mile to the village, where surgical aid can be obtained;—all shall be done at my expense, and thou shalt live with me until thy wound is healed—ay, and forever afterwards, too.”

“I thank you, sir, for your good intentions, but must decline your offer. I have a friend who would be uneasy were he to hear that I am hurt and away from him. The injury is but slight, and the bullet has missed the bones; but I believe, sir, you will now admit my title to the venison.”

“Admit it!” repeated the agitated Judge; ‘I here give thee a right to shoot deer, or bears, or anything thou pleasest in my woods, for ever. Leather-stocking is the only other man that I have granted the same privilege to; and the time is coming when it will be of value. But I buy your deer—here, this bill will pay thee, both for thy shot and my own.”

The old hunter gathered his tall person up into an air of pride, during this dialogue, and now muttered in an under tone—

“There’s them living who say, that Nathaniel Bumppo’s right to shoot in these hills, is of older date than Marmaduke Temple’s right to forbid him. But if there’s a law about it at all, though who ever heard tell of a law, that a man should’nt kill deer where he pleased!—but if there is a law at all, it should be to keep people from the use of smooth-bores. A body never knows where his lead will fly, when he pulls the trigger of one of them fancified fire-arms.”

Without attending to the soliloquy of Natty, the youth bowed his head silently to the offer of the bank note, and replied—

“Excuse me, sir, I have need of the venison.”

“But this will buy you many deer,” said the judge; “take it, I entreat you,” and lowering his voice to a whisper, he added—”it is for a hundred dollars.”

For an instant only, the youth seemed to hesitate, and then, blushing even through the high colour that the cold had given to his cheeks, as if with inward shame at his own weakness, he again proudly declined the offer.

During this scene the female arose, and, regardless of the cold air, she threw back the hood which concealed her features, and now spoke, with great earnestness—

“Surely, surely—young man—sir—you would not pain my father so much as to have him think that he leaves a fellow-creature in this wilderness, whom his own hand has injured. I entreat you will go with us, and receive medical aid for your hurts.”

Whether his wound became more painful, or there was something irresistible in the voice and manner of the fair pleader for her father’s feelings, we know not, but the haughty distance of the young man’s manner was sensibly softened by this appeal, and he stood, in apparent doubt, as if reluctant to comply with, and yet unwilling to refuse her request. The judge, for such being his office, must, in future, be his title, watched, with no little interest, the display of this singular contention in the feelings of the youth, and advancing, kindly took his hand, and, as he pulled him gently toward the sleigh, urged him to enter it.

“There is no human aid nearer than Templeton,” he said; “and the hut of Natty is full three miles from this;—come—come, my young friend, go with us, and let the new doctor look to this shoulder of thine. Here is Natty will take the tidings of thy welfare to thy friend; and should’st thou require it, thou shalt be returned to thy home in the morning.”

The young man succeeded in extricating his hand from the warm grasp of the judge, but continued to gaze on the face of the female, who, regardless of the cold was still standing with her fine features exposed, which expressed feelings that eloquently seconded the request of her father. Leather-stocking stood, in the mean time, leaning upon his long rifle, with his head turned a little to one side, as if engaged in deep and sagacious musing; when, having apparently satisfied his doubts, by revolving the subject in his mind, he broke silence—

“It may be best to go, lad, after all; for if the shot hangs under the skin, my hand is getting too old to be cutting into human flesh, as I once used to could. Though some thirty years agone, in the old war, when I was out under Sir William, I travelled seventy miles alone in the howling wilderness, with a rifle bullet in my thigh, and then cut it out with my own jack-knife. Old Indian John knows the time well. I met him with a party of the Delawares, on the trail of the Iroquois, who had been down and taken five scalps on the Schoharie. But I made a mark on the redskin that I’ll warrant he carried to his grave. I took him on the posteerum,

saving the lady's presence, as he got up from the amboosh, and rattled three buck shot into his naked hide, so close, that you might have laid a broad joe upon them all—" here Natty stretched out his long neck, and straightened his body, as he opened his mouth, which exposed a single tusk of yellow bone, while his eyes, his face, even his whole frame, seemed to laugh, although no sound was emitted, except a kind of thick hissing, as he inhaled his breath in quavers. "I had lost my bullet mould in crossing the Oneida outlet, and so was true, and did'nt scatter like your two-legged thing there, Judge, which don't do, I find, to hunt in company with."

Natty's apology to the delicacy of the young lady was unnecessary, for, while he was speaking, she was too much employed in helping her father to remove certain articles of their baggage to hear him. Unable to resist the kind urgency of the travellers any longer, the youth, though still with an unaccountable reluctance expressed in his manner, suffered himself to be persuaded to enter the sleigh. The black with the aid of his master threw the buck across the baggage, and entering the vehicle themselves, the judge invited the hunter to do so likewise.

"No—no—" said the old man, shaking his head; "I have work to do at home this Christmas eve—drive on with the boy, and let your doctor look to the shoulder; though if he will only cut out the shot, I have yarbs that will heal the wound quicker than all his foreign 'intments." He turned, and was about to move off, when, suddenly recollecting himself, he again faced the party, and added—"If you see anything of Indian John, about the foot of the lake, you had better take him with you, and let him lend the doctor a hand; for old as he is, he is curious at cuts and bruises, and it's likelier than not he'll be in with brooms to sweep your Christmas ha'arths."

"Stop—stop," cried the youth, catching the arm of the black as he prepared to urge his horses forward; "Natty—you need say nothing of the shot, nor of where I am going—remember, Natty, as you love me."

"Trust old Leather-stocking," returned the hunter, significantly; "he hasn't lived forty years in the wilderness, and not larnt from the savages how to hold his tongue—trust to me, lad; and remember old Indian John."

"And, Natty," said the youth eagerly, still holding the black by the arm. "I will just get the shot extracted, and bring you up, to-night, a quarter of the buck, for the Christmas dinner."

He was interrupted by the hunter, who held up his finger with an expressive gesture for silence, and moved softly along the margin of the road, keeping his eyes steadfastly fixed on the branches of a pine near him. When he had obtained such a position as he wished, he stopped, and cocking his rifle, threw one leg far behind him, and stretching his left arm to its utmost extent along the barrel of his piece, he began slowly to raise its muzzle in a line with the straight trunk of the tree. The eyes of the group in the sleigh naturally preceded the movement of the rifle, and they soon discovered the object of Natty's aim. On a small dead branch of the pine, which, at the distance of seventy feet from the ground, shot out horizontally, immediately beneath the living members of the tree, sat a bird, that in the vulgar language of the country, was indiscriminately called pheasant or a partridge. In size, it was but little smaller than a common barn-yard fowl. The baying of the dogs, and the conversation that had passed near the root of the tree on which it was perched, had alarmed the bird, which was now drawn up near the body of the pine, with a head and neck erect, that formed nearly a straight line with its legs. So soon as the rifle bore on the victim, Natty drew his trigger, and the partridge fell from its height with a force that buried it in the snow.

"Lie down, you old villain," exclaimed Leather-stocking, shaking his ramrod at Hector as he bounded toward the foot of the tree, "lie down, I say." The dog obeyed, and Natty proceeded with great rapidity, though with the nicest accuracy, to re-load his piece. When this was ended, he took up his game, and showing it to the party without a head, he cried—"Here is a tit-bit for an old man's Christmas— never mind the venison, boy, and remember Indian John; his yarbs are better nor all the foreign 'intments. Here, Judge," holding up the bird again, "do you think a smooth-bore would pick game off their roost, and not ruffle a feather?" The old man gave another of his remarkable laughs, which partook so largely of exultation, mirth, and irony, and, shaking his head, he turned, with his rifle at a trail, and moved into the forest with short and quick steps, that were between a walk and a trot. At each movement he made his body lowered several inches, his knees yielding with an inclination inward; but as the sleigh turned at a bend in the road, the youth cast his eyes in quest of his old companion, and he saw that he was already nearly concealed by the trunks of the trees, while his dogs were following quietly in his footsteps, occasionally scenting the deer track, that they seemed to know instinctively was now of no farther use to them. Another jerk was given to the sleigh, and Leather-stocking was hidden from view.

## Volume II, Chapter II

> "Speed! Malise, speed! such cause of haste
> Thine active sinews never braced." —Scott.

The roads of Otsego, if we except the principal highways, were, at the early day of our tale, but little better than wood-paths. The high trees that were growing on the very verge of the wheel-tracks excluded the sun's rays, unless at meridian; and the slowness of the evaporation, united with the rich mould of vegetable decomposition that covered the whole country to the depth of several inches, occasioned but an indifferent foundation for the footing of travellers. Added to these were the inequalities of a natural surface, and the constant recurrence of enormous and slippery roots that were laid bare by the removal of the light soil, together with stumps of trees, to make a passage not only difficult but dangerous. Yet the riders among these numerous obstructions, which were such as would terrify an unpracticed eye, gave no demonstrations of uneasiness as their horses toiled through the sloughs or trotted with uncertain paces along the dark route. In many places the marks on the trees were the only indications of a road, with perhaps an occasional remnant of a pine that, by being cut close to the earth, so as to leave nothing visible but its base of roots, spreading for twenty feet in every direction, was apparently placed there as a beacon to warn the traveller that it was the centre of a highway.

Into one of these roads the active sheriff led the way, first striking out of the foot-path, by which they had descended from the sugar-bush, across a little bridge, formed of round logs laid loosely on sleepers of pine, in which large openings of a formidable width were frequent. The nag of Richard, when it reached one of these gaps, laid its nose along the logs and stepped across the difficult passage with the sagacity of a man; but the blooded filly which Miss Temple rode disdained so humble a movement. She made a step or two with an unusual caution, and then, on reaching the broadest opening, obedient to the curt and whip of her fearless mistress, she bounded across the dangerous pass with the activity of a squirrel.

"Gently, gently, my child," said Marmaduke, who was following in the manner of Richard; "this is not a country for equestrian feats. Much prudence is requisite to journey through our rough paths with safety. Thou mayst practise thy skill in horsemanship on the plains of New Jersey with safety; but in the hills of Otsego they may be suspended for a time."

"I may as well then relinquish my saddle at once, dear sir," returned his daughter; "for if it is to be laid aside until this wild country be improved, old age will overtake me, and put an end to what you term my equestrian feats."

"Say not so, my child," returned her father; "but if thou venturest again as in crossing this bridge, old age will never overtake thee, but I shall be left to mourn thee, cut off in thy pride, my Elizabeth. If thou hadst seen this district of country, as I did, when it lay in the sleep of nature, and bad witnessed its rapid changes as it awoke to supply the wants of man, thou wouldst curb thy impatience for a little time, though thou shouldst not check thy steed."

"I recollect hearing you speak of your first visit to these woods, but the impression is faint, and blended with the confused images of childhood. Wild and unsettled as it may yet seem, it must have been a thousand times more dreary then. Will you repeat, dear sir, what you then thought of your enterprise, and what you felt?"

During this speech of Elizabeth, which was uttered with the fervor of affection, young Edwards rode more closely to the side of the Judge, and bent his dark eyes on his countenance with an expression that seemed to read his thoughts.

"Thou wast then young, my child, but must remember when I left thee and thy mother, to take my first survey of these uninhabited mountains," said Marmaduke. "But thou dost not feel all the secret motives that can urge a man to endure privations in order to accumulate wealth. In my case they have not been trifling, and God has been pleased to smile on my efforts. If I have encountered pain, famine, and disease in accomplishing the settlement of this rough territory, I have not the misery of failure to add to the grievances."

"Famine!" echoed Elizabeth; "I thought this was the land of abundance! Had you famine to contend with?"

"Even so, my child," said her father. "Those who look around them now, and see the loads of produce that issue out of every wild path in these mountains during the season of travelling, will hardly credit that no more than five years have elapsed since the tenants of these woods were compelled to eat the scanty fruits of the forest to sustain life, and, with their unpracticed skill, to hunt the beasts as food for their starving families."

"Ay!" cried Richard, who happened to overhear the last of this speech between the notes of the wood-chopper's song, which he was endeavoring to breathe aloud; "that was the starving-time, Cousin Bess. I grew as lank as a weasel that fall, and my face was as pale as one of your fever-and-ague visages. Monsieur Le Quoi, there, fell away like a pumpkin in drying; nor do I think you have got fairly over it yet, monsieur. Benjamin, I thought, bore it with a worse grace than any of the family; for he swore it was harder to endure than a short allowance in the calm latitudes. Benjamin is a sad fellow to swear if you starve him ever so little. I had half a mind to quit you then, 'Duke, and to go into Pennsylvania to fatten; but, damn it, thinks I, we are sisters' children, and I will live or die with him, after all."

“I do not forget thy kindness,” said Marmaduke, “nor that we are of one blood.”

“But, my dear father,” cried the wondering Elizabeth, “was there actual suffering? Where were the beautiful and fertile vales of the Mohawk? Could they not furnish food for your wants?”

“It was a season of scarcity; the necessities of life commanded a high price in Europe, and were greedily sought after by the speculators. The emigrants from the East to the West invariably passed along the valley of the Mohawk, and swept away the means of subsistence like a swarm of locusts, Nor were the people on the Flats in a much better condition. They were in want themselves, but they spared the little excess of provisions that nature did not absolutely require, with the justice of the German character. There was no grinding of the poor. The word speculator was then unknown to them. I have seen many a stout man, bending under the load of the bag of meal which he was carrying from the mills of the Mohawk, through the rugged passes of these mountains, to feed his half-famished children, with a heart so light, as he approached his hut, that the thirty miles he had passed seemed nothing. Remember, my child, it was in our very infancy; we had neither mills, nor grain, nor roads, nor often clearings; we had nothing of increase but the mouths that were to be fed: for even at that inauspicious moment the restless spirit of emigration was not idle; nay, the general scarcity which extended to the East tended to increase the number of adventurers.”

“And how, dearest father, didst thou encounter this dreadful evil?” said Elizabeth, unconsciously adopting the dialect of her parent in the warmth of her sympathy. “Upon thee must have fallen the responsibility, if not the suffering.”

“It did, Elizabeth,” returned the Judge, pausing for a single moment, as if musing on his former feelings. “ I had hundreds at that dreadful time daily looking up to me for bread. The sufferings of their families and the gloomy prospect before them had paralyzed the enterprise and efforts of my settlers; hunger drove them to the woods for food, but despair sent them at night, enfeebled and wan, to a sleepless pillow. It was not a moment for in action. I purchased cargoes of wheat from the granaries of Pennsylvania; they were landed at Albany and brought up the Mohawk in boats; from thence it was transported on pack-horses into the wilderness and distributed among my people. Seines were made, and the lakes and rivers were dragged for fish. Something like a miracle was wrought in our favor, for enormous shoals of herrings were discovered to have wandered five hundred miles through the windings of the impetuous Susquehanna, and the lake was alive with their numbers. These were at length caught and dealt out to the people, with proper portions of salt, and from that moment we again began to prosper.”

“Yes,” cried Richard, “and I was the man who served out the fish and salt. When the poor devils came to receive their rations, Benjamin, who was my deputy, was obliged to keep them off by stretching ropes around me, for they smelt so of garlic, from eating nothing but the wild onion, that the fumes put me out often in my measurement. You were a child then, Bess, and knew nothing of the matter, for great care was observed to keep both you and your mother from suffering. That year put me back dreadfully, both in the breed of my hogs and of my turkeys.”

“No, Bess,” cried the Judge, in a more cheerful tone, disregarding the interruption of his cousin, “he who hears of the settlement of a country knows but little of the toil and suffering by which it is accomplished. Unimproved and wild as this district now seems to your eyes, what was it when I first entered the hills? I left my party, the morning of my arrival, near the farms of the Cherry Valley, and, following a deer-path, rode to the summit of the mountain that I have since called Mount Vision; for the sight that there met my eyes seemed to me as the deceptions of a dream. The fire had run over the pinnacle, and in a great measure laid open the view. The leaves were fallen, and I mounted a tree and sat for an hour looking on the silent wilderness. Not an opening was to be seen in the boundless forest except where the lake lay, like a mirror of glass. The water was covered by myriads of the wild-fowl that migrate with the changes in the season; and while in my situation on the branch of the beech, I saw a bear, with her cubs, descend to the shore to drink. I had met many deer, gliding through the woods, in my journey ; but not the vestige of a man could I trace during my progress, nor from my elevated observatory. No clearing, no hut, none of the winding roads that are now to be seen, were there; nothing but mountains rising behind mountains ; and the valley, with its surface of branches enlivened here and there with the faded foliage of some tree that parted from its leaves with more than ordinary reluctance. Even the Susquehanna was then hid by the height and density of the forest.”

“And were you alone?” asked Elizabeth: “passed you the night in that solitary state?”

“Not so, my child,” returned the father. “After musing on the scene for an hour, with a mingled feeling of pleasure and desolation, I left my perch and descended the mountain. My horse was left to browse on the twigs that grew within his reach, while I explored the shores of the lake and the spot where Templeton stands. A pine of more than ordinary growth stood where my dwelling is now placed! A wind— row had been opened through the trees from thence to the lake, and my view was but little impeded. Under the branches of that tree I made my solitary dinner. I had just finished my repast as I saw smoke curling from under the mountain, near the eastern bank of the lake. It was the only indication of the vicinity of man that I had then seen. After much toil I made my way to the spot, and found a rough cabin of logs, built against the foot of a rock, and bearing the marks of a tenant, though I found no one within it —”

“It was the hut of Leather-Stocking,” said Edwards quickly.

“It was; though I at first supposed it to be a habitation of the Indians. But while I was lingering around the spot Natty made his appearance, staggering under the carcass of a buck that he bad slain. Our acquaintance commenced at that time; before, I had never heard that such a being tenanted the woods. He launched his bark canoe and set me across the foot of the lake to the place where I had fastened my horse, and pointed out a spot where he might get a scanty browsing until the morning; when I returned and passed the night in the cabin of the hunter.”

Miss Temple was so much struck by the deep attention of young Edwards during this speech that she forgot to resume her interrogations; but the youth himself continued the discourse by asking:

“And how did the Leather-Stocking discharge the duties of a host sir?”

“Why, simply but kindly, until late in the evening, when he discovered my name and object, and the cordiality of his manner very sensibly diminished, or, I might better say, disappeared. He considered the introduction of the settlers as an innovation on his rights, I believe for he expressed much dissatisfaction at the measure, though it was in his confused and ambiguous manner. I hardly understood his objections myself, but supposed they referred chiefly to an interruption of the hunting.”

“Had you then purchased the estate, or were you examining it with an intent to buy?” asked Edwards, a little abruptly.

“It had been mine for several years. It was with a view to People the land that I visited the lake. Natty treated me hospitably, but coldly, I thought, after he learned the nature of my journey. I slept on his own bear—skin, however, and in the morning joined my surveyors again.”

“Said he nothing of the Indian rights, sir? The Leather-Stocking is much given to impeach the justice of the tenure by which the whites hold the country.”

“I remember that he spoke of them, but I did not nearly comprehend him, and may have forgotten what he said; for the Indian title was extinguished so far back as the close of the old war, and if it had not been at all, I hold under the patents of the Royal Governors, confirmed by an act of our own State Legislature, and no court in the country can affect my title.” “Doubtless, sir, your title is both legal and equitable,” returned the youth coldly, reining his horse back and remaining silent till the subject was changed.

It was seldom Mr. Jones suffered any conversation to continue for a great length of time without his participation. It seems that he was of the party that Judge Temple had designated as his surveyors; and he embraced the opportunity of the pause that succeeded the retreat of young Edwards to take up the discourse, and with a narration of their further proceedings, after his own manner. As it wanted, however, the interest that had accompanied the description of the Judge, we must decline the task of committing his sentences to paper.

They soon reached the point where the promised view was to be seen. It was one of those picturesque and peculiar scenes that belong to the Otsego, but which required the absence of the ice and the softness of a summer’s landscape to be enjoyed in all its beauty. Marmaduke had early forewarned his daughter of the season, and of its effect on the prospect; and after casting a cursory glance at its capabilities, the party returned homeward, perfectly satisfied that its beauties would repay them for the toil of a second ride at a more propitious season.

“The spring is the gloomy time of the American year,” said the Judge, “and it is more peculiarly the case in these mountains. The winter seems to retreat to the fast nesses of the hills, as to the citadel of its dominion, and is only expelled after a tedious siege, in which either party, at times, would seem to be gaining the victory.”

“A very just and apposite figure, Judge Temple,” observed the sheriff; “and the garrison under the command of Jack Frost make formidable sorties—you understand what I mean by sorties, monsieur; sallies, in English—and sometimes drive General Spring and his troops back again into the low countries.”

“Yes sair,” returned the Frenchman, whose prominent eyes were watching the precarious footsteps of the beast he rode, as it picked its dangerous way among the roots of trees, holes, log bridges, and sloughs that formed the aggregate of the highway. “Je vous entends; de low countrie is freeze up for half de year.”

The error of Mr. Le Quoi was not noticed by the sheriff; and the rest of the party were yielding to the influence of the changeful season, which was already teaching the equestrians that a continuance of its mildness was not to be expected for any length of time. Silence and thoughtfulness succeeded the gayety and conversation that had prevailed during the commencement of the

ride, as clouds began to gather about the heavens, apparently collecting from every quarter, in quick motion, without the agency of a breath of air,

While riding over one of the cleared eminencies that occurred in their route, the watchful eye of Judge Temple pointed out to his daughter the approach of a tempest. Flurries of snow already obscured the mountain that formed the northern boundary of the lake, and the genial sensation which had quickened the blood through their veins was already succeeded by the deadening influence of an approaching northwester.

All of the party were now busily engaged in making the best of their way to the village, though the badness of the roads frequently compelled them to check the impatience of their animals, which often carried them over places that would not admit of any gait faster than a walk.

Richard continued in advance, followed by Mr. Le Quoi; next to whom rode Elizabeth, who seemed to have imbibed the distance which pervaded the manner of young Edwards since the termination of the discourse between the latter and her father. Marmaduke followed his daughter, giving her frequent and tender warnings as to the management of her horse. It was, possibly, the evident dependence that Louisa Grant placed on his assistance which induced the youth to continue by her side, as they pursued their way through a dreary and dark wood, where the rays of the sun could but rarely penetrate, and where even the daylight was obscured and rendered gloomy by the deep forests that surrounded them. No wind had yet reached the spot where the equestrians were in motion, but that dead silence that often precedes a storm contributed to render their situation more irksome than if they were already subject to the fury of the tempest. Suddenly the voice of young Edwards was heard shouting in those appalling tones that carry alarm to the very soul, and which curdle the blood of those that hear them.

“A tree! a tree! Whip—spur for your lives! a tree! a tree. “

“A tree! a tree!” echoed Richard, giving his horse a blow that caused the alarmed beast to jump nearly a rod, throwing the mud and water into the air like a hurricane.

“Von tree! von tree!” shouted the Frenchman, bending his body on the neck of his charger, shutting his eyes, and playing on the ribs of his beast with his heels at a rate that caused him to be conveyed on the crupper of the sheriff with a marvellous speed.

Elizabeth checked her filly and looked up, with an unconscious but alarmed air, at the very cause of their danger, while she listened to the crackling sounds that awoke the stillness of the forest; but the next instant her bridlet was seized by her father, who cried, “God protect my child!” and she felt herself hurried onward, impelled by the vigor of his nervous arm.

Each one of the party bowed to his saddle-bows as the tearing of branches was succeeded by a sound like the rushing of the winds, which was followed by a thundering report, and a shock that caused the very earth to tremble as one of the noblest ruins of the forest fell directly across their path.

One glance was enough to assure Judge Temple that his daughter and those in front of him were safe, and he turned his eyes, in dreadful anxiety, to learn the fate of the others. Young Edwards was on the opposite side of the tree, his form thrown back in his saddle to its utmost distance, his left hand drawing up his bridle with its greatest force, while the right grasped that of Miss Grant so as to draw the head of her horse under its body. Both the animals stood shaking in every joint with terror, and snorting fearfully. Louisa herself had relinquished her reins, and, with her hands pressed on her face, sat bending forward in her saddle, in an attitude of despair, mingled strangely with resignation.

“Are you safe?” cried the Judge, first breaking the awful silence of the moment.

“By God’s blessing,” returned the youth; but if there had been branches to the tree we must have been lost—”

He was interrupted by the figure of Louisa slowly yielding in her saddle, and but for his arm she would have sunk to the earth. Terror, however, was the only injury that the clergyman’s daughter had sustained, and, with the aid of Elizabeth, she was soon restored to her senses. After some little time was lost in recovering her strength, the young lady was replaced in her saddle, and supported on either side by Judge Temple and Mr. Edwards she was enabled to follow the party in their slow progress.

“The sudden fallings of the trees,” said Marmaduke, “are the most dangerous accidents in the forest, for they are not to be foreseen, being impelled by no winds, nor any extraneous or visible cause against which we can guard.”

“The reason of their falling, Judge Temple, is very obvious,” said the sheriff. “The tree is old and decayed, and it is gradually weakened by the frosts, until a line drawn from the centre of gravity falls without its base, and then the tree comes of a certainty; and I should like to know what greater compulsion there can be for any thing than a mathematical certainty. I studied math—”

“Very true, Richard,” interrupted Marmaduke; “thy reasoning is true, and, if my memory be not over-treacherous, was furnished by myself on a former occasion, But how is one to guard against the danger? Canst thou go through the forests measuring the bases and calculating the centres of the oaks? Answer me that, friend Jones, and I will say thou wilt do the country a service.”

“Answer thee that, friend Temple!” returned Richard; “a well-educated man can answer thee anything, sir. Do any trees fall in this manner but such as are decayed? Take care not to approach the roots of a rotten tree, and you will be safe enough.”

“That would be excluding us entirely from the forests,’ said Marmaduke. “But, happily, the winds usually force down most of these dangerous ruins, as their currents are admitted into the woods by the surrounding clearings, and such a fall as this has been is very rare.”

Louisa by this time had recovered so much strength as to allow the party to proceed at a quicker pace, but long before they were safely housed they were overtaken by the storm; and when they dismounted at the door of the mansion-house, the black plumes of Miss Temple’s hat were drooping with the weight of a load of damp snow, and the coats of the gentlemen were powdered with the same material.

While Edwards was assisting Louisa from her horse, the warm-hearted girl caught his hand with fervor and whispered:

“Now, Mr. Edwards, both father and daughter owe their lives to you.”

A driving northwesterly storm succeeded, and before the sun was set every vestige of spring had vanished; the lake, the mountains, the village, and the fields being again hidden under one dazzling coat of snow.

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# 7.3.2: Reading and Review Questions

1. How do people's relationship with the land depend upon their relationship with each other in a commonwealth or democracy? Why?
2. How does progress/advancement of civilization mitigate against the abundance of the land that supports the growing population? How does the law of civilization assist or hinder American 'rights'?
3. How, if at all, does Natty Bumpo seem a uniquely American character? Consider the way he dresses, talks, and acts. Consider his attitude towards the Judge.
4. How does Judge Templeton represent the values of civilization? Why? What dangers are there in settling the land under Templeton's jurisdiction?
5. What is Natty Bumbo's attitude towards Native American rights? And the Judge's? How do you know?

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# 7.4: The Peyote Cult (Plains)

## *The Peyote Cult*, by Paul Radin, [1925]

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Owing to the great importance of one of the modem cults found among the Winnebago, the so-called Mescal or Peyote, it will be discussed here in some detail. Not only is this cult of great prominence in the life of the modem Winnebago, but as its inception and progress can be followed out in considerable detail it is of great significance for the study of their religion.

The ceremony is generally held in a building called by the Peyote worshipers a church, although it frequently takes place in the open also. In the early days of its organization as many meetings as possible were held. In 1910 there was a tendency to restrict the number and to have them generally take place on Saturday night. In 1913, after the first enthusiasm of the new converts had died out, the author was informed that the meetings were rarely held more than once a week. Around Christmas and beginning with July a series of meetings was held, lasting from a week to 10 days, as a rule. The Christmas meetings were not prominent in 1910, but the July ones seem to have been held from the beginning. They represent, of course, merely a substitution for the older pagan ceremonies and games that were held about that time.

In the early days the ceremony was opened by a prayer from the founder, and this was followed by an introductory speech. Thereupon the leader sang a Peyote song, to the accompaniment of a drum. Then another speech was delivered, and when it was finished the drum and other regalia were passed to the man to the right. This man, in turn, delivered a speech and sang a song, and when he was finished, passed the regalia to the third man, who subsequently passed it to the fourth one. The fourth man, when he was finished, returned it to the leader. In this way the regalia passed from one person to another throughout the night. It not infrequently happens that one of these four gets tired and gives up his place temporarily to some other member of the cult. At intervals they stopped to eat or drink peyote. At about midnight the peyote, as a rule, begins to affect some people. These generally arise and deliver self-accusatory speeches, and make more or less formal confessions, after which they go around shaking hands with everyone and asking forgiveness.

In 1910 the cult already had a rather definite organization. There was, at every performance, one leader and four principal participants. John Rave the Winnebago who introduced the peyote, was always the leader whenever he was present. On other occasions leadership devolved upon some older member. The four other principal participants changed from meeting to meeting, although there was a tendency to ask certain individuals whenever it was possible. The ritualistic unit, in short, is a very definite one, consisting of a number of speeches and songs and in the passing of the regalia from one to the other of the four participants.

During the early hours of the evening, before the peyote has begun to have any appreciable effect, a number of apparently intrusive features are found. These, for the most part, consist of speeches by people in the audience and the reading and explanation of parts of the Bible. After the peyote has begun to have an appreciable effect, however, the ceremony consists exclusively of a repetition of the ritualistic unit and confessions.

There is an initiation consisting of a baptism, always performed by John Rave. It is of a very simple nature. Rave dips his fingers in a peyote infusion and then passes them over the forehead of the new member, muttering at the same time the following prayer:

“God, his holiness.”This is what the Winnebago words mean, although some of the younger members who have been strongly permeated with Christian teachings translate the prayer into, “God, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

Whenever the ceremony is performed in the open a fireplace in the shape of a horseshoe is made. At one end of this fireplace is placed a very small mound of earth, called by Rave “Mount Sinai,” and in front of this a cross is traced in the earth. Upon the small earth mound are placed the two “chief” peyote, the Bible and the staff. The latter, called by Rave the shepherd’s crook, is always covered with beadwork, and generally has a number of evenly cut tufts of deer hair on the end and at intervals along its length. The sacred peyote, known as *huŋka* (i.e., “chief”) are exceptionally large and beautiful specimens. They are regarded by a number of people, certainly by Rave, with undisguised veneration.

In addition to the above, there is found a large eagle feather fan, a small drum, arid a peculiar small type of rattle. To my knowledge, this type was unknown among the Winnebago before its introduction by the peyote eaters.

# JOHN RAVE'S ACCOUNT OF THE PEYOTE CULT AND OF HIS CONVERSION

During 1893-94 I was in Oklahoma with peyote eaters.

In the middle of the night we were to eat peyote. We ate it and I also did. It was the middle of the night when I got frightened, for a live thing seemed to have entered me. "Why did I do it?" I thought to myself. I should not have done it, for right at the beginning I have harmed myself. Indeed, I should not have done it. I am sure it will injure me. The best thing will be for me to vomit it up. Well, now, I will try it. After a few attempts I gave up. I thought to myself, "Well, now you have done it. You have been going around trying everything and now you have done something that has harmed you. What is it? It seems to be alive and moving around in my stomach. If only some of my own people were here! That would have been better. Now no one will know what has happened to me. I have killed myself."

Just then the object was about to come out. It seemed almost out and I put out my hand to feel it, but then it went back again. "O, my, I should never have done it from the beginning. Never again will I do it. I am surely going to die."

As we continued it became day and we laughed. Before that I had been unable to laugh.

The following night we were to eat peyote again. I thought to myself, "Last night it almost harmed me." "Well, let us do it again," they said. "All right, I'll do it." So there we ate seven peyote apiece.

Suddenly I saw a big snake. I was very much frightened. Then another one came crawling over me. "My God! where are these coming from?" There at my back there seemed to be something. So I looked around and I saw a snake about to swallow me entirely. It had legs and arms and a long tail. The end of this tail was like a spear. "O, my God! I am surely going to die now," I thought. Then I looked again in another direction and I saw a man with horns and long claws and with a spear in his hand. He jumped for me and I threw myself on the ground. He missed me. Then I looked hack and this time he started back, but it seemed to me that he was directing his spear at me. Again I threw myself on the ground and he missed me. There seemed to be no possible escape for me. Then suddenly it occurred to me, "Perhaps it is this peyote that is doing this thing to me?" "Help me, O medicine, help me! It is you who are doing this and you are holy! It is not these frightful visions that are causing this. I should have known that you were doing it. Help me!" Then my suffering stopped. "As long as the earth shall last, that long will I make use of you, O medicine!"

This had lasted a night and a day. For a whole night I had not slept at all.

Then we breakfasted. Then I said, when we were through, "Let us eat peyote again to-night." That evening I ate eight peyote.

In the middle of the night I saw God. To God living up above, our Father, I prayed. "Have mercy upon me! Give me knowledge that I may not say and do evil things. To you, O God, I am trying to pray. Do thou, O Son of God, help me, too. This religion, let me know. Help me, O medicine, grandfather, help me! Let me know this religion!" Thus I spoke and sat very quiet. And then I beheld the morning star and it was good to look upon. The light was good to look upon. I had been frightened during the night but now I was happy. Now as the light appeared, it seemed to me that nothing would be invisible to me. I seemed to see everything clearly. Then I thought of my home and as I looked around, there I saw the house in which I lived far away among the Winnebago, quite close to me. There at the window I saw my children playing. Then I saw a man going to my house carrying a. jug of whisky. Then he gave them something to drink and the one that had brought the whisky got drunk and bothered my people. Finally he ran away. "So, that is what they are doing," I thought to myself. Then I beheld my wife come and stand outside of the door, wearing a red blanket. She was thinking of going to the flagpole and was wondering which road she should take. "If I take this road I am likely to meet some people, but if I take the other road, I am not likely to meet anyone."

Indeed, it is good. They are all well—my brother, my sister, my father, my mother. I felt very good indeed. O medicine, grandfather, most assuredly you are holy! All that is connected with you, that I would like to know and that I would like to understand. Help me! I give myself up to you entirely!

For three days and three nights I had been eating medicine, and for three days and three nights I had not slept. Throughout all the years that I had lived on earth, I now realized that I had never known anything holy. Now, for the first time, I knew it. Would that some of the Winnebagoes might also know it!

Many years ago I had been sick and it looked as if this illness were going to kill me. I tried all the Indian doctors and then I tried all of the white man's medicines, but they were of no avail. "I am doomed. I wonder whether I will be alive next year." Such were the thoughts that came to me. As soon as I ate the peyote, however, I got over my sickness. After that I was not sick again. My wife had suffered from the same disease, and I told her that if she ate this medicine it would surely cure her. But she was afraid,

although she had never seen it before. She knew that I used it, but nevertheless she was afraid of it. Her sickness was getting worse and worse and one day I said to her, “You are sick. It is going to be very difficult, but try this medicine anyhow. It will ease you.” Finally she ate it. I had told her to eat it and then to wash herself and comb her hair and she would get well, and now she is well. Then I painted her face and took my gourd and began singing very much. Then I stopped. “Indeed, you are right,”she said, “for now I am well.” From that day on to the present time she has been well. Now she is very happy.

Black Water-spirit at about that time was having a hemorrhage and I wanted him to eat the peyote. “Well, I am not going to live anyhow,” he said. “Well, eat this medicine soon then and you will get cured.” Consumptives never were cured before this and now for the first time one was cured. Black Water-spirit is living to-day and is very well.

There was a man named Walking-Priest and he was very fond of whisky; he chewed and he smoked and he gambled. He was very fond of women. He did everything that was bad. Then I gave him some of the peyote and he ate it and he gave up all the had things he was doing. He had had a very dangerous disease and had even had murder in his heart. But to-day he is living a good life. That is his desire.

Whoever has any bad thoughts, if he will eat this peyote he will abandon all his bad habits. It is a cure for everything bad.

To-day the Indians say that only God is holy. One of the Winnebagoes has told me, “Really, the life that I led was a very bad one. Never again will I do it. This medicine is good and I will always use it.” John Harrison and Squeaking-Wings were prominent members of the medicine dance; they thought much of themselves as did all the members of the medicine dance. They knew everything connected with this medicine dance. Both of them were gamblers and were rich because they had won very much in gambling. Their parents had acquired great possessions by giving medicines to the people. They were rich and they believed that they had a right to be selfish with their possessions. Then they ate peyote and ever since that time they have been followers of this medicine. They were really very ill and now they have been cured of it. Now if there are any men that might be taken as examples of the peyote, it is these three. Even if a man were blind and only heard about them he would realize that if any medicine were good, it is this medicine. It is a cure for all evil. Before, I had thought that I knew something but I really knew nothing. It is only now that I have real knowledge. In my former life I was like one blind and deaf. My heart ached when I thought of what I had been doing. Never again will I do it. This medicine alone is holy and has made me good and has rid me of all evil. The one whom they call God has given me this. That I know positively. Let them all come here; men and women; let them bring with them all that they desire; let them bring with them their diseases. If they come here they will get well. This is all true; it is all true. Bring whatever desires you possess along with you and then come and eat or drink this medicine. This is life, the only life. Then you will learn Homesomething about yourself, so come. Even if you are not told anything about yourself, nevertheless you will learn something of yourself. Come with your disease, for this medicine will cure it. Whatever you have, come and eat this medicine and you will have true knowledge once and for all. Learn of this medicine yourself through actual experience.

If you just hear about it you are not likely to try it. If you desire real knowledge about it try it yourself, for then you will learn of things that you had never known before. In no other way will you ever be happy. I know that all sorts of excuses will run through your mind for not partaking of it, but if you wish to learn of something good, try this. Perhaps you will think to yourself that it will be too difficult and this will seem an excuse to you for not trying it. But why should you act thus a If you partake of it, even if you feel some uncertainty about its accomplishing all the good that has been said of it, I know that you will say to yourself, “Well, this life is good enough.” After you have taken it for the first time, it will seem as if they are digging a grave for you, that you are about to die; and you will not want to take it again. “It is bad,” you will think to yourself. You will believe that you are going to die and you will want to know what is going to happen to you. The coffin will be set before you and then you will see your body. If you wish to inquire further about where you are going then you will learn something you have not known. Two roads there are, one leading to a hole in the earth and the other extending up above. You will learn something that you had not known before. Of the two roads, one is dark and the other is light. You must choose one of these while you are alive and so must you decide whether you wish to continue in your evil ways or whether you will abandon them. These are the two roads. The Peyote people see them. They claim that only if you weep and repent will you be able to obtain knowledge. Do not, as I said before, listen to others talking about it, but try the medicine yourself. That is the only way to find out. No other medicine can accomplish what this has done. If, therefore, you make use of it, you will live. After they have eaten peyote people throw aside all the (evil) ceremonies that they were accustomed to perform before. Only by eating the peyote will you learn what is truly holy. That is what I am trying to learn myself.

It is now 23 years since I first ate peyote, and I am still doing it (1912). Before that my heart was filled with murderous thoughts. I wanted to kill my brother and my sister. It seemed to me that my heart would not feel good until I killed one of them. All my thoughts were fixed on the warpath. This is all I thought of. Now I know that it was because the evil spirit possessed me that I felt that way. I was suffering from a disease. I even desired to kill myself;

I did not care to live. That feeling, too, was caused by this evil spirit living within me. Then I ate this medicine and everything changed. The brother and sister I wanted to kill before I became attached to and I wanted them to live. The medicine had

accomplished this.

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# 7.5: Of the Girl who Married Mount Katahdin (Penobscot)

## *The Algonquin Legends of New England*, by Charles G. Leland, [1884]

## Of the Girl who married Mount Katahdin, and how all the Indians brought about their own Rain.

Of the old time. There was once an Indian girl gathering blueberries on Mount Katahdin. And, being lonely, she said, “I would that I had a husband!” And seeing the great mountain in all its glory rising on high, with the red sunlight on the top, she added, “I wish Katahdin were a man, and would marry me!”

All this she was heard to say ere she went onward and up the mountain, but for three years she was never seen again. Then she reappeared, bearing a babe, a beautiful child, but his little eyebrows were of stone. For the Spirit of the Mountain had taken her to himself; and when she greatly desired to return to her own people, he told her to go in peace, but forbade her to tell any man who had married her.

Now the boy had strange gifts, and the wise men said that he was born to become a mighty magician. For when he did but point his finger at a moose, or anything which ran, it would drop dead; and when in a canoe, if he pointed at the flocks of wild ducks or swans, then the water was at once covered with the floating game, and they gathered them in as they listed, and through that boy his mother and every one had food and to spare.

Now this was the truth, and it was a great wonder, that Katahdin had wedded this girl, thinking with himself and his wife to bring up a child who should build up his nation, and make of the Wabanaki a mighty race. And he said, “Declare unto these people that they are not to inquire of thee who is the father of thy child; truly they will all know it by seeing him, for they shall not grieve thee with impertinence.” Now the woman had made it known that she would not be questioned, and she gave them all what they needed; yet, for all this, they could not refrain nor restrain themselves from talking to her on what they well knew she would fain be silent. And one day when they had angered her, she thought, “Truly Katahdin was right; these people are in nowise worthy of my son, neither shall he serve them; he shall not lead them to victory; they are not of those who make a great nation.” And being still further teased and tormented, she spake and said, “Ye fools, who by your own folly will kill yourselves; ye mud-wasps, who sting the fingers which would pick ye out of the water, why will ye ever trouble me to tell you what you well know? Can you not see who was the father of my boy? Behold his eyebrows; do ye not know Katahdin by them? But it shall be to your exceeding great sorrow that ever ye inquired. From this day ye may feed yourselves and find your own venison, for this child shall do so no more for you.”

And she arose and went her way into the woods and up the mountain, and was seen on earth no more. And since that day the Indians, who should have been great, have become a little people. Truly it would have been wise and well for those of early times if they could have held their tongues.

This remarkable legend was related to me by Mrs. Marie Sakis, a Penobscot, a very clever story-teller. It gives the Fall of Man from a purely Indian standpoint. Nothing is so contemptible in Indian eyes as a want of dignity and idle, loquacious teasing; therefore it is made in the myth the sin which destroyed their race. The tendency of the lower class of Americans, especially in New England, to raise and emphasize the voice, to speak continually in italics and small and large capitals, with a wide display, and the constant disposition to chaff and tease, have contributed more than any other cause to destroy confidence and respect for them among the Indians.

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# 7.6: How Glooskap went to England and France (Passamaquoddy)

## *The Algonquin Legends of New England*, by Charles G. Leland, [1884]

## How Glooskap went to England and France, and was the first to make America known to the Europeans.

There was an Indian woman: she was a Woodchuck (Mon-in-kwess, R). She had lost a boy; she always thought of him. Once there came to her a strange boy; he called her mother.

He had a pipe with which he could call all the animals. He said, “Mother, if you let any one have this pipe we shall starve.”

“Where did you get it?”

“A stranger gave it to me.””

One day the boy was making a canoe. The woman took the pipe and blew it. There came a deer and a *qwah-beet*,–a beaver. They came running; the deer came first, the beaver next. The beaver had a stick in his mouth; he gave it to her, and said, “Whenever you wish to kill anything, though it were half a mile off, point this stick at it.” She pointed it at the deer; it fell dead.

The boy was Glooskap. He was building a stone canoe. Every morning he went forth, and was gone all day. He worked a year at it. The mother had killed many animals. When the great canoe was finished he took his (adopted) mother to see it. He said that he would make sails for it. She asked him, “Of what will you make them?” He answered, “Of leaves.” She replied, “Let the leaves alone. I have something better.” She had many buffalo skins alreadyHometanned, and said, “Take as many as you need.”

He took his pipe. He piped for moose; he piped for elk and for bear: they came. He pointed his stick at them: they were slain. He dried their meat, and so provisioned his great canoe. To carry water he killed many seals; he filled their bladders with water.

So they sailed across the sea. This was before the white people had ever heard of America. The white men did not discover this country first at all. Glooskap discovered England, and told them about it. He got to London. The people had never seen a canoe before. They came flocking down to look at it.

The Woodchuck had lost her boy. This boy it was who first discovered America (England?). This boy could walk on the water and fly up to the sky. Home1 He took his mother to England. They offered him a large ship for his stone canoe. He refused it. He feared lest the ship should burn. They offered him servants. He refused them. They gave him presents which almost overloaded the canoe. They gave him an anchor and an English flag.

He and his mother went to France. The French people fired cannon at him till the afternoon. They could not hurt the stone canoe. In the night Glooskap drew all their men-of-war ashore. Next morning the French saw this. They said, “Who did this?

He answered, “I did it.”

They took him prisoner. They put him into a great cannon and fired it off. They looked into the cannon, and there he sat smoking his stone pipe, knocking the ashes out.

The king heard how they had treated him. He said. it was wrong. He who could do such deeds must be a great man. He sent for Glooskap, who replied, “I do not want to see your king. I came to this country to have my mother baptized as a Catholic.” They sent boats, they sent a coach; he was taken to the king, who put many questions to him.

He wished to have his mother christened. It was done. They called her Molly. Home1 Therefore to this day all woodchucks are called Molly. They went down to the shore; to please the king Glooskap drew all the ships into the sea again. So the king gave him what he wanted, and he returned home. Since that time white men have come to America.

This is an old Eskimo tale, greatly modernized and altered. The Eskimo believe in a kind of sorcerers or spirits, who have instruments which they merely point at people or animals, to kill them. I think that the Indian who told me this story (P.) was aware of its feebleness, and was ashamed to attribute such nonsense to Glooskap, and therefore made the hero an Indian named Woodchuck. But among Mr. Rand's Micmac tales it figures as a later tribute to the memory of the great hero.

One version of this story was given to me by Tomah Josephs, another by Mrs. W. Wallace Brown. In the latter Glooskap's canoe is a great ship, with all kinds of birds for sailors. In the Shawnee legend of the Celestial Sisters (Hiawatha Legends), a youth who goes to the sky must take with him one of every kind of bird. This indicates that the Glooskap voyage meant a trip to heaven.

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# 7.7: The Origin of Disease and Medicine

## The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees.

### By JAMES MOONEY.

### [1891]

## THE ORIGIN OF DISEASE AND MEDICINE.

In the old days quadrupeds, birds, fishes, and insects could all talk, and they and the human race lived together in peace and friendship. But as time went on the people increased so rapidly that their settlements spread over the whole earth and the poor animals found themselves beginning to be cramped for room. This was bad enough, but to add to their misfortunes man invented bows, knives, blowguns, spears, and hooks, and began to slaughter the larger animals, birds and fishes for the sake of their flesh or their skins, while the smaller creatures, such as the frogs and worms, were crushed and trodden upon without mercy, out of pure carelessness or contempt. In. this state of affairs the animals resolved to consult upon measures for their common safety.

The bears were the first to meet in council in their townhouse in Kuwa'hï, the "Mulberry Place,"[1] and the old White Bear chief presided.

After each in turn had made complaint against the way in which man killed their friends, devoured their flesh and used their skins for his own adornment, it was unanimously decided to begin war at once against the human race. Some one asked what weapons man used to accomplish their destruction. "Bows and arrows, of course," cried all the bears in chorus. "And what are they made of?" was the next question. "The bow of wood and the string of our own entrails," replied one of the bears. It was then proposed that they make a bow and some arrows and see if they could not turn man's weapons against himself. So one bear got a nice piece of locust wood and another sacrificed himself for the good of the rest in order to furnish a piece of his entrails for the string. But when everything was ready and the first bear stepped up to make the trial it was found that in letting the arrow fly after drawing back the bow, his long claws caught the string and spoiled the shot. This was annoying, but another suggested that he could overcome the difficulty by cutting his claws, which was accordingly done, and on a second trial it was found that the arrow went straight to the mark. But here the chief, the old White Bear, interposed and said that it was necessary that they should have long claws in order to be able to climb trees. "One of us has already died to furnish the bowstring, and if we now cut off our claws we shall all have to starve together. It is better to trust to the teeth and claws which nature has given us, for it is evident that man's weapons were not intended for us."

No one could suggest any better plan, so the old chief dismissed the council and the bears dispersed to their forest haunts without having concerted any means for preventing the increase of the human race. Had the result of the council been otherwise, we should now be at war with the bears, but as it is the hunter does not even ask the bear's pardon when he kills one.

The deer next held a council under their chief, the Little Deer, and after some deliberation resolved to inflict rheumatism upon every hunter who should kill one of their number, unless he took care to ask their pardon for the offense. They sent notice of their decision to the nearest settlement of Indians and told them at the same time how to make propitiation when necessity forced them to kill one of the deer tribe. Now, whenever the hunter brings down a deer, the Little Deer, who is swift as the wind and can not be wounded, runs quickly up to the spot and bending over the blood stains asks the spirit of the deer if it has heard the prayer of the hunter for pardon. If the reply be "Yes" all is well and the Little Deer goes on his way, but if the reply be in the negative he follows on the trail of the hunter, guided by the drops of blood on the ground, until he arrives at the cabin in the settlement, when the Little Deer enters invisibly and strikes the neglectful hunter with rheumatism, so that he, is rendered on the instant a helpless cripple. No hunter who has regard for his health ever fails to ask pardon of the deer for killing it, although some who have not learned the proper formula may attempt to turn aside the Little Deer from his pursuit by building a fire behind them in the trail.

Next came the fishes and reptiles, who had their own grievances against humanity. They held a joint council and determined to make their victims dream of snakes twining about them in slimy folds and blowing their fetid breath in their faces, or to make them dream of eating raw or decaying fish, so that they would lose appetite, sicken, and die. Thus it is that snake and fish dreams are accounted for.

Finally the birds, insects, and smaller animals came together for a like purpose, and the Grubworm presided over the deliberations. It was decided that each in turn should express an opinion and then vote on the question as to whether or not man should be deemed guilty. Seven votes were to be sufficient to condemn him. One after another denounced man's cruelty and injustice toward the other animals and voted in favor of his death. The Frog (walâ'sï) spoke first and said: "We must do something to check the increase of the race or people will become so numerous that we shall be crowded from off the earth. See how man has kicked me about because I'm ugly, as he says, until my back is covered with sores;" and here he showed the spots on his skin. Next came the Bird (tsi'skwa; no particular species is indicated), who condemned man because "he burns my feet off," alluding to the way in which the hunter barbecues birds by impaling them on a stick set over the fire, so that their feathers and tender feet are singed and burned. Others followed in the same strain. The Ground Squirrel alone ventured to say a word in behalf of man, who seldom hurt him because he was so small; but this so enraged the others that they fell upon the Ground Squirrel and tore him with their teeth and claws, and the stripes remain on his back to this day.

The assembly then began to devise and name various diseases, one after another, and had not their invention finally failed them not one of the human race would have been able to survive. The Grubworm in his place of honor hailed each new malady with delight, until at last they had reached the end of the list, when some one suggested that it be arranged so that menstruation should sometimes prove fatal to woman. On this he rose up in his place and cried: "Wata'$^{n}$! Thanks! I'm glad some of them will die, for they are getting so thick that they tread on me." He fairly shook with joy at the thought, so that he fell over backward and could not get on his feet again, but had to wriggle off on his back, as the Grubworm has done ever since.

When the plants, who were friendly to man, heard what had been done by the animals, they determined to defeat their evil designs. Each tree, shrub, and herb, down even to the grasses and mosses, agreed to furnish a remedy for some one of the diseases named, and each said: "I shall appear to help man when he calls upon me in his need." Thus did medicine originate, and the plants, every one of which has its use if we only knew it, furnish the antidote to counteract the evil wrought by the revengeful animals. When the doctor is in doubt what treatment to apply for the relief of a patient, the spirit of the plant suggests to him the proper remedy.

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# 7.8: Viracocha and The Coming of the Incas

## from “History of the Incas” by Pedro Sarmiento De Gamboa, translated by Clements Markham, Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society 1907, pp. 28-58.

THE NATIVES OF THIS LAND affirm that in the beginning, and before this world was created, there was a being called Viracocha. He created a dark world without sun, moon or stars. Owing to this creation he was named Viracocha Pachayachachi, which means “Creator of all things.” And when he had created the world he formed a race of giants of disproportioned greatness painted and sculptured, to see whether it would be well to make real men of that size. He then created men in his likeness as they are now; and they lived in darkness.

Viracocha ordered these people that they should live without quarrelling, and that they should know and serve him. He gave them a certain precept which they were to observe on pain of being confounded if they should break it. They kept this precept for some time, but it is not mentioned what it was. But as there arose among them the vices of pride and covetousness, they transgressed the precept of Viracocha Pachayachachi and falling, through this sin, under his indignation, he confounded and cursed them. Then some were turned into stones, others into other things, some were swallowed up by the earth, others by the sea, and over all there came a general flood which they call *uñu pachacuti*, which means “water that overturns the land.” They say that it rained 60 days and nights, that it drowned all created things, and that there alone remained some vestiges of those who were turned into stones, as a memorial of the event, and as an example to posterity, in the edifices of Pucara, which are 60 leagues from Cuzco.

Some of the nations, besides the Cuzcos, also say that a few were saved from this flood to leave descendants for a future age. Each nation has its special fable which is told by its people, of how their first ancestors were saved from the waters of the deluge. That the ideas they had in their blindness may be understood, I will insert only one, told by the nation of the Cañaris, a land of Quito and Tumibamba, 400 leagues from Cuzco and more.

They say that in the time of the deluge called *uñu pachacuti* there was a mountain named Guasano in the province of Quito and near a town called Tumipampa. The natives still point it out. Up this mountain went two of the Cañaris named Ataorupagui and Cusicayo. As the waters increased the mountain kept rising and keeping above them in such a way that it was never covered by the waters of the flood. In this way the two Cañaris escaped. These two, who were brothers, when the waters abated after the flood, began to sow. One day when they had been at work, on returning to their but, they found in it some small loaves of bread, and a jar of chicha, which is the beverage used in this country in place of wine, made of boiled maize. They did not know who had brought it, but they gave thanks to the Creator, eating and drinking of that provision. Next day the same thing happened. As they marvelled at this mystery, they were anxious to find out who brought the meals. So one day they hid themselves, to spy out the bringers of their food. While they were watching they saw two Cañari women preparing the victuals and putting them in the accustomed place. When about to depart the men tried to seize them, but they evaded their would-be captors and escaped. The Cañaris, seeing the mistake they had made in molesting those who had done them so much good, became sad and prayed to Viracocha for pardon for their sins, entreating him to let the women come back and give them the accustomed meals. The Creator granted their petition. The women came back and said to the Cañaris–“The Creator has thought it well that we should return to you, lest you should die of hunger.” They brought them food. Then there was friendship between the women and the Cañari brothers, and one of the Cañari brothers had connexion with one of the women. Then, as the elder brother was drowned in a lake which was near, the survivor married one of the women, and had the other as a concubine. By them he had ten sons who formed two lineages of five each, and increasing in numbers they called one Hanansaya which is the same as to say the upper party, and the other Hurinsaya, or the lower party. From these all the Cañaris that now exist are descended.

In the same way the other nations have fables of how some of their people were saved, from whom they trace their origin and descent. But the Incas and most of those of Cuzco, those among them who are believed to know most, do not say that anyone escaped from the flood, but that Viracocha began to create men afresh, as will be related further on. One thing is believed among all the nations of these parts, for they all speak generally and as well known of the general flood which they call uñu pachacuti. From this we may clearly understand that if, in these parts they have a tradition of the great flood, this great mass of the floating islands which they afterwards called the Atlanticas, and now the Indies of Castille, or America, must have begun to receive a population immediately after the flood, although, by their account, the details are different from those which the true Scriptures teach us. This must have been done by divine Providence, through the first people coming over the land of the Atlantic Island, which was joined to this, as has been already said. For as the natives, though barbarous, give reasons for their very ancient settlement, by recording the flood, there is no necessity for setting aside the Scriptures by quoting authorities to establish this origin. We now come to those who relate the events of the second age after the flood, which is the subject of the next chapter.

# FABLE OF THE SECOND AGE, AND CREATION OF THE BARBAROUS INDIANS ACCORDING TO THEIR ACCOUNT

IT IS RELATED that everything was destroyed in the flood called *uñu pachacuti*. It must now be known that Viracocha Pachayachachi, when he destroyed that land as has been already recounted, preserved three men, one of them named Taguapaca, that they might serve and help him in the creation of new people who had to be made in the second age after the deluge, which was done in this manner. The flood being passed and the land dry, Viracocha determined to people it a second time, and, to make it more perfect, he decided upon creating luminaries to give it light. With this object he went, with his servants, to a great lake in the Collao, in which there is an island called Titicaca, the meaning being “the rock of lead,” of which we shall treat in the first part. Viracocha went to this island, and presently ordered that the sun, moon, and stars should come forth, and be set in the heavens to give light to the world, and it was so. They say that the moon was created brighter than the sun, which made the sun jealous at the time when they rose into the sky. So the sun threw over the moon’s face a handful of ashes, which gave it the shaded colour it now presents. This frontier lake of Chucuito, in the territory of the Collao, is 57 leagues to the south of Cuzco. Viracocha gave various orders to his servants, but Taguapaca disobeyed the commands of Viracocha. So Viracocha was enraged against Taguapaca, and ordered the other two servants to take him, tie him hands and feet, and launch him in a balsa on the lake. This was done. Taguapaca was blaspheming against Viracocha for the way he was treated, and threatening that he would return and take vengeance, when he was carried by the water down the drain of the same lake, and was not seen again for a long time. This done, Viracocha made a sacred idol in that place, as a place for worship and as a sign of what he had there created.

Leaving the island, he passed by the lake to the main land, taking with him the two servants who survived. He went to a place now called Tiahuanacu in the province of Collasuyu, and in this place he sculptured and designed on a great piece of stone, all the nations that he intended to create. This done, he ordered his two servants to charge their memories with the names of all tribes that he had depicted, and of the valleys and provinces where they were to come forth, which were those of the whole land. He ordered that each one should go by a different road, naming the tribes, and ordering them all to go forth and people the country. His servants, obeying the command of Viracocha, set out on their journey and work. One went by the mountain range or chain which they call the heights over the plains on the South Sea. The other went by the heights which overlook the wonderful mountain ranges which we call the Andes, situated to the east of the said sea. By these roads they went, saying with a loud voice “Oh you tribes and nations, hear and obey the order of Ticci Viracocha Pachayachachi, which commands you to go forth, and multiply and settle the land.” Viracocha himself did the same along the road between those taken by his two servants, naming all the tribes and places by which he passed. At the sound of his voice every place obeyed, and people came forth, some from lakes, others from fountains, valleys, caves, trees, rocks and hills, spreading over the land and multiplying to form the nations which are to-day in Peru.

Others affirm that this creation of Viracocha was made from the Titicaca site where, having originally formed some shapes of large strong men which seemed to him out of proportion, he made them again of his stature which was, as they say, the average height of men, and being made he gave them life. Thence they set out to people the land. As they spoke one language previous to starting, they built those edifices, the ruins of which may still be seen, before they set out. This was for the residence of Viracocha, their maker. After departing they varied their languages, noting the cries of wild beasts, insomuch that, coming across each other afterwards, those could not understand who had before been relations and neighbours.

Whether it was in one way or the other, all agree that Viracocha was the creator of these people. They have the tradition that he was a man of medium height, white and dressed in a white robe like an alb secured round the waist, and that he carried a staff and a book in his hands.

Besides this they tell of a strange event; how that Viracocha, after he had created all people, went on his road and came to a place where many men of his creation had congregated. This place is now called Cacha. When Viracocha arrived there, the inhabitants were estranged owing to his dress and bearing. They murmured at it and proposed to kill him from a hill that was near. They took their weapons there, and gathered together with evil intentions against Viracocha. He, falling on his knees on some plain ground, with his hands clasped, fire from above came down upon those on the hill, and covered all the place, burning up the earth and stones like straw. Those bad men were terrified at the fearful fire. They came down from the hill, and sought pardon from Viracocha for their sin. Viracocha was moved by compassion. He went to the flames and put them out with his staff. But the hill remained quite parched up, the stones being rendered so light by the burning that a very large stone which could not have been carried on a cart, could be raised easily by one man. This may be seen at this day, and it is a wonderful sight to behold this hill, which is a quarter of a league in extent, all burnt up. It is in the Collao.

After this Viracocha continued his journey and arrived at a place called Urcos, 6 leagues to the south of Cuzco. Remaining there some days he was well served by the natives of that neighborhood. At the time of his departure, he made them a celebrated *huaca* or statue, for them to offer gifts to and worship; to which statue the Incas, in after times, offered many rich gifts of gold and other

metals, and above all a golden bench. When the Spaniards entered Cuzco they found it, and appropriated it to themselves. It was worth $17,000. The Marquis Don Francisco Pizarro took it himself, as the share of the General.

Returning to the subject of the fable, Viracocha continued his journey, working his miracles and instructing his created beings. In this way he reached the territory on the equinoctial line, where are now Puerto Viejo and Manta. Here he was joined by his servants. Intending to leave the land of Peru, he made a speech to those he had created, apprising them of the things that would happen. He told them that people would come, who would say that they were Viracocha their creator, and that they were not to believe them; but that in the time to come he would send his messengers who would protect and teach them. Having said this he went to sea with his two servants, and went travelling over the water as if it was land, without sinking. For they appeared like foam over the water, and the people, therefore, gave them the name of Viracocha which is the same as to say the grease or foam of the sea. At the end of some years after Viracocha departed, they say that Taguapaca, whom Viracocha ordered to be thrown into the lake of Titicaca in the Collao, as has already been related, came back and began, with others, to preach that he was Viracocha. Although at first the people were doubtful, they finally saw that it was false, and ridiculed them.

This absurd fable of their creation is held by these barbarians and they affirm and believe it as if they had really seen it to happen and come to pass.

## THE ANCIENT FREEDOMS OF THESE KINGDOMS OF PERU AND THEIR PROVINCES

It is important to note that these barbarians could tell nothing more respecting what happened from the second creation by Viracocha down to the time of the Incas. But it may be assumed that, although the land was peopled and full of inhabitants before the Incas, it had no regular government, nor did it have natural lords elected by common consent to govern and rule, and who were respected by the people, so that they were obeyed and received tribute. On the contrary all the people were scattered and disorganized, living in complete liberty, and each man being sole lord of his house and estate. In each tribe there were two divisions. One was called Hanansaya, which means the upper division, and the other Hurinsaya, which is the lower division, a custom which continues to this day. These divisions do not mean anything more than a way to count each other, for their satisfaction; though afterwards it served a more useful purpose, as will be seen in its place.

As there were dissensions among them, a certain kind of militia was organized for defence, in the following way. When it became known to the people of one district that some from other parts were coming to make war, they chose one who was a native, or he might be a stranger, who was known to be a valiant warrior. Often such a man offered himself to aid and to fight for them against their enemies. Such a man was followed and

his orders were obeyed during the war. When the war was over he became a private man as he had been before, like the rest of the people, nor did they pay him tribute either before or afterwards, nor any manner of tax whatever. To such a man they gave and still give the name of *Sinchi* which means valiant. They call such men “Sinchi-cuna” which means “valiant now” as who should say–“now during the time the war lasts you shall be our valiant man, and afterwards no”: or another meaning would be simply “valiant men,” for “cuna” is an adverb of time, and also denotes the plural. In whichever meaning, it is very applicable to these temporary captains in the days of general liberty. So that from the general flood of which they have a tradition to the time when the Incas began to reign, which was 3519 years, all the natives of these kingdoms lived on their properties without acknowledging either a natural or an elected lord. They succeeded in preserving, as it is said, a simple state of liberty, living in huts or caves or humble little houses. This name of Sinchi for those who held sway only during war, lasted throughout the land until the time of Tupac Inca Yupanqui, the tenth Inca, who instituted *Curacas* and other officials in the order which will be fully described in the life of that Inca. Even at the present time they continue this use and custom in the provinces of Chile and in other parts of the forests of Peru to the east of Quito and Chachapoyas, where they only obey a chief during war time, not any special one, but he who is known to be most valiant, enterprising and daring in the wars. The reader should note that all the land was private property with reference to any dominion of chiefs, yet they had natural chiefs with special rights in each province, as for instance among the natives of the valley of Cuzco and in other parts, as we shall relate of each part in its place.

## THE FIRST SETTLERS IN THE VALLEY OF CUZCO

I have explained how the people of these lands preserved their inheritances and lived on them in ancient times, and that their proper and natural countries were known. There were many of these which I shall notice in their places, treating specially at present of the original settlers of the valley where stands the present city of Cuzco. For from there we have to trace the origin of the tyranny of the Incas, who always had their chief seat in the valley of Cuzco.

Before all things it must be understood that the valley of Cuzco is in 13° 15′ from the equator on the side of the south pole. In this valley, owing to its being fertile for cultivation, there were three tribes settled from most ancient times, the first called Sauaseras, the second Antasayas, the third Huallas. They settled near each other, although their lands for sowing were distinct, which is the property they valued most in those days and even now. These natives of the valley lived there in peace for many years, cultivating their farms.

Some time before the arrival of the Incas, three *Sinchis*, strangers to this valley, the first named Alcabisa, the second Copalimayta, and the third Culunchima, collected certain companies and came to the valley of Cuzco, where, by consent of the natives, they settled and became brothers and companions of the original inhabitants. So they lived for a long time. There was concord between these six tribes, three native and three immigrant. They relate that the immigrants came out to where the Incas then resided, as we shall relate presently, and called them relations. This is an important point with reference to what happened afterwards.

Before entering upon the history of the Incas I wish to make known or, speaking more accurately, to answer a difficulty which may occur to those who have not been in these parts. Some may say that this history cannot be accepted as authentic being taken from the narratives of these barbarians, because, having no letters, they could not preserve such details as they give from so remote an antiquity. The answer is that, to supply the want of letters, these barbarians had a curious invention which was very good and accurate. This was that from one to the other, from fathers to sons, they handed down past events, repeating the story of them many times, just as lessons are repeated from a professor's chair, making the hearers say these historical lessons over and over again until they were fixed in the memory. Thus each one of the descendants continued to communicate the annals in the order described with a view to preserve their histories and deeds, their ancient traditions, the numbers of their tribes, towns, provinces, their days, months and years, their battles, deaths, destructions, fortresses and *Sinchis*. Finally they recorded, and they still record, the most notable things which may be expressed in numbers (or statistics), on certain cords called quipu, which is the same as to say reasoner or accountant. On these cords they make certain knots by which, and by differences of colour, they distinguish and record each thing as by letters. It is a thing to be admired to see what details may be recorded on these cords, for which there are masters like our writing masters.

Besides this they had, and still have, special historians in these nations, an hereditary office descending from father to son. The collection of these annals is due to the great diligence of Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui, the ninth Inca, who sent out a general summons to an the old historians in all the provinces he had subjugated, and even to many others throughout those kingdoms. He had them in Cuzco for a long time, examining them concerning their antiquities, origin, and the most notable events in their history. These were painted on great boards, and deposited in the temple of the Sun, in a great hall. There such boards, adorned with gold, were kept as in our libraries, and learned persons were appointed, who were well versed in the art of understanding and declaring their contents. No one was allowed to enter where these boards were kept, except the Inca and the historians, without a special order of the Inca.

In this way they took care to have all their past history investigated, and to have records respecting all kinds of people, so that at this day the Indians generally know and agree respecting details and important events, though, in some things, they hold different opinions on special points. By examining the oldest and most prudent among them, in all ranks of life, who had most credit, I collected and compiled the present history, referring the sayings and declarations of one party to their antagonists of another party, for they are divided into parties, and seeking from each one a memorial of its lineage and of that of the opposing party. These memorials, which are all in my possession, were compared and corrected, and ultimately verified in public, in presence of representatives of all the parties and lineages, under oaths in presence of a judge, and with expert and very faithful interpreters also on oath, and I thus finished what is now written. Such great diligence has been observed, because the facts which will be obvious on the true completion of such a great work-the establishment of the tyranny of the cruel Incas of this land-will make all the nations of the world understand the judicial and more than legitimate right that the King of Castille has to these Indies and to other lands adjacent, especially to these kingdoms of Peru. As all the histories of past events have been verified by proof, which in this case has been done so carefully and faithfully by order and owing to the industry of the most excellent Viceroy Don Francisco de Toledo, no one can doubt that everything in this volume is most sufficiently established and verified without any room being left for reply or contradiction. I have been desirous of making this digression because, in writing the history, I have heard that many entertain the doubts I have above referred to, and it seemed well to satisfy them once for all.

## HOW THE INCAS BEGAN TO TYRANNIZE OVER THE LANDS AND INHERITANCES

Having explained that, in ancient times, all this land was owned by the people, it is necessary to state how the Incas began their tyranny. Although the tribes all lived in simple liberty without recognising any lord, there were always some ambitious men among them, aspiring for mastery. They committed violence among their countrymen and among strangers to subject them and bring

them to obedience under their command, so that they might serve them and pay tribute. Thus bands of men belonging to one region went to others to make war and to rob and kill, usurping the lands of others.

As these movements took place in many parts by many tribes, each one trying to subjugate his neighbour, it happened that 6 leagues from the valley of Cuzco, at a place called Paccari-tampu, there were four men with their four sisters, of fierce courage and evil intentions, although with lofty aims. These, being more able than the others, understood the pusillanimity of the natives of those districts and the ease with which they could be made to believe anything that was propounded with authority or with any force. So they conceived among themselves the idea of being able to subjugate many lands by force and deception. Thus all the eight brethren, four men and four women, consulted together how they could tyrannize over other tribes beyond the place where they lived, and they proposed to do this by violence. Considering that most of the natives were ignorant and could easily be made to believe what was said to them, particularly if they were addressed with some roughness, rigour and authority, against which they could make neither reply nor resistance because they are timid by nature, they sent abroad certain fables respecting their origin, that they might be respected and feared. They said that they were the sons of Viracocha Pachayachachi, the Creator, and that they had come forth out of certain windows to rule the rest of the people. As they were fierce, they made the people believe and fear them, and hold them to be more than men, even worshipping them as gods. Thus they introduced the religion that suited them. The order of the fable they told of their origin was as follows.

## THE FABLE OF THE ORIGIN OF THE INCAS OF CUZCO

All the native Indians of this land relate and affirm that the Incas Ccapac originated in this way. Six leagues S.S.W. of Cuzco by the road which the Incas made, there is a place called Paccari-tampu, at which there is a hill called Tampu-tocco, meaning “the house of windows.” It is certain that in this hill there are three windows, one called “Maras-tocco,” the other “Sutic-tocco,” while that which is in the middle, between these two, was known as “Ccapac-tocco,” which means “the rich window,” because they say that it was ornamented with gold and other treasures. From the window called “Maras-tocco” came forth, without parentage, a tribe of Indians called Maras. There are still some of them in Cuzco. From the “Sutic-tocco” came Indians called Tampus, who settled round the same hill, and there are also men of this lineage still in Cuzco. From the chief window of “Ccapac-tocco,” came four men and four women, called brethren. These knew no father nor mother, beyond the story they told that they were created and came out of the said window by order of Ticci Viracocha, and they declared that Viracocha created them to be lords. For this reason they took the name of Inca, which is the same as lord. They took “Ccapac” as an additional name because they came out of the window “Ccapac-tocco,” which means “rich,” although afterwards they used this term to denote the chief lord over many.

The names of the eight brethren were as follows: The eldest of the men, and the one with the most authority was named Manco Ccapac, the second Ayar Auca, the third Ayar Cachi, the fourth Ayar Uchu. Of the women the eldest was called Mama Occlo, the second Mama Huaco, the third Mama Ipacura, or, as others say, Mama Cura, the fourth Mama Raua.

The eight brethren, called Incas, said–“We are born strong and wise, and with the people who will here join us, we shall be powerful. We will go forth from this place to seek fertile lands and when we find them we will subjugate the people and take the lands, making war on all those who do not receive us as their lords.” This, as they relate, was said by Mama Huaco, one of the women, who was fierce and cruel. Manco Ccapac, her brother, was also cruel and atrocious. This being agreed upon between the eight, they began to move the people who lived near the hill, putting it to them that their reward would be to become rich and to receive the lands and estates of those who were conquered and subjugated. For these objects they moved ten tribes or *ayllus*, which means among these barbarians “lineages” or “parties”; the names of which are as follows:

I. Chauin Cuzco Ayllu of the lineage of Ayar Cachi, of which there are still some in Cuzco, the chiefs being Martin Chucumbi, and Don Diego Huaman Paucar.

II. Arayraca Ayllu Cuzco-Callan. At present there are of this *ayllu* Juan Pizarro Yupanqui, Don Francisco Quispi, Alonso Tarma Yupanqui of the lineage of Ayar Uchu.

III. Tarpuntay Ayllu. Of this there are now some in Cuzco.

IV. Huacaytaqui Ayllu. Some still living in Cuzco.

V. Sañoc Ayllu. Some still in Cuzco. The above five lineages are Hanan-Cuzco, which means the party of Upper Cuzco.

VI. Sutic-Tocco Ayllu is the lineage which came out of one of the windows called “Sutic-Tocco,” as has been before explained. Of these there are still some in Cuzco, the chiefs being Don Francisco Avca Micho Avri Sutic, and Don Alonso Hualpa.

VII. Maras Ayllu. These are of the men who came forth from the window “Maras-Tocco.” There are some of these now in Cuzco, the chiefs being Don Alonso Llama Oca, and Don Gonzalo Ampura Llama Oca.

VIII. Cuycusa Ayllu. Of these there are still some in Cuzco, the chief being Cristoval Acllari.

IX. Masca Ayllu. Of this there is in Cuzco, Juan Quispi.

X. Oro Ayllu. Of this lineage is Don Pedro Yucay.

I say that all these ayllus have preserved their records in such a way that the memory of them has not been lost. There are more of them than are given above, for I only insert the chiefs who are the protectors and heads of the lineages, under whose guidance they are preserved. Each chief has the duty and obligation to protect the rest, and to know the history of his ancestors. Although I say that these live in Cuzco, the truth is that they are in a suburb of the city which the Indians call Cayocache and which is known to us as Belem, from the church of that parish which is that of our Lady of Belem.

Returning to our subject, all these followers above-mentioned marched with Manco Ccapac and the other brethren to seek for land (and to tyrannize over those who did no harm to them, nor gave them any excuse for war, and without any right or title beyond what has been stated). To be prepared for war they chose for their leaders Manco Ccapac and Mama Huaco, and with this arrangement the companies of the hill of Tampu-tocco set out, to put their design into execution.

## THE ROAD WHICH THESE COMPANIES OF THE INCAS TOOK TO THE VALLEY OF CUZCO, AND OF THE FABLES WHICH ARE MIXED WITH THEIR HISTORY

The Incas and the rest of the companies or *ayllus* set out from their homes at Tampu-tocco, taking with them their property and arms, in sufficient numbers to form a good squadron, having for their chiefs the said Manco Ccapac and Mama Huaco.

Manco Ccapac took with him a bird like a falcon, called *indi*, which they all worshipped and feared as a sacred, or, as some say, an enchanted thing, for they thought that this bird made Manco Ccapac their lord and obliged the people to follow him. It was thus that Manco Ccapac gave them to understand, and it was always kept in a covered hamper of straw, like a box, with much care. He left it as an heirloom to his son, and the Incas had it down to the time of Inca Yupanqui. In his hand he carried with him a staff of gold, to test the lands which they would come to.

Marching together they came to a place called Huanacancha, four leagues from the valley of Cuzco, where they remained for some time, sowing and seeking for fertile land. Here Manco Ccapac had connection with his sister Mama Occlo, and she became pregnant by him. As this place did not appear able to sustain them, being barren, they advanced to another place called Tampu-quiro, where Mama Occlo begot a son named Sinchi Rocca. Having celebrated the natal feasts of the infant, they set out in search of fertile land, and came to another place called Pallata, which is almost contiguous to Tampu-quiro, and there they remained for some years.

Not content with this land, they came to another called Hays-quisro, a quarter of a league further on. Here they consulted together over what ought to be done respecting their journey, and over the best way of getting rid of Ayar Cachi, one of the four brothers. Ayar Cachi was fierce and strong, and very dexterous with the sling. He committed great cruelties and was oppressive both among the natives of the places they passed, and among his own people. The other brothers were afraid that the conduct of Ayar Cachi would cause their companies to disband and desert, and that they would be left alone. As Manco Ccapac was prudent, he concurred with the opinion of the others that they should secure their object by deceit. They called Ayar Cachi and said to him, “Brother! Know that in Ccapac-tocco we have forgotten the golden vases called *tupac-cusi*, and certain seeds, and the *napa*, which is our principal ensign of sovereignty.” The *napa* is a sheep of the country, the colour white, with a red body cloth, on the top ear-rings of gold, and on the breast a plate with red badges such as was worn by rich Incas when they went abroad; carried in front of all on a pole with a cross of plumes of feathers. This was called *suntur-paucar*. They said that it would be for the good of all, if he would go back and fetch them. When Ayar Cachi refused to return, his sister Mama Huaco, raising her foot, rebuked him with furious words, saying, “How is it that there should be such cowardice in so strong a youth as you are? Get ready for the journey, and do not fail to go to Tampu-tocco, and do what you are ordered.” Ayar Cachi was shamed by these words. He obeyed and started to carry out his orders. They gave him, as a companion, one of those who had come with them, named Tampu-chacay, to whom they gave secret orders to kill Ayar Cachi at Tampu-tocco, and not to return with him. With these orders they both arrived at Tampu-tocco. They had scarcely arrived when Ayar Cachi entered through the window Ccapac-tocco, to get the things for which he had been sent. He was no sooner inside than Tampu-chacay, with great celerity, put a rock against the opening of the window

and sat upon it, that Ayar Cachi might remain inside and die there. When Ayar Cachi turned to the opening and found it closed he understood the treason of which the traitor Tampu-chacay had been guilty, and determined to get out if it was possible, to take vengeance. To force an opening he used such force and shouted so loud that he made the mountain tremble. With a loud voice he spoke these words to Tampu-chacay, “Thou traitor! thou who hast done me so much harm, thinkest thou to convey the news of my mortal imprisonment? That shall, never happen. For thy treason thou shalt remain outside, turned into a stone.” So it was done, and to this day they show the stone on one side of the window Ccapac-tocco. Turn we now to the seven brethren who had remained at Hays-quisro. The death of Ayar Cachi being known, they were very sorry for what they had done, for, as he was valiant, they regretted much to be without him when the time came to make war on any one. So they mourned for him. This Ayar Cachi was so dexterous with a sling and so strong that with each shot he pulled down a mountain and filled up a ravine. They say that the ravines, which we now see on their line of march, were made by Ayar Cachi in hurling stones.

The seven Incas and their companions left this place, and came to another called Quirirmanta at the foot of a hill which was afterwards called Huanacauri. In this place they consulted together how they should divide the duties of the enterprise amongst themselves, so that there should be distinctions between them. They agreed that as Manco Ccapac had had a child by his sister, they should be married and have children to continue the lineage, and that he should be the leader. Ayar Uchu was to remain as a *huaca* for the sake of religion. Ayar Auca, from the position they should select, was to take possession of the land set apart for him to people.

Leaving this place they came to a hill at a distance of two leagues, a little more or less, from Cuzco. Ascending the hill they saw a rainbow, which the natives call *huanacauri*. Holding it to be a fortunate sign, Manco Ccapac said: “Take this for a sign that the world will not be destroyed by water. We shall arrive and from hence we shall select where we shall found our city.” Then, first casting lots, they saw that the signs were good for doing so, and for exploring the land from that point and becoming lords of it. Before they got to the height where the rainbow was, they saw a *huaca* which was a place of worship in human shape, near the rainbow. They determined among themselves to seize it and take it away from there. Ayar Uchu offered himself to go to it, for they said that he was very like it. When Ayar Uchu came to the statue or *huaca*, with great courage he sat upon it, asking it what it did there. At these words the *huaca*turned its head to see who spoke, but, owing to the weight upon it, it could not see. Presently, when Ayar Uchu wanted to get off he was not able, for he found that the soles of his feet were fastened to the shoulders of the *huaca*. The six brethren, seeing that he was a prisoner, came to succour him. But Ayar Uchu, finding himself thus transformed, and that his brethren could not release him, said to them–“O Brothers, an evil work you have wrought for me. It was for your sakes that I came where I must remain for ever, apart from your company. Go! go! happy brethren. I announce to you that you will be great lords. I, therefore, pray that in recognition of the desire I have always had to please you, you will honour and venerate me in all your festivals and ceremonies, and that I shall be the first to whom you make offerings. For I remain here for your sakes. When you celebrate the *huarachico* (which is the arming of the sons as knights) you shall adore me as their father, for I shall remain here for ever.” Manco Ccapac answered that he would do so, for that it was his will and that it should be so ordered. Ayar Uchu promised for the youths that he would bestow on them the gifts of valour, nobility, and knighthood, and with these last words he remained, turned into stone. They constituted him the *huaca*of the Incas, giving it the name of Ayar Uchu Huanacauri. And so it always was, until the arrival of the Spaniards, the most venerated *huaca*, and the one that received the most offerings of any in the kingdom. Here the Incas went to arm the young knights until about twenty years ago, when the Christians abolished this ceremony. It was religiously done, because there were many abuses and idolatrous practices, offensive and contrary to the ordinances of God our Lord.

## ENTRY OF THE INCAS INTO THE VALLEY OF CUZCO, AND THE FABLES THEY RELATE CONCERNING IT

The six brethren were sad at the loss of Ayar Uchu, and at the loss of Ayar Cachi; and, owing to the death of Ayar Cachi, those of the lineage of the Incas, from that time to this day, always fear to go to Tampu-tocco, lest they should have to remain there like Ayar Cachi.

They went down to the foot of the hill, whence they began their entry into the valley of Cuzco, arriving at a place called Matahua, where they stopped and built huts, intending to remain there some time. Here they armed as knight the son of Manco Ccapac and of Mama Occlo, named Sinchi Rocca, and they bored his ears, a ceremony which is called huarachico, being the insignia of his knighthood and nobility, like the custom known among ourselves. On this occasion they indulged in great rejoicings, drinking for many days, and at intervals mourning for the loss of their brother Ayar Uchu. It was here that they invented the mourning sound for the dead, like the cooing of a dove. Then they performed the dance called *Ccapac Raymi*, a ceremony of the royal or great lords. It is danced, in long purple robes, at the ceremonies they call *quicochico*, which is when girls come to maturity, and the huarachico, when they pierce the ears of the Incas, and the *rutuchico*, when the Inca’s hair is cut the first time, and the *ayuscay*, which is when a child is born, and they drink continuously for four or five days.

After this they were in Matahua for two years, waiting to pass on to the upper valley to seek good and fertile land. Mama Huaco, who was very strong and dexterous, took two wands of gold and hurled them towards the north. One fell, at two shots of an arquebus, into a ploughed field called Colcapampa and did not drive in well, the soil being loose and not terraced. By this they knew that the soil was not fertile. The other went further, to near Cuzco, and fixed well in the territory called Huanay-pata, where they knew the land to be fertile. Others say that this proof was made by Manco Ccapac with the staff of gold which he carried himself, and that thus they knew of the fertility of the land, when the staff sunk in the land called Huanay-pata, two shots of an arquebus from Cuzco. They knew the crust of the soil to be rich and close, so that it could only be broken by using much force.

Let it be by one way or the other, for all agree that they went trying the land with a pole or staff until they arrived at this Huanay-pata, when they were satisfied. They were sure of its fertility, because after sowing perpetually, it always yielded abundantly, giving more the more it was sown. They determined to usurp that land by force, in spite of the natural owners, and to do with it as they chose. So they returned to Matahua.

From that place Manco Ccapac saw a heap of stones near the site of the present monastery of Santo Domingo at Cuzco. Pointing it out to his brother Ayar Auca, he said, “Brother! you remember how it was arranged between us, that you should go to take possession of the land where we are to settle. Well! look at that stone.” Pointing out the stone he continued, “Go thither flying,” for they say that Ayar Auca had developed some wings, “and seating yourself there, take possession of land seen from that heap of stones. We will presently come to settle and reside.” When Ayar Auca heard the words of his brother, he opened his wings and flew to that place which Manco Ccapac had pointed out. Seating himself there, he was presently turned into stone, and was made the stone of possession. In the ancient language of this valley the heap was called *cozco*, whence that site has had the name of Cuzco to this day. From this circumstance the Incas had a proverb which said, “Ayar Auca cuzco huanca,” or, “Ayar Auca a heap of marble.” Others say that Manco Ccapac gave the name of Cuzco because he wept in that place where he buried his brother Ayar Cachi. Owing to his sorrow and to the fertility, he gave that name which in the ancient language of that time signified sad as well as fertile. The first version must be the correct one because Ayar Cachi was not buried at Cuzco, having died at Ccapac-tocco as has been narrated before. And this is generally affirmed by Incas and natives.

Five brethren only remaining, namely Manco Ccapac, and the four sisters, and Manco Ccapac being the only surviving brother out of four, they presently resolved to advance to where Ayar Auca had taken possession. Manco Ccapac first gave to his son Sinchi Rocca a wife named Mama Cuca, of the lineage of Sañu, daughter of a Sinchi named Sitic-huaman, by whom he afterwards had a son named Sapaca. He also instituted the sacrifice called *capa cocha*, which is the immolation of two male and two female infants before the idol Huanacauri, at the time when the Incas were armed as knights. These things being arranged, he ordered the companies to follow him to the place where Ayar Auca was.

Arriving on the land of Huanay-pata, which is near where now stands the *Arco de la plata* leading to the Charcas road, he found settled there a nation of Indians named Huallas, already mentioned. Manco Ccapac and Mama Occlo began to settle and to take possession of the land and water, against the will of the Huallas. In this business they did many violent and unjust things. As the Huallas attempted to defend their lives and properties, many cruelties were committed by Manco Ccapac and Mama Occlo. They relate that Mama Occlo was so fierce that, having killed one of the Hualla Indians, she cut him up, took out the inside, carried the heart and lungs in her mouth, and with an *ayuinto*, which is a stone fastened to a rope, in her hand, she attacked the Huallas with diabolical resolution. When the Huallas beheld this horrible and inhuman spectacle, they feared that the same things would be done to them, being simple and timid, and they fled and abandoned their rights. Mama Occlo reflecting on her cruelty, and fearing that for it they would be branded as tyrants, resolved not to spare any Huallas, believing that the affair would thus be forgotten. So they killed all they could lay their hands upon, dragging infants from their mothers’ wombs, that no memory might be left of these miserable Huallas.

Having done this Manco Ccapac advanced, and came within a mile of Cuzco to the S. E., where a Sinchi named Copalimayta came out to oppose him. We have mentioned this chief before and that, although he was a late comer, he settled with the consent of the natives of the valley, and had been incorporated in the nation of Sauaseray Panaca, natives of the site of Santo Domingo at Cuzco. Having seen the strangers invading their lands and tyrannizing over them, and knowing the cruelties inflicted on the Huallas, they had chosen Copalimayta as their *Sinchi*. He came forth to resist the invasion, saying that the strangers should not enter his lands or those of the natives. His resistance was such that Manco Ccapac and his companions were obliged to turn their backs. They returned to Huanay-pata, the land they had usurped from the Huallas. From the sowing they had made they derived a fine crop of maize, and for this reason they gave the place a name which means something precious.

After some months they returned to the attack on the natives of the valley, to tyrannize over them. They assaulted the settlement of the Sauaseras, and were so rapid in their attack that they captured Copalimayta, slaughtering many of the Sauaseras with great cruelty. Copalimayta, finding himself a prisoner and fearing death, fled out of desperation, leaving his estates, and was never seen again after he escaped. Mama Huaco and Manco Ccapac usurped his houses, lands and people. In this way Manco Ccapac, Mama Huaco, Sinchi Rocca, and Manco Sapaca settled on the site between the two rivers, and erected the House of the Sun, which they

called Ynti-cancha. They divided all that position, from Santo Domingo to the junction of the rivers into four neighbourhoods or quarters which they call *cancha*. They called one Quinti-cancha, the second Chumpi-cancha, the third Sayri-cancha, and the fourth Yarampuy-cancha. They divided the sites among themselves, and thus the city was peopled, and, from the heap of stones of Ayar Auca it was called Cuzco.

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# 7.9: The Magic Feather

## THE MAGIC FEATHER.





N the depths of the forest in the land of the Dacotahs stood a wigwam many leagues distant from any other. The old man who had been known to live in it was supposed to have died; but he kept himself in hiding for the sake of his little grandson, whose mother had brought him there to escape the giants.

The Dacotahs had once been a brave and mighty people. They were swift runners and proud of their fleetness. It had been told among the nations for many generations that a great chief should spring from this tribe, and that he should conquer all his enemies, even the giants who had made themselves strong by eating the flesh of those they took in battle and drinking their blood. This great chief should wear a white feather and should be known by its name.

The giants believed the story and sought to prevent it coming true. So they said to the Dacotahs: “Let us run a race. If you win you shall have our sons and our daughters to do with them as you please, and if we win we will take yours.”

Some of the wise Indians shook their heads and said: “Suppose the giants win; they will kill our children and will serve them as dainty food upon their tables.” But the young men answered: “Kaw: who can outrun the Dacotahs? We shall return from the race with the young giants bound hand and foot, to fetch and carry for us all our days.” So they agreed to the wager and ran with the giants.

Now, it was not to be supposed that the giants would act fairly. They dug pitfalls on the prairie, covering them with leaves and grass, which caused the runners to stumble, and lose the race.

The Dacotahs, therefore, had to bring out their children and give them to the giants. When they were counted one child was missing. The giants roared with anger and made the whole tribe search for him, but he could not be found. Then the giants killed the father instead and ate his flesh, grumbling and muttering vengeance with every mouthful.

This was the child whose home was in the forest. When he was still a very little fellow his grandfather made him a tiny bow and some smooth, light arrows, and taught him how to use them.

The first time he ventured from the lodge he brought home a rabbit, the second time a squirrel, and he shot a fine, large deer long before he was strong enough to drag it home.

One day when he was about fourteen years old, he heard a voice calling to him as he went through the thick woods:

Come hither, you wearer of the white feather. You do not yet wear it, but you are worthy of it.”

He looked about, but at first saw no one. At last he caught sight of the head of a little old man among the trees. On going up to it he discovered that the body from the heart downwards was wood and fast in the earth. He thought some hunter must have leaped upon a rotten stump and, it giving way, had caught and held him fast; but he soon recognized the roots of an old oak that he well

knew. Its top had been blighted by a stroke of lightning, and the lower branches were so dark that no birds built their nests on them, and few even lighted upon them.

The boy knew nothing of the world except what his grandfather had taught him. He had once found some lodge poles on the edge of the forest and a heap of ashes like those about their own wigwam, by which he guessed that there were other people living. He had never been told why he was living with an old man so far away from others, or of his father, but the time had come for him to know these things.

The head which had called him, said as he came near: “Go home, White Feather, and lie down to sleep. You will dream, and on waking will find a pipe, a pouch of smoking mixture, and a long white feather beside you. Put the feather on your head, and as you smoke you will see the cloud which rises from your pipe pass out of the doorway as a flock of pigeons.” The voice then told him who he was, and also that the giants had never given up looking for him. He was to wait for them no longer, but to go boldly to their lodge and offer to race with them. “Here,” said the voice, “is an enchanted vine which you are to throw over the head of every one who runs with you.”

White Feather, as he was thenceforth called, picked up the vine, went quickly home and did as he had been told. He heard the voice, awoke and found the pouch of tobacco, the pipe, and the white feather. Placing the feather on his head, he filled the pipe and sat down to smoke.

His grandfather, who was at work not far from the wigwam, was astonished to see flocks of pigeons flying over his head, and still more surprised to find that they came from his own doorway. When he went in and saw the boy wearing the white feather, he knew what it all meant and became very sad, for he loved the boy so much that he could not bear the thought of losing him.

The next morning White Feather went in search of the giants. He passed through the forest, out upon the prairie and through other woods across another prairie, until at last he saw a tall lodge pole in the middle of the forest. He went boldly up to it, thinking to surprise the giants, but his coming was not unexpected, for the little spirits which carry the news had heard the voice speaking to him and had hastened to tell those whom it most concerned.

The giants were six brothers who lived in a lodge that was ill-kept and dirty. When they saw the boy coming they made fun of him among themselves; but when he entered the lodge they pretended that they were glad to see him and flattered him, telling him that his fame as a brave had already reached them.

White Feather knew well what they wanted. He proposed the race; and though this was just what they had intended doing, they laughed at his offer. At last they said that if he would have it so, he should try first with the smallest and weakest of their number.

They were to run towards the east until they came to a certain tree which had been stripped of its bark, and then back to the starting point, where a war-club made of iron was driven into the ground. Whoever reached this first was to beat the other’s brains out with it.

White Feather and the youngest giant ran nimbly on, and the giants, who were watching, were rejoiced to see their brother gain slowly but surely, and at last shoot ahead of White Feather. When his enemy was almost at the goal, the boy, who was only a few feet behind, threw the enchanted vine over the giant’s head, which caused him to fall back helpless. No one suspected anything more than an accident, for the vine could not be seen except by him who carried it.

After White Feather had cut off the giant’s head, the brothers thought to get the better of him, and begged him to leave the head with them, for they thought that by magic they might bring it back to life, but he claimed his right to take it home to his grandfather.

The next morning he returned to run with the second giant, whom he defeated in the same manner; the third morning the third, and so on until all but one were killed.

As he went towards the giant’s lodge on the sixth morning he heard the voice of the old man of the oak tree who had first appeared to him. It came to warn him. It told him that the sixth giant was afraid to race with him, and would therefore try to deceive him and work enchantment on him. As he went through the wood he would meet a beautiful woman, the most beautiful in the world. To avoid danger he must wish himself an elk and he would be changed into that animal. Even then he must keep out of her way, for she meant to do him harm.

White Feather had not gone far from the tree when he met her. He had never seen a woman before, and this one was so beautiful that he wished himself an elk at once for he was sure she would bewitch him. He could not tear himself away from the spot,

however, but kept browsing near her, raising his eyes now and then to look at her.

She went to him, laid her hand upon his neck and stroked his sides. Looking from him she sighed, and as he turned his head towards her, she reproached him for changing himself from a tall and handsome man to such an ugly creature. “For,” said she, “I heard of you in a distant land, and, though many sought me, I came hither to be your wife.”

As White Feather looked at her he saw tears shining in her eyes, and almost before he knew it he wished himself a man again. In a moment he was restored to his natural shape, and the woman flung her arms about his neck and kissed him.

By and by she coaxed him to lie down on the ground and put his head on her lap. Now, this beautiful woman was really the giant in disguise; and as White Feather lay with his head on her knee, she stroked his hair and forehead, and by her magic put him to sleep. Then she took an ax and broke his back. This done, she changed herself into the giant, turned White Feather into a dog, and bade him follow to the lodge.

The giant took the white feather and placed it on his own head, for he knew there was magic in it; and he wished to make the tribes honor him as the great warrior they had long expected.

In a little village but a woman’s journey from the home of the giants lived a chief named Red Wing. He had two daughters, White Weasel and Crystal Stone, each noted for her beauty and haughtiness, though Crystal Stone was kind to every one but her lovers, who came from far and near, and were a constant source of jealousy to White Weasel, the elder. The eldest of the giants was White Weasel’s suitor, but she was afraid of him, so both the sisters remained unmarried.

When the news of White Feather’s race with the giants came to the village, each of the maidens determined that she would win the young brave for a husband. White Weasel wanted some one who would be a great chief and make all the tribes afraid of him. Crystal Stone loved him beforehand, for she knew he must be good as well as brave, else the white feather would not have been given to him. Each kept the wish to herself and went into the woods to fast, that it might come true.

When they heard that White Feather was on his way through the forest, White Weasel set her lodge in order and dressed herself gaily, hoping thereby to attract his attention. Her sister made no such preparation, for she thought so brave and wise a chief would have too good sense to take notice of a woman’s finery.

When the giant passed through the forest, White Weasel went out and invited him into her lodge. He entered and she did not guess that it was the giant of whom she had been in such fear.

Crystal Stone invited the dog into her lodge—her sister had shut him out—and was kind to it, as she had always been to dumb creatures. Now, although the dog was enchanted and could not change his condition, he still had more than human sense and knew all the thoughts of his mistress. He grew to love her more and more every day and looked about for some way to show it.

One day when the giant was hunting on the prairie, the dog went out to hunt also; but he ran down to the bank of the river. He stepped cautiously into the water and drew out a large stone, which was turned into a beaver as soon as it touched the ground. He took it home to his mistress, who showed it to her sister and offered to share it with her. White Weasel refused it, but told her husband he had better follow the dog and discover where such fine beavers could be had.

The giant went, and hiding behind a tree, saw the dog draw out a stone, which turned into a beaver. After the animal had gone home he went down to the water and drew out a stone, which likewise turned into a beaver. He tied it to his belt and took it home, throwing it down at the door of the lodge.

When he had been at home a little while, he told his wife to go and bring in his belt. She did so, but there was no beaver tied to it, only a large, smooth stone such as he had drawn out of the water.

The dog, knowing that he had been watched, would not go for more beavers; but the next day went through the woods until he came to a charred tree. He broke off a small branch, which turned into a bear as soon as he took hold of it to carry it home. The giant, who had been watching him, also broke off a branch, and he, too, secured a bear; but when he took it home and told his wife to fetch it in, she found only a black stick.

Then White Weasel became very angry and scoffed at her husband, asking him if this was the way he had done the wonderful things that had made his fame. “Ugh!” she said, “you are a coward, though you are so big and great.”

The next day, after the giant had gone out, she went to the village to tell her father, Red Wing, how badly her husband treated her in not bringing home food. She also told him that her sister, who had taken the dog into her wigwam, always had plenty to eat,

and that Crystal Stone *pitied* the wife of the wearer of the white feather, who often had to go hungry.

Red Wing listened to her story and knew at once that there must be magic at work somewhere. He sent a company of young men and women to the lodge of Crystal Stone to see if White Weasel's story were true, and if so to bring his younger daughter and the dog to his wigwam.

Meanwhile the dog had asked his mistress to give him a bath such as the Indians take. They went down to the river, where he pointed out a spot on which she was to build him a lodge. She made it of grass and sticks, and after heating some large stones laid them on the floor, leaving only just enough room for the dog to crawl in and lie down. Then she poured water on the stones, which caused a thick steam that almost choked him. He lay in it for a long time, after which, raising himself, he rushed out and jumped into a pool of water formed by the river. He came out a tall, handsome man, but without the power of speech.

The messengers from Red Wing were greatly astonished at finding a man instead of the dog that they had expected to see, but had no trouble in persuading him and Crystal Stone to go with them.

Red Wing was as much astonished as his messengers had been, and called all the wise men of the tribe to witness what should take place, and to give counsel concerning his daughters.

The whole tribe and many strangers soon assembled. The giant came also and brought with him the magic pipe that had been given to White Feather in his dream. He smoked it and passed it to the Indians to smoke, but nothing came of it. Then White Feather motioned to them that he wished to take it. He also asked for the white feather, which he placed on his head; when, at

Home p. 91

Home



Click to enlarge
"Lo! Clouds of blue and white pigeons rushed from the smoke."

the first whiff from the pipe, lo! clouds of blue and white pigeons rushed from the smoke.

The men sprang to their feet, astonished to see such magic. White Feather's speech returned, and in answer to the questions put to him, he told his story to the chief.

Red Wing and the council listened and smoked for a time in silence. Then the oldest and wisest brave ordered the giant to appear before White Feather, who should transform him into a dog. White Feather accomplished this by knocking upon him the ashes from the magic pipe. It was next decreed that the boys of the tribe should take the war-clubs of their fathers and, driving the animal into the forest, beat him to death.

White Feather wished to reward his friends, so he invited them to a buffalo hunt, to take place in four days' time, and he bade them prepare many arrows. To make ready for them, he cut a buffalo robe into strips, which he sowed upon the prairie.

On the day appointed the warriors found that these shreds of skin had grown into a large herd of buffaloes. They killed as many as they pleased, for White Feather tipped each arrow with magic, so that none missed their aim.

A grand feast followed in honor of White Feather's triumph over the giants and of his marriage with Crystal Stone.

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# 7.10: The Island of Skeletons

## THE ISLAND OF SKELETONS.

Home



IG Wave and his little nephew, Red Shell, lived together in a deep forest. The boy was the only relative that the old man had, and he was very fond of him. He had brought Red Shell and his sister, Wild Sage, to his home some years before, just after the great plague had killed most of his tribe, among them the father and mother of the children. But they had not been many months in the forest before Wild Sage was stolen by a giant who lived on the Island of Skeletons.

Big Wave warned the boy never to go towards the east; for, if by any chance, he should cross a certain magic line of sacred meal that Big Wave had drawn, he would be at the mercy of the giant.

The boy obeyed for a time; but by and by he grew tired of playing in one place, so he went towards the east, not noticing when he crossed the magic line, till he came to the shore of a great lake.

He amused himself for a while, throwing pebbles into the water, and shooting arrows. A man came up to him, and said, “Well, boy, where is your lodge?”

Red Shell told him. Then the man proposed shooting arrows to see who could shoot the higher. Red Shell had had much practice, and though he was only a boy, his arm was strong, and he drew the bow far back and sent the arrow much higher than the man did.

The man laughed and said, “You are a brave boy; now let us see whether you can swim as well as you can shoot.”

They jumped into the water and tried holding their breath while swimming. Again the boy proved himself the victor.

When they were again on land, the man said to him, “Will you go with me in my canoe? I am on my way to an island where there are pretty birds, and you can shoot as many as you please.”

Red Shell said he would go, and looked about for a canoe. The man began singing, and presently there appeared a canoe drawn by six white swans, three on either side. The boy and his companion stepped in and the man guided the swans by singing.

The island was so long that he could not see the end of it, but it was not very wide. It was thickly wooded and there was so much undergrowth that the ground could hardly be seen, but Red Shell noticed heaps of bones under the bushes, and asked what they were. He was told that the island had once been a famous hunting-ground and these were the bones of the animals that had been killed.

After wandering about for some time, the man proposed another swim. They had been in the water but a few minutes when the boy heard singing, and looking around he saw the man going off in the canoe and taking his own and Red Shell’s clothes with him. He shouted, but neither the man nor the birds paid any attention to him.

Thus he was left alone and naked, and it was fast growing dark. Then he remembered his uncle's warnings, and was so miserable from cold, hunger and fear, that at last he sat down and cried.

By-and-by he heard a voice calling to him, "Hist! keep still."

He looked round and saw a skeleton lying on the ground not far from him. It beckoned to him and said, "Poor boy, it was the same with me, but I will help you if you will do me a service. Go to that tree" (pointing to one close by) "dig on the west side of it, and you will find a pouch of smoking mixture and a pipe. Bring them to me. You can get a flint on the shore. Bring that also."

The boy was terribly frightened, but the skeleton spoke kindly, and not as though he meant to do harm. Red Shell therefore went to the tree, and brought the pipe and smoking mixture. Then he found a flint and on being asked to do so struck fire, lit the pipe and handed the same to the skeleton.

It smoked quickly, drawing the smoke into the mouth and letting it escape between the ribs. Red Shell watched and saw mice run out from between the bones. When the skeleton was rid of them it said: "Now I feel better, and can tell you what to do to escape my fate. A giant is coming to-night with three dogs, to hunt you and kill you for his supper. You must lose the trail for them by jumping into the water many times on your way to a hollow tree, which you will find on the other side of the island. In the morning after they have gone, come to me."

Red Shell thanked the skeleton and started at once to find the tree. It was quite dark, so he could see nothing, but he ran from tree to tree, climbing hallway up each one, and running into the water many times before he found the place where he had been told to sleep.

Towards morning he heard the splash of a canoe in the water, and soon a giant followed by three large dogs, strode into the forest.

"You must hunt this animal," the giant said to the dogs.

They scented the trail and dashed through the bushes. They rushed up one tree and then another, and at last came back to the giant with their tails between their legs, for they had found nothing.

He was so angry that he struck the foremost animal with his war-club and killed it on the spot. He skinned it and ate it raw. Then he drove the two others down to the canoe, jumped in and went away.

When they were out of sight of the island, Red Shell crept from his hiding place and went back to the skeleton.

"You are still alive?" it asked in surprise. "You are a brave boy. To-night the man who brought you here will come to drink your blood. You must go down to the shore before the darkness comes and dig a pit in the sand. Lie down in it and cover yourself with sand. When he leaves his canoe, get into it and say 'Come swans, let us go home.' If the man calls you, you must not turn round or look at him. When you are free, do not forget the skeleton."

Red Shell promised to come back to the island and to do all that he could for the poor bones. He went down to the shore and dug the pit deep enough so that when he stood in it his head was on a level with the water. When he heard the song in the distance he knew the swans were coming; so he covered his head with sand and waited till he heard a footstep on the dry leaves.

Then he crept out stealthily, stepped into the canoe and whispered to the swans, "Come, let us go home." He began the song that he had heard their master sing to them, and the canoe glided from the shore.

The swans carried him down the lake to a large cleft rock in the center. They drew the canoe through the opening and through the cave till they came to a stone door. Red Shell tried to open it, but could not. Then he turned the canoe around and struck the door with the stern.

The door flew open and Red Shell found himself in a fine lodge. He saw his own clothes and many others heaped in a corner near the fire which was burning brightly. A kettle of soup was steaming over it and there were some potatoes in the ashes on the hearth.

Seeing no one, the boy ate supper and then lay down to sleep on a couch of wild-cat skins.

In the morning he went out and stepping into the canoe, said, "Come, swans, let us go to the island."

He saw the two dogs lying asleep in the sun and, on landing, found that then had killed their master.

The skeleton was delighted to see him and praised him for his courage and for being true to his word. But he said to him, “You must not go home yet. Travel toward the east three days and you will come to some huge rocks. There you will see a young girl drawing water from a spring. She is your sister, Wild Sage, whom the giant stole many moons since, and whom you believed dead. You will be able to get her away. When you have done so, come back to me.”

Red Shell at once set out for the east and in three days he found the rocks of which he had been told. As he came near them he saw a lovely girl drawing water. “Sister,” he said, going up to her, “you must come home with me.”

She was frightened and tried to run away. Looking back, she saw that it was really her brother, when she was even more afraid, though she turned and spoke to him. “Hist,” said she, “a giant keeps me here. Go before he sees you or he will kill you.”

Red Shell did not move.

“Go,” said Wild Sage.

“No,” he answered, “not till you go with me. Take me to your lodge.”

The giant had gone to a cranberry swamp, and Wild Sage knew that he would not return until the evening; so she ventured to take her brother home with her. She dug a pit in one corner of the lodge, told him to get into it, and then covered it with her bed of buffalo skins.

Just before the darkness came the giant’s dogs rushed in, barking furiously. “Who?” said the giant, “is hidden here?”

“No one,” said Wild Sage.

“There is, there is,” said the giant, “or the dogs would not bark like that.”

They did not discover Red Shell, however, so the giant sat down to his supper.

“This boy is not tender, he is not cooked enough, get up and cook him more,” said the giant.

“Cook it yourself, if it doesn’t suit you,” she answered.

The giant took no notice of her answer, but called to her to come and take off his moccasins.

“Take them off yourself,” she said.

“Kaw,” thought the giant, “now I know she has some one hidden. I will kill him in the morning.”

Early the next day the giant said he was going to the cranberry swamp to get some children for his dinner. He did not go far from the lodge, but hid himself in some bushes close to the shore.

He saw Wild Sage and her brother get into a canoe, and threw a hook after them, which caught the boat and drew it towards the shore. But Red Shell took up a stone and broke the hook, and they floated off once more.

The giant was in a terrible rage. He lay down flat on the ground, and, putting his mouth to the water, drank so fast that the canoe was drawn close to the shore He began to swell from drinking such a quantity, and could not move. Red Shell took another stone and threw it at him. It struck him and he snapped in two, and the water he had swallowed flowed back into the lake.

Red Shell and his sister then sailed to the island, where the two dogs who had eaten their master rushed down to meet them. The boy raised his hand threateningly, and said: “Off to the woods as wolves. You no longer deserve to be dogs.”

The animals slunk away growling, and as they disappeared were seen to change into lean and hungry wolves.

Red Shell went to the skeleton, who commanded him to gather all the bones that he could find on the island and to lay them side by side in one place. Then he was to say to them, “Dead folk, arise!”

It took him and his sister many days, for there were bones everywhere. When all had been arranged in one place, Red Shell stood off at a little distance and called loudly, “Dead folk, arise!” The bones raised themselves and took human form. All the men had bows and arrows,but some had only one arm, and others only one leg. The skeleton whom Red Shell had first met became a tall,

handsome warrior, perfect in every limb. He saluted Red Shell as Chief, and the others did the same.

Then the boy and his sister crossed the lake and traveled westward till they came to their uncles' lodge. He was very old, his fire was out and he was still mourning for his nephew. But as he listened to the story of the lad's adventures, and realized that he had come back unhurt, some of his years left him.

They built a long lodge with many fireplaces; then Red Shell returned to the island and brought back those who had been skeletons. The handsome brave, who was known as White Eagle, married Wild Sage, and they all dwelt together in peace to the end of their lives.

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# 8: AFRICAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE

8.1: Key Writers
8.2: Understanding African American Authors
8.3: The Slavery Controversy and Abolitionist Literature
8.4: The Church in the Southern Black Community
8.5: Explore The Dispersal of Enslaved Africans Across the Atlantic World
8.6: What was the Harlem Renaissance?
8.7: Importance of the Harlem Renaissance
8.8: Video- Civil Rights and the 1950s
8.9: A Talk to Teachers
8.10: Video- Get Christie Love

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# 8.1: Key Writers

## Who were its key writers?

Although the Harlem Renaissance represents a unique revolution in the history of American literature, there were a number of African American writers who came to prominence before the movement began. Jupiter Hammon is considered the first published African American writer in America, and Phillis Wheatley is credited with being the first African American female to be published. Likewise, the abolitionist writings of authors such as Frances Hparper and Frederick Douglas were also widely read and published.

However, W. E. B. Du Bois could be considered a forerunner of the Harlem Renaissance. In his highly influential book *The Souls of Black Folk* , published in 1903, Du Bois expresses an artistic and political vision of equality for African Americans which inspired artists in the early twentieth century and later the early Civil Rights movement. Read and listen to two excerpts from *The Souls of Black Folk* entitled*"The Forethought"* and *"Of Our Spiritual Strivings,"* paying particular attention to his recollection of African American history and the importance he places on folk musical traditions as a record of African American's struggle for freedom.

*"The Forethought"* (36)

*"Of Our Spiritual Strivings"* (38)

(37)(39)

Music played a particularly prominent role in the development of the Harlem Renaissance. The work of musicians and composers such as Duke Ellington, Paul Robeson, and Ella Fitzgerald, among others, grew in popularity among white and black audiences during the Harlem Renaissance. Like Du Bois, many of the movement's writers drew explicitly upon the folk traditions of spirituals, blues music, and work songs to create a unique literary language that reflected some aspects of the everyday speech of African Americans. (In this module, you will read two musically inspired works by the writer James Weldon Johnson, *"O Black and Unknown Bards"* and *"Lift Every Voice and Sing."* )

For the purposes of this course, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive overview of the numerous influential artists and writers associated with the Harlem Renaissance. An anthology published in 1925 entitled *The New Negro* helped to solidify the group of writers typically associated with the movement. The book included work by writers such as Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, and Eric Walrond. (In this module, you will read the essay, *"The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain"* and the poem *"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"* by Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen's poem *"I Have a Rendezvous with Life,"* and the play *"Lawing and Jawing"* by Zora Neale Hurston.)

*The New Negro* was edited by Alain Locke, and it included his title essay *"Enter the New Negro"* in which he describes the creative and social attitudes of the modern African American as being more assertive and openly critical of racial prejudice and injustice. Contrasting the "New Negro" to the "Old Negro" of the past, Locke suggests that the ideal African American citizen is one who "lays aside the status of beneficiary and ward for that of a collaborator and participant in American civilization. The great social gain in this is the releasing of our talented group from the arid fields of controversy and debate to the productive fields of creative expression." This participation was, however, contingent on being granted equal legal and political status to white Americans. In contrast to Du Bois, who believed the African American art ought to contribute to the social and political liberation of black people, Locke believed that African American art should demonstrate the uniqueness of the artist in order to demonstrate his or her undeniable humanity. (1)

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# 8.2: Understanding African American Authors

The 1920s was a time of dramatic change in the United States. Many young people, especially those living in big cities, embraced a new morality that was much more permissive than that of previous generations. They listened to jazz music, especially in the nightclubs of Harlem. Although prohibition outlawed alcohol, criminal bootlegging and importing businesses thrived. The decade was not a pleasure cruise for everyone, however; in the wake of the Great War, many were left awaiting the promise of a new generation.

## A New Morality

Many Americans were disillusioned in the post-World War I era, and their reactions took many forms. Rebellious American youth, in particular, adjusted to the changes by embracing a new morality that was far more permissive than the social mores of their parents. Many young women of the era shed their mother's morality and adopted the dress and mannerisms of a flapper, the Jazz Age female stereotype, seeking the endless party. Flappers wore shorter skirts, shorter hair, and more makeup, and they drank and smoked with the boys (Figure 1.1.1). Flappers' dresses emphasized straight lines from the shoulders to the knees, minimizing breasts and curves while highlighting legs and ankles. The male equivalent of a flapper was a "**sheik**," although that term has not remained as strong in the American vernacular. At the time, however, many of these fads became a type of conformity, especially among college-aged youths, with the signature bob haircut of the flapper becoming almost universal—in both the United States and overseas.




Figure 8.2.1: The flapper look, seen here in "Flapper" by Ellen Pyle for the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* in February 1922, was a national craze in American cities during the 1920s.

As men and women pushed social and cultural boundaries in the Jazz Age, sexual mores changed and social customs grew more permissive. "Petting parties" or "necking parties" became the rage on college campuses. Psychologist Sigmund Freud and British "sexologist" Havelock Ellis emphasized that sex was a natural and pleasurable part of the human experience. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, launched an information campaign on birth control to give women a choice in the realm in which suffrage had changed little—the family. The popularization of contraception and the private space that the automobile offered to teenagers and unwed couples also contributed to changes in sexual behavior.

Flappers and sheiks also took their cues from the high-flying romances they saw on movie screens and confessions in movie magazines of immorality on movie sets. Movie posters promised: "Brilliant men, beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific smashing climax that makes you gasp." And "neckers, petters, white kisses, red kisses, pleasure-mad daughters, sensation-craving mothers . . . the truth: bold, naked, sensational."

EXPLORE

Could you go “on a toot” with flappers and sheiks? Improve your chances with this collection of Jazz Age slang.

New dances and new music—especially jazz—also characterized the Jazz Age. Born out of the African American community, jazz was a uniquely American music. The innovative sound emerged from a number of different communities and from a number of different musical traditions such as blues and ragtime. By the 1920s, jazz had spread from African American clubs in New Orleans and Chicago to reach greater popularity in New York and abroad. One New York jazz establishment, the Cotton Club, became particularly famous and attracted large audiences of hip, young, and white flappers and sheiks to see black entertainers play jazz (Figure 1.1.2).




Figure 8.2.2: Black jazz bands such as the King and Carter Jazzing Orchestra, photographed in 1921 by Robert Runyon, were immensely popular among white urbanites in the 1920s.

## The "New Woman"

The Jazz Age and the proliferation of the flapper lifestyle of the 1920s should not be seen merely as the product of postwar disillusionment and newfound prosperity. Rather, the search for new styles of dress and new forms of entertainment like jazz was part of a larger women’s rights movement. The early 1920s, especially with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteeing full voting rights to women, was a period that witnessed the expansion of women’s political power. The public flaunting of social and sexual norms by flappers represented an attempt to match gains in political equality with gains in the social sphere. Women were increasingly leaving the Victorian era norms of the previous generation behind, as they broadened the concept of women’s liberation to include new forms of social expression such as dance, fashion, women’s clubs, and forays into college and the professions.

Nor did the struggle for women’s rights through the promotion and passage of legislation cease in the 1920s. In 1921, Congress passed the Promotion of the Welfare and Hygiene of Maternity and Infancy Act, also known as the Sheppard-Towner Act, which earmarked $1.25 million for well-baby clinics and educational programs, as well as nursing. This funding dramatically reduced the rate of infant mortality. Two years later, in 1923, Alice Paul drafted and promoted an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) that promised to end all sex discrimination by guaranteeing that “Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction.”

Yet, ironically, at precisely the time when the Progressive movement was achieving its long-sought-after goals, the movement itself was losing steam and the Progressive Era was coming to a close. As the heat of Progressive politics grew less intense, voter participation from both sexes declined over the course of the 1920s. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, many women believed that they had accomplished their goals and dropped out of the movement. As a result, the proposed ERA stalled (the ERA eventually passed Congress almost fifty years later in 1972, but then failed to win ratification by a sufficient number of states), and, by the end of the 1920s, Congress even allowed funding for the Sheppard-Towner Act to lapse.

The growing lethargy toward women's rights was happening at a time when an increasing number of women were working for wages in the U.S. economy—not only in domestic service, but in retail, healthcare and education, offices, and manufacturing. Beginning in the 1920s, women's participation in the labor force increased steadily. However, most were paid less than men for the same type of work based on the rationale that they did not have to support a family. While the employment of single and unmarried women had largely won social acceptance, married women often suffered the stigma that they were working for pin money—frivolous additional discretionary income.

## The Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro

It wasn't only women who found new forms of expression in the 1920s. African Americans were also expanding their horizons and embracing the concept of the "new Negro." The decade witnessed the continued Great Migration of African Americans to the North, with over half a million fleeing the strict Jim Crow laws of the South. Life in the northern states, as many African Americans discovered, was hardly free of discrimination and segregation. Even without Jim Crow, businesses, property owners, employers, and private citizens typically practiced *de facto* segregation, which could be quite stifling and oppressive. Nonetheless, many southern blacks continued to move north into segregated neighborhoods that were already bursting at the seams, because the North, at the very least, offered two tickets toward black progress: schools and the vote. The black population of New York City doubled during the decade. As a result, Harlem, a neighborhood at the northern end of Manhattan, became a center for Afro-centric art, music, poetry, and politics. Political expression in the Harlem of the 1920s ran the gamut, as some leaders advocated a return to Africa, while others fought for inclusion and integration.

Revived by the wartime migration and fired up by the white violence of the postwar riots, urban blacks developed a strong cultural expression in the 1920s that came to be known as the Harlem Renaissance. In this rediscovery of black culture, African American artists and writers formulated an independent black culture and encouraged racial pride, rejecting any emulation of white American culture. Claude McKay's poem "If We Must Die" called on African Americans to start fighting back in the wake of the Red Summer riots of 1919 (Figure 1.1.3). Langston Hughes, often nicknamed the "poet laureate" of the movement, invoked sacrifice and the just cause of civil rights in "The Colored Soldier," while another author of the movement, Zora Neale Hurston, celebrated the life and dialect of rural blacks in a fictional, all-black town in Florida. Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was only published posthumously in 1937.



Figure 8.2.3: The Jamaican-born poet and novelist Claude McKay articulated the new sense of self and urban community of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. Although centered in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, this cultural movement emerged in urban centers throughout the Northeast and Midwest.

The new Negro found political expression in a political ideology that celebrated African Americans distinct national identity. This Negro nationalism, as some referred to it, proposed that African Americans had a distinct and separate national heritage that should inspire pride and a sense of community. An early proponent of such nationalism was W. E. B. Du Bois. One of the founders of the NAACP, a brilliant writer and scholar, and the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard, Du Bois openly rejected assumptions of white supremacy. His conception of Negro nationalism encouraged Africans to work together in support of their own interests, promoted the elevation of black literature and cultural expression, and, most famously, embraced the African

continent as the true homeland of all ethnic Africans—a concept known as Pan-Africanism.

Taking Negro nationalism to a new level was Marcus Garvey. Like many black Americans, the Jamaican immigrant had become utterly disillusioned with the prospect of overcoming white racism in the United States in the wake of the postwar riots and promoted a "Back to Africa" movement. To return African Americans to a presumably more welcoming home in Africa, Garvey founded the **Black Star Steamship Line**. He also started the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which attracted thousands of primarily lower-income working people. UNIA members wore colorful uniforms and promoted the doctrine of a "negritude" that reversed the color hierarchy of white supremacy, prizing blackness and identifying light skin as a mark of inferiority. Intellectual leaders like Du Bois, whose lighter skin put him low on Garvey's social order, considered the UNIA leader a charlatan. Garvey was eventually imprisoned for mail fraud and then deported, but his legacy set the stage for Malcolm X and the Black Power movement of the 1960s.

## Prohibition

At precisely the same time that African Americans and women were experimenting with new forms of social expression, the country as a whole was undergoing a process of austere and dramatic social reform in the form of alcohol prohibition. After decades of organizing to reduce or end the consumption of alcohol in the United States, temperance groups and the Anti-Saloon League finally succeeded in pushing through the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, which banned the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors (Figure 1.1.4). The law proved difficult to enforce, as illegal alcohol soon poured in from Canada and the Caribbean, and rural Americans resorted to home-brewed "moonshine." The result was an eroding of respect for law and order, as many people continued to drink illegal liquor. Rather than bringing about an age of sobriety, as Progressive reformers had hoped, it gave rise to a new subculture that included illegal importers, interstate smuggling (or bootlegging), clandestine saloons referred to as "speakeasies," hipflasks, cocktail parties, and the organized crime of trafficking liquor.



(a) (b)

Figure 8.2.4: While forces of law and order confiscated and discarded alcohol when they found it (a), consumers found ingenious ways of hiding liquor during prohibition, such as this cane that served as a flask (b).

Prohibition also revealed deep political divisions in the nation. The Democratic Party found itself deeply divided between urban, northern "wets" who hated the idea of abstinence, and rural, southern "dries" who favored the amendment. This divided the party and opened the door for the Republican Party to gain ascendancy in the 1920s. All politicians, including Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, Robert La Follette, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, equivocated in their support for the law. Publicly, they catered to the Anti-Saloon League; however, they failed to provide funding for enforcement.

Prohibition sparked a rise in organized crime. "Scarface" Al Capone (Figure 1.1.5) ran an extensive bootlegging and criminal operation known as the Chicago Outfit or Chicago mafia. By 1927, Capone's organization included a number of illegal activities including bootlegging, prostitution, gambling, loan sharking, and even murder. His operation was earning him more than $100 million annually, and many local police were on his payroll. Although he did not have a monopoly on crime, his organizational structure was better than many other criminals of his era. His liquor trafficking business and his Chicago soup kitchens during the Great Depression led some Americans to liken Capone to a modern-day Robin Hood. Still, Capone was eventually imprisoned

for eleven years for tax evasion, including a stint in California's notorious Alcatraz prison.




Figure 8.2.5: Al Capone, pictured here in his U.S. Department of Justice mug shot, was convicted of tax fraud and sent to prison in 1931.

## The Lost Generation

As the country struggled with the effects and side-effects of prohibition, many young intellectuals endeavored to come to grips with a lingering sense of disillusionment. World War I, fundamentalism, and the Red Scare—a pervasive American fear of Communist infiltrators prompted by the success of the Bolshevik Revolution—all left their mark on these intellectuals. Known as the Lost Generation, writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, Edith Wharton, and John Dos Passos expressed their hopelessness and despair by skewering the middle class in their work. They felt alienated from society, so they tried to escape (some literally) to criticize it. Many lived an expatriate life in Paris for the decade, although others went to Rome or Berlin.

The Lost Generation writer that best exemplifies the mood of the 1920s was F. Scott Fitzgerald, now considered one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century. His debut novel, *This Side of Paradise*, describes a generation of youth "grown up to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faith in man shaken." *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, exposed the doom that always follows the fun, fast-lived life. Fitzgerald depicted the modern millionaire Jay Gatsby living a profligate life: unscrupulous, coarse, and in love with another man's wife. Both Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda lived this life as well, squandering the money he made from his writing.

### MY STORY: F. SCOTT FITZGERALD ON THE 1920S

In the 1920s, Fitzgerald was one of the most celebrated authors of his day, publishing *This Side of Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, and *The Great Gatsby* in quick succession. However, his profligate lifestyle with his wife Zelda sapped their funds, and Fitzgerald had to struggle to maintain their lavish lifestyle. Below is an excerpt from "The Crack-Up," a personal essay by Fitzgerald originally published in *Esquire* in which he describes his "good life" during the 1920s.

> It seemed a romantic business to be a successful literary man—you were not ever going to be as famous as a movie star but what note you had was probably longer-lived; you were never going to have the power of a man of strong political or religious convictions but you were certainly more independent. Of course within the practice of your trade you were forever unsatisfied—but I, for one, would not have chosen any other.
>
> As the Twenties passed, with my own twenties marching a little ahead of them, my two juvenile regrets—at not being big enough (or good enough) to play football in college, and at not getting overseas during the war—resolved themselves into childish waking dreams of imaginary heroism that were good enough to go to sleep on in restless nights. The big problems of life seemed to solve themselves, and if the business of fixing them was difficult, it made one too tired to think of more general problems.
>
> —F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Crack-Up," 1936

How does Fitzgerald describe his life in the 1920s? How did his interpretation reflect the reality of the decade?

Equally idiosyncratic and disillusioned was writer Ernest Hemingway (Figure 1.1.6). He lived a peripatetic and adventurous lifestyle in Europe, Cuba, and Africa, working as an ambulance driver in Italy during World War I and traveling to Spain in the 1930s to cover the civil war there. His experiences of war and tragedy stuck with him, emerging in colorful scenes in his novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). In 1952, his novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, won the Pulitzer Prize. Two years later, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature for this book and his overall influence on contemporary style.



Figure 8.2.6: Ernest Hemingway was one of the most prominent members of the Lost Generation who went to live as expatriates in Europe during the 1920s.

EXPLORE

Listen to an audio of Hemingway's Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

Not all Lost Generation writers were like Fitzgerald or Hemingway. The writing of Sinclair Lewis, rather than expressing a defined disillusionment, was more influenced by the Progressivism of the previous generation. In *Babbitt* (1922), he examined the "sheep following the herd" mentality that conformity promoted. He satirized American middle-class life as pleasure-seeking and mindless. Similarly, writer Edith Wharton celebrated life in old New York, a vanished society, in *The Age of Innocence*, in 1920. Wharton came from a very wealthy, socialite family in New York, where she was educated by tutors and never attended college. She lived for many years in Europe; during the Great War, she worked in Paris helping women establish businesses.

## Section Summary

Different groups reacted to the upheavals of the 1920s in different ways. Some people, especially young urbanites, embraced the new amusements and social venues of the decade. Women found new opportunities for professional and political advancement, as well as new models of sexual liberation; however, the women's rights movement began to wane with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. For black artists of the Harlem Renaissance, the decade was marked less by leisure and consumption than by creativity and purpose. African American leaders like Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. Du Bois responded to the retrenched racism of the time with different campaigns for civil rights and black empowerment. Others, like the writers of the Lost Generation, reveled in exposing the hypocrisies and shallowness of mainstream middle-class culture. Meanwhile, the passage of prohibition served to increase the illegal production of alcohol and led to a rise in organized crime.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The popularization of which psychologist's ideas encouraged the new morality of the 1920s?
   a. Sigmund Freud
   b. Alice Paul
   c. W. E. B. Du Bois
   d. Margaret Sanger
2. Which amendment did Alice Paul promote to end gender discrimination?
   a. Prohibition Amendment
   b. Equal Rights Amendment
   c. Sheppard-Towner Amendment
   d. Free Exercise Amendment
3. Which novel of the era satirized the conformity of the American middle class?
   a. *This Side of Paradise*
   b. *The Sun Also Rises*
   c. *A Farewell to Arms*
   d. *Babbitt*
4. Why did the prohibition amendment fail after its adoption in 1919?
5. What was the Harlem Renaissance, and who were some of the most famous participants?

*Answer available at the end of this section.*

## GLOSSARY

*bootlegging available at the end of this section.*

*expatriate available at the end of this section.*

*flapper available at the end of this section.*

*Lost Generation available at the end of this section.*

*Negro nationalism available at the end of this section.*

*new morality available at the end of this section.*

## Answers

**REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. a
2. b
3. d
4. The prohibition amendment failed due to its infeasibility. It lacked both public support and funds for its enforcement. It also lessened Americans' respect for law and order, and sparked a rise in unlawful activities, such as illegal alcohol production and organized crime.
5. The Harlem Renaissance was a rediscovery and celebration of black culture and race pride. Within this context, black literature and art flourished. Writers such as Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston created fiction and poetry that spoke directly to the experiences of black Americans. Meanwhile, black scholars and political leaders, such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, created new social and political ideologies and defined a distinct national identity for African Americans.

**GLOSSARY**

a nineteenth-century term for the illegal transport of alcoholic beverages that became popular during prohibition

**GLOSSARY**

someone who lives outside of their home country

**GLOSSARY**

a young, modern woman who embraced the new morality and fashions of the Jazz Age

**GLOSSARY**

a group of writers who came of age during World War I and expressed their disillusionment with the era

**GLOSSARY**

the notion that African Americans had a distinct and separate national heritage that should inspire pride and a sense of community

**GLOSSARY**

the more permissive mores adopted my many young people in the 1920s

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# 8.3: The Slavery Controversy and Abolitionist Literature

**Learning Objectives**

After completing this section, you should be able to:

- Summarize the ways that Africans resisted slavery, the impact of that resistance, who was involved in anti-slavery movements, and the arguments they used to advance their cause
- Explain how slavery related to ideas of manifest destiny, the Western expansion, and the Mexican-American War
- Define the key abolitionist arguments of Garrison, Walker, and Mott, and distinguish their approaches from one another
- List the chief features of the slave narrative as a literary genre
- Distinguish similarities and differences between Douglass' and Jacobs' slave narratives, analyzing the roles gender and genre play in those distinctions
- Identify key turning points in Douglass' account of achieving freedom
- Outline the ways that Jacobs appealed specifically to women readers in the North
- Describe Stowe's appeal to her readers in *Uncle Tom*'s *Cabin* and formulate hypotheses to explain its incredible popularity despite stereotypical representations of women and African Americans
- Analyze the role of Christianity, motherhood, and racialist representations in the antislavery arguments of *Uncle Tom*'s *Cabin*

## Slavery and the Debate over Abolition

### Resistance and Abolition

Consider these questions as you read: In what ways did Africans resist slavery, and what was the impact of this resistance? Who was involved in anti-slavery movements, and how did the sentiment spread? What arguments did anti-slavery movements use to advance their cause?

Resistance to slavery came in many forms, all of which contributed to the abolition of slavery as an institution in the Americas in the second half of the nineteenth century. There were two main arms of resistance: that of slaves themselves and that of abolitionists, whose calls for the end of slavery became louder and more forceful beginning in the last two decades of the eighteenth century.

Africans resisted slavery in several ways. First, they adopted defensive measures in their own villages to elude capture by slavers. Second, they launched attacks on the crews aboard slave ships. Slavers' reports document over 400 such attacks, but scholars believe there were many more. Third, once ashore, Africans ran away, sometimes establishing Maroon communities. Maroon communities, such as those in Suriname and Jamaica, and the Republic of Palmares in Brazil, warred with white settlers throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Fourth, African slaves revolted on the very lands on which they were enslaved. The first slave revolt in the Americas we know of occurred in 1522 on the island of Hispaniola. This revolt, like most that would follow in the next 250 years, was quickly put down. During the late eighteenth century, however, the Americas saw an increase in slave revolts, especially in the French Caribbean. The French and Haitian Revolutions, which began in 1789 and 1791 respectively, largely inspired these revolts. Both revolutions were fought in the name of natural rights and the equality of men, ideas not lost on those who remained enslaved in the French colonial world. The French revolutionary government even abolished slavery in its colonies, although this did not last for very long, as slavery was soon reinstated during the reign of Napoleon. Slave revolts continued into the nineteenth century in British and Spanish Caribbean colonies. A revolt on the British-controlled island of Barbados in 1816 involved 20,000 slaves from over seventy plantations.

In 1831, a slave revolt in Virginia led by Nat Turner, although small in comparison with other slave revolts of the same period, became a symbol for slaveholders in the U.S. of the danger posed by abolition. For others, however, two decades of increased slave unrest supported calls for the end of slavery. These were the individuals involved in anti-slavery movements, which began gaining substantial ground with public opinion beginning in the 1780s. The anti-slavery movement was perhaps strongest in Britain, where member of Parliament William Wilberforce led anti-slavery campaigns from the 1780s onwards. Evangelical Protestant Christians joined him. These campaigns led to thousands of petitions to end slavery between the 1780s and 1830s.

The slave trade was anti-slavery's first target and in 1787 the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was established in Britain. Wilberforce and evangelical Protestants saw slavery and slaveholders as evil. So, too, did the Quakers (or the Society of Friends). On both sides of the Atlantic, Quakers attacked slavery as immoral and prohibited their members from owning slaves or being involved in any part of the slave trade.

In addition to these moral attacks on slavery, Enlightenment thinkers attacked slavery on philosophical grounds. French Enlightenment philosophers such as Montesquieu argued that slavery went against the natural rights of man. During the French Revolution, members of the Society of the Friends of Blacks, which originated among Enlightenment thinkers, joined with free blacks from the Caribbean colonies living in France, who organized the Society of Colored Citizens, to advocate for equal rights for free people of color and the end of slavery. The anti-slavery movement scored a victory in 1807 when the United States and then Britain signed bills to end their nations' involvement in the slave trade. Many in the anti-slavery movement believed this was the first step to abolishing slavery as an institution.

## The Library of Congress: "Abolition, Anti-Slavery Movements, and the Rise of the Sectional Controversy"

To better understand abolition, antislavery movements, and the rise of the sectional controversy, read this text, which provides a short overview of abolition with related images from the Library of Congress.

Black and white abolitionists in the first half of the nineteenth century waged a biracial assault against slavery. Their efforts proved to be extremely effective. Abolitionists focused attention on slavery and made it difficult to ignore. They heightened the rift that had threatened to destroy the unity of the nation even as early as the Constitutional Convention.

Although some Quakers were slaveholders, members of that religious group were among the earliest to protest the African slave trade, the perpetual bondage of its captives, and the practice of separating enslaved family members by sale to different masters.

As the nineteenth century progressed, many abolitionists united to form numerous antislavery societies. These groups sent petitions with thousands of signatures to Congress, held abolition meetings and conferences, boycotted products made with slave labor, printed mountains of literature, and gave innumerable speeches for their cause. Individual abolitionists sometimes advocated violent means for bringing slavery to an end.

Although black and white abolitionists often worked together, by the 1840s they differed in philosophy and method. While many white abolitionists focused only on slavery, black Americans tended to couple anti-slavery activities with demands for racial equality and justice.

## Anti-Slavery Activists

### Christian Arguments Against Slavery

Benjamin Lay, a Quaker who saw slavery as a "notorious sin", addresses this 1737 volume to those who "pretend to lay claim to the pure and holy Christian religion". Although some Quakers held slaves, no religious group was more outspoken against slavery from the seventeenth century until slavery's demise. Quaker petitions on behalf of the emancipation of African Americans flowed into colonial legislatures and later to the United States Congress.

Figure 8.3.1: Benjamin Lay. *All Slave Keepers that Keep the Innocent in Bondage* . . . . Philadelphia: Printed for the Author, 1737. Franklin Collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-22)

### Plea for the Suppression of the Slave Trade

In this plea for the abolition of the slave trade, Anthony Benezet, a Quaker of French Huguenot descent, pointed out that if buyers did not demand slaves, the supply would end. "Without purchasers", he argued, "there would be no trade; and consequently every purchaser as he encourages the trade, becomes partaker in the guilt of it". He contended that guilt existed on both sides of the Atlantic. There are Africans, he alleged, "who will sell their own children, kindred, or neighbors". Benezet also used the biblical maxim, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", to justify ending slavery. Insisting that emancipation alone would not solve the problems of people of color, Benezet opened schools to prepare them for more productive lives.

Figure 8.3.2: Anthony Benezet. *Observations on the Inslaving, Importing and Purchasing of Negroes*. Germantown, Pennsylvania: Christopher Sower, 1760. American Imprints Collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-1)

## The Conflict Between Christianity and Slavery

Connecticut theologian Jonathan Edwards, born 1745, echoes Benezet's use of the Golden Rule as well as the natural rights arguments of the Revolutionary era to justify the abolition of slavery. In this printed version of his 1791 sermon to a local anti-slavery group, he notes the progress toward abolition in the North and predicts that through vigilant efforts slavery would be extinguished in the next fifty years.

Figure 8.3.3: Jonathan Edwards, D.D. *The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade and of the Slavery of Africans . . . A Sermon*. New Haven, Connecticut: Thomas and Samuel Green, 1791. Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-2)

## Sojourner Truth

Abolitionist and women's rights advocate Sojourner Truth was enslaved in New York until she was an adult. Born Isabella Baumfree around the turn of the nineteenth century, her first language was Dutch. Owned by a series of masters, she was freed in 1827 by the New York Gradual Abolition Act and worked as a domestic. In 1843 she believed that she was called by God to travel around the nation--sojourn--and preach the truth of his word. Thus, she believed God gave her the name, Sojourner Truth. One of the ways that she supported her work was selling these calling cards.

Figure 8.3.4: Sojourner Truth. Portrait. Carte de visite, 1864. Gladstone Collection, Prints and Photographs Division. Reproduction Number: LC-USZC4-6166 (3-11a)

Figure 8.3.5: Sojourner Truth. Carte de visite (seated), 1864. Gladstone Collection, Prints and Photographs Division. Reproduction Number: LC-USZC4-6165 (3-11b) **Woman to Woman**

Figure 8.3.6: *The Negro Woman's Appeal to Her White Sisters*. [London]: Richard Barrett, [1850]. Broadside. Printed Ephemera Collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-12)

Ye wives and ye mothers, your influence extend--
Ye sisters, ye daughters, the helpless defend--
The strong ties are severed for one crime alone,
Possessing a colour less fair than your own.

Abolitionists understood the power of pictorial representations in drawing support for the cause of emancipation. As white and black women became more active in the 1830s as lecturers, petitioners, and meeting organizers, variations of this female supplicant motif, appealing for interracial sisterhood, appeared in newspapers, broadsides, and handicraft goods sold at fund-raising fairs.

## Harriet Tubman--the Moses of Her People

The quote below, echoing Patrick Henry, is from this biography of underground railroad conductor Harriet Tubman:

*Harriet was now left alone, . . . She turned her face toward the north, and fixing her eyes on the guiding star, and committing her way unto the Lord, she started again upon her long, lonely journey. She believed that there were one or two things she had a right to, liberty or death.*

After making her own escape, Tubman returned to the South nineteen times to bring over three hundred fugitives to safety, including her own aged parents.

In a handwritten note on the title page of this book, Susan B. Anthony, who was an abolitionist as well as a suffragist, referred to Tubman as a "most wonderful woman".

Figure 8.3.7: Sarah H. Bradford. *Harriet, the Moses of Her People*. New York: J. J. Little & Co., 1901. Susan B. Anthony Collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-21)

## Increasing Tide of Anti-slavery Organizations

In 1833, sixty abolitionist leaders from ten states met in Philadelphia to create a national organization to bring about immediate emancipation of all slaves. The American Anti-slavery Society elected officers and adopted a constitution and declaration. Drafted by William Lloyd Garrison, the declaration pledged its members to work for emancipation through non-violent actions of "moral suasion", or "the overthrow of prejudice by the power of love". The society encouraged public lectures, publications, civil disobedience, and the boycott of cotton and other slave-manufactured products.

Figure 8.3.8: Declaration of the Anti-Slavery Convention.Philadelphia, December 4, 1833. Broadside. Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-3)

## William Lloyd Garrison--Abolitionist Strategies

White abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, born in 1805, had a particular fondness for poetry, which he believed to be "naturally and instinctively on the side of liberty". He used verse as a vehicle for enhancing anti-slavery sentiment. Garrison collected his work in Sonnets and Other Poems (1843).

Figure 8.3.9: William L. Garrison. "Sonnet to Liberty" Manuscript, December 14, 1840. Manuscript Division. (3-19a)

During the 1840s, abolitionist societies used song to stir up enthusiasm at their meetings. To make songs easier to learn, new words were set to familiar tunes. This song by William Lloyd Garrison has six stanzas set to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne".

Figure 8.3.10: William L. Garrison. "Song of the Abolitionist" November 10, 1841. Manuscript Division. (3-19b)

# Popularizing Anti-Slavery Sentiment

## Slave Stealer Branded

Massachusetts sea captain Jonathan Walker, born in 1790, was apprehended off the coast of Florida for attempting to carry slaves who were members of his church denomination to freedom in the Bahamas in 1844. He was jailed for more than a year and branded with the letters "S.S." for slave stealer. The abolitionist poet John Greenleaf Whittier immortalized Walker's deed in this often reprinted verse: "Then lift that manly right hand, bold ploughman of the wave! Its branded palm shall prophesy, 'Salvation to the Slave!'"

Figure 8.3.11: John G. Whittier. "The Branded Hand" Philadelphia, ca. 1845. Leaflet. Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-15)

## Abolitionist Songsters

George W. Clark's, The Liberty Minstrel, is an exception among songsters in having music as well as words. "Minstrel" in the title has its earlier meaning of "wandering singer". Clark, a white musician, wrote some of the music himself; most of it, however, consists of well-known melodies to which anti-slavery words have been written. The book is open to a page containing lyrics to the tune of "Near the Lake", which appeared earlier in this exhibit (section 1, item 22) as "Long Time Ago". Note that there is an anti-slavery poem on the right-hand page. Like many songsters, The Liberty Minstrel contains an occasional poem.

Figure 8.3.12: George W. Clark. *The Liberty Minstrel*. New York: Leavitt & Alden [et al.], 1844. Music Division. (3-17)

## Abolitionist Songsters

Music was one of the most powerful weapons of the abolitionists. In 1848, William Wells Brown, abolitionist and former slave, published The *Anti-Slavery Harp* , "a collection of songs for anti-slavery meetings", which contains songs and occasional poems. The *Anti-Slavery Harp* is in the format of a "songster"--giving the lyrics and indicating the tunes to which they are to be sung, but with no music. The book is open to the pages containing lyrics to the tune of the "Marseillaise", the French national anthem, which to 19th-century Americans symbolized the determination to bring about freedom, by force if necessary.

Figure 8.3.13: *The Anti-Slavery Harp: A Collection of Songs for Anti-slavery Meetings*. Compiled by William Wells Brown. Boston: Bela Marsh, 1848. Music Division. (3-16)

### Suffer the Children

This abolitionist tract, distributed by the Sunday School Union, uses actual life stories about slave children separated from their parents or mistreated by their masters to excite the sympathy of free children. Vivid illustrations help to reinforce the message that black children should have the same rights as white children, and that holding humans as property is "a sin against God".

Figure 8.3.14: *The Child's Anti-Slavery Book: Containing a Few Words about American Slave Children. . . .* New York: Carlton and Porter, 1859. Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-13)

## Fugitive Slave Law

### North to Canada

In the wake of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which forced Northern law enforcement officers to aid in the recapture of runaways, more than ten thousand fugitive slaves swelled the flood of those fleeing to Canada. The Colonial Church and School Society established mission schools in western Canada, particularly for children of fugitive slaves but open to all. The school's Mistress Williams notes that their success proves the "feasibility of educating together white and colored children". While primarily focusing on spiritual and secular educational operations, the report reproduces letters of thanks for food, clothing, shoes, and books sent from England. This early photograph accompanied one such letter to the children of St. Matthew's School, Bristol.

Figure 8.3.15: *Mission to Fugitive Slaves in Canada: Being a Branch of the Operations of the Colonial Church and School Society . . . 1858-9*. [London]: Society's Offices, 1859. Pamphlet. Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-4a)

Figure 8.3.16: *Mission to Fugitive Slaves in Canada: Being a Branch of the Operations of the Colonial Church and School Society . . . 1858-9*. [London]: Society's Offices, 1859. Copyprint. Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-4b)

### The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850

This controversial law allowed slave-hunters to seize alleged fugitive slaves without due process of law and prohibited anyone from aiding escaped fugitives or obstructing their recovery. Because it was often presumed that a black person was a slave, the law threatened the safety of all blacks, slave and free, and forced many Northerners to become more defiant in their support of fugitives. S. M. Africanus presents objections in prose and verse to justify noncompliance with this law.

Figure 8.3.17: S. M. Africanus. *The Fugitive Slave Law*. Hartford, Connecticut, 1850. Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-5)

### Anthony Burns--Capture of A Fugitive Slave

This is a portrait of fugitive slave Anthony Burns, whose arrest and trial in Boston under the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 incited riots and protests by white and black abolitionists and citizens of Boston in the spring of 1854. The portrait is surrounded by scenes from his life, including his sale on the auction block, escape from Richmond, Virginia, capture and imprisonment in Boston, and his return to a vessel to transport him to the South. Within a year after his capture, abolitionists were able to raise enough money to purchase Burns's freedom.

Figure 8.3.18: *Anthony Burns*. Boston: R. M. Edwards, 1855. Wood engraving with letterpress. Prints and Photographs Division. Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-90750 (3-9)

## Growing Sectionalism

### Antebellum Map Showing the Free and Slave States

The growing sectionalism that was dividing the nation during the late antebellum years is documented graphically with this political map of the United States, published in 1856. Designed to portray and compare the areas of free and slave states,

it also includes tables of statistics for each of the states from the 1850 census, the results of the 1852 presidential election, congressional representation by state, and the number of slaves held by owners. The map is also embellished with portraits of John C. Fremont and William L. Dayton, the 1856 presidential and vice-presidential candidates of the newly organized Republican Party, which advocated an anti-slavery platform.

Figure 8.3.19: William Reynolds. *Reynolds's Political Map of the United States* . . . . New York: Wm. C. Reynolds, 1856. Geography and Map Division. (3-20)

### Distribution of Slaves

Although the Southern states were known collectively as the "slave states" by the end of the Antebellum Period, this map provides statistical evidence to demonstrate that slaves were not evenly distributed throughout each state or the region as a whole. Using data from the 1860 census, the map shows, by county, the percentage of slave population to the whole population. Tables also list population and area for both Southern and Northern states, while an inset map shows the extent of cotton, rice, and sugar cultivation. Another version of this map was published with Daniel Lord's *The Effect of Secession upon the Commercial Relations between the North and South, and upon Each Section* (New York, 1861), a series of articles reprinted from The New York Times.

Figure 8.3.20: Adolph von Steinwehr. *Map Showing the Distribution of Slaves in the Southern States*, [n. p., n. d.]. Printed Map. Geography and Map Division. (3-14)

## Militant Abolition

### John Brown's Raid

More than twenty years after the militant abolitionist John Brown had consecrated his life to the destruction of slavery, his crusade ended in October 1859 with his ill-fated attempt to seize the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in western Virginia. He hoped to take the weapons from the arsenal and arm the slaves, who would then overthrow their masters and establish a free state for themselves.

Convicted of treason and sentenced to death, Brown maintained to the end that he intended only to free the slaves, not to incite insurrection. His zeal, courage, and willingness to die for the slaves made him a martyr and a bellwether of the violence soon to consume the country during the Civil War.

Figure 8.3.21: John Brown. *Address of John Brown . . . Sentence of Death; For his heroic attempt at Harpers Ferry.* . . . Boston: C.C. Mead. Broadside. Rare Book and Special Collections Division. (3-6)

### Frederick Douglass on John Brown

The friendship of Frederick Douglass and John Brown began in 1848, when Douglass visited Brown's home in Springfield, Massachusetts. Brown confided to Douglass his ambitious scheme to free the slaves. Over the next eleven years, Brown sought Douglass's counsel and support.

Figure 8.3.22: Frederick Douglass. "A Lecture on John Brown" Typescript, 1860. Frederick Douglass Papers, Manuscript Division. (3-8a)

Figure 8.3.23: Frederick Douglass. "A Lecture on John Brown" Autograph corrections and drafts, 1860. Frederick Douglass Papers, Manuscript Division. (3-8b)

In August 1859 Brown made a final plea to Douglass to join the raid on Harpers Ferry. Douglass refused. After Brown's capture, federal marshals issued a warrant for Douglass's arrest as an accomplice. Douglass fled abroad. When he returned five months later to mourn the death of his youngest daughter Annie, he had been exonerated. Douglass wrote this lecture as a tribute to "a hero and martyr in the cause of liberty".

# "The Book That Made This Great War"

## Harriet Beecher Stowe's Mighty Pen

Harriet Beecher Stowe is best remembered as the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, her first novel, published as a serial in 1851 and then in book form in 1852. This book infuriated Southerners. It focused on the cruelties of slavery--particularly the separation of family members--and brought instant acclaim to Stowe. After its publication, Stowe traveled throughout the United States and Europe speaking against slavery. She reported that upon meeting President Lincoln, he remarked, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war".

Figure 8.3.24: *Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Copyprint. Published by Johnson, Fry & Co., 1872, after Alonzo Chappel. Prints and Photographs Division. Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-10476 (3-18)

## Uncle Tom's Cabin--Theatrical Productions

This poster for a production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* features the Garden City Quartette under the direction of Tom Dailey and George W. Goodhart. Many stage productions of Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous novel have been performed in various parts of the country since *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was first published as a serial in 1851. Although the major actors were usually white, people of color were sometimes part of the cast. African American performers were often allowed only stereotypical roles--if any--in productions by major companies.

Figure 8.3.25: *Palmer's Uncle Tom's Cabin Co.*, 1882, no. 11 Buffalo, N.Y.: Courier Litho. Co., ca. 1899. Prints and Photographs Division. Reproduction Number: LC-USZC4-6171 (3-10)

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# 8.4: The Church in the Southern Black Community

The collection of documents brought together in this project begins to tell the story of the growth of Protestant religion among African Americans during the nineteenth century, and of the birth of what came to be known as the "Black Church" in the United States. This development continues to have enormous political, spiritual, and economic consequences. But perhaps what is most apparent in these texts is the diversity of ways in which that religious tradition was envisioned, experienced, and implemented. From the white Baptist and Methodist missionaries sent to convert enslaved Africans, to the earliest pioneers of the independent black denominations, to black missionaries in Africa, to the eloquent rhetoric of W.E.B. DuBois, the story of the black church is a tale of variety and struggle in the midst of constant racism and oppression. It is also a story of constant change, and of the coincidence of cultural cohesion among enslaved Africans and the introduction of Protestant evangelicalism to their communities.

## The Church During Slavery

For our purposes, the account begins in the decades after the American Revolution, as Northern states gradually began to abolish slavery. As a result, sharper differences emerged between the experiences of enslaved peoples in the South and those Northerners who were now relatively free. By 1810 the slave trade to the United States had come to an end and the slave population began to increase naturally, giving rise to an increasingly large native-born population of African Americans. With fewer migrants who had experienced Africa personally, these transformations allowed the myriad cultures and language groups of enslaved Africans to blend together, making way for the preservation and transmission of religious practices that were increasingly "African-American."

This transition coincided with the period of intense religious revivalism known as "awakenings." In the Southern states beginning in the 1770s, increasing numbers of slaves converted to evangelical religions such as the Methodist and Baptist faiths. Many clergy within these denominations actively promoted the idea that all Christians were equal in the sight of God, a message that provided hope and sustenance to the slaves. They also encouraged worship in ways that many Africans found to be similar, or at least adaptable, to African worship patterns, with enthusiastic singing, clapping, dancing, and even spirit-possession. Still, many white owners and clergy preached a message of strict obedience, and insisted on slave attendance at white-controlled churches, since they were fearful that if slaves were allowed to worship independently they would ultimately plot rebellion against their owners. It is clear that many blacks saw these white churches, in which ministers promoted obedience to one's master as the highest religious ideal, as a mockery of the "true" Christian message of equality and liberation as they knew it.

In the slave quarters, however, African Americans organized their own "invisible institution." Through signals, passwords, and messages not discernible to whites, they called believers to "hush harbors" where they freely mixed African rhythms, singing, and beliefs with evangelical Christianity. We have little remaining written record of these religious gatherings. But it was here that the spirituals, with their double meanings of religious salvation and freedom from slavery, developed and flourished; and here, too, that black preachers, those who believed that God had called them to speak his Word, polished their "chanted sermons," or rhythmic, intoned style of extemporaneous preaching. Part church, part psychological refuge, and part organizing point for occasional acts of outright rebellion (Nat Turner, whose armed insurrection in Virginia in 1831 resulted in the deaths of scores of white men, women, and children, was a self-styled Baptist preacher), these meetings provided one of the few ways for enslaved African Americans to express and enact their hopes for a better future.

## Emancipation

Emancipation from slavery in 1863 posed distinctive religious challenges for African Americans in the South. When the Civil War finally brought freedom to previously enslaved peoples, the task of organizing religious communities was only one element of the larger need to create new lives--to reunite families, to find jobs, and to figure out what it would mean to live in the United States as citizens rather than property. Northern blacks, having already gained freedom, wanted to bring their nascent black churches to their freed Southern brethren. Yet they saw Emancipation as an enormous logistical challenge: how could black Protestants meet the many needs of newly freed slaves and truly welcome them into a Christian community? For both Southern and Northern blacks, Emancipation promised a meeting between two African-American religious traditions that had moved far apart, in terms of both theology and ritual, in the previous seventy years. In significant respects, the story of African-American religion between Emancipation and the Northern migration that began just prior to World War I is a tale of regionally distinctive communities that found several areas of common cause, not the least of which were the advent of Jim Crow and lynching as ominous new forms of racism.

A long history of antislavery and political activity among Northern black Protestants had convinced them that they could play a major role in the adjustment of the four million freed slaves to American life. In a massive missionary effort, Northern black leaders such as Daniel A. Payne and Theophilus Gould Steward established missions to their Southern counterparts, resulting in the dynamic growth of independent black churches in the Southern states between 1865 and 1900. Predominantly white denominations, such as the Presbyterian, Congregational, and Episcopal churches, also sponsored missions, opened schools for freed slaves, and aided the general welfare of Southern blacks, but the majority of African-Americans chose to join the independent black denominations founded in the Northern states during the antebellum era. Within a decade the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) churches claimed Southern membership in the hundreds of thousands, far outstripping that of any other organizations. They were quickly joined in 1870 by a new Southern-based denomination, the Colored (now "Christian") Methodist Episcopal Church, founded by indigenous Southern black leaders. Finally, in 1894 black Baptists formed the National Baptist Convention, an organization that is currently the largest black religious organization in the United States.

## Growth and Development of the Church

In many ways, this missionary effort was enormously successful. It helped finance and build new churches and schools, it facilitated a remarkable increase in Southern black literacy (from 5% in 1870 to approximately 70% by 1900), and, as had been the case in the North, it promoted the rise of many African American leaders who worked well outside the sphere of the church in politics, education, and other professions. But it also created tensions between Northerners, who saw themselves in many respects as the superiors and mentors of their less fortunate Southern brethren, and Southerners, who had their own ideas about how to worship, work, and live. Not all ex-slaves welcomed the "help" of the Northerners, black or white, particularly because most Northern blacks (like whites) saw Southern black worship as hopelessly "heathen." Missionaries like Daniel Payne, an AME bishop, took t as their task to educate Southern blacks about what "true" Christianity looked like; they wanted to convince ex-slaves to give up any remnants of African practices (such as drumming, dancing, or moaning) and embrace a more sedate, intellectual style of religion. Educational differences played a role in this tension as well: Southern blacks, most of whom had been forbidden from learning to read, saw religion as a matter of oral tradition and immediate experience and emotion; Northerners, however, stressed that one could not truly be Christian unless one was able to read the Bible and understand the creeds and written literature that accompanied a more textually-oriented religious system.

Freedom also brought with it opportunities for self-improvement and "getting ahead," and differences of class and location also fostered different kinds of religious practices and beliefs. Gradually, Southern religious life became as variegated as that in the North, with Protestant churches to suit a variety of styles. Generally, poorer and more rural churches tended to cling more tenaciously to older customs, and to more experiential forms of worship, and since the vast majority of Southern blacks remained in rural areas, many of the traditions inherited from the "hush harbors" of slavery--including root work, chanted preaching, and particularly musical styles--remained a part of church life. In Southern cities, as the numbers of educated and middle-class African Americans grew, so too did the interest in a more codified and uniform religious experience like that of the North.

Meanwhile, African American religion in urban areas of the South also changed dramatically, particularly after the 1880s. Here, issues of class predominated, as middle-class blacks began to build a religious life much like that of their white counterparts: the AME Church, in particular, was noted for its large, formal churches, its educational network of schools and colleges, and its vast publishing arm that included several publications by the end of the century. Black religious leaders became involved in some of the interdenominational institutions, such as the YMCA and the Sunday School movement, that were the bulwarks of evangelical life at the turn of the twentieth century. Yet unlike white evangelical leaders of the day, who were also engaged in theological battles about biblical history and interpretation, middle-class blacks kept their eyes trained toward the basic social injustices wrought by American racism. This battle, which had steadily worsened after the 1870s, promoted a degree of political unity among black Protestant groups that, at times, outweighed their many differences.

# Women in the Church

Yet there were some internal tensions. With the emergence of middle-class membership came issues about women's participation in the church, as some black women now had the relative leisure to look beyond the immediacies of life. Several female leaders in this era raised the issue of women's ordination, only to be rebuffed by the male hierarchy. Instead, women formed missionary societies to address all manner of local and international needs, from the support of job training in their communities to funding for African American missionaries to Africa. They worked on urban ills, established reading groups, and advocated for better living conditions. They also wrote for religious periodicals, promoting quite traditional ideals of Victorian womanhood, respectability, and racial uplift. Women also continued work among their less fortunate counterparts in the rural South, in what continued to be an uneasy alliance. Like male religious leaders, too, they protested the creeping effects of Jim Crow laws and the systematic

violence of lynching.

Most significant for us today, these African American church leaders recognized the importance of what they were doing for future generations of Americans. They wrote histories, biographies, memoirs, and other accounts of religious life in the South during this era. It is through these written texts that we still have access to the many voices that comprise the first century of the black church in the United States.

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# 8.5: Explore The Dispersal of Enslaved Africans Across the Atlantic World

The SlaveVoyages website is a collaborative digital initiative that compiles and makes publicly accessible records of the largest slave trades in history. Search these records to learn about the broad origins and forced relocations of more than 12 million African people who were sent across the Atlantic in slave ships, and hundreds of thousands more who were trafficked within the Americas. Explore where they were taken, the numerous rebellions that occurred, the horrific loss of life during the voyages, the identities and nationalities of the perpetrators, and much more.

Vist the SlaveVoyages website here: https://www.slavevoyages.org/

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# 8.6: What was the Harlem Renaissance?

## Introduction

In the introductory module for this course, it was suggested that literature is capable of performing a certain kind of work in the world. One of the ways that literature influences our lives is by providing us with ways of making sense of the complex experiences and challenges that we encounter in daily life.

Literature, like other representational art forms, uses metaphors to make connections between the concrete and the abstract, as well as between the known and the unknown. Metaphors can also be problematic depending upon the way that they are constructed and employed. African American writers such as James Baldwin and Toni Morrison have noted the ways in which the idea of "whiteness" in works of literature came to evoke ideas of safety, purity, and life, whereas images of "blackness" came to represent ideas of danger, uncleanliness, and even death.

These notions of blackness were often transposed onto portrayals of black people in works of fiction by white authors. For example, in his famous novel *Heart of Darkness* , the Polish-British novelist Joseph Conrad uses the image of darkness to describe the jungles surrounding the Congo River. Moreover, in the novel, African people are described with images that present them as beasts. In his critique of Conrad's novel, the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe suggests that the story "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." Nevertheless, Conrad's novel, among other works of English literature, have fundamentally shaped cultural attitudes to the present day.



"Ivory 1880s" by UnknownWikimedia Commons is in the Public Domain, CC0

In this module, we will explore the important cultural, social, and political role that a literary movement like the Harlem Renaissance played in challenging a Western literary tradition that was to a great extent based upon the prejudices and cultural values of Anglo-European society in America. By doing so, we will explore the work that literature can do in helping to reshape the values and beliefs that give rise to the social world that we inhabit. [1]

## What was the Harlem Renaissance?

The Harlem Renaissance was an artistic and political movement among African Americans that originated in the Harlem district of New York City. Although the precise dates are difficult to pinpoint, the period is typically dated from 1920 up to the mid to late 1930s. A number of important social and economic factors contributed to the movement's emergence. Firstly, after World War I, America's northern industrialized cities experienced a severe labor shortage.

At the same time, after a brief period of social and political reform in the South, which took place during the Reconstruction period, life for African Americans grew particularly difficult with the rise of Jim Crow laws and the resurgence of racial violence and segregation. Many African Americans left the South as part of what would become known as the Great Migration, a movement which ultimately led to migration of nearly six million African Americans from the South to the Northeast, and later the Midwest and West. In the Northeast, this mass migration of African Americans led to the emergence of urban cultural centers in Harlem, in addition to parts of Chicago, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis, among others (see Jacob Lawrence's portrayal of the Great Migration in Figure 1).




**Figure 1** — "During World War I there was a great migration north by southern Negroes" by Jacob LawrenceWikimedia Commons is in the Public Domain, CC0

During the more than four centuries of Chattel slavery in America, African Americans were largely denied their own literary culture. Although some slave-owners chose to teach their slaves to read, writing was mainly forbidden. Reading was seen as a useful tool for instruction and religious indoctrination, but writing opened the possibility for slaves to communicate with one another covertly. Nevertheless, African American slaves brought with them a rich literary and artistic heritage that stemmed from the cultures of their ancestral homelands. The Harlem Renaissance was primarily a Modernist literary movement. In an effort to reclaim and to create their own distinct literary tradition, the work of many Harlem Renaissance artists is characterized by a fusion of African folk traditions with aspects of secular southern folkways, as well as aspects of Christianity, including spirituals, gospel music, and biblical imagery. However, other artists were deeply secular and non-traditionalist in their creative outlooks.

The Harlem Renaissance was not even exclusively a literary movement but an artistic movement that encompassed multiple art forms including musical composition, visual arts, and drama (see the silent, black and white documentary film, "Study of Negro Artists" in Figure 2).

*Click on the image to watch the silent film.*

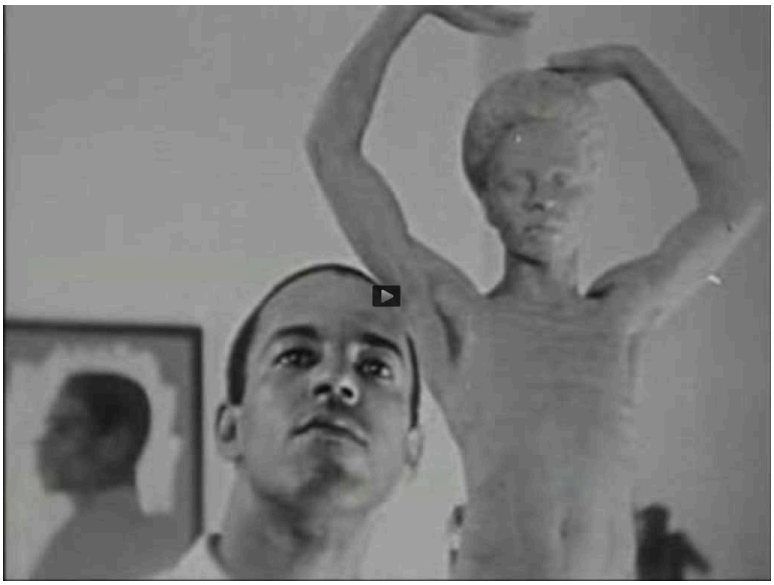


Figure 2 — “Study of Negro Artists”Prelinger Archives is in the Public Domain, CC0

Although it is possible to identify some commonalities among Harlem Renaissance artists and writers, it is also important to emphasize that there was widespread debate among its key writers and thinkers about precisely how African American artists in the early twentieth century should go about creating their work, and many writers did not wish to be associated with any particular artistic movement. [1]

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- During World War I there was a great migration north by southern Negroes. **Authored by**: Jacob Lawrence. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:During_World_War_I_there_was_a_great_migration_north_by_southern_Negroes_-_NARA_-_559091.jpg. **License**: *CC0: No Rights Reserved*

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# 8.7: Importance of the Harlem Renaissance

## Why was the Harlem Renaissance important?

The Harlem Renaissance was important because, aside from the limited role that a few prominent individuals occupied in public life, the voices of African Americans were largely absent from the cultural and political life of America. Writers like Alain Locke maintained that it was necessary for African Americans to demonstrate through their artistic endeavors a shared human experience that transcended racial boundaries. In the 1920s and 30s, America remained a deeply segregated society, even in the more urbanized areas of the Northeast.

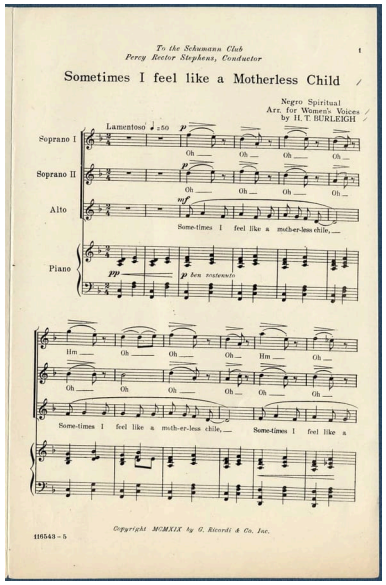
It is important to note that although the right to vote was granted to African Americans through the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, in the South and elsewhere, there was still widespread violence and intimidation which was aimed at disenfranchising black voters. Arguably the political consequences of the Harlem Renaissance were not even apparent until the emergence of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, which is also when there became a renewed scholarly interest in the works of these authors. It would take many more years for the work of Harlem Renaissance writers to become incorporated into literature courses across the country.

By narrating the experiences of African Americans, and by producing a lively literary and artistic movement, the Harlem Renaissance demonstrated the undeniable role that African Americans have played in the formation of America's cultural landscape. But most importantly, hearing the voices of black writers is crucial for understanding the truth of their struggle for the fundamental freedoms that presumably define American life. Speaking of the importance of music in expressing the truth of black experiences of oppression, Anthony Pinn claims that "this struggle is known by and through the body, in the ways in which bodies occupy time and space, and chronicled in a variety of forms including musical production." Moreover, Edward Hirsch suggests that like music, poetry "calls us deeply to each other." The creative power of the voice contends with dehumanizing power of institutionalized racism and oppression. (1)

*Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*

Listen carefully to the emotive quality of the voices singing the spiritual:

(46)




"Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" (notated music) by G. Ricordi.Library of Congress Music Division is in the Public Domain, CC0
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- Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child. **Authored by**: Unknown. **Provided by**: OurMedia - The Sounds of Slavery. **Located at**: https://archive.org/details/TDavidFranklinTheSoundsofSlavery/15__Sometimes_I_Feel_Like_A_Motherless_Child.mp3. **License**: *CC0: No Rights Reserved*

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# 8.8: Video- Civil Rights and the 1950s

In which John Green teaches you about the early days of the Civil Rights movement. By way of providing context for this, John also talks a bit about wider America in the 1950s. The 1950s are a deeply nostalgic period for many Americans, but there is more than a little idealizing going on here. The 1950s were a time of economic expansion, new technologies, and a growing middle class. America was becoming a suburban nation thanks to cookie-cutter housing developments like the Levittowns. While the white working class saw their wages and status improve, the proverbial rising tide wasn't lifting all proverbial ships. A lot of people were excluded from the prosperity of the 1950s. Segregation in housing and education made for some serious inequality for African Americans. As a result, the Civil Rights movement was born. John will talk about the early careers of Martin Luther King, Thurgood Marshall, Rosa Parks, and even Earl Warren. He'll teach you about Brown v Board of Education, and the lesser known Mendez vs Westminster, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and all kinds of other stuff.




A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: http://pb.libretexts.org/al2/?p=208

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- Civil Rights and the 1950s: Crash Course US History #39. **Authored by**: CrashCourse. **Located at**: https://youtu.be/S64zRnnn4Po. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Standard YouTube License

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# 8.9: A Talk to Teachers

 Click the link below to read the article “A Talk to Teachers” by James Baldwin, originally published in *The Saturday Review* in 1961.

“James Baldwin: A Talk to Teachers” from *Flagler Live*.

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- Image of James Baldwin with Marlon Brando and Charlton Heston. **Provided by**: US Information Agency. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heston_Baldwin_Brando_Civil_Rights_March_1963.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

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# 8.10: Video- Get Christie Love



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: http://pb.libretexts.org/al2/?p=212

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- Get Christie Love - Full Length Movie, Blaxploitation with Teresa Graves. **Authored by**: Manic Movies. **Located at**: https://youtu.be/sFDW1h9lLho. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Standard YouTube License

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# 9: MLA REFERENCING


9.1: MLA Documentation and Format

9.2: Introduction to MLA Documentation

9.3: MLA Signal Phrases

9.4: Citing in MLA

9.5: Outcome- Writing Ethically

9.6: Academic Integrity

9.7: Defining Plagiarism

9.8: Avoiding Plagiarism

9.9: Self Check- Writing Ethically

9.10: Readings by H. Morrison

9.11: Activity by H. Morrison


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# 9.1: MLA Documentation and Format

MLA style is the preferred form for documenting research sources in English and other humanities disciplines. The following are general features of MLA style:

- All material borrowed from sources is cited in the text of a paper by the author's name and page number (if available).
- A works-cited list at the end of a paper provides full publication data for each source cited in the text of the paper.
- Additional explanatory information provided by the writer (but not from external sources) goes in either footnotes or endnotes. These notes are optional.

## MLA In-Text Citations

In-text citations feature author names, page numbers, and sometimes titles, depending on what information is available. The Index located in H12 provides a listing of the models that are included below.

1. **One Author**

When you quote, paraphrase, or summarize a source, include the last name of the source's author, if known, in a signal phrase or in parentheses at the end of your sentence. Provide the page or pages on which the original material appeared. Do not include the word *page* or the abbreviations *p.* or *pp.* Use a hyphen [-] to indicate a number range (See Spotlight on ... Citation for more on quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing sources):

> Becker points out that Joe Biden's views on same-sex marriage changed during a personal visit to a family while he was vice president (285-86).
>
> While he was vice president, Joe Biden's views on same-sex marriage changed during a personal visit with a family (Becker 285-86).

2. **Two or more works by the same author**

If you cite two or more works by the same author in your paper, give the title of the specific work in your sentence or a short version of the title in parentheses:

> According to Lewis Thomas in *Lives of a Cell*, many bacteria become dangerous only if they manufacture exotoxins (76).
>
> According to Lewis Thomas, many bacteria become dangerous only if they manufacture exotoxins (*Lives* 76).
>
> Many bacteria become dangerous only if they manufacture exotoxins (Thomas, *Lives* 76).

See Model 18 for how to cite two works by the same author in the works-cited list.

3. **Two authors**

If you cite a work with two authors, include both authors' names in a signal phrase or in parentheses:

> In the preface to *Half the Sky*, Kristof and WuDunn explain their focus on the issues of sex trafficking and sex work, violence against women, and maternal mortality (xxi).
>
> In the preface to *Half the Sky*, the authors explain their focus on the issues of sex trafficking and sex work, violence against women, and maternal mortality (Kristof and WuDunn xxi).

4. **Three or more authors**

For works with more than two authors, give the last name of the first author followed by "et al.":

> Of the survey respondents, twenty-two percent described themselves as concerned about future job prospects (Pronkowski

et al. 9).

5. **Authors with the same last name**

When authors of different sources have the same last name, include their initials:

> Since the legalization of marijuana for recreational use, frequent use among adults has risen (J. T. Greene 21; M. Greene 30).

6. **Organization, government, corporation, or association as author**

When no author is given for a work published by a corporation, a government, an organization, or an association, indicate the group's name in a signal phrase or in parentheses:

> The United States Forest Service describes its mission as "sustain[ing] the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations" (8).

7. **Unknown author**

When the author of a work is unknown, use the work's title in a signal phrase or a shortened version of the title in parentheses and a page number if available. Put quotation marks around article titles, and put book or journal titles in italics:

> In a pointed 2020 editorial, "Don't Let the Games Begin," *The New York Times* argued that college athletic departments should support public health by canceling sports seasons until athletes and the public were vaccinated.

> In a pointed 2020 editorial, *The New York Times* argued that college athletic departments should support public health by canceling sports seasons until athletes and the public were vaccinated ("Don't Let").

8. **Work in more than one volume**

If you cite only one volume of a multivolume work, give the page number in parentheses. If you cite more than one volume of a multivolume work, give the volume number for each citation before the page number, and follow it with a colon and one space:

> Hill notes that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventure of the Dancing Men* was first published in the *Strand Magazine* and later in *Collier's Weekly* (1: 332).

9. **Work with no page or other reference numbers**

When the work has no page numbers, give the author's name in a signal phrase or in parentheses. If the source has paragraph, chapter, or section numbers, use them with the abbreviations *par.*, *ch.*, or *sec.*:

> Chen reports that the number of Americans seeking help with mental health rose during the pandemic that began in 2020. (ch. 2)

> The number of Americans seeking help with mental health rose during the pandemic that began in 2020 (Chen, ch. 2).

For an audio or a video recording, give the start and stop times for the segment you are citing shown on the player in hours (if available), minutes, and seconds:

> It is well known that maternity leave is available in countries around the world, including Norway, which popularized its policy in a comic *YouTube* video showing a pregnant woman on skis announcing the start of her one-year paid leave (01:48-02:07).

10. **One-page work or entire work**

When you cite a work that is one page long or an entire work, such as a book, website, single-page article, tweet, video, or film, you do not need to cite a page or give a reference number:

> In *Da 5 Bloods*, director Spike Lee connects the Civil Rights movement to the war in Vietnam through the music, montages of the era, and characters' stories.

11. **Source quoted in another source (indirect quotation)**

When a quotation or any information in your source is originally from another source, try to track down the original source. If you cannot find it, use the abbreviation "qtd. in":

> The group, which has researched global health including access to food, sounded the alarm about a potential "worldwide food crisis" in the early 2000s (qtd. in Sing 32).

12. **Literacy works**

- Poetry and verse plays
  For poems, provide line numbers for reference, and include *line* or *lines* in the first reference:
  In "The Character," Aphra Behn describes a lovely young woman, starting with her eyes: "Her Eyes all sweet, and languishingly move" (line 4).
  Cite verse plays using act, scene, and line numbers, separated by periods: (*Hamlet* 4.4.31-39)
- Fiction and prose plays
  When citing a prose literary work available in various editions, provide additional information after the page number, such as the chapter, act, or scene number, for readers who may be consulting a different edition. Use a semicolon to separate the page number from this additional information: (331; ch. 5) or (78; act 2).

13. **Two or more works in the same citation**

When you cite more than one work in parentheses, use a semicolon between them:

> Americans who resisted or ignored civil defense are often portrayed as heroic people who chose not to build fallout shelters or as marginalized people who could not afford them (Garrison 57; Mechling and Mechling 109).

14. **Sacred text**

When you cite passages from the Bible or another sacred text such as the Qur'an, give the title of the edition you are consulting the first time you refer to it. Then give the book (abbreviate the title if it is longer than four letters), chapter, and verse, separated by periods:

> Several times in the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus comments on wealth, telling his disciples, "And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (*King James Version*, Matt. 19.24).

## Endnotes and Footnotes

Writers use notes to offer comments, explanations, or additional information that cannot easily be integrated into the rest of a paper. Use notes to cite several sources within a single context if a series of in-text citations will detract from the readability of the text.

### Text with Superscript

The standard ingredients for guacamole include avocados, lemon juice, onion, tomatoes, coriander, salt, and pepper. 1 Hurtado's poem, however, gives this traditional dish a whole new twist.

### Note

1. For variations see Beard 314, Egerton 197, Eckhardt 92, and Kafka 26. Beard's version, which includes olives and green peppers, is the most unusual.

A note may be placed as a footnote at the bottom of the page on which the in-text citation appears or on a separate page of endnotes at the end of the paper. This should be titled "Notes" or "Endnotes" and appear between the last page of the paper and the works-cited list. Include all sources given in notes in the works-cited list.

# MLA Works Cited

Each source cited in the text of your paper refers readers to the list of works cited, a complete list of all the sources you quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. Every source cited in the text of your paper must be included in the works-cited list, and every source in the works-cited list must be cited in the text of your paper.

## Format of the List of Works Cited (MLA)

After the last page of the paper, start a new page with the centered title "Works Cited" at the top. Create an entry for each source using the following guidelines and examples:

- Begin each entry at the left margin, and indent subsequent lines one-half inch. (In Microsoft Word, you can also highlight the entire page when you are finished and select "Hanging" from the Special options on the Indentation section of the Paragraph menu.)
- Alphabetize the entries according to authors' last names. If two or more authors have the same last name, alphabetize by first name or initial. Alphabetize sources with unknown authors by the first word of the title, excluding *a*, *an*, or *the*.
- Double-space the entire page.

## Core Elements (MLA)

Each entry in the list of works cited consists of core elements:

- **Author.** *Who is responsible for the work?*
- **Title.** *What is the work called?*
- **Publication information.** *Where can the work be found so that others can consult it?* Publication information includes the date of publication and any larger work, which MLA calls a "container," in which a shorter work is published, such as a journal, magazine, newspaper, database, streaming service, and so on.
  **A note on access dates.** Although access dates for online sources are not required, MLA acknowledges that an access date can indicate the version of a source you consulted. If you add an access date, place it at the end of the works-cited entry in this format: "Accessed 4 Apr. 2020." Ask your instructors whether they require access dates.

## Authors and Contributors for Books and Articles (MLA)

- **Authors.** Give the author's last name, a comma, the author's first name and any middle name or middle initial, and then a period. For works with more than one author, an organization as an author, or an unknown author, see the models below.
- **Contributors.** People who contributed to the work in addition to the author are called contributors. Refer to them by their role in a phrase such as "adapted by," "directed by," "edited by," "illustrated by," "introduction by," "narrated by," "performance by," and "translated by." (See Models 19, 20, 21, 30, and 58 for examples.)

15. **Book: one author**

Sotomayor, Sonia. *My Beloved World*. Vintage Books, 2013.

16. **Book: two atuhors**

Kristoff, Nicholas D., and Sheryl WuDunn. H*alf the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

17. **Book: three or more authors**

Barlow, David H., et al. *Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach*. 8th ed., Cengage Learning, 2017.

18. **Book: two or more works by the same author**

When you cite two works by the same author, use three hyphens in place of the author's name, and alphabetize the works by title:

Trethewey, Natasha. *Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir*. Ecco, 2020.

---. *Native Guard: Poems*. Mariner Books, 2007.

19. **Book author and editor**

Add the editor's name after the title:

Hemingway, Ernest. *Conversations with Ernest Hemingway*, edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli, UP of Mississippi, 1986.

20. **Book author and translator**

Add the translator's name after the title:

Ferrante, Elena. *My Brilliant Friend*. Translated by Ann Goldstein, Europa Editions, 2012.

If you are citing the work of the translator, place the translator's name in the author position:

Goldstein, Ann, translator. *My Brilliant Friend*. By Elena Ferrante, Europa Editions, 2012.

21. **Book author and illustrator**

Add the illustrator's name after the title. If you are citing the work of the illustrator, place the illustrator's name in the author position, as shown in the preceding example:

Fasler, Joe. *Light in the Dark: Writers on Creativity, Inspiration, and the Artistic Process*. Illustrated by Doug McLean, Penguin Books, 2017.

22. **Work by an organization, a government, a corporation, or an association**

If the author and publisher are *not* the same, start with the author:

United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration. *Healthy Living Resource Guide*. Government Printing Office, 2020.

If the author and the publisher *are* the same, give the title of the work in place of the author, and list the organization as the publisher:

*MLA Handbook*. 8th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2016.

"This Is Who We Are." *U.S. Forest Service*, United States Department of Agriculture, Mar. 2019, www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/This-is-Who-We-Are.pdf.

23. **Unknown author**

If no author is given, start with the title.

"The Most Beautiful Battalion in the Army." *Grunt Magazine*, 1968, pp. 12-15.

## Articles in Journals, Magazines, and Newspaper (MLA)

Articles, reviews, editorials, and other short works are published in journals, newspapers, and magazines. They appear in print, on databases, and on websites (though often through a paywall). As a student, you are likely to access many articles and other short research sources primarily through databases available through your library.

24. **Basic format for a journal article in a database**

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, volume number, issue number, Date of Publication, page numbers. *Title of Database*, DOI or URL.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD*. End with a period.

- **Title of the article.** Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title. Put the title of the article in quotation marks. End with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the journal.** Put the title of the journal in italics. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End the title with a comma.
- **Volume and issue numbers.** Use the abbreviations *vol.* and *no.* followed by the number and a comma.
- **Publication date.** Give the month or season and the year of publication, if available. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Mar.*, *Apr.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, or July.
- **Page numbers.** Give p. (singular) or pp. (plural) and the page number or numbers of the article, followed by a period.
- **Title of the database.** Put the database title in italics, followed by a comma.
- **Location.** Give a DOI if available, and end with a period. If there is no DOI, give a URL, preferably a permalink, without http://.

25. **Article in an academic journal**

- Database
  Daddis, Gregory A. "Out of Balance: Evaluating American Strategy in Vietnam, 1968–72." *War & Society*, vol. 32, no. 3, Oct. 2013, pp. 252-70. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1179/0729247313Z.000000000026.
- Print
  Daddis, Gregory A. "Out of Balance: Evaluating American Strategy in Vietnam, 1968–72." *War & Society*, vol. 32, no. 3, Oct. 2013, pp. 252-70.
- Online
  Squires, Scot. "Do Generations Differ When It Comes to Green Values and Products?" *Electronic Green Journal*, no. 42, 2019, escholarship.org/uc/item/6f91213q.
  The journal in the example numbers issues only, so no volume number is given.

26. **Article in a weekly or biweekly magazine**

To cite an article in a weekly or biweekly magazine, give the author, title of the article, title of the magazine, publication date (day, month, year), and page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database
  Sanneh, Kelefa. "The Color of Money." *The New Yorker*, 8 Feb. 2021, pp. 26-31. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=aph&AN=148411685&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Print
  Sanneh, Kelefa. "The Color of Money." *The New Yorker*, 8 Feb. 2021, pp. 26-31.
- Online
  Ferrer, Ada. "My Brother's Keeper." *The New Yorker*, 22 Feb. 2021, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/ 03/01/my-brothers-keeper.

27. **Article in a monthly or bimonthly magazine**

To cite an article in a monthly or bimonthly magazine, give the author, title of the article, title of the magazine, publication month and year, and page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database
  Sneed, Annie. "Giant Shape-Shifters." *Scientific American*, Sept. 2017, pp. 20-22. *EBSCOhost*, *doi:10.1038/scientificamerican1017-20*.
- Print
  Sneed, Annie. "Giant Shape-Shifters." *Scientific American*, Sept. 2017, pp. 20-22.
- Online
  Stewart, Jamila. "A Look Inside the Black Designers of Canada Initiative." *Essence*, July 2020, www.essence.com/fashion/black-designers-of-canada-digital-index/.

To cite a comment on an article, see Model 54.

28. **Article in a newspaper**

To cite an article in a newspaper, give the author, title of the article, title of the newspaper, publication date (day, month, year),

and the page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or a URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database
  Krueger, Alyson. "When Mom Knows Best, on Instagram." *The New York Times*, 27 Nov. 2019, pp. B1-B4. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType =aph&AN=139891108&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Print
  Krueger, Alyson. "When Mom Knows Best, on Instagram." *The New York Times*, 27 Nov. 2019, pp. B1-B4.
- Online
  Smith, Doug. "They're Building Affordable Housing for the Homeless—Without Government Help." *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Feb. 2021, www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-10/theyre-building-affordable-housing-for-the-homeless-without-government-help.

To cite a comment on an article, see Model 54.

29. **Editorial or letter to the editor**

An editorial may or may not have an author's name attached to it. If it does, give the author's name first. If it does not, start with the title. In both situations, add the designation Editorial or Letter to the Editor after the title.

"For Better Elections, Copy the Neighbors." Editorial. The Wall Street Journal, 16 Feb. 2021, www.wsj.com/ articles/for-better-elections-copy-the-neighbors-11613518448.

30. **Review**

To cite a review of a book, film, television show, or other work, give the name of the reviewer and title of the review, add *Review of* before the title of work being reviewed, and give the name of the work's author, director, or creator after the title.

Girish, Devika. "Refocusing the Lens on Race and Gender." Review of *Test Pattern*, directed by Shatara Michelle Ford. *The New York Times*, 18 Feb. 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/02/18/movies/test-pattern-review.html.

## Books and Parts of Books (MLA)

Use the following guidelines for books and parts of books, such as a selection from an anthology, an article in a collection, a published letter, and so on.

31. **Basic entry for a book**

Author's Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Year of Publication.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD.* End with a period.
- **Title of the book.** Put the book's title in italics. Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title, even if the book's cover does not use conventional capitalization. End the title with a period.
- **Publisher.** List the publisher's name without words such as "Inc." or "Company." Shorten "University Press" to "UP." End with a comma.
- **Year of publication.** Provide the publication date, and end with a period.

32. **Print book**

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Vintage Books, 2010.

33. **E-book formatted for a specific reader device or service**

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Kindle ed., Vintage Books, 2010.

34. **Book, anthology, or collection with an editor**

Add the abbreviation *ed.* or *eds.* (if more than one) after the editor's first name:

Lunsford, Andrea, ed. *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1995.

### 35. Work in an anthology or chpater in an edited collection

After the author and title of the work, give the title of the anthology or edited collection, name of the editor, publication information, and page numbers of the work:

Royster, Jacqueline Jones. “To Call a Thing by Its True Name: The Rhetoric of Ida B. Wells.” *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, edited by Andrea Lunsford, U of Pittsburgh P, 1995, pp. 167-84.

### 36. Two or more works in an anthology or edited collection

When you cite two or more selections from the same anthology or edited collection, list the anthology separately under the editor’s name. In the entries for the selections you cite, include the editor’s name and the page numbers on which the selections appear:

Lipscomb, Drema R. “Sojourner Truth: A Practical Public Discourse." Lunsford, pp. 227-46.

Lunsford, Andrea, ed. *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1995.

Royster, Jacqueline Jones. “To Call a Thing by Its True Name: The Rhetoric of Ida B. Wells.” Lunsford, pp. 167-84.

### 37. Revised or later edition

For a book published in an edition other than the first, give the edition number after the title:

Strunk, William, Jr., and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed., Pearson, 2019.

### 38. Multivolume work

For a book published in more than one volume, give the total number of volumes after the title:

Klinger, Leslie S. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. 2 vols., W. W. Norton, 2005.

### 39. One volume of a multivolume work

Klinger, Leslie S. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. Vol. 2, W. W. Norton, 2005.

When each volume of a multivolume set has an individual title, list the volume’s full publication information first, followed by series information (number of volumes, dates). When separate volumes were published in different years, give inclusive dates:

Churchill, Winston S. *Triumph and Tragedy*. Houghton Mifflin, 1953. Vol. 6 of *The Second World War*. 6 vols. 1948-53.

However, if the volume you are using has its own title, you may cite the book without referring to the other volumes as if it were an independent publication.

### 40. Book in a series

Add the title of the series at the end of the entry:

Thaiss, Christopher. *Language across the Curriculum in the Elementary Grades*. WAC Clearinghouse, 2011, wac.colostate.edu/books/landmarks/thaiss/. Landmark Publications in Writing Studies.

### 41. Republished book

Give the original publication date after the title and the date the book was republished after the publisher:

Evans, Elizabeth E. G. *The Abuse of Maternity*. 1875. Arno, 1974.

### 42. Sacred text

Give the complete title of the version you consulted followed by the name of the editor and/or translator, the edition, the publisher,

and the publication date:

*The Bible*. Authorized King James Version. Edited by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, Oxford UP, 2008.

*The Koran*. Translated by N. J. Dawood, rev. ed., Penguin Books, 2015.

13. **Introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword**

Start with the author of the introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword, followed by a description of the work you are citing, such as "Foreword." Give the author of the work after the title:

Offill, Jenny. Foreword. *Mrs. Dalloway*, by Virginia Woolf, Penguin Classics, 2021, pp. vii-xiv.

14. **Published letter**

Roosevelt, Theodore. Letter to Upton Sinclair. 15 Mar. 1906. *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters and Speeche*s, edited by Louis Auchincloss, 2004, pp. 310-11.

15. **Conference paper**

Killi, Stainer, and Andrew Morrison. "Could the Food Market Pull 3D Printing Appetites Further?" *Industry 4.0—Shaping the Future of the Digital World: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Sustainable & Smart Manufacturing*, edited by Paulo Bartolo et al., CRC Press, 2021, pp. 197-203.

## Websites and Parts of Websites (MLA)

Use the following guidelines for works that are published *only* online and do not have an overarching publication, such as a journal, newspaper, magazine, or database.

16. **Basic format for a short work or page on a website**

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Short Work." *Title of Website*, Publisher, Publication Date, URL.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD*. End with a period.
- **Title of the short work.** Put the title in quotation marks. Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the website.** Put the title of the website in italics. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End the title with a comma.
- **Publisher.** If the publisher of the website is different from the title of the website (as shown in Model 48), give it next, followed by a comma. If they are the same (as shown in Model 47), give only the title of the website.
- **Publication date.** Give the day, month, and year the work was posted, if available. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Mar.*, *Apr.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, and July.
- **URL.** Give the URL, without "http://."

17. **Short work or page on a website**

Shetterly, Margot Lee. "Katherine Johnson Biography." *NASA*, 24 Feb. 2020, www.nasa.gov/content/katherine-johnson-biography.

If the source you are citing has no author listed, start with the title. If the page has no title, give the name of the site and a descriptive label, such as "Home page" or "Blog post."

18. **Blog post**

Blazich, Frank A. "The Cold Morning of the Day After." Smithsonian Voices, *Smithsonian Magazine*, 5 Feb. 2021, www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-history/2021/02/05/cold-morning-day-after/.

19. **Entire website**

*Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*. Yale U, 2021, beinecke.library.yale.edu/.

If the website lists an editor, give the person's name as you would an author, followed by a comma and *ed.*

50. **Wiki**

"Coronavirus." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 22 Feb. 2021, en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus.

## Social Media (MLA)

51. **Basic format for a social media post**

Author. "Text of untitled post" or "Title of post" or Descriptive label. *Title of Site*, Date of Post, Time of Post, URL.

- **Author.** Give the author's handle and name. End with a period.
- **Text, title, or description of post.** Match the capitalization exactly, add quotation marks, and end with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the social media site.** Put the title of the site in italics, ending with a comma.
- **Publication date and time.** Give the day, month, year, and time of the post. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Mar.*, *Apr.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, and July.
- **URL.** Give the URL, without "http://."

52. **Social media post**

@Holleratcha (James Holler). "People go out and vote tomorrow!" *Twitter*, 2 Nov. 2020, 2:08 p.m., twitter.com/ holleratcha/status/ 1270432672544784384.

Death Valley National Park. "What does it mean to protect something you love?" *Facebook*, 23 Feb. 2021, 5:01 p.m., www.facebook.com/DeathValleyNPS/posts/4108808255810092.

See Model 54 for how to cite a comment.

53. **Online forum post**

@Duckpond318. "Turkeys in the arboretum." *Reddit*, 15 Mar. 2021, 11:22 a.m., www.reddit.com/r/Wildlife/ comments/lqlbo3/ turkeys_in_the_arboretum/. Accessed 4 Feb. 2021.

54. **Online comment**

AKJersey. Comment on "Can We Stop Fighting about Charter Schools?" *The New York Times*, 22 Feb. 2021, www.nytimes.com/ 2021/02/22/opinion/charter-schools-democrats.html#commentsContainer.

## Personal Communication (MLA)

Use the following guidelines to cite email, text messages, and letters that you sent or received.

55. **Email**

Roberts, Jeffrey. "Study results." Received by Kenneth Berg, 21 Oct. 2020.

56. **Text message**

Roberts, Jeffrey. "Study results." Received by Kenneth Berg, 21 Oct. 2020.

57. **Personal letter**

Atwood, Margaret. Letter to the author. 11 Mar. 2007.

# Video, Audio, and Other Media Sources (MLA)

Use the following guidelines to cite various media sources.

### 58. Film

Begin with the title, followed by the director, the studio, and the year released.

*Casablanca*. Directed by Michael Curtiz, Warner Brothers, 1942.

You may also cite other contributors and their roles after the title (as illustrated below). If your paper is concerned with a particular person's work on a film, such as the director, an actor, or someone else, begin with that person's name and arrange all other information accordingly. For a film you stream, add the title of the streaming service and the URL:

*Moonlight*. Directed by Barry Jenkins, performances by Mahershala Ali, Naomie Harris, and Trevante Rhodes. A24, 2016. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/watch/80121348?trackId=13752289&tctx=8%2C.

### 59. Online video

NASA. "Apollo 11 Moonwalk – Original NASA EVA Mission Video." 20 July 1969. *YouTube*, 17 July 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9HdPi9Ikhk.

### 60. Television series or episode

- TV Series
  *The Good Place*. Michael Schur, creator. NBC, 2016-20.
- Streamed TV episode
  "Jason Mendoza." *The Good Place*, season 1, episode 4, NBC, 2016. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/watch/80191852?trackId=13752289&tctx=%2C%2C.

### 61. Advertisement

- Print
  XOFLUZA. Flu medication advertisement. *The New Yorker*, 8. Feb. 2021, pp. 5-6.
- Online
  General Motors. "Will Ferrell Super Bowl Ad." *YouTube*, 3 Feb. 2021, www.youtube.com/ watch?v=mdsPvbSpB2Y&t=24s.

### 62. Cartoon or comic

- Print
  Davis, Jim. "Garfield." Cartoon. *Courier* [Findlay, OH], 17 May 1996, p. 18.
  If the source you cite appears in a local newspaper, as it does here, give the city and state in brackets after the name of the newspaper if the city is not part of the newspaper's name.
- Online
  Gauld, Tom. "Waiting for Godot to Join the Zoom Meeting." *You're All Just Jealous of My Jetpack*, 31 Jan. 2021, myjetpack.tumblr.com/.

### 63. Painting or other visual artwork

- Original work
  Rivera, Diego. *Detroit Industry Murals*. 1932-33. Detroit Institute of Art.
  If the city is not part of the name of the museum, add it after museum. For example, if the work you viewed was at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, you would end the entry as follows: Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- Reproduction
  Neel, Alice. *Elenka*. 1936. *Alice Neel: People Come First*, by Kelly Baum and Randall Griffey, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2021, p. 142.
- Online
  Basquiat, Jean-Michel. *Untitled*. 1983. *Museum of Modern Art*, www.moma.org/collection/works/63997?artist_id=370&page=1&sov_referrer=artist. Accessed 24 Sept. 2020.

### 64. Map, chart, or diagram

- Print
  *Everglades National Park*. National Geographic Society Maps, 2019.
- Online
  "Map: Expedition of Lewis and Clark." *National Park Service*, 2 Jan. 2018, nps.gov/subjects/ travellewisandclark/map.htm.

### 65. Sound recording

Sound recordings include songs, albums, and spoken word. If you stream a sound recording or watch a performance online, add the name of the streaming service, such as Spotify, Apple Music, or Amazon Music, after the date. If you access the recording online, add the name of the website and the URL after the date.

- Album
  Prince. *Purple Rain*. Warner Brothers, 1984.
- Song
  The Supremes. "Baby Love." *Where Did Our Love Go*, Motown, 1964. Spotify.
- Online
  Gorman, Amanda. "The Hill We Climb." 20 Jan. 2021, *YouTube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055ilIiN4.

### 66. Radio

*The Road to Higher Ground*. Hosted by Jonathan Overby. WPR, 9 Jan. 2021.

If you listened to the radio program online, add the URL after the date.

### 67. Podcast

McEvers, Kelly, host. "This Is Not a Joke." *Embedded*, season 9, episode 2, NPR, 7 Nov. 2019, Apple Podcasts.

If you listened to the podcast on the web, add the URL instead of the podcast service.

### 68. Interview

- Broadcast
  Wilkerson, Isabel. Interview. *Fresh Air*, NPR, 4 Aug. 2020.
- Online
  Sowell, Thomas. Interview. *Hoover Institution*, 3 Jan. 2015, www.wsj.com/video/uncommon-knowledg-thomas-sowell-basic-economics/51837CB6-9FF2-305AE55D179A.html.
- Personal interview
  Wong, Diana. Personal interview. 12 Sept. 2020.

### 69. Video game, software, or app

Houser, Dan, et al., writers. *Grand Theft Auto V*. Rockstar Games, 2013. Xbox 360.

## Other Sources (MLA)

### 70. Live lecture, speech, address, or reading

Diaz, Shanna. "Your Dazzling Brain: The Symphony of Sleep." Community Lecture Series, University of New Mexico Health Science and the City of Albuquerque, 13 Mar. 2018, Albuquerque Academy.

### 71. Live performance

*Hamilton*. By Lin-Manuel Miranda, directed by Thomas Kail, 11 Mar. 2018, CIBC Theater, Chicago.

If you watch a video of a performance online, cite it as you would cite an online video.

72. **Letter in an archive**

Mucklestone, Ada. Letter to Maj. Gen. Ralph J. Olson. 6 Nov. 1958. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Alphabetical Subject File, 1950-66, 1715, Box 13.

73. **Dissertation**

- Database
  Park, Eun Jung. *Korean American Artists and the 1992 Los Angeles Riots*. 2013. U of California, San Diego, PhD dissertation. ProQuest, www.proquest.com/doc-view/1425303659.
- Print
  Boothby, Daniel W. *The Determinants of Earnings and Occupation for Young Women*. 1978. U of California, Berkeley, PhD dissertation.

74. **Pamphlet**

"Facts about Fallout." Civil Defense Administration, 1961.

# MLA Paper Format

Follow your instructor's formatting guidelines or those indicated here. For sample papers with MLA format and works-cited pages, visit this site (https://openstax.org/r/this-site1).

- **Margins.** Use one-inch margins on all sides.
- **Spacing.** Double-space throughout the paper, including the works-cited page.
- **Paragraph format.** Indent paragraphs one-half inch.
- **Page numbers.** Start numbering on the first page of your paper and continue to the end of the works-cited page. Place page numbers in the upper-right corner, and add your last name before the page number: "Coleman 3."
- **Identifying information.** Put your name, your instructor's name, the course title, and the date in the left corner of the first page of the body of the paper, not in the header. Double-space this information.
- **Title.** Center the title on the first page. Do not use italics, boldface, all capitals, or quotation marks. Do not add extra space below the title.
- **Long quotations and quotations from poetry.** See Quotations for how to cite long quotations and poetry quotations.

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# 9.2: Introduction to MLA Documentation

## Why Cite?

You will recall from the previous section that citing is important because:

- citations help others find the information you used in your research paper
- citing your sources accurately helps establish the credibility of your research
- citations connect your work to the work of other scholars
- citations are one way that scholars enter into a dialogue with one another
- citations are a way to honor and acknowledge the work of others who have made your own research possible

The following video demonstrates the practical importance of always giving credit where credit is due.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: http://pb.libretexts.org/ec1/?p=308

## MLA Documentation

MLA style is one of the most common citation and formatting styles you will encounter in your academic career. The MLA, which stands for Modern Language Association, is an organization of language scholars and experts that aims to present a straightforward process to standardize the format and presentation of academic writing. MLA format It is widely used by in many high school and introductory college English classes, as well as scholarly books and professional journals. If you are writing a paper for a literature or media studies class, it is likely your professor will ask you to write in MLA style.

## The 8th Edition

The newest edition of the MLA Handbook, the 8th Edition, was released in April 2016. We will focus on the newest changes, but you should be aware that some institutions or instructors may still utilize the previous 7th edition of the handbook. While the overall principles of creating a works cited page and using in-text citations remains the same, there are a few key changes and updates that make the citation process easier for our modern uses. For example, the guidelines now state that you should always include a URL of an internet source, you can use alternative author names, such as Twitter handles, and you no longer need to include the publisher (in some instances), and you don't need to include the city where a source was published. These

new changes are less nit-picky and allow for a more streamlined citation process that will work with the wide variety of source locations (i.e., YouTube videos, songs, clips from TV episodes, websites, periodicals, books, academic journals, poems, interviews, etc.).

## Citation Resources

There are many fantastic resources out there that can make the formatting and citation process easier. Some common style guides include the following:

- The Purdue Online Writing Lab: this is a popular resource that concisely explains how to properly format and cite in various academic styles.
- EasyBib: in addition to having a style guide, this website allows you to paste in information from your research and will create and save citations for you.

Reference management websites and applications can also assist you in tracking and recording your research. Most of these websites will even create the works cited page for you! Some of the most popular citation tools include the following:

- Zotero
- RefME
- BibMe

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# 9.3: MLA Signal Phrases

Keep things interesting for your readers by switching up the language and placement of your signal phrases.

## MODEL PHRASES

In the words of professors Greer and Dewey, "..."

As sociology scholar Janice Kinsey has noted, "..."

Creative Commons, an organization that helps internet users understand and create copyright for materials, reports that "..."

"...," writes Deidre Tyrell, "..."

"...," attorney Sanderson claims.

Kyles and Sanderson offer up a compelling point: "..."

## VERBS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Acknowledges | Contends | Observes |
| Admits | Declares | Points out |
| Adds | Denies | Reasons |
| Agrees | Disputes | Refutes |
| Argues | Emphasizes | Rejects |
| Asserts | Endorses | Reports |
| Believes | Grants | Responds |
| Claims | Illustrates | Suggests |
| Comments | Implies | Thinks |
| Compares | Insists | Writes |
| Confirms | Notes | |

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# 9.4: Citing in MLA

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# 9.5: Outcome- Writing Ethically



Melania Trump

Parts of Melania Trump's speech at the Republican National Convention in July 2016 were strikingly similar to Michelle Obama's speech from eight years ago. How does this happen? Plagiarism at this level is typically the result of sloppiness, not outright theft, but it's still just as egregious a result no matter the underlying cause. If you don't want this to happen to you, then you need to be aware of plagiarism and how to avoid it.

In 2008, here's what Michelle Obama said, in part (most of the highlights in these passages, which show the similar parts, are from a Wall Street Journal article about the plagiarism).

Like my family, they scrimped and saved so that he could have opportunities they never had themselves. And Barack and I were raised with so many of the same values: that **you work hard for what you want in life**; **that your word is your bond and you do what you say you're going to do; that you treat people with dignity and respect**, even if you don't know them, and even if you don't agree with them. And Barack and I set out to build lives guided by these values, and pass them on to the next generation. Because **we want our children—and all children in this nation—to know that the only limit to the height of your achievements is the reach of your dreams and your willingness to work for them**.

And here's the similar passage from Melania Trump's speech:

From a young age, my parents impressed on me the values that **you work hard for what you want in life**, that **your word is your bond and you do what you say and keep your promise, that you treat people with respect**. They taught and showed me values and morals in their daily lives. That is a lesson that I continue to pass along to our son. And we need to pass those lessons on to the many generations to follow. Because **we want our children in this nation to know that the only limit to your achievements is the strength of your dreams and your willingness to work for them.**

You can watch a video of the similar snippets from their speeches here.

## How plagiarism really happens

According to author Josh Bernoff, Melania's Trump plagiarism is probably not the obvious kind of cut-and-paste theft you might associate with cheating on a research paper, but it's still clearly plagiarism. He imagines that Melania Trump and her speechwriters talked about what she wanted to communicate and what's important to her. They probably discussed ideas, developed a theme, and researched it. They also researched past, successful speeches from prospective first ladies. The result of that research was a bunch of fragments from all over the place. One of those fragments was the piece of Michelle Obama's speech. As the fragments coalesced into a speech, that one got included, because the writers lost track of its provenance, or Melania Trump did.

You may want to believe the more evil explanation here, but carelessness is far more likely. For example, the famous primatologist Jane Goodall blamed "chaotic note taking" for plagiarized passages in her book, *Seeds of Hope*. This stuff happens all the time.

## How you can avoid this mistake

How do you gather your notes? Do you bookmark Web passages, use Evernote or Zotero, or create index cards or sticky notes?

No matter your method, you should have a consistent and clear method to keep track of your sources. You wouldn't walk around without clothes on; notes shouldn't get around unless they're clothed in source attributions. And you should make those attributions habitually and consistently, using the same format every time. Your mind can run free, your text can flow, but your attributions must be as fastidious as an accountant's.

While this is a pain, it's not nearly as painful as what Melania Trump and others suffer after plagiarism is discovered. You *will* get caught. Do you really want to explain whether you were dishonest or just sloppy? You'll learn how to avoid plagiarism in this section.

## What You Will Learn to Do

- evaluate the definition of academic dishonesty
- evaluate the definition of intentional and unintentional plagiarism
- evaluate reasons for concerns about plagiarism and academic dishonesty in academic settings
- evaluate strategies to avoid intentional and unintentional plagiarism and academic dishonesty, including summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting

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# 9.6: Academic Integrity

## What is Academic Integrity?

Academic Integrity is defined as the honest and responsible pursuit of scholarship. Academic integrity is characterized by

- completing exams and other academic assignments in an honest way
- presenting truthful and accurate data and research information in academic assignments
- avoiding plagiarism by properly incorporating and acknowledging sources

### Practice

Which of the following is NOT a vital characteristic of academic integrity?

a. doing your own work on assignments
b. correctly citing sources in a research paper
c. completing all work without assistance or help from a TA
d. presenting accurate and truthful data
e. following assignment and exam instructions

[reveal-answer q="245692"]Show Answer[/reveal-answer]
[hidden-answer a="245692"]c[/hidden-answer]

## Academic Dishonesty

In all academic work, students are expected to submit materials that are their own and are to include attribution for any ideas or language that are not their own. Examples of dishonest conduct include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating including **giving and receiving information in examinations**.
- Falsification of data, results or sources.
- **Collusion**, such as working with another person when independent work is assigned.
- Plagiarism.
- **Submitting the same paper** or report for assignments in more than one course without permission (self-plagiarism).

### Cheating

Cheating is the most well-known academically dishonest behavior. Cheating includes more than just copying a neighbor's answers on an exam or peeking at a cheat sheet or storing answers on your phone. Giving or offering information in examinations is also dishonest. Turning in someone else's work as your own is also considered cheating.

### Collusion

Collusion, such as working with another person or persons when independent work is assigned, is considered academic dishonesty. While it is fine to work in a team if your professor specifically requires or allows it, be sure to communicate about guidelines on permissible collaboration if you are unsure (including how to attribute the contributions of others).

**True Story:** In 2012, 125 Harvard students were investigated for working together on a take-home final exam. The only rule on the exam was not to work together. Almost half of those students were determined to have cheated, and forced to withdraw from school for a year.

## Falsifying Results and Misrepresentation

Falsifying results in studies or experiments is a serious breach of academic honesty. Students are sometimes tempted to make up results if their study or experiment does not produce the results they hoped for. But getting caught has major consequences.

Misrepresenting yourself or your research is, by definition, dishonest. Misrepresentation might include inflating credentials, claiming that a study proves something that it does not, or leaving out inconvenient and/or contradictory results.

**True Story:** An undergraduate at the University of Kansas claimed to be a researcher and promoted his (unfortunately incorrect) research on how much a Big Mac would cost if the U.S. raised minimum wage. His study was picked up by the Huffington Post, NY Times, and other major news outlets, who then had to publish retractions.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when you present another person's ideas, intentionally or unintentionally, as your own. In the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, Joseph Gibaldi likens plagiarism to "intellectual theft," because it "gives the impression that you wrote or thought something that you in fact borrowed from someone, and to do so is a violation of professional ethics" (165). It is your responsibility as the student to avoid plagiarizing. As a scholar you are expected to credit the sources of the ideas that you use in your own work.

# How Can You Avoid Academic Dishonesty?

- Start your assignments early and stay on track with due dates.
- Ask for help from your professor.
- Join a study group.
- Take careful notes as you do your research and organize your sources.
- Work with a Librarian or the Writing Center to integrate and cite your sources and avoid plagiarism.
- Prioritize your integrity!

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- Academic Integrity Tutorial, examples of Academic Dishonesty. **Provided by**: DiMenna-Nyselius Library, Fairfield University. **Located at**: http://librarybestbets.fairfield.edu/c.php?g=476878&p=3314732. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*

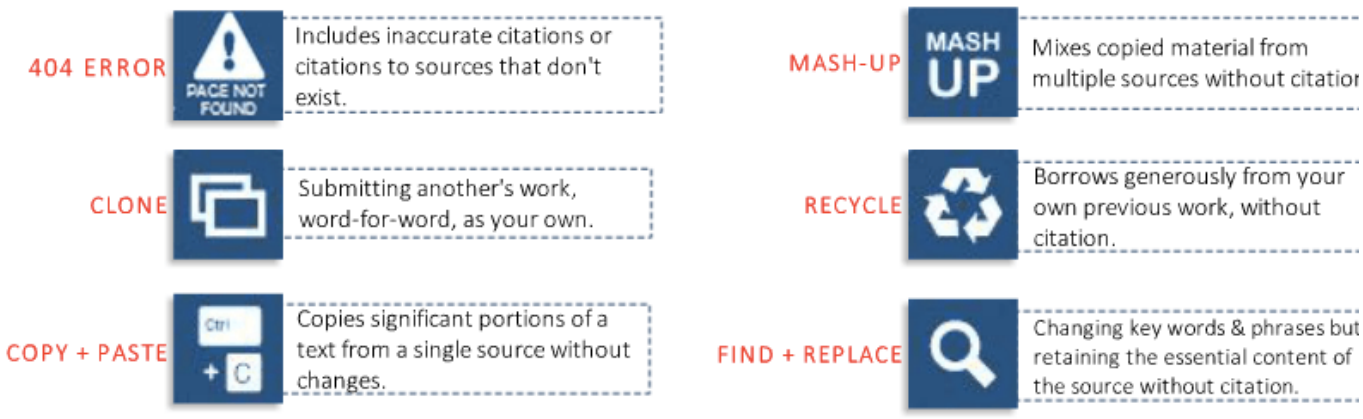
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# 9.7: Defining Plagiarism

## What Counts as Plagiarism?

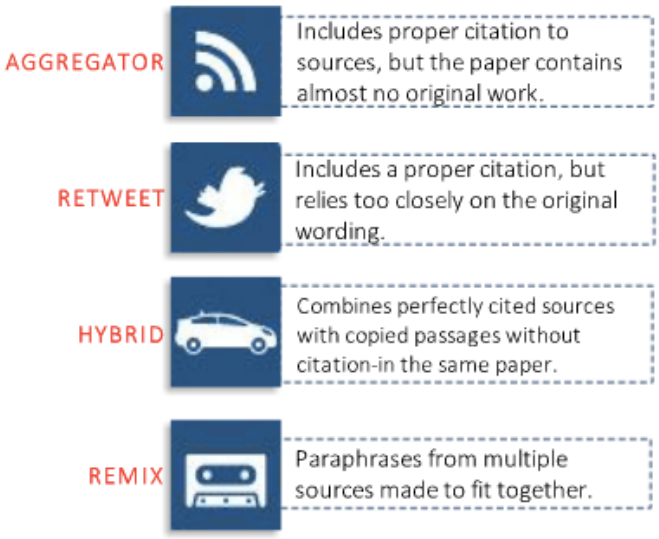
Plagiarism can be **intentional** or **unintentional**. It often occurs because the process of citation can be confusing, technology makes copy + paste so easy, and knowing exactly what to cite is not always easy! You can avoid unintentional plagiarism by learning how to cite material and keeping track of sources in your notes. Give yourself plenty of time to process sources so you don't plagiarize by mistake. Here are some examples of plagiarism:

- Submitting a paper written by someone else.
- Using words and phrases from the source text and patching them together in new sentences.
- Failing to acknowledge the sources of words or information.
- Not providing quotation marks around a direct quotation. This leads to the false assumption that the words are your own.
- Borrowing the idea or opinion of someone else without giving the person credit
- Restating or paraphrasing a passage without citing the original author
- Borrowing facts or statistics that are not common knowledge without proper acknowledgement




**The plagiarism spectrum.** There are many different ways to plagiarize. It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiari can avoid it in your assignments.

| Obvious Plagiarism | Less Obvious Plagiarism |
|---|---|
| • Turning in someone else's paper as one's own.<br>• Turning in a paper that was bought from a service on the Internet.<br>• Reusing a paper previously turned in for one class and then submitting the same paper or portions of it for subsequent classes without permission of the instructor (self-plagiarism).<br>• Cutting and pasting entire sections from other authors' works into one's own paper.<br>• Using another author's exact words but not putting quotation marks around the quote and citing the work. | • Failing to differentiate between common knowledge and something that needs to be cited.<br>• Failing to include complete and correct citations.<br>• Sticking too closely to another author's words by only changing a few words around when paraphrasing.<br>• Using another author's exact words but not putting quotation marks around the quote even if one cites the work. |




More ways to plagiarize.

## Why Should You Care?

Being honest and maintaining integrity in your academic work is a sign of character and professionalism. In addition to maximizing your own learning and taking ownership of your academic success, not plagiarizing is important because

- Your professors assign research projects to help you learn. You cheat yourself when you substitute someone else's work for your own.
- You don't like it when someone else takes credit for your ideas, so don't do it to someone else.
- Plagiarizing comes with consequences. Depending on the offense and the institution, you may be asked to rewrite plagiarized work, receive a failing grade on the assignment, fail the entire course, or be suspended from the university.
- Professors use search engines, databases, and specialized software to check suspicious work, so you will eventually get caught.

## Is it Plagiarism?

1. Last semester you wrote an essay on Emily Dickinson for Professor Belin's "American Literature 101" course. This semester you are taking a course called "Interrogating Gender in American Culture," and Professor Arecco has assigned a paper topic that references Dickinson's life and work. It would be very easy for you to re-tool whole sections of your first essay to satisfy the requirements of the second. It is acceptable practice to re-submit this paper – without checking with either professor — because you are writing a paper for a different professor and a different course.

a. This is plagiarism
b. This is not plagiarism

[reveal-answer q="896360"]Show Answer[/reveal-answer]
[hidden-answer a="896360"]a. You are correct. You need to check with BOTH Professor Belin and Professor Arecco before re-submitting this paper. If you were to superficially revise this paper and submit it without prior approval from both professors, you would be committing self-plagiarism by dual submission.[/hidden-answer]

2. Plagiarism is not limited to taking something from a book; it also includes stealing ideas from a movie, a professor's lecture, or from an interview on a radio news program.

a. True, this is plagiarism
b. False, this is not plagiarism

[reveal-answer q="174540"]Show Answer[/reveal-answer]

[hidden-answer a="174540"]a. Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft, and the medium is less important than the fact that an idea – whether in the form of a musical composition or a string of computer code – has been stolen. Students can be brought before their school's judiciary boards for any suspected act of plagiarism, regardless of subject or medium.[/hidden-answer]

3. You have cut and pasted a lot of information from articles you found on web sites and databases into a Word file on your computer. While writing your essay, you find yourself patching together pieces from different sources, and you have occasionally lost track of which ideas were your own and which were from various articles and websites. You consider going back to the original sources but the prospect is daunting. In any case, you figure that if your professor queries your sources, you can say that you didn't intentionally plagiarize, and this will result in a lesser punishment.

a. Agree
b. Disagree

[reveal-answer q="676266"]Show Answer[/reveal-answer]
[hidden-answer a="676266"]b. As a general rule, unintentional plagiarism is still intellectual theft and bad note-taking skills are not a mitigating circumstance when punishment is meted out. Note the entries on our web log of well-publicized cases of famous authors whose poor note-taking skills led them to plagiarize. They have had to suffer public humiliation and severe blows to their professional reputations. Here are some tips for avoiding unintentional plagiarism: If you take notes on the computer rather than on paper, create a special folder for citation information.

In fact, it would be a good idea to create a number of folders: one for your paper; another for sources, with individual files for each and every source; and another folder for the notes you take from each source. Maintain all the information for the bibliography as you go – it'll save time and effort later. When taking notes, identify your source. Put quotation marks around direct quotes and double check to make sure you've duplicated every punctuation mark. Avoid using the author's language when paraphrasing or summarizing information – unless, of course, you quote verbatim from the original. Here's a tip for keeping your ideas separate from those in your sources; you can either identify each idea as your own, that is, cite yourself, or put your ideas in a different font, case, or color on the screen. Another good idea is to print out your sources whenever possible, even when you have a file-version on your computer. Working from the paper sources will allow you to check quotations for accuracy.[/hidden-answer]

4. Your professor has recommended a particular text as a secondary source for an assigned essay on Kant's ideas about war and peace. You find a quotation that seems to speak directly to Kant's idea of perpetual peace and you plug it in your essay, but it doesn't quite relate to what goes before and you don't know how to discuss it. You realize that you don't really understand what the quotation means, or how you might discuss it within the larger context of your essay. You think of approaching your professor to ask for help, but decide that she will think less of you for not grasping the import of this text. Instead you find a website that discusses this very idea, and you summarize its explanation in your paper without citing it. Is this plagiarism?

a. Yes
b. No

[reveal-answer q="494039"]Show Answer[/reveal-answer]
[hidden-answer a="494039"]a. You're right! Even if it is a website, and even if you are summarizing rather than quoting or paraphrasing from the site, you are still "kidnapping" someone else's ideas. A summary is written in your own words, but it still makes reference to another person's intellectual property. Think of it this way: you are collaborating with the authors of your sources, working with their ideas and recasting them to come up with your own. Finally, a word of advice: always go to your professor for help. They should be your first and best resource for questions about texts or anything relating to your class.[/hidden-answer]

5. I have found something posted on the Internet that I am going to include in a paper that I am writing. It is covered by a "Creative Commons" copyright. Since it is, can I consider it "common knowledge" and not cite it in my paper or included it in my references?

a. Agree
b. Disagree

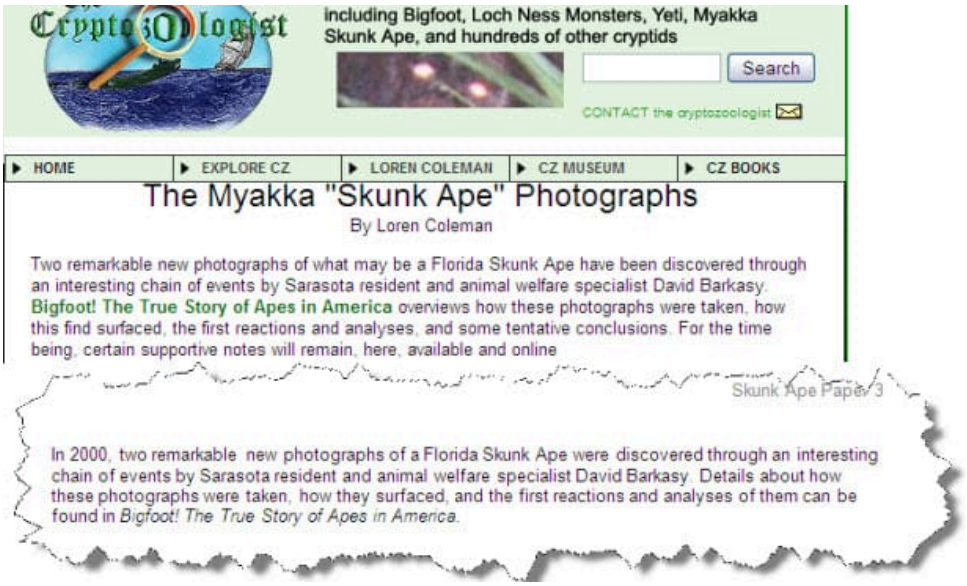
[reveal-answer q="362375"]Show Answer[/reveal-answer]
[hidden-answer a="362375"]b. The Creative Commons copyright does NOT mean the information is considered common knowledge. It indicates permission for others to use the material, properly attributed, without violating copyright law. Note: Just because something is posted on the Internet doesn't automatically make it common knowledge. You are well advised to cite the webpage on which you found the information.[/hidden-answer]

6. You are writing a biology report and you have included information that you read in your biology textbook. You aren't sure if this information can be considered common knowledge, or whether you need to cite it. You

a. Decide not cite the information. Information in the textbook is common knowledge for the biology class.
b. Determine to cite your text book in the instances where you quoted from it directly; otherwise the summarized ideas in this text are considered common knowledge.
c. Cite all the information you've gleaned from the textbook, whether quoted verbatim or summarized.

[reveal-answer q="908000"]Show Answer[/reveal-answer]
[hidden-answer a="908000"]c. You should cite the textbook regardless of whether or not you quote from it directly. While it is not necessary to give citations for certain well-known equations, it is important to acknowledge your debt for any information you did not come up with independently.[/hidden-answer]

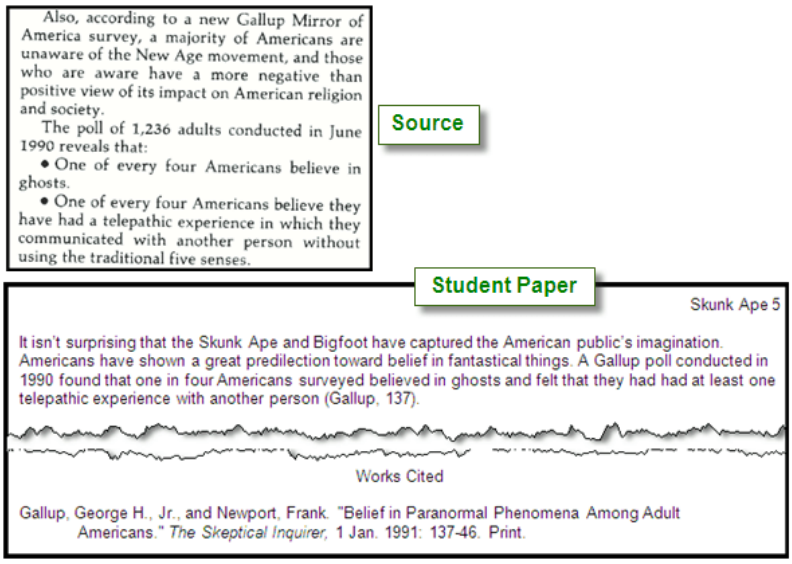
7. Is this use of information from a website plagiarism?




a. Yes, it is plagiarism. The writer of the paper just rearranged some of the words from the website and does not acknowledge the source.
b. No, it is not plagiarism. The paragraph written in the research paper is different than the website so the author didn't need to cite the original.

[reveal-answer q="173701"]Show Answer[/reveal-answer]
[hidden-answer a="173701"]a. This is an example of plagiarism. The original content has not been changed very much, and there is no citation of the source material.[/hidden-answer]

8. Is this plagiarism?




a. Yes, it is plagiarism. The student did not use quotation marks.
b. No, it is not plagiarism. The student gave credit to the source in the text of the paper and in the list of references

[reveal-answer q="90716"]Show Answer[/reveal-answer]
[hidden-answer a="90716"]b. The student did not need to use quotation marks, because the original material was paraphrased. And the student provided proper citation of the source, both in-text and in the list of works cited.[/hidden-answer]

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- Section on Unintentional Plagiarism. **Authored by**: Community College of Vermont. **Located at**: http://tutorials.libraries.vsc.edu/plagiarism/unintentional/after. **Project**: Understanding Plagiarism Tutorial. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*
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- Pot of Gold: Information Literacy Tutorial, Why Should You Care?. **Provided by**: University of Notre Dame. **Located at**: http://library.nd.edu/instruction/potofgold/utilizing/?page=8. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*
- Plagiarism Self-Test. **Provided by**: Colorado State University Tilt Academic Integrity Program. **Located at**: http://tilt.colostate.edu/integrity/resources/quiz/. **Project**: A collaborative project funded by the Center for Educational Technology and developed by Colby College, Bates College and Bowdoin College.. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*
- Quiz questions 7 and 8, from the Search for the Skunk Ape . **Provided by**: Florida Gulf Coast University. **Located at**: https://www.softchalkcloud.com/lesson/serve/cYCsWVMO9zDh8B/html. **Project**: Research Using FGCU Library. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
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# 9.8: Avoiding Plagiarism

You can take steps to avoid plagiarism in your writing by carefully managing your time, keeping a good record of your sources, and by knowing when and how to appropriately cite your sources.

## Manage Your Time

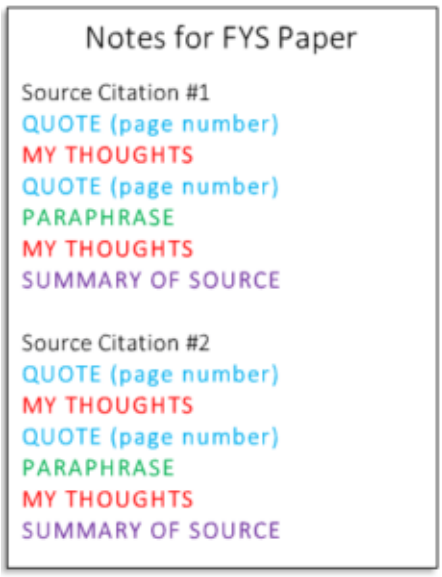
Plagiarism is often the result of procrastination. Doing research, writing your paper, and incorporating sources correctly takes time. Cobbling your paper together the night before it is due leaves you susceptible to unintentional plagiarism. In your rush, you may use your sources improperly or forget to cite.

Waiting until the last minute to do your paper also increases the appeal of buying a paper online or trying to turn in a paper you wrote previously for a different class. If you are caught doing those things, there can be very serious consequences.

## Develop a Note-Taking System

When you are in the middle of doing research, make sure that you use a note-taking system that clearly differentiates the following things: your own personal thoughts on the sources, quotes taken directly from the sources (with a page number), and summaries or paraphrases of the source.

One strategy you could apply during your note taking is the use of different colors to differentiate what text was copied directly from the source, from what you wrote using your own words. Here's an example:




Reference management websites and applications are excellent tools to help you keep track of your sources. Most of these websites are free and will even create the works cited page for you! Some of the most popular citation tools are:

- Zotero
- RefME (which works with Evernote)
- BibMe
- Mendeley

Pick one of these helpful tools at the beginning of your research and use it during your initial searches to ensure you always keep track of your materials.

# Know What Needs a Citation

The key to avoiding plagiarism is to make sure you give credit where credit is due. This may be credit for something somebody said, wrote, emailed, drew, or implied. You need to give credit to:

- Words or ideas presented in a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, web page, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any other medium
- Information you gain through interviewing or conversing with another person face-to-face, over the phone, or in writing
- Exact words or a unique phrase that you copy
- Diagrams, illustrations, charts, pictures, or other visual materials that you reprint
- Any electronically available media, including images, audio, video, or other media, that you reuse or repost.

Ultimately, you must cite any source of information you use in your paper that doesn't originate with you. You do **NOT** need to cite:

- your own ideas and opinions
- your own words
- common knowledge

Examples of common knowledge include:

- Basic facts: there are 365 days in a year, the earth orbits the sun, the molecular structure of water ($H_2O$), etc.
- Very well-known quotes: "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet" or "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." You still have to use quotation marks and indicate who said the quote (Romeo in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, and John F. Kennedy, respectively), but you do not need to include the source in your bibliography.
- Subject-specific common knowledge: There is information in specific disciplines or branches of knowledge that is considered common knowledge. A good indicator of what constitutes common knowledge is if you see the information in 4 or 5 articles or books and it does not need a citation. Until you become familiar with what is considered common knowledge in your major area of study, it is best to play it safe and cite your sources or ask your professor.

## Practice

What needs a citation?

1. 86% of internet users have taken steps online to remove or mask their digital footprints.
2. The Supreme Court ruling for Brown v. the Board of Education states, "Racial discrimination in public education is unconstitutional."
3. Paris is the Capital of France.
4. Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States of America.
5. Water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit.
6. 52, 950 unaccompanied homeless youth were supported through school based programs in 2008-09.

[reveal-answer q="921068"]Show Answer[/reveal-answer]
[hidden-answer a="921068"]a, b, and f need citations. The others are common knowledge.[/hidden-answer]

# Know How to Incorporate Sources




Checklist for integrating sources into your research paper.

You can incorporate other sources into your writing by paraphrasing, summarizing, or using direct quotes. With each of these techniques, you must always cite the original work.

**Paraphrasing** is using another author's idea, but expressing it in your own words and without quotation marks, since is it no longer a word-for-word quotation. A proper paraphrase is substantially different from the original text.

**Summarizing** condenses the main idea of a whole text, or of several texts, into a substantially shorter form while capturing the most important elements.

A **direct quotation** uses exactly the same words as the text you are taking it from, and it puts the exact words in quotation marks. Always include the page number, when possible, when citing a direct quotation: (Smith 116).

# Know How to Accurately Cite Your Sources

Knowing how to cite your sources properly is one of the most important skills to have in order to avoid plagiarism. Anytime you paraphrase, summarize, or use a direct quote in your research assignment, you must provide a citation in the text and list the source in your bibliography. We'll cover exactly how to do that in the next section.

Let's return to Marvin's research. He's already learned from the online professor about *walking*, *talking*, and *cooking* with his sources. Now the professor reminds Marvin about one more important step for utilizing sources in his research.

## Documenting Sources

O-Prof: In college writing, if you use a source in a paper, you're expected to let the reader know exactly how to find that source as well. Providing this "source address" information for your sources is known as *documenting your sources*.

Marvin: What do you mean by a "source address"?

O-Prof: It's directions for finding the source. A mailing address tells you how to find a person: the house number, street, city, state, and zip code. To help your readers find your sources, it's customary to give them the name of the author; the title of the book or article or website; and other information such as date, location of publication, publisher, even the database in which a source is located. Or, if it's a website, you might give the name of the site and/or the date on which you accessed it. Source documentation can be complicated, because the necessary source address information differs for different types of sources (e.g., books vs. journal articles, electronic vs. print). Additionally, different disciplines (e.g., history, philosophy, psychology, literature, etc.) use different "address" formats. Eventually, you'll become familiar with the documentation conventions for your own academic major, but source documentation takes a lot of practice. In the meantime, your teachers and various writing handbooks can provide

instructions on what information you'll need.

Marvin: Do I really need to include all that information? A lot of times, the sources I use are readings my teachers have assigned, so they already know where to find them.

O-Prof: Your teachers don't always know where all your sources are from, and they also want you to get into the habit of source documentation. And what about your other readers? If they're deeply interested in your topic, they may want to find more information than you've included in your paper. Your source documentation allows them to find the original source. And there are other reasons for documenting sources. It can help readers understand your own position on a topic, because they can see which authors you agree with and which you don't. It also shows readers you've taken time to investigate your topic and aren't just writing off the top of your head. If readers see that your ideas are based on trustworthy sources, they're more likely to trust what you say.

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# 9.9: Self Check- Writing Ethically

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# 9.10: Readings by H. Morrison

## 10.1 MLA citations

### Why do we cite?

- To **avoid plagiarism** (passing off others' ideas as your own) in any and all forms.
- To **increase our own ethos** as writers: showing that you know of, and are in conversation with, other credible sources boosts your own credibility and authority.
- To create an easy way for your readers or audience to **verify the facts** you present.

### Why do we use MLA in this class?

### It's a way to standardize the way you present your writing in academic settings. MLA is most commonly used in the humanities. As English is understood broadly as part of the Humanities, we use MLA.

MLA (Modern Language Association) is one of many ways to format documents and cite sources. Other common citation styles are APA (American Psychological Association), which is often used in the social sciences, and Chicago/Turabian style. All styles are suited to particular subject areas.

Each method provides 3 things:

- Standardization for **in-text citations** (for quotes, paraphrases, and summaries within the body of the essay).
- Standardization for **Works Cited/References**.
- Standardization for **formatting** the entire essay, i.e. where to put your name, the title, and the margin size.

## Citations and how to do them

Citations are not the same as quotations. A citation is an standardized indication of the source of your ideas and/or words.

*Citation* is the broad category: *summaries*, *paraphrases*, and *quotations* all need citations, but none them themselves are citations.

- Example citation *summaries*:*
- In their book about modern ecology movements in the face of the climate crisis, *Beyond the New Green Deal*, Hahn and Wright discuss the impact of global corporations on the worsening climate. They conclude that anti-capitalist grassroot movements may be the most effective tool available, given the poor outcomes of attempts to change environmental policy in the US.
- *Summaries generally do not need page number citations because they are summaries of the entire work, or large parts of it. A signal phrase is most often enough.
- Example citation *paraphrases*:
- Hahn and Wright state that while a growing number of democratic political candidates promise to prioritize policy making to help climate change, only about 5% of them are able to do this once elected (112).
- Example citation *quotations*:
- Hahn and Wright argue "the ineffective nature of policy making in Washington, by our elected officials, may be discouraging to grassroots activists who are just starting out, but it in can also be a rallying cry to organize and create change in local communities" (113).

All three of these would necessitate a **Works Cited entry**, like this:

Hahn, Jo and W. Wright. *Beyond the New Green Deal*. Simon & Schuster, New York, 2018.

## Never leave a quote alone

**Never leave a quote alone in a sentence:** use signal phrases or blend the quote into your own writing. Your own words should always introduce a quote or contextualize it.

- Incorporation into your own sentence:
  - While the statistics vary for men under the age of 50, there's "a clear indication that men 50 and older are two to three times more likely to report being lonely, regardless of relationship status" (Watts) that suggests finding a mate is not helpful.
- Introduce the quote:
  - In the article "World on Fire," the authors report on the panic caused by climate change: "60% of participants reported feeling severely heightened anxiety when consuming media about climate change."
- Signal phrase:
  - Vaughn argues, "policy makers are not taking their commitment to citizens seriously. Instead, they are motivated by the interests of big business and the kickbacks and other financial and social benefit they provide."

# Quote/Paraphrase Sandwich

A quote/paraphrase sandwich is an analogy to help you remember how to treat quotes and paraphrases in your essays. As noted, quotes should never be left alone in a sentence. Quotes/paraphrases must always be introduced (conceptually and literally), presented, and then explained or connected to the topic sentence.

| | |
|---|---|
| Top Bun | Conceptually introduce the quote, and literally introduce the quote. Include some introductory information needed to understand the quote, as well as the source, if desired. |
| Meat or delectable veggie filling | Present the quote or paraphrase. |
| Bottom Bun | Explain the quote if needed (if the language is complex, or the data otherwise needs to be broken down) and explain how the quote/paraphrase connects to the topic sentence in the paragraph in which the quote/paraphrase exists. |

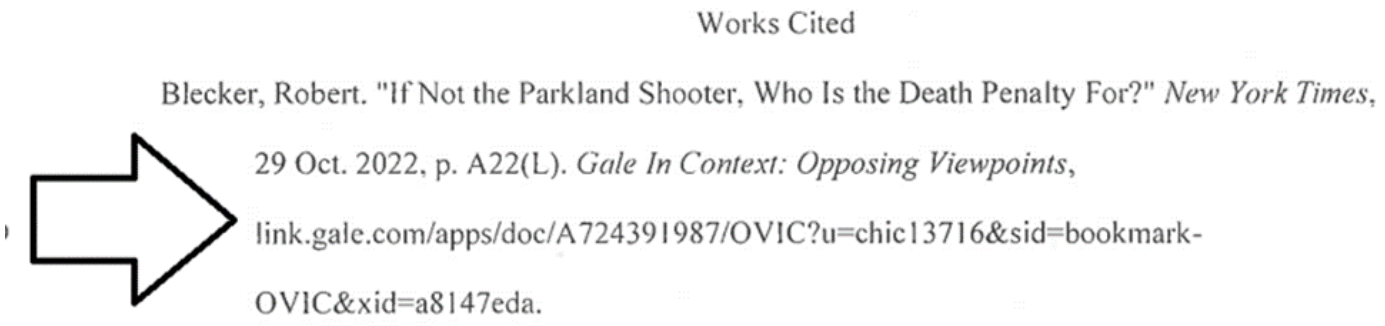
**Example**

The popular documentary-style show *Love on the Spectrum* (LotS) depicts young adults with autism engaged in the pursuit of romantic relationships. Like other dating shows, it follows participants' lives as they get ready for and go on dates. In the article "Exploitation for Acceptance," author Maree Wolf states "while *Love on the Spectrum* outwardly purports to be inclusive and increase representation of autistic adults, it actually does the opposite. It makes a spectacle—a bumbling circus sideshow—of earnest autistic's pursuit of community and connection. The participant's lives aren't treated as real or serious—they are treated as jokes or 'aww, cute!' moments." LotS's cast is made up of autistic people, but as Wolf argues, the representation the show offers through editing and dubious interviewing techniques is harmful and dehumanizing, and just a matter of entertainment for the audience at the expense of real people.

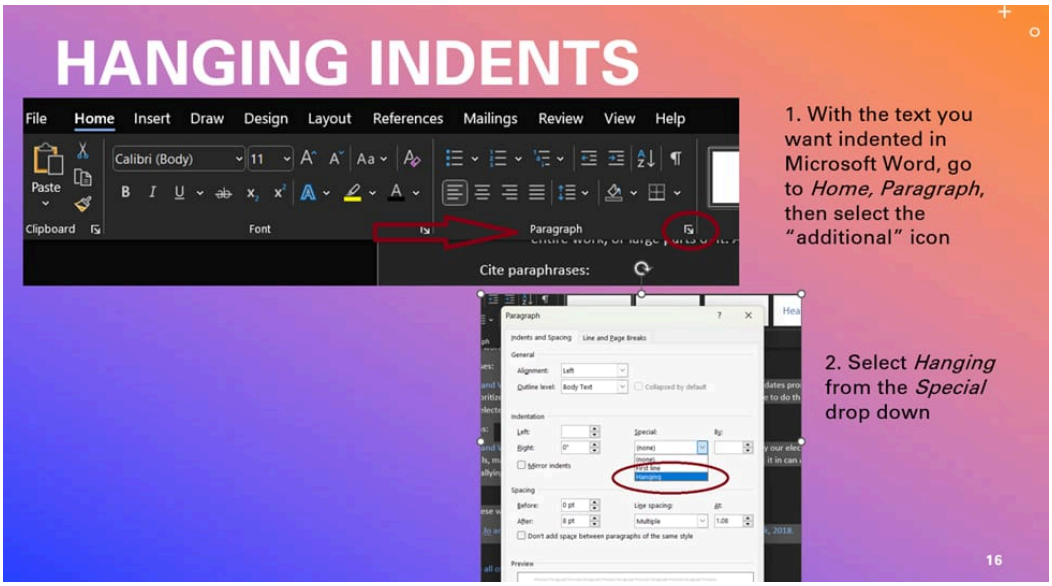
# Hanging Indents

Your Works Cited must have "hanging indents."

They look like this:




Here's how to do them in Microsoft Word.




## MLA citation and Works Cited Checklist

The answer to all of these questions should be YES!

In-text citations:

- If I used my own words to explain a source's ideas, is it clear exactly where those ideas come from? Do I use **signal phrases** and/or **parenthetical citations**?
- If I used the source's exact words, is it in **quotation marks**?
- If I used more than 4 lines of a source's exact words, is it presented properly in a **block quote**?
- Do I introduce each quote/paraphrase/summary, and then immediately discuss/explain/elaborate and connect it to the rest of the paragraph?
- Does every cited source have a **Works Cited** entry?

On the Works Cited page:

- Does the Works Cited start on its own page?
- Is the title Works Cited in bold and centered at the top of the page?
- Are the entries arranged in alphabetical order?
- Did I use **hanging indents**?
- Did I verify the formatting and content of each entry, using Purdue OWL, even if the entry was automatically generated by a database?

- Is every Works Cited entry cited at least once in the essay in an in-text citation (quote, summary, paraphrase with signal phrase and/or parenthetical citation)?

## MLA Resources

Full Information on how to properly use MLA for all 3 elements: in-text citations, works cited, and formatting from Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL).

**MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics**

**MLA Formatting and Style Guide**

**MLA Works Cited Page: Basic Format**

# Responsible use of sources: accuracy, fairness, and clear attribution

To properly use a source, you must do the following:

- Comprehend the source. It is crucial for you to completely understand your source--thoroughly read and understand the source. If you need help with this step, see a reading tutor.
- Be accurate. If you understand your source, you should be able to accurately represent the source author's ideas and data.
- Be fair. Honestly represent what the source says, even if it does not help your argument. Typically, we use sources that agree with our arguments, so we default to being fair, i.e., using the author's work in the way they intended and honestly representing it. However, sometimes we disagree with an author's conclusions OR we think they should have come to a somewhat different conclusion. We then can take their work and point out the issues, but we must be clear when we do this. It should never seem like you are changing or misrepresenting the author's ideas.
- Cite the source correctly whether you paraphrase, quote, or summarize. It should always be crystal clear when you are using the source's ideas rather than your own.
- Do not plagiarize. It must be very clear whose ideas are presented. If the ideas are not entirely your own, if the wording is not entirely your own, either do not use it or cite it properly.

## Considering the source

Rhetorically analyze your potential sources:

- What is their ethos? What are their credentials, and what is their motivation/intention?
- A source being peer reviewed automatically lends ethos and high credibility because the source: 1. Must be an expert to be peer reviewed, and 2. Those peers who review it are also experts. Therefore, the output's reliability is verified.
- Who is their intended audience? If it's not you, consider either not using the source, or, if appropriate, offering contextualization when you cite them. Say "In a report intended for medical students, the author suggests...."
- Reliable academic sources will rarely use pathos; they will use logos in abundance. They will also strengthen their own ethos by citing the work of other reliable, well-respected sources.

## Plagiarism

There are many forms of plagiarism, but it can be summarized as presenting another's work as your own. This applies to a single sentence or phrase, or an entire essay.

It can be intentional or unintentional. Intentional is far more serious and carries heavier penalties, but both will result in lost points, at minimum.

Intentional – In this class, automatic failure of the assignment, possible other disciplinary actions and/or failure of the course.

- Your friend took this class last year. You submit a part of one of his essays as though you wrote it.
- You buy an essay.
- You copy/paste a paragraph from a news article, modify it somewhat, do not cite it, and then include it your essay.

- A work colleague heavily edits your essay and changes the phrasing, word choice, and organization of your essay. They may have also added a topic sentence here and there.
- You used an AI chat to write your essay, in part or in whole.

Unintentional—In this class, results in a point reduction only if it is clearly unintentional. May incur more serious penalties.

- You paraphrased one of your sources and forgot to cite it.
- You briefly summarized an article but forgot to mention where it came from or who wrote it.
- You provided a quote but forgot to put it in quotation marks and cite the source.

## How to avoid plagiarism:

### Intentional:

If you're feeling stuck and/or overwhelmed, ask for help from the correct sources that will actually help you learn:

- A writing tutor.
- A reading tutor.
- A librarian.
- Your professor.
- If you need other support, seek it out!
- For disability accommodations, see the Access Center.
- For mental health issues, see the Wellness Center.

**Here and in life in general, advocating for yourself and asking for what you need is crucial.**

- Plan ahead and anticipate your challenges. Life is busy and complicated, and no one succeeds completely on their own. Make a plan to complete your assignments and make appointments for help.
- Ask for an extension. While extensions can set you back, it's far better to ask for an extension than to plagiarize.
- Accept that you may not get the grade you want, or you might even fail. No one wants to fall short of their own expectations or others'; however, even an F is preferable to plagiarism being noted on your official academic record.

### Unintentional

- Give yourself enough time to revise and thoroughly edit.
- Carefully edit and re-read your essay. Try highlighting all the content that is not yours for a clear visual indicator (remove the highlight before submitting!). You can also color code.
- Keep track of your research in your research log.
- Keep track of the sources you use with an in-progress works cited page.
- Have a writing tutor review your final draft for correct citations. Note, there's no guarantee that a tutor will spot unintentional plagiarism.

### Patchwriting

Patchwriting happens when you rephrase a portion of source material, but your language remains too close to the vocabulary and/or sentence structure of the original text. All patchwriting is a kind of paraphrase, but successful paraphrase is not patchwritten.

**Why is it something to be avoided?**

- Patchwriting does not demonstrate the writer's comprehension. Often, we patchwrite when we do not fully understand the source content..
- It is typically not well-written. Pasting together synonyms is usually a recipe for an awkward, unwieldy sentence. Sometimes, it's incomprehensible.
- It can lead to plagiarism. If you are not truly using your own words, and not using a quote, it's technically plagiarism.

**Patch Writing Example**

**Original text**

"The Goose diet, commonly known as "honking" on social media, is a growing trend in which teens and adults eat nothing but grass clippings in an effort to lose weight and, reportedly get "goose juiced"—meaning they take on the fearless of aggression of a nesting Canadian goose" (Gosling).

**Patchwriting (ineffective, plagiaristic paraphrase)**

The Goose diet, also known as "honking" on Tiktok, Twitter(X) and the like, is a growing trend in which people over the age of twelve eat only clippings of grass in an effort to shrink their waistlines, and allegedly get "goose juiced"—which means they assume the lack of fear and the anger of a Canadian goose who is in its nesting season.

**Actual paraphrase**

According to Gosling, the Goose Diet phenomenon has been gaining popularity among both teenagers and adults, and even has a nickname on social media: "Honking." The diet is simple—it consists of eating grass clippings exclusively—and, allegedly, the result is rapid, significant weight loss as well as an empowering behavioral change in which dieters feel they have the invincible assertiveness of nesting Canadian geese (Gosling).

## To quote or not to quote: determining whether you should paraphrase/summarize, or quote.

- Does the potential quote contain NECCESARY specific or technical phrasing (even jargon) that cannot be duplicated?
- Is it beautifully or poetically stated? Pithy or witty?
- Does it contain statistics, numbers, or figures that you would have to present "as is" anyhow?
- Is the quote an important personal narrative that needs to have the author's voice presented, rather than your own?

**.... Then you should quote it!**

- Is the potential quote very long?
- Would you need to leave things out using an ellipsis (...) because not all of it is relevant?
- Is the quote an explanation or background information?
- Is it confusingly written? Complicated?
- Is it a key point or concept that you need to show you understand completely?

**.... Then you should NOT quote it!**

**Paraphrase or summarize instead.**

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# 9.11: Activity by H. Morrison

## Responsible Use Activity of Sources

Below are excerpts from a research essay that uses the source “On Life Support: Public Health in the Age of Mass Incarceration.” Carefully read each item below. Do not read the whole source report, but do read the areas cited below https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/on-life-support-public-health-mass-incarceration-report.pdf. Simply locate the information cited below in the source above and, for each item, determine: A) if the writer used the report fairly and accurately? B) if they did not, how is it inaccurate and/or unfair? C) if it could be improved, how would you recommend improving it?

Note: all citation formatting is correct.

1. As of 2014, individuals with infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis C, and a variety of STDs, are more likely to end up incarcerated than individuals without such conditions (Cloud 6, 10).
2. According to Cloud’s 2014 report, being incarcerated causes “higher rates of chronic conditions and mental and physical disabilities” for people 55 years and older (7). Clearly, prison literally makes people sick, especially those of certain age demographics.
3. Poor health is not only a problem for incarcerated individuals—it’s a problem for their communities: each year, “prisons release nearly 700,000 people to the community… for people with a history of injection drug use, failure to promote care continuity upon release increases risk of relapse, overdose, and risky behaviors that spread HIV/AIDs and HCV disease in communities” (Cloud 15).
4. What’s arguably worse is that the punishment for incarcerated individuals does not end after their prison sentence: their punishment continues in being blocked from vital resources. Cloud reports, “Policies such as banning people with a drug felony conviction from receiving cash welfare, food stamps, and subsidized housing lead to housing instability” (18). While some may say that this outcome is part of the individual’s “consequence” of having engaged in crime, it is crucial to note that because of such policies, children who have an incarcerated father are far more likely to experience homelessness in their childhoods (Cloud 18). There’s no justice in punishing innocent children for “the sins” of their fathers; children, families, and other community members should not suffer continually because of an individual’s alleged crimes.

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# INDEX


**A**

annotate
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*

annotated bibliography
*3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research*

annotating
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*

annotation
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*

argumentative writing
*2: Different Types of Literature*

**C**

Catharine Maria Sedgwick
*7.1: Catharine Maria Sedgwick*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman
*4.9: Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860 - 1935)*

cid:engl110
*1: What is Literature?*
*1.1: What is Literature?*
*1.2: Why Read and Write About Literature?*
*1.3: What is Literary Analysis?*
*1.7: Inferences in Literature*
*2: Different Types of Literature*
*2.1: About Creative Nonfiction*
*2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style*
*2.11: Rhetorical and Literary Devices*
*2.12: Theme*
*2.2: About Fiction - Short Stories and the Novel*
*2.23: About Drama*
*2.24: What is Drama?*
*2.25: Elements of Drama*
*2.26: Reading and Responding to Drama*
*2.27: About Literary Criticism*
*2.28: Literary Criticism*
*2.29: What is Literary Criticism?*
*2.3: What is Fiction?*
*2.30: Formalism*
*2.31: Psychoanalytic Criticism*
*2.32: Criticism and Gender*
*2.33: Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies Criticism*
*2.34: New Historicism*
*2.35: Ecocriticism*
*2.4: How to Read Fiction*
*2.5: Elements of Fiction*
*2.6: Character*
*2.7: Plot*
*2.8: Setting*
*2.9: Narration, Point of View, Dialogue*
*3: Writing About Literature*
*3.1: The Literary Landscape- Four Major Genres*
*3.10: Essay Type - Literary Analysis*
*3.11: Essay Type - Comparing and Contrasting Literature*
*3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research*
*3.13: How to Perform Literary Research (Navigating Secondary Sources and Library Databases)*
*3.14: Writing About Poetry*
*3.15: Analyzing Poetry*
*3.16: Compare and Contrast Poetry Assignments*
*3.17: Writing About Drama*
*3.18: Literary Essay Titles*
*3.2: The Writing Process for Literary Essays*
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*
*3.4: Writing About Fiction and Creative Nonfiction*
*3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays*
*3.6: Literary Thesis Statements*
*3.7: Essay as Argument*
*3.8: Summarizing vs. Analyzing Literary Works*
*3.9: Essay Type - Literary Response*
*4.7: Chopin, Kate "The Story of an Hour" (1894)*

composition
*3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays*

connotation
*2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style*

Creating Literary Analysis
*3.2: The Writing Process for Literary Essays*

critical thinking
*2: Different Types of Literature*

**D**

defining literature
*1: What is Literature?*

denotation
*2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style*

drama
*2.24: What is Drama?*

**E**

ecocriticism
*2.35: Ecocriticism*

essay writing
*3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays*

Eurocentrism
*5.1: Postcolonial, Racial, and Ethnic Theory- An Overview*

**F**

Francisco X. Alarcón
*6.13: Francisco X. Alarcón*

**I**

inference
*1.7: Inferences in Literature*

**J**

James Fenimore Cooper
*7.3: James Fenimore Cooper*

**K**

Kate Chopin
*4.6: Kate Chopin (1850 - 1904)*

**L**

literary
*1: What is Literature?*
*3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research*

literary analysis
*3.18: Literary Essay Titles*
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*

literary criticism
*1: What is Literature?*

Literary Essay
*3.18: Literary Essay Titles*

literary spectrum
*1: What is Literature?*

literary thesis statement
*3.6: Literary Thesis Statements*

Literary Title
*3.18: Literary Essay Titles*

literature
*1: What is Literature?*
*2: Different Types of Literature*
*2.24: What is Drama?*
*3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research*
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*
*3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays*

**M**

Mary E. Wilkins Freeman
*4.8: Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852 - 1930)*

meme
1.1: What is Literature?
MLA
9.1: MLA Documentation and Format

**N**

New Historicism
2.34: New Historicism

**O**

organization
3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays
orientalism
5.1: Postcolonial, Racial, and Ethnic Theory- An Overview

**P**

prewriting
3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays

**R**

research
3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research
rhetorical analysis
3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays

**S**

sarah orne jewett
4.5: Sarah Orne Jewett (1849 - 1909)
Shakespeare
2.24: What is Drama?
syntax
2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style

**T**

thesis statement
3.6: Literary Thesis Statements
title
3.18: Literary Essay Titles

**W**

William Apess
7.2: William Apess
writing process
3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays
writing skills
3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays

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# GLOSSARY

## S

**Sample Word 1** | Sample Definition 1

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# INDEX


**A**

annotate
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*

annotated bibliography
*3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research*

annotating
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*

annotation
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*

argumentative writing
*2: Different Types of Literature*

**C**

Catharine Maria Sedgwick
*7.1: Catharine Maria Sedgwick*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman
*4.9: Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860 - 1935)*

cid:engl110
*1: What is Literature?*
*1.1: What is Literature?*
*1.2: Why Read and Write About Literature?*
*1.3: What is Literary Analysis?*
*1.7: Inferences in Literature*
*2: Different Types of Literature*
*2.1: About Creative Nonfiction*
*2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style*
*2.11: Rhetorical and Literary Devices*
*2.12: Theme*
*2.2: About Fiction - Short Stories and the Novel*
*2.23: About Drama*
*2.24: What is Drama?*
*2.25: Elements of Drama*
*2.26: Reading and Responding to Drama*
*2.27: About Literary Criticism*
*2.28: Literary Criticism*
*2.29: What is Literary Criticism?*
*2.3: What is Fiction?*
*2.30: Formalism*
*2.31: Psychoanalytic Criticism*
*2.32: Criticism and Gender*
*2.33: Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies Criticism*
*2.34: New Historicism*
*2.35: Ecocriticism*
*2.4: How to Read Fiction*
*2.5: Elements of Fiction*
*2.6: Character*
*2.7: Plot*
*2.8: Setting*
*2.9: Narration, Point of View, Dialogue*
*3: Writing About Literature*
*3.1: The Literary Landscape- Four Major Genres*
*3.10: Essay Type - Literary Analysis*
*3.11: Essay Type - Comparing and Contrasting Literature*
*3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research*
*3.13: How to Perform Literary Research (Navigating Secondary Sources and Library Databases)*
*3.14: Writing About Poetry*
*3.15: Analyzing Poetry*
*3.16: Compare and Contrast Poetry Assignments*
*3.17: Writing About Drama*
*3.18: Literary Essay Titles*
*3.2: The Writing Process for Literary Essays*
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*
*3.4: Writing About Fiction and Creative Nonfiction*
*3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays*
*3.6: Literary Thesis Statements*
*3.7: Essay as Argument*
*3.8: Summarizing vs. Analyzing Literary Works*
*3.9: Essay Type - Literary Response*
*4.7: Chopin, Kate "The Story of an Hour" (1894)*

composition
*3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays*

connotation
*2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style*

Creating Literary Analysis
*3.2: The Writing Process for Literary Essays*

critical thinking
*2: Different Types of Literature*

**D**

defining literature
*1: What is Literature?*

denotation
*2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style*

drama
*2.24: What is Drama?*

**E**

ecocriticism
*2.35: Ecocriticism*

essay writing
*3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays*

Eurocentrism
*5.1: Postcolonial, Racial, and Ethnic Theory- An Overview*

**F**

Francisco X. Alarcón
*6.13: Francisco X. Alarcón*

**I**

inference
*1.7: Inferences in Literature*

**J**

James Fenimore Cooper
*7.3: James Fenimore Cooper*

**K**

Kate Chopin
*4.6: Kate Chopin (1850 - 1904)*

**L**

literary
*1: What is Literature?*
*3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research*

literary analysis
*3.18: Literary Essay Titles*
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*

literary criticism
*1: What is Literature?*

Literary Essay
*3.18: Literary Essay Titles*

literary spectrum
*1: What is Literature?*

literary thesis statement
*3.6: Literary Thesis Statements*

Literary Title
*3.18: Literary Essay Titles*

literature
*1: What is Literature?*
*2: Different Types of Literature*
*2.24: What is Drama?*
*3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research*
*3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays*
*3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays*

**M**

Mary E. Wilkins Freeman
*4.8: Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852 - 1930)*

meme
1.1: What is Literature?
MLA
9.1: MLA Documentation and Format

**N**

New Historicism
2.34: New Historicism

**O**

organization
3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays
orientalism
5.1: Postcolonial, Racial, and Ethnic Theory- An Overview

**P**

prewriting
3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays

**R**

research
3.12: Essay Type - Literary Research
rhetorical analysis
3.5: Outlining for Literary Essays

**S**

sarah orne jewett
4.5: Sarah Orne Jewett (1849 - 1909)
Shakespeare
2.24: What is Drama?
syntax
2.10: Word Choice, Tone, Voice, and Style

**T**

thesis statement
3.6: Literary Thesis Statements
title
3.18: Literary Essay Titles

**W**

William Apess
7.2: William Apess
writing process
3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays
writing skills
3.3: Prewriting for Literature Essays

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# GLOSSARY

## S

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