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Preface

The ideas expressed in this manual are merely suggestions. These ideas cannot and should not replace your notions about what will work best for you and with your students. Different sections of the same course bring different students, a different group chemistry, and a different relationship with you and the literature in this book. Your judgment and your active involvement with your students will tell you the most effective direction to take.

In many ways, the best questions to use as the basis for your discussions in class are the questions your students raise themselves. Listening carefully to their questions and comments will help you gain insights into what they know and what they need to know to enliven and enrich their experiences with literature. The statement from Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* that I have used in the preface of the book gets at the heart of what matters in the classroom and bears repeating here. When you use any method or technique with your class, ask yourself if it gets "in the way of the live sense of literature . . . is it a means toward making literature a more personally meaningful and self-disciplined activity?" If you measure all your classroom activities and assignments against this question, you'll be off to a solid start.

The table of contents at the beginning of this manual follows the order of the material in the text. The alternate TOC that follows this commentary is organized by genre and lists authors and their works in alphabetical order. In addition to the commentary and explanations about the organization and features of Parts I and II (chapters 1 through 5), there are a number of student exercises that you might use with your classes. These exercises are a follow-up on the commentary in the text itself and are designed to get students to "experience" what is described in the surrounding passages in the book.

Part III of this manual includes commentary and suggestions about using the literature and the case books in the theme sections of the book. For the
most part, these suggestions are aimed at getting students personally involved with the literature and tapping their own experiences as a foundation for responding to literature. The appendix contains four sample syllabi constructed by faculty members who have used / are using the text at my college. The first three are designed for traditional classrooms, and the last one is designed for an on-line course.

New to the second edition of this instructor’s manual are prompts for writing and discussion for all the short stories, poems, plays, and essays. In addition, all of the short stories and plays will list useful web sites, and where possible, video resources and bibliographies of additional reading.

A comprehensive web site has been constructed to support the literature and activities in the text. This site includes in-depth information about featured authors, additional activities for writing about literature, links to literature and research sites, and additional casebooks. It can be found at <http:www.ablongman.com/madden>.

Finally, remember that the quality of your presence in the classroom--your wisdom, enthusiasm, listening skills, and patience--more than any text or method, is the most important factor in making your class a success. If your students respect and believe in you, they are much more likely to believe that the reading and writing that you ask them to do will ultimately benefit them.

I am grateful to my generous colleagues in the English Dept. at WCC who have contributed their work, ideas, and / or syllabi to the text and this manual: Bill Costanzo, Joanne Falinski, Alan Devenish, Liz Gaffney, Linda Sledge, Tahir Naqvi, Mary Ellen LeClair, Richard Courage, and Jillian Quinn. And I am grateful to my students, who have been and continue to be such a vital part of my own education. At Longman, I am thankful to Stefanie Schwalb for her proofreading, and I appreciate the fine work Cyndy Taylor has done on the web site. I am especially grateful to Donna Campion for her patience and perseverance during the production of this manual.
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PART I

MAKING CONNECTIONS
CHAPTER 1

Participation
Personal Response and Critical Thinking

I begin this chapter with the reader and the importance of personal response because I want students to understand that it is only through their reading that literature comes to life. It is not clear that most students believe this, so you may find it helpful to discuss this issue with the class at the beginning of the semester. Many students believe that literature like everything else in their academic world is information to be digested, solved, or memorized--with a correct meaning separate from their experience of it.

Of equal importance is helping them to understand that their personal responses are the foundation of later critical analysis--that these are not separate and distinct kinds of responses. And, of course, they need to know from the outset that what ultimately makes their responses compelling and convincing is the evidence they bring to support them.

Writing to Learn

I have assumed that students using this book will have many opportunities to write both informally and formally. Many students have used journals and other forms of informal writing in high school, so this idea won't be new to them. But keeping a journal, a reading log, or response sheets about their reading of literature might be, so it will be helpful to review what this means. The student samples in this section (like all the student samples in the text) are authentic and reflect the kind of confusion or insight students might write about. They don't have to have read "Araby" or "There's a Certain Slant of Light" to get a sense of what these student writers are addressing here. The freedom they express as writers to conjecture, stumble, complain, and articulate their connections is evident
in what they write. This kind of writing gives students a "low stakes" opportunity to play with their responses and to explore possibilities.

**Collaboration and Privacy**

Another assumption I've made is that students will have the opportunity to talk with one another about their responses--and to learn how exchanging ideas, much like writing, is an effective way to develop their responses. But students will not openly discuss their ideas if they feel coerced into revealing things about themselves that make them feel uncomfortable. Students know best when they are uncomfortable about sharing personal issues. Given the nature of this first chapter and its encouragement to write about what's personal, it's crucial that students are given the opportunity to back off when they need to. I assume that whoever uses this text will respect a student's right to privacy.

**Ourselves as Readers**

It's always illuminating to hear students talk about the their different experiences as readers, how much they read and what they read or don't read. And it's useful to begin a semester by having them think about themselves as readers, rather than focusing exclusively on what's being read. You may find the following questions helpful as homework or as an in-class assignment. Students might record their responses in journals or reading logs and share their answers to these questions in pairs or small groups.

**Student Exercise: Your Reading History**

1. Think back to your earliest reading experiences.
   What were they like? Did any of those reading experiences have an important influence on your life? If so, how?

2. Did you do your first reading inside or outside school?
   If you read outside the classroom, what kind of reading did you do? Did you feel differently about the reading you did outside the
classroom? If so, why? Have you read any books that have influenced your life? Explain.


Different Kinds of Reading: “Advice to My Son”

Because many students don't differentiate between one type of reading and another, I've included this exercise to get them to think about the difference between what Rosenblatt calls "efferent" reading and "aesthetic" reading. The bleach bottle warning label and Peter Meinke's "Advice to My Son" each give advice, but the nature—not just the substance--of that advice is quite different. It's a good idea to let students talk about their different responses to these pieces as well as encouraging them to bring up other pieces and types of reading that they do. They should understand that their reading "stance" anticipates meaning and will help them read literature differently than they might read to simply gather information.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: “Advice to My Son”

1. The poet has changed one line in this poem since it was first published. Originally, lines 19 and 20 were “show your soul to one man / work with another.” Meinke has changed this two line sequence to “speak truth to one man / work with another.” Which combo do you prefer and why?

2. Identify the instances of literal and figurative language in the poem. To what extent do they work together to create the meaning of the poem?
MAKING CONNECTIONS

This entire section is designed to get students thinking about the influence that their personalities, backgrounds, experiences, and values have on their perception of what they read. The "Making Connections" that precede the poem are an attempt to sensitize students--to tap their emotions around the issue--before they read the poem. It's a "scaffolding" technique that is especially helpful to students who want to "solve" rather than experience the poem.

Images of Ourselves: Paul Zimmer, “Zimmer in Grade School”

This poem is both fun and provocative. Many of our students (and many of us) may still in some deep recess of our beings see ourselves as "sitting outside the principal's office." This is a very accessible poem and fertile ground for a discussion of self-image. In what way do students still carry around a vision of themselves that was conceived within them as young children? Where do our self-images come from? What people in our lives and what kinds of experiences fed and continue to feed our sense of who we are? Interesting comparisons might be made to Stevie Smith's “Not Waving But Drowning” and Marge Piercy's “Barbie Doll” in this chapter. For a different view, it might also be useful to compare it to Maya Angelou's “Phenomenal Woman.”

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: “Zimmer in Grade School”

1. Can you write a poem about yourself in grade school? If so how would the issues and the images differ from those of the speaker in this poem?

2. To what extent do we all hide behind “an elaborate mask” as we play the roles in life that we play? Do you think we should? To what extent does creating such a mask make us adults?
3. Compare this poem to T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and/or Paul Dunbar’s “We Wear the Mask.”

Images of Ourselves: Stevie Smith, "Not Waving but Drowning"

I have found that whether I assigned this poem or not that students tended to find it for themselves. I often encourage my students to "roam" through the text and read pieces (especially poems) that attract their attention. This one almost always does. They are sometimes confused by the shifting speaker in the poem but even so they seem to understand (and often identify with) the compelling plight of being misunderstood.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: "Not Waving but Drowning"

1. There are two speakers in the poem? To what extent do they understand each other?

2. The lines "I was much too far out all my life / And not waving but drowning" are obviously meant to carry more than a literal meaning. What do they mean?

3. To what extent do you, like the person in this poem, project an outside veneer that is different from what you are feeling inside?

Culture, Values, and Experience

In addition to the introduction to these issues in the text, students might be asked to answer the following questions for their own edification or for class discussion.

Student Exercise

1. Describe your family situation. Which of your family members has had the most influence on you? Why?
2. Describe the friendships that have had the most influence on you. In what ways have your friends influenced your values?

3. How important an influence has race and ethnic background been in your life?

4. How important a factor has gender been in your life?

5. Describe how religion has or has not influenced you.

6. What kind of influence has work had in your life?

7. Are there other factors that are important in your life or in describing your background?

"Those Winter Sundays" and "Barbie Doll"

Once again, each of these poems is preceded by a "Making Connections" prompt that might help to sensitize students to the emotional context of these poems. Each of these poems, however, tends to do a good job of this on their own, and I have found these poems to be among the most popular pieces I've done with my students.

Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays"

As evidenced by the student sample at the end of Chapter 2, this is a poem that often brings wonderfully moving responses. Though it may not have been Robert Hayden's intent when he wrote this, so many students respond to it by saying they're going to thank someone who has been selflessly generous with them. The downside of this is that many will reduce the poem to a moral (e.g. "The moral of this poem is be nicer to your parents") rather than giving it its due as a tribute and expression of sad regret. This may be a good opportunity to talk about the difference between "moral" and "theme" even though the book doesn't formally address the issue until Chapter 3.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing: "Those Winter Sundays"

1. Consider the lengths of the sentences in the poem. To what extent do the varying lengths of the sentences help to convey the poem’s meaning?

2. What is the dominant tone of the poem? Answer the speaker’s question: “What did [he] know of love’s austere and lonely offices?”

3. All is not ideal in this household as described by the speaker in this poem. Pick out both the negative and positive images and try to capture the complete setting and atmosphere of the poem.

4. Compare the father-son relationship in this poem with that in Heaney's poem “Digging” or Achebe’s short story “Marriage is a Private Affair.”

Marge Piercy, "Barbie Doll"

This is another provocative poem that usually raises many issues about gender roles. It is always interesting to compare male and female responses to it--and extend the discussion to male roles growing up, and the kinds of pressures boys feel that may seem the equivalent of what Barbie faces. Some students will suggest that Barbie is literally dead, and this can be an excellent opportunity to discuss the figurative nature of language--not to discourage these students away from their own interpretations--but to help them understand that figurative language increases the range of possibility beyond the linear and rational.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: “Barbie Doll”

1. Consider the language in the poem. To what extent do words like “peepee” and phrases like “you have a great big nose and fat legs” influence our response to the “girlchild” and the developing tone of the poem?
2. Compare this poem to the Grimm Brother’s fairy tale “Cinderella” and/or the Anne Sexton poem “Cinderella.

3. To what extent are males faced with this same problem? Are men responsible for imposing these standards of beauty on women? Are there equivalents of Barbie beauty that are attached to men? Explain.

**Being in the Moment: Dudley Randall, "Ballad of Birmingham"**

Given the nature of the material, this chapter is recursive and circular rather than linear. The end of the chapter brings us back in large measure to different kinds of reading once again, but it's premised on their having read--and experienced--the earlier poems.

Like the earlier section on "Different Kinds of Reading," this section is designed to help students understand the difference between a piece (in this case The New York Times article about the racially motivated bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama) that intends to convey information and a poem, "The Ballad of Birmingham," that seeks to involve them in the moment of the tragedy and its immediate aftermath. A discussion of what went on while they were reading may be illuminating.

It might also be illuminating for students to go back to other newspaper and magazine stories written at the time and recently. Several of those responsible (and still alive) have finally been put on trial for these bombings, and many recent stories have revisited the event and the subsequent investigations and trials. Spike Lee’s recent documentary about this bombing, *Four Little Girls*, would provide a terrific supplement to their reading of the poem and the newspaper article.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: "Ballad of Birmingham"**

1. The dialogue in this poem represents the mother and her daughter. How do their perspectives differ? Are their stances realistic? Explain.
2. This poem is a strong example of situational irony as described in Chapter 3? What is so ironic about what happens to the girl? To what extent can you find equivalent examples of irony in the *New York Times* story?

3. This poem is a ballad. Consider the requirements for this type of narrative poetry in Chapter 3 and describe the ways that this poem fulfills them.

**Participation and Imagination**

The last few sections of this first chapter are a reminder to students that their imaginations—and their active emotional participation—are essential if they want to have a complete experience with literature. Beginning with Chapter 2, and in greater depth in subsequent chapters, we will be examining the parts that make up the whole of literature—but that whole is still greater than the sum of its parts and will not be experienced without their personal engagement and involvement.
CHAPTER 2

Communication
Writing about Literature

The Response Essay

The Response Essay is a natural build from the journals or reading logs students have been encouraged to write in Chapter 1. Like so many other explanations in the book, this one is based on the kinds of experiences students have had in their own lives where they often talk about or write about events to share their meaning not to prove a thesis. The explanation of the response essay on page 21 emphasizes this, and you might find it helpful to talk about this in class.

Voice and Writing

The concept of voice is an elusive one for many students and often at the core of a problem they have when reading texts. The intended effect of the discussion of voice in this chapter is to have students understand its importance in both their reading and writing. The explanations and examples on pp. 22-23 are calling up examples from their own lives.

You may want to use the exercises below as an extension and expansion of the reference to “leaving a message on voice mail or a phone answering machine,” an activity that makes most of us very aware of our own voices and their impact on potential audiences.

Student Exercise: Finding Our Voices

The following exercises may provide some insight into some of the ways that circumstance and audience influence the voice you choose:
1. **Student Exercise: Identifying Purpose and Audience**

Imagine you're leaving a message on a phone answering machine:

a. Imagine that you've had an argument with your girl/boyfriend, husband/wife, best friend, or someone else important to you. You want to reopen the lines of communication.

b. You've sent in an application for a job you want very much. You call to ask for an interview.

c. You've just run over your neighbor's cat with your car. You call to break the news.

d. You've just run over your boy/girlfriend's or husband/wife's or best friend's cat. You call to break the news.

How would your *voice* differ in each of those messages? In what way would the situation and/or the audience influence your *voice*?

2. **Student Exercise: Expanding Your Audience**

What if the *voice* you choose will have to represent who you are to a much larger audience?

Leaving a message for incoming calls on a phone answering machine seems like a very simple procedure. But if you've ever recorded or witnessed someone recording a message on an answering machine, you know it usually takes more than one try to "get it right." So imagine you've just purchased a phone answering machine. The manual suggests you leave the following message for incoming callers:

"Hi, you've reached (your name). I'm not available to answer the phone right now, but if you leave your name and number and a message after the beep, I'll get back to you as soon as I can. Thank you."
b. Record this or a similar message on a tape recorder or read the message out loud to a partner. Besides the basic information, what else would you try to communicate? Would you change the message? How?
c. Would your message or the way you recorded it be different because of the larger audience?
d. Imagine you've just had an important job interview. You've been told "We'll call and let you know our decision in a day or two." You may not be home when they call, and your phone message is a joke designed to amuse your friends. Do you change it? How do you want your voice to sound?

Student Exercise: Identifying Your Own Voice

1. Take a look back through your journal entries and see if you can pick out a response that represents your most natural voice.

2. We said in Chapter 1 that we often project a different personality according to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. How did the circumstances of your writing affect the personality or voice you projected?

   a. Read the entry out loud. Does it sound like you? In what ways does your writing indicate that?
   b. When you wrote your entry who did you have in mind as a reader? In what ways does your writing indicate that?
   c. What tone or "sound of your voice" did you want to convey? In what ways does your writing indicate that?
   d. What did you want to say? In what ways does your entry indicate that?
   e. Rewrite the entry for an audience of classmates and instructor. In what ways did your entry change to account for your larger audience?
Voice and Response to Literature

This is a two-pronged approach to the issue of voice. The first part is an explanation of the way that showing through example or detail brings our voices to life. It might be helpful here to have students think about their experiences and how they tell/show them to their friends. Or have them think about the kinds of details they expect their friends to provide when they are the listeners hearing about an experience.

The second part asks students to respond to Countee Cullen’s “Incident” on page 23. If they have not read the poem already, it’s essential that they read it before reading the student response that follows the poem. The point of this exercise is to get students to recognize the criteria for a strong “showing” rather than simply “telling” response.

Countee Cullen "Incident"

This poem can be a provocative or subdued experience for students. It will either provoke much immediate discussion or it will intimidate students who are uncomfortable discussing race in class. In addition to the emotional "branding" of the eight-year-old speaker in the poem, issues of language often arise. African-American students will sometimes say they've used the word "nigger" in a humorous way with their friends--and this opens up a wide range of issues about "loaded" words that have historical resonance well beyond what some younger students realize.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: "Incident"

1. In "Incident" we are shown not simply told about the boy’s experience—though the point of the poem is implied in the shock of our own experience and the understated title of the poem. What is the theme of this poem?
2. The form and language of "Incident" is very simple. Does this simplicity help to convey the poem’s meaning? Explain.

3. Write about your own “loss of innocence” or introduction to a harsh reality you had never experienced before. Compare your experience with that of the boy in the poem.

**Writing To Describe**

Once again the references here are to students’ own experiences as the foundation for describing literature and their responses to it. The following exercise may prove useful.

**Student Exercise: Describing People and Places**

1. Choose a person or place important to you. Write down what you feel or what impresses you when s/he or it comes to mind.

2. Write down as much factual information as you can about that person or place.

3. Which facts support your response? Which don't?

4. Write down your impressions again and link/support them with the relevant details.

**Staying Anchored in the Literature**

It’s not surprising that many students will see the response essay as an opportunity to tell their own stories. But a common problem is that some students forget the work of literature and tell only their own stories. So this explanation reminds students that ultimately what they are sharing is not just a personal experience but their experience of a work of literature.
Choosing Details from Literature

The Making Connections questions that follow Janice’s response get at the heart of what students need to be thinking about as they write any kind of essay. Understanding the difference between a summary of a work and a response to or critique of that work is essential. Some of my students come to college from high school English classes where they have been asked to write book reports in response to their reading. Often these book reports were summaries of the story, so students need to understand the difference between these summaries and the kind of essays they’ll be required to write for your class.

“Eleven,” “Mothers,” and “Salvation”

The three pieces of literature Sandra Cisneros’ “Eleven,” Anna Quindlen’s “Mothers,” and Langston Hughes’ “Salvation” are the third part of this sequence and have been chosen because of the strength of their narrative voices. Not only are they good examples of “showing” but they are very provocative and usually inspire strong voices from the students in response. A challenging exercise for students is to try to write their own narratives with an 11 year old’s voice. This is both fun and difficult, and it highlights the importance of voice in Cisneros’ story.

Sandra Cisneros, “Eleven”

It’s pretty easy for most students to remember situations as children when they felt humiliated because of adult or peer intimidation. So most can identify with the protagonist in this story very readily. For some adjusting to the diction of the 11 year old narrator is a challenge, but most students “get it” pretty quickly. A challenging exercise for students is to try to write their own narratives with an 11 year old’s voice. This is both fun and difficult, and it highlights the importance of voice in Cisneros’ story.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing: “Eleven”

Try to remember a time in your childhood when you felt intimidated and humiliated by an adult. Describe the situation. How old were you? Where was it? Try to remember the details of your surroundings, what objects and people were there and what you felt. Like the author of “Eleven,” write a brief narrative of the event using your voice at that time.

1. Rachel is the narrator, so everything we experience in this story comes through her perspective. Re-write the story with Mrs. Price as the narrator. How does it change? What gets emphasized? To what extent does she become a more sympathetic character?

2. Compare and contrast Rachel with Zimmer in the poem “Zimmer in Grade School” in Chapter 1.

Writing to Compare

Given the encouragement students have received in the early sections of the book to think about their own experiences in relation to the works they’ve been reading, comparisons are a natural—not only as they might apply to personal experience but as they might apply to two works of literature, two characters, etc. The illustrations of the Venn Diagram that follow give students a “visual” method of organizing their comparisons.

Anna Quindlen, “Mothers”

This is a moving essay with an especially strong voice, and many of my students have been deeply affected by it. Granted, there are issues of economic class here—and not all students will be able to connect with the upscale shopping and lunching scenarios. But the quality of Quindlen’s writing transcends all that and illustrates how carefully chosen scenes and phrases and an honest voice can make a powerful statement about loss and “what if” scenarios of many kinds. I have
had students write about this from the perspectives of both daughters and mothers (and sons and fathers).

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: “Mothers”**

1. At one point the narrator says “my mother died when I was nineteen” was all that anyone needed to know about her. Are there any events in your own life that preoccupied you so much they became a personal definition of you this way? Explain.

2. To what extent is this essay about more than the loss of a mother at a relatively young age? What conclusion does the narrator come to? If you were in her position, would you conclude the same? Explain.


4. To what extent does the structure, sentence length, and choice of language contribute to the effectiveness of the narrator’s voice?

**Langston Hughes, “Salvation”**

This narrative is taken from Langston Hughes biography *The Big Sea*. Unlike Sandra Cisneros’ “Eleven,” which relates a painful event from the perspective of a child, this “return to childhood” piece is told from the perspective of an adult. On at least one occasion, I have had a students tell me he or she was offended by what they believed was an anti-religious message, but in general, students react to this narrative positively—often with a strong sense of identification—and see Hughes’ story as the remembrance of an embarrassing “loss of innocence” and not an opportunity to knock religion.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing: “Salvation”

1. Compare the effect of the adult narrative perspective in this piece with that in Sandra Cisneros’ “Eleven.”

2. The story is told by an adult narrator, but to what extent does young Langston’s sincerity and sense of childhood wonder still come through? Pick out language in the text of the story that seems to come from a child. Pick out language seems especially “adult.” What is the effect of mixing the two voices?

3. Some readers have responded to this narrative as anti-religious. Do you agree with that description? Explain.

Possible Worlds

Because of the emphasis in Chapters 1 and 2 on personal response, some students may feel as though they must be able to connect some experience in their own lives to what they read in order to benefit from reading it. The student responses are examples and a reminder that it is not necessary to “identify with” works of literature to enjoy or appreciate them. In fact, identifying too closely with the work or character may distort a student’s response. The student’s journal entries that follow are intended to illustrate the value of going to “possible worlds” in addition to those with which they are already familiar.

From First Response to Final Draft

The purpose of this process to product section is self-evident. It would obviously be helpful if students have read Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays" before they look at Dierdre’s responses and process. It may also be helpful if they are given a chance to try some of these pre-writing and writing techniques with their own work. As the explanations in this section indicate, not all approaches work equally well for all students. Some students can generate ideas and organize
better when they see a picture; other students may work more effectively by listing or working linearly.

I have found the revision and editing/proofreading checklists on pp. 47-48 useful for all the essays my students write. In addition you may want to create compact checklists of your own for organization like those below. These can be distributed as separate sheets and students can keep them handy when they write their essays.

RESPONSE ESSAY ORGANIZATION COVER SHEET

NAME______________________________________________
DATE_________________________
SUBJECT___________________________________________
TITLE______________________________________________

THESIS STATEMENT (Your proposition about the subject)
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

WHAT DETAILS DID YOU USE TO SUPPORT YOUR THESIS?

DID YOU EXPLAIN HOW YOUR DETAILS SUPPORT YOUR THESIS?
HOW SO?

HOW MANY PARAGRAPHS DO YOU HAVE? __________
IDENTIFY THE FUNCTION OF EACH BELOW

1.______________________________________________________________
2.______________________________________________________________
3.______________________________________________________________
4.______________________________________________________________
5.______________________________________________________________
6.______________________________________________________________
7.______________________________________________________________
PART II

ANALYSIS, ARGUMENTATION, AND RESEARCH
CHAPTER 3

Exploration and Analysis
Genre and the Elements of Literature

It's important for students to continue to involve their emotions and senses as they do their first readings. Their ultimate goal may be analysis and a critical essay, but if they try to analyze the work too soon, they will reduce their reading to problem solving—not a literary experience.

Close Reading

Students should know that a close reading is not a first reading—that for purposes of analysis it is essential that they do more than one reading, particularly of poems and shorter stories, plays, and essays. These readings, of course, involve more than going through the work again and again. Their reading may be expanded to include the questions and discussions that come up in class before they do subsequent readings.

Annotating the Text

This section is an illustration of one way to do a close reading. I've chosen a poem here because the image of two separate annotations could be contained virtually on one page. My intention is to show that subsequent readings bring deeper analysis. That analysis does not mean a narrower look. As you can see from the second annotation, the possibilities expand to analysis of contextual, textual, and even biographical factors.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias"

I've chosen this poem because it requires some analysis. Those of us who are familiar with it may think it's an easy read. But students sometimes have trouble imagining this picture, and until they can get the whole image they won't be able to understand its irony. Recently one of my students sketched a picture of the scene, and it proved very helpful for other students who were
stuck on the parts of the description and were having trouble seeing it as a whole.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: "Ozymandias"**

1. Try to draw or have someone in your group draw a picture of this scene based solely on Shelley’s words.
2. The Egyptian statue that inspired this poem has this inscription: "I am Ozymandias, king of kings; if anyone wishes to know what I am and where I lie, let him surpass me in some of my exploits." Compare this inscription to the poem.
3. This poem is a good illustration of situational irony, defined later in this chapter. Compare the poem with the definition. What contrast is there between what the king said and how the statue now looks? How does the final image of the landscape surrounding the broken-down statue reinforce the tone and theme of the poem?
4. Compare the image "Ozymandias" with the image in Claude McKay's "America" on page 1044 in the Harlem Renaissance Case Study later in the text.

**Literature in Context**

This section is a "qualifier" for the discussion of textual elements that follows. Students need to be made aware that there are many different and valid approaches to looking at a work of literature, and that a textual analysis is only one of these, albeit the one we tend to emphasize most in our classes. The section on **Your Critical Approach** tries to make it clear to students that an interpretation of literature is influenced by many complex factors, and that critics make choices about what to emphasize. These choices are not a matter of right or wrong but an indication of the cultural and aesthetic values of the critic. And they too, like the critics, are influenced by their own values and the influence of their own interpretive communities when they read and write about literature.
READING AND ANALYZING FICTION

Each of the genres has a general introduction like this. My intention with each one is to give a background and a brief "human" history for the genre--why do we write and read stories, poetry, drama, and essays. In this section, that discussion leads naturally into a discussion of **Fiction and Truth** and the difference between literal or factual truth and figurative or metaphorical truth.

**Narration**

Like so many of the other explanations that follow, I have sought to ground my explanation of **point of view, voice, and reliability** in terms and comparisons that students know. They are certainly familiar with the conventions of television and the way that camera shots directly affect what they know (are allowed to know) of the action in front of them and the difference that makes to their experience with it. You may find it helpful to solicit other examples from students' experiences to clarify the concept further.

**Setting**

Again it may be helpful to have students come up with settings from their own experience and discuss the different factors involved. As explained here, setting is more than time and location, and you may find it useful to have students talk about what goes into "atmosphere" and give their own examples.

The exercise below may help students come up with some of their own examples:

**Student Exercise: Location and Atmosphere**

1. Choose three different places where you've gone during the past few weeks.
2. What drew you to these places? Did you expect a particular kind of atmosphere? What was it?

3. Were your expectations met? Why, or why not? Describe the atmosphere? List all the details that contributed to it.

**Conflict and Plot**

In many ways, conflict is the more useful term of these two. Though we tend to talk about plot a great deal, there is no universal plot structure that modern fiction follows. Without an interesting conflict, however, there is no story worth reading.

**Student Exercise: Conflict**

The following exercise may shed some light on the nature of conflict:

1. See if you can identify some small and large conflicts in your life over the past year. What made the large conflicts so important to you?

2. Which one caused the most internal strife? Why? What made it so anxiety provoking?

3. How did your own personality affect the nature of your internal conflict? Do you know anyone who would not have been bothered as much as you were? If so, how can you account for the difference in their response(s)?

**Plot**

I have used the *Perry Mason* example here because it is clear and a good demonstration of formulaic plotting. Of course what works for a popular television series, designed for a particular audience, does not always represent the best fiction.
Character

The encouragement for students here is that they already know a great deal about characterization. They do it regularly as they make their way through the day. The exercise below addresses the issue in the explanation. How did you characterize your classmates on the first day of class--and did that characterization hold up as you got to know more and more about them?

Student Exercise: Characterization

1. Try to remember the first day of class (or the first day you were in class). Pick out someone in the class whom you met or saw for the first time. What were your impressions of that person?

2. What were those impressions based on? What did the person say or do? What was said about that person?

3. Have your first impressions changed since then? In what ways has your impression changed? What have you learned that you could not have known at first?

Language and Style

Though it may seem like an obvious consideration, many students don't automatically think of the language of the narration or the characters as especially important. Reading selected passages aloud and having students discuss word choices can help them become more sensitive to the way that language choices emphasize and complement their responses to narration, setting, conflict, character, and theme.

Theme

This is a tough one. Many students believe that literature is necessarily didactic and that every story has a lesson. It's not unusual for a student to begin an explanation of theme by saying: "The author is trying to tell us that we should . . . ." Thus, the explanation in this section of the difference
between *moral* and *theme* points out an important distinction that many students have never thought much about.

**Getting Ideas for Writing about Fiction**

The purpose of all the "Getting Ideas” and "Generating Ideas for Writing" sections is to get students to apply the principles discussed earlier in the section to a work from that genre. It is not the intention here, however, to limit students' discussion or writing to these principles. In each of these cases, students' own questions and responses may be the best ones to pursue first.

**Kate Chopin, “The Story of an Hour”**

Some students may read this story too quickly to pick up the important details, so you might want to encourage them to read it slowly and to read it more than once. In addition to its insight into the emotional tugs on Mrs. Mallard, it is very much a "period" piece and a good source of comparison to works like *A Doll's House* or “The Yellow Wallpaper.” Discussing how the many pieces in the casebook provide a historical and cultural context for the story might also be productive.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

In addition to the questions below, there are 34 prompts for discussion and writing on pages 69 through 71 in the text. These questions ask students to apply what they’ve learned in the preceding pages of the fiction section of Chapter 3. Though they are applied to “The Story of an Hour,” my intention is to equip students with the kinds of questions they might ask about any story they read and discuss. These prompts account for the specifics of first responses, narration, setting, conflict and plot, character, language and style, and theme. The list of prompts ends with 10 topics for writing that are specific to “The Story of an Hour.”
1. The first sentence of the story mentions that Mrs. Mallard has “heart trouble.” Is there more than one meaning to this diagnosis? To what extent is her "heart trouble" more than a physical problem?

2. To what extent is springtime an appropriate setting for this story? Why do you think the narrator contrasts the vibrant description of "new spring life" outside Mrs. Mallard's window with the lines of "repression" in her face?

3. What does the way that the other characters speak to her and report her husband’s death to her say about Mrs. Mallard? Cite examples of these reports from the text of the story and explain.

4. Describe Mrs. Mallard's feelings about her husband. Do we learn anything about Brently Mallard? To what extent does the narrator’s comment that Mr. Mallard "had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one" say something about their relationship and marriage?

5. Mrs. Mallard wonders "What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of the possession of self-assertion? " What does she mean? What has her life been like that she would think this?

6. Compare Mrs. Mallard with Nora in Ibsen’s A Doll’s House, Elisa in Steinbeck’s The Chrysanthemums, " or the protagonist in Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper.”

Video


Additional Reading


READING AND ANALYZING POETRY

There was a time when poetry was a hard sell. But it seems as if more students like poetry--or at least don't have an aversion to it--than ever before. Poetry requires an acute attention to language through the mind, the senses, and the emotions. And you may find it helpful to sensitize students to this different way of reading by trying some of the exercises below.

**Student Exercise: Reading Poetry**

In addition to writing your responses to the questions below, it might be illuminating and fun to share them with other members of the class in small or large groups.

What are the first words that come to mind when you think of poetry?

Do you read poetry differently than you read other things?
In what way does it seem different than other things you've read?
Can you remember your first experiences with poetry?
   If so, what were they like?
   Were they in school?
   Did you read them or hear them?
Can you think of some poems that you really like?
   If so, what are they? What did you like about them?
Have you read a poem or poems recently that have moved you?
   If so, how did they affect you?

**Language and Style**

The issues of denotation, connotation, voice and tone are obviously important ones when discussing poetry. Students often gloss over the very language that will help them feel the emotion of the poem. The poems that follow are illustrative of the way that word choices change meaning.

The following exercise may prompt students to think about their responses to language and word choice:

**Student Exercise: Wordplay - Free Association**

a. Choose three words.

b. Look at each of the words you've chosen and write down the first thing that comes to your mind.

c. Read what you've written down for each word and try to explain where your association came from.

d. How would a dictionary define each of the words you've chosen? If you don't have a dictionary handy try to guess what the definition would look like.

e. How did your connotations or personal associations differ from denotations or dictionary definitions?
Stephen Crane, “War Is Kind”

This is a powerful anti-war poem, but it is sometimes misinterpreted by students as a celebration of the glories of war. These students miss the verbal irony in the poem, and the tone of the poem will only be apparent to them when they look at the contradictory nature of the language and images and see that there is nothing "kind" about the scenes that Crane so graphically describes.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: “War Is Kind”

1. Look at the physical structure of the poem. Why do you think stanzas 2 and 4 are indented? Who is being addressed in stanzas 1, 3, and 5? To what extent does the physical form of the poem connect with the poem’s meaning?

2. What does line 9, “The unexplained glory flies above them” mean to you? Do you think there is another kind of glory? Explain.

3. What is the tone of the poem, and what is the poem saying? What is its theme?

4. To what extent does this poem fulfill the definition of verbal irony at the beginning of this chapter?

5. Do you think the poem is effective? Why doesn’t Crane just come out and say what he thinks directly? If he did, what would the poem be called and how would the content change?

6. Compare this poem to the five war poems in the Faith and Doubt section of the text.

Imagery, Figurative Language, Simile, Metaphor, and Symbol

The explanations of imagery, figurative language, simile, metaphor, and symbol in this section are intended to be as simple as possible. In each case
a poem or two is used to illustrate the explanation. In addition to these poems you may find it helpful to tap examples from students' own use of language or from other poems in the text. Beyond an end in itself, learning these terms gives students a vocabulary to discuss the language of poetry and other genres as well.

The poems used to illustrate these terms, “The Word ‘Plum,’” “Meeting at Night” / “Parting at Morning,” “A Dream Deferred,” “Simile,” “Fog,” “The Wind,” and “The Road Not Taken” are very worthy of discussion beyond their use as examples. The many different types of poems here are also illustrative of the different intentions poets have when they write--from whimsy to serious meaning.

Below are some exercises you might try with students to help them understand where their images come from.

**Student Exercise: Sense Memory**

a. Close your eyes and imagine yourself: (1) on a beach on a hot summer day, or (2) in the snow on a cold winter day. Don't write anything right away. Take a minute or so to get your senses involved, especially feeling, seeing, and hearing.

b. What sensations did you feel?

c. What did you see?

d. What did you hear?

e. From what events in your past life did you call up these memories.
Student Exercise: Recollecting A Day in Your Life

The following exercises may provide some insight into our image making process. It may be fun and illuminating to share these in a group.

1. Sense Impressions
   a. Think back over the past 24 hours and collect your sense impressions of particular moments.
   b. Write down each of those sense impressions on separate lines.
   c. Read them back to yourself. Do they capture your experience?
   d. Share them with a group of students. Ask the members of your group if they "felt" your experience. Could they picture those moments?

1. Retrospective

   Take a look back at a poem you've read:

   a. Pick out the phrases that brought the strongest images to your mind.
   b. Why did you like them? What did you see in your "mind's eye" when you read them?

Student Exercise: A Simple Truth

Go back to the object that you chose for a closer look in the "retrospective" exercise.
With how many senses can you experience it?
Create an image for each one.
From how many angles can you see it?
What other objects is it normally seen with? What's it never seen with?
If it were a person how would it see the world? 
Write down as many images as you can about it. 
Write a poem about this object.
It doesn't have to be tightly structured or long. But try to say something we don't normally realize. Let us see it in a different way.

Take a few moments to jot down some responses to the following?

1. Look around you at the things you take for granted - those things you use regularly but never wonder about.

2. Pick out one and look at it closely. Try to imagine its history. Try to imagine how your life might be changed if it didn't exist. Write a few sentences about it.

**Student Exercise: From Sense Impression to Poetry**

Take a look at the sense impressions you recorded.

Do they sound like a poem? Can you turn them into one?

   Compare the phrases you wrote about your own experience to those in Robert Browning's *Meeting at Night*.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Helen Chassin “The Word ‘Plum”**

This is a great poem to read aloud slowly and give students enough time to see, taste, feel, hear and to focus on their sense memories and responses.

1. Why do you think this poem isn’t titled “Plum.” What difference does adding “the word” to the title make? To what extent is this a poem about a word rather than a piece of fruit?

2. Sound out the word “plum” slowly many times. To what extent is that sound connected to the content of the poem? Sound out the other words in the poem? To what extent are you affected by their sounds? How are these sounds connected to the content of the poem?
3. Why do you think the poem is structured the way it is? To what extent does this structure connect to the content?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Robert Browning, “Meeting at Night” / “Parting at Morning”

“Meeting at Night” is a natural for illustrating images. Browning taps almost all the senses as he describes this rendezvous. He also taps imaginations in other ways. Students will often conjecture about the nature of this relationship. Who is his lover? Why are they being so quiet, so secretive about the meeting? If he’s writing about Elizabeth Barrett here, a glimpse at their bios gives us an insight into the secrecy. But, so much for enduring passion—the speaker has managed to compartmentalize his love life pretty effectively in the companion poem, “Parting at Morning” (Suns up—enough of this—I’ve got serious business to take care of!).

1. Identify each of the images in “Meeting at Night” and describe how the image works. What sense(s) is (are) being tapped? How does it or how do they evoke a picture, sound, physical sensation, emotional reaction in you?

2. Given the committed passion of “Meeting at Night,” how are you affected by “Parting at Morning”? Are the speaker’s emotions in Meeting at Night insincere? Is this a typical male reaction to the morning after? Explain.

3. Compare this combination of poems to Sei Shonagan’s “A Lover’s Departure” on page 552.

Student Exercise: Similes and Metaphors

Wordplay—Like, you know ..........

1. Try to complete the following phrases as imaginatively as you can.
   
   He/she's as (happy, hot, pleased, etc.) as . . . . .
They're as (happy, hot, pleased, etc.) as . . . . .
He/she (walks, talks, sounds, etc.) like . . . . .
They (get along, fight, dance, etc.) like . . . . .

2. Create your own.

3. Try this exercise in a group. See what happens when you combine your similes.

Student Exercise: Wordplay--Metaphor Hunting

1. Search the language around you for comparisons (including the title of this exercise). Look at newspapers, magazines, the names of products, etc. Make a list and comment on the effectiveness of each.

2. Create some of your own.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Langston Hughes, “A Dream Deferred”

There is little doubt that this "dream deferred" is an earlier rendering of the dream Martin Luther King Jr. refers to in his "I Have a Dream" speech on page 766 of the text. And it is, of course, the second and third line of this poem (“Does it dry up / like a raisin in the sun”) that inspired the title of Lorraine Hansberry’s play, A Raisin in the Sun, on page 363 of the text. But there is a choice in listing the title of this play. It is often titled Harlem, but I’ve chosen the more generic title “A Dream Deferred” because like all great literature that derives from injustice and oppression, it has a universal quality that students of all races can appreciate in a personal way.

1. What does the phrase "a dream deferred" mean to you? Read about the Harlem Renaissance” on page 1018 and Langston Hughes’ “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” on page 1032. What do you think it means to Langston Hughes?
2. Carefully examine the similes and the metaphor in this poem. What are the social and personal implications of each one? To what extent do they represent the history of racial oppression and human reaction to it?

3. Compare this poem to Langston Hughes’ short story “One Friday Morning” on page 1037, Lorraine Hansberry’s play *A Raisin in the Sun* on page 363, or Claude McKay’s poem “America” on page 1044.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: N. Scott Momaday’s “Simile,” Carl Sandburg’s “Fog,” and James Stephens’ “The Wind”**

These poems are here for illustrative purposes. The entire poem “Simile” is an extended simile. Of the three, it has the most depth to it. The comparison between the way that deer move and the communication of the disconnected lovers is very well done and may prompt some rich discussion. “Fog,” on the other hand, is very simple and conveys a single image. How well it does that is subject to debate—or at least debate from some of my students, who don’t think it works all that well. Even if you’re a fan of the Weather Channel, “The Wind” doesn’t have a lot to say beyond the personification it illustrates.

1. Carefully examine the simile in “Simile.” Is it a good comparison to a relationship in trouble? Cite examples from the poem and explain.

2. How well does “Fog” work for you? If you have a cat, does this description fit? Is there anything missing here for either cats or fog? Explain.


**Student Exercise: Symbols**

**Wordplay - Personal Representations**

1. Make a list of your personal symbols. For example, a personal symbol might be an object that you’ve kept, a song you listen to, or
a place or the name of a place, which represents something or someone important to you.

2. Make a list of symbols that you share with others.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Robert Frost, “The Road Not Taken”

More often than not students come prepared with a poorly thought-out pat “moral” for this poem. They will often say, “The moral-message of this poem is to do your own thing and not do what everyone else is doing.” Short of discouraging them, I’m sure you will want to have them re-examine this interpretation by pointing out the contradictory evidence in the poem.

1. Titles often get at the heart of what’s expressed in a poem. Frost entitled this poem “The Road Not Taken.” Why didn’t he call it “The Road Taken”? What evidence in the poem justifies his choice? Are these roads significantly different? Cite lines in the poem to justify your view.

2. Clearly, the road in the poem is symbolic of choice. Describe some roads that you have not taken. Have you ever wondered or “sighed” about your choices? Explain.

3. Why does the speaker predict, “I will be telling this with a sigh / somewhere ages and ages hence.” Why will he be sighing? Explain.

Sound and Structure

Discussing the sound and structure of poems does not have to be a dull experience. Most students are very conscious of the sounds and rhythms much more than the words in many of the songs they listen to.

The exercises below may be used as a "loosening up" and help students become aware of how sound--in and of itself--can be appealing.

Take a look at the three children's rhymes below:
Mairzey doats and dozey doats
And little lamsey divey,
A kiddley-divey do,
Wouldn't you?

I scream.
You scream.
We all scream
For ice cream.

Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear,
Fuzzy Wuzzy had no hair.
Fuzzy Wuzzy wasn't fuzzy,
Was he?

Do you recognize them? What do they mean?

Say them out loud. Say them out loud several times.

Do you like the way they sound? If so, why?

**Student Exercise: Sound Patterns**

It might be fun and illuminating to do this exercise in a small group.

Think of your favorite songs or music.

If they're songs and have words, how important is the rhyming and the rhythm?

If it's music (or the words are not clear) how important is the pattern of the tones?

Pick out an example and see if you can identify how the rhyme or rhythm work.

If you're doing this in a small group, see if others agree with you.
Rhyme, Alliteration, Assonance, and Meter

The limerick exercise on page 80 is designed to sensitize students to the rhythms and sounds of poetry in a fun way. One class activity I use is to break the class into small groups and make each group responsible for creating a limerick. Either an individual or the whole group can be responsible for making sure the final product matches the criteria for a limerick identified in the book. In order to do this, of course, students will sound out the lines rather than counting metrical feet, so their understanding of it is literally based on their “ear” for the sounds.

The explanations of rhyme, alliteration, and assonance and the brief excerpts from the Blake poems that follow are meant to clarify and illustrate this further. Reading the excerpts out loud and thinking about and discussing the ways that placement of rhyme and rhythm affect their responses to the verse can give students a good sense of its importance to poetry.

The sonnet is a good form to use to illustrate the way that rhyme, rhythm, and meaning work together. It is a very formal structure, and the Shakespearian sonnet on p. 81 illustrates the form well. As a modern example and source of comparison, you might want to refer to the Edna St. Vincent Millay sonnet, “Love Is Not All,” on page 522. These sonnets are separated by more than three centuries—yet they follow the same rules. Beyond their classification, both poems are quite worthy of discussion in their own right.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Sonnet #29

Students who are not comfortable with Shakespeare’s language may have some trouble understanding this sonnet at first. But the language and meaning are quite accessible. Reading the sonnet out loud several times—-all at once and in separate part—can make a big difference. If the sonnet’s structure and meaning are given enough time to sink in, most students will come away with both a sense of appreciating Shakespeare’s work and their own accomplishment in doing it.

1. Like so many sonnets, the end of this poem is a reversal of the
beginning. Discuss the connection between structure and meaning in this sonnet.

2. To what extent do the images that Shakespeare uses at the beginning of the poem change at the end of the poem and support this reversal. Cite passages from the poem for support.

3. The speaker is depressed at the beginning of this poem. By line 9, however, he begins to change his mind, and by line 14, he would not “change his state with kings.” Is it believable that someone could go from depression to elation so quickly? Explain.

**Blank Verse**

Sounding out the lines in the excerpt from the Frost poem may give students a sense of how the combination of unstressed/stressed iambic rhythms are natural to speaking English and the most popular formal meter in poetry.

**Free Verse**

Since most of the poetry that students read—and so much of the poetry in this text—is written in free verse, it may be productive to talk about it. What does dictate the form that a free verse poem takes? For example, why has Whitman chosen the form that he has for his poem, "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer"? Does the form help to convey the meaning of the poem? How so?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Walt Whitman, When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer**

Typical of Whitman’s poetry, this poem is a celebration of nature in contrast to the lifeless rows of numbers and calculations that academics use to define it. The speaker becomes “tired and sick” of the analysis and is only restored by the experience of the thing itself.
1. In many respects this poem reflects Whitman’s philosophy. Compare it to the free verse excerpt from Song of Myself on page 1157. Based on your reading of both, how would you characterize Whitman’s philosophy? Cite passages from each to support your view.

2. Describe your response to free verse. Examine the verse lines in this poem. Does there seem to be a pattern that Whitman is following or is it haphazard? Explain.

3. Pick out some poems with formal rhyme scheme and meter. Compare your response to those poems with your response to Whitman’s poetry or other free verse poems. Which do you prefer? Explain.

**Interpretation/Explication**

The operative term, of course, for interpreting poetry is explication. Because they are usually brief, poems can be excellent practice for interpreting any type of literature. Looking closely at the language in poetry helps students develop a sensitivity to the nuances of word choice and form and their relationship to meaning.

**Types of Poetry**

Classifying poetry as lyric or narrative may help students to understand a poem's objective--to tell a story or to share a compelling emotion. But it can also be confusing and frustrating if emphasized too much and can get in the way of engaging students in the work itself.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: May Swenson, "Pigeon Woman"**

I have chosen this piece as the final poem in this section not because it is the best poem in the text or even May Swenson's best, but because it is filled with imagery and it is accessible to students. Many students have witnessed a scene like this but have never given it much thought. They don't tend to "identify" the plight of the woman in the poem with themselves but they usually remember seeing someone like this. The language of the poem brings
them (returns them) to a possible world and helps them experience it from a "close-up" perspective.

There are 26 prompts for discussion and writing on pages 87 through 89 in the text, so I won’t repeat them here. These questions ask students to apply what they’ve learned in the poetry section of Chapter 3. Though they are applied to “Pigeon Woman,” my intention is to equip students with the kinds of questions they might ask about any poem they read and discuss. These prompts account for the specifics of first responses, language and style, sound and structure, interpretation and theme, and types of poetry. The list of prompts ends with 10 topics for writing that are specific to “Pigeon Woman.”

READING AND ANALYZING DRAMA

Reading drama may seem to have its limitations, particularly for students who spend so much more of their time viewing, but it can still be very rewarding. So much of what many students view is considerably more obvious and cliched than the plays in this text. One valuable objective is to “stretch” their sensibilities beyond what they’re used to.

For purposes of comparison and clarification, drama's natural counterpart is fiction. The descriptions of the elements in the fiction section are a good foundation and point of departure. If students understand the elements of narration, conflict, plot, characterization and theme in fiction, it's an easy shift to understanding how they are similar and different in drama.

Point of View

Most fundamental is an understanding of the limited role of narration in drama and the way this affects all the other elements.

You may find it helpful to pick a page or a small section of a short story and a play and compare them. What is the physical layout of each? What is the role of narration? What is the dialogue like? You might even choose samples of the range within each genre. For example, the first-person narration of Updike's "A&P" and Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" for narrative
perspective in fiction and Shakespeare's *Othello* and Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* in drama.

**Set and Setting**

The plays from different eras represent many different approaches toward set design and range from the bare stages of Greek and Shakespearian drama to the very comprehensive and sometimes elaborate set requirements of modern drama. What the set (and setting) add to the play can be easily overlooked when *reading* drama in a text--so it's important to account for it, and its impact on the action and dialogue.

**Conflict and Plot**

As in fiction, conflict, rather than plot, is easier to nail down in drama. A discussion of conflict and its relationship to characterization can prompt a rich discussion. I've found that having a class build a semantic map--or several semantic maps--can be fruitful. In fact, the outer bubbles, by including quotes from the text of the play, may help students generate a skeleton of all they will need to build an essay.

**Aristotle's Poetics**

Most discussions of Aristotle's *Poetics* benefit more from seeing the differences between the plays and Aristotle's credo than trying to squeeze the play within its boundaries. Since the *Poetics* was inspired by the work of Sophocles, it's obvious that *Oedipus* and *Antigone* will match the requirements nicely--but few other plays will. It may be more useful to talk about the unities of time, place, and action in any of the plays.

**Character**

In most drama, characterization is limited to action and dialogue, but one way of getting students to do a thorough analysis of the characters is to have them imagine that they are playing the roles themselves. If they describe characters from the perspective of "I"--not "he" or "she"--they may dig a little deeper
into what makes these characters tick. Questions like "How do I feel in this situation?" "What is my relationship to the other characters?" "What do I want?" can bring illuminating answers.

**Theme**

Once again, it is the inclination of many students to look for a moral or lesson in drama much as they do with fiction or poetry. And unlike an exploration of characterization—where it's possible to examine from inside out, coming up with theme requires a shift to an overview and some distance.

**Periods of Drama: Greek, Shakespearian, and Modern Drama**

For the most part these sections are self-explanatory. They provide background information that may help students understand the historical context of the plays in the text. To save space, what is not provided here are pictures of the stages or theaters where these plays would have been performed. They are described but not shown, so you may find it useful to provide some of these "visualsex" yourself.

For each period there is a discussion of the historical context, staging and acting, audience participation, and the language of the script. It will affect their comprehension of the action, for example, if students understand the role of the chorus in Greek drama. The presence of the chorus can get in the way of the plot for many students, so you may even want to suggest that when they do their first reading they skip the choral odes—then come back later to see how the commentary of the chorus reflects the background and action of the play.

Understanding the language of the script is more likely to be a problem in Shakespeare's plays than it is in drama written in modern English or translated into modern English. So the "Tips on Reading the Language of Shakespeare" can be helpful as an introduction. It can also be useful to look at the Shakespearian sonnets in the text before you read or see either of the plays as a "workup" to the language.
Sophocles, *Antigone*

My students usually identify *Antigone* as one of their favorites. The characters and the conflicts in this play are provocative, and students tend to be immediately engaged by it. The biggest source of confusion is the chorus and the frequent allusions to mythology, so you may find it helpful to give them some background information before they begin to read. You may also want to have students read the play or selected passages aloud to maximize the dramatic effect. In any case, there are many conflicting relationships to discuss and analyze, and the language of the translation makes the play relatively easy to read.

**Tips on Reading *Antigone***

Remind students that when reading the verse form of this play (and Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* or Shakespeare’s *Othello* and *Hamlet*) to let the punctuation—not the end of verse lines—guide their pauses when reading. I have also found it helpful to explain the function of the choral odes but have students skip them in their first reading. Unlike ancient Greeks who already knew the story line, most of our students are encountering this story for the first time—and they often find the choral odes confusing and distracting. After reading the play on their own, you may want to do an in-class reading out loud with assigned parts, including the choral odes. When students read and hear the choral odes aloud, they more easily comprehend their prayer-like qualities of the recitation. Reading the play or parts of the play in class will also provide you with an opportunity to explain the many references to Greek mythology in the Choral Odes.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

There are 41 prompts for discussion and writing on pages 134 and 135 in the text, so I won’t repeat them here. These questions ask students to apply what they’ve learned in the preceding drama section of Chapter 3. Though they are applied to *Antigone*, my intention is to equip students with the kinds of questions they might ask about any play they read/view and discuss. These prompts account for the specifics of first responses, language and style,
narration, setting, conflict and plot, character and theme. The list of prompts ends with 13 topics for writing that are specific to Antigone.

Videos


Web Sites

Antigone: A Tribute. Contains plot lines, commentary about the characters, and descriptions of Greek art and women. 
<www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Union/6747/antigone.html>

The Classics Page: Antigone. Provides a summary of the play along with general notes, discusses the characters and their portrayal, and includes "The Antigone Game" and information on a theatrical production.
<www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/antigone.htm>

Additional Reading

READING AND ANALYZING THE ESSAY

As the opening of this section in the book suggests, this is the form of writing with which students are most familiar. They regularly read articles in magazines, and columns, editorials, op-ed pieces, sports reports and stories in newspapers. They regularly write essays for their classes.

It's important for students to know that essay writing is as challenging as writing in the other genres and requires the same kind of imagination and skill with language. You might want to point students to a number of examples in the text where the line has been blurred between story and essay. Sandra Cisneros’ “Eleven,” Anna Quindlen's “Mothers,” and Langston Hughes' “Salvation” are prime examples.

Amy Tan, "Mother Tongue"

The Amy Tan essay at the end of the chapter was chosen because it is not only exemplary of the qualities of a good essay, but it is an essay about using language and about writing. Tan writes about the different Englishes in her (and her mother's) life. So many of our students have different "Englishes" too, and it could be illuminating to talk with them about issues of purpose and audience, and what Tan describes as her ultimate criterion: "So easy to read."

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

There are 20 prompts for discussion and writing on pages 144 and 145 in the text, so I won’t repeat them here. These questions ask students to apply what
they’ve learned in the preceding essay section of Chapter 3. Though they are applied to “Mother Tongue,” my intention is to equip students with the kinds of questions they might ask about any essay they read and discuss. These prompts account for the specifics of first responses; types of essays; language, style, and structure; and theme or thesis. The list of prompts ends with six topics for writing that are specific to “Mother Tongue.”
CHAPTER 4
Argumentation
Writing a Critical Essay

The intention of this chapter is to have students make the transition from the more personal emphasis of the response essay to the more formal and argumentative emphasis of the critical essay. They need to understand, of course, that they are "building" on their foundation of response essay writing--not shifting to something entirely different. They have already been encouraged to "show" not just "tell." They've been gathering support from the text and from their own experiences. They've been building the habits of mind that will serve them well when writing a critical essay.

The comparison of journal entries shows the difference between statements of personal experience and statements of interpretation and evaluation. Have students look back at their own journal, reading log, or response sheet entries. Which ones are good starts for the interpretation or evaluation necessary in a critical essay? What criteria are they using to judge?

Interpretation and Evaluation

One intention of this section is to take the mystery out of a word like "interpretation." It sounds daunting, and the idea of it can be overwhelming for some students. The early part of the discussion of "evaluation" is a return to the issue of standards--that we can't legitimately evaluate unless we have criteria or standards by which to judge. The Connecting through Collaboration exercise that follows is intended to remind students of the standards they have already developed in other areas of their lives, and of the need to articulate standards for literature before they can evaluate it.
Options for Writing a Critical Essay: Process and Product

Lest students think that the elements discussed in Chapter 3 are the limitations of critical essay writing, this section identifies many other possibilities. *An Analytical Essay* is the first installment, but the explanations of *A Comparative Essay, A Thematic Essay, An Essay about the Beliefs or Actions of the Narrator or Characters, and A Contextual Essay* expand the potential sources for a critical essay. The many references to stories, poems, and plays throughout the explanations are intended to give students concrete examples of the kinds of issues they might address as the topic for a critical essay. And in each case, student samples are identified that illustrate the particular approach that is explained. For students not quite sure what the explanation means, these samples can be enormously helpful.

Argumentation: Writing a Critical Essay

This systematic approach to constructing an argument is pretty self-explanatory. It's a discussion of one approach to writing an argument. There is a great deal of information here, so be careful not to overwhelm students with too much at once.

You might note under Supporting Your Argument, for example, the explanation of induction and substantiation that taps students’ own experiences. In this case the reference is to tasting food and developing and acknowledging standards as a normal routine in our lives—a routine quite similar to the kind of thinking that goes into interpreting or evaluating literature. You may be able to think of other activities that illustrate this process as well. You might, for example, ask students to identify a "favorite" something (food, piece of music, song, type of clothes, car, etc.) and have them write a history of how they came to like it, what factors or details about it influenced them, how they might convince a friend to like it as well, and what details they would use to support their judgment about it.
The Development of a Critical Essay

Like the concluding section of Chapter 2, the process described here and the essay that results takes students from the first journal essay through a draft and to a final, revised essay. It is an explanation of what choices Suzanne made and why she made them. These were her choices, not the only or necessarily the best choices possible, but she justifies them and turns out a solid final essay.
CHAPTER 5

Research
Writing with Secondary Sources

The emphasis in this chapter is on making the transition from the response and critical essays described in earlier chapters to the research essay/paper. Students are reminded that like many of the other skills they've been encouraged to develop, research is not a new experience. That in fact when they are going back to the text of the work to provide support for their responses and critical essays, they are doing primary-source research.

The first few pages of the chapter encourage students to see the research essay as very much like the essay writing they've been doing, and the brief exercises on pp. 173-74 illustrate the ways that students have been "synthesizing" secondary-source material into what they know for some time.

What follows in this chapter is largely "informational" and includes suggestions for different kinds of research projects, and how students might use their journal entries, notes, or discussions with classmates to generate their research topics. They are presented with five categories and an explanation of popular areas of literary research.

The "Your Search" section makes suggestions about where to find secondary-source material. From people, to the Library, to the World Wide Web, students are given descriptions of these resources and an explanation of why they might be useful. Of particular importance are the paragraphs about "Evaluating Internet Sources." So many of the sources that students currently tap are located on the Internet, and while using the Internet is a good idea, using it without checking on the credibility of the information is not. This section gives students some criteria with which to judge the quality of the sites they hit and makes them aware that they ultimately are responsible for the quality and veracity of the information they gather.
This first part of the chapter ends with a discussion of note taking and an explanation of paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting—and what is appropriate when.

**Case Study in Research:**

**Thinking about Interpretation, Culture, and Research**  
**James Joyce and “Eveline”**

Students tend to be engaged by this story, and for many of them it may represent a dilemma they have been struggling with. Their responses to “why” Eveline can’t leave at the end of the story may come from a variety of directions. Some may be puzzled by her choice. It may be worthwhile to ask them if they think it would have been hard for her to turn her back on her father—despite his lack of appreciation—and why. Could she have been happy in Argentina knowing what she’d done? Is there something in this culture that doesn’t allow her to do that?

**Prof. Devenish’s Commentary**  
**Student Essay: Research and Culture**

Perhaps the most valuable feature of this study of a student’s process as he “does” research and writing is the emphasis on how research emerges naturally from a need to know. Many students proceed very mechanically when they tackle a research project and simply gather information and link it together with a thin thread of their own words and ideas. It often lacks their voices or their passion and does not reflect the result of genuine, truly curious inquiry. Alan Devenish’s commentary insightfully analyzes Kevin’s work and his motivation as he keeps finding reasons to look for more. Kevin’s final paper is certainly within reach of most students, and you may find it worthwhile to have students try a similar research activity into their own backgrounds.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Here is an assignment my colleague, Elizabeth Gaffney, uses with this casebook:
   Prof. Gaffney’s Assignment: "Eveline" and Contexts”:
   Read Kevin Chamberlain's essay "Leaving Home" (p.194). Write an organized essay in which you discuss Chamberlain's point of view, using direct and indirect quotes. Then explain how "Leaving Home" affected your understanding of Joyce's story "Eveline." Do you agree or disagree with Chamberlain's views? Does knowing about culture, gender, and social class affect the way we read literature? In what ways?

2. Compare Eveline to Connie in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" What motivates each of them? Which one do you think made the better decision?

3. Research your own background. What are the cultural traditions from which you spring? How have they or how might they affect your choices?

4. Compare this story to Chinua Achebe’s “Marriage Is a Private Affair” on page 204 and / or Cathy Song’s “The Youngest Daughter” on page 298.

Additional Reading


**Web Sites**

Joyce Resources on the Internet: 15 Joyce-related resources with critical descriptions of each. <www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/rickard/Joyce.html>

Joyce Resource Center.  
<www.cohums.ohio-state.edu/english/oganizations/ijjf/jrc/>

Online Literary Criticism Collection: Joyce, his work, life, and times.  
<www.ipl.org/cgi-bin/ref/litcrit/litcrit.out.pl?au=joy-47>
PART III

A THEMATIC ANTHOLOGY
The Dialogues Across History

The dialogues across history that open each theme are designed to sensitize students to the historical context of each theme. It doesn't take long to read them, and in general, the statements at the beginning of the theme sections represent positions in a debate across history. If you are organizing your course thematically, these statements will "get the issue going" by provoking discussion and establishing a background for a discussion of the literature that follows.

Family and Friends

Fiction

Chinua Achebe, “Marriage Is a Private Affair”

This is a heart-wrenching story about a parent-child relationship, cultural imperatives, and the changes brought with new generations. But it can also prompt a very compelling discussion about the idea of marriage itself. Are romantic marriages better than arranged ones? Some students may attribute the conflict of the story to a "foreign" culture without understanding that there are equivalents to this attitude and behavior in their own culture. So it may be a good idea to ask them to think about equivalents in their own lives, perhaps with their own parents, before or while they discuss the story.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Compare the parent-child relationship with your own relationship with a parent (or child). Imagine a similar dilemma and whether you could work it out better than this father and son.

2. Compare the relationship in this story with that in other stories like John Cheever's Reunion or Tillie Olsen's I Stand Here Ironing.
3. Discuss Achebe’s attitude toward the father and son. To what extent does he seem to favor one over the other? What evidence of this is there in the story?

4. Explore the cultural background of this story. What are the tribal backgrounds of these characters and why is this marriage such a problem for the father? To what extent have students experienced or do they know people who have experienced this kind of conflict over cultural, ethnic, or religious issues?

Web Sites

*Achebe in His Own Words: Quotations, Interviews, Works* | | Achebe
WWW Links<www.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/achebe.html>

Chinua Achebe: An Overview
<www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/landow/post/achebe/achebeov.html>

Chinua Achebe's Biography and Style
<www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/landow/post/achebe/achebebio.html>

James Baldwin, “Sonny's Blues”

In addition to the theme of "brotherly love" this is a story about jazz. Ken Burns documentary on the history of jazz would provide a very comprehensive insight into the background of this piece, not only as it pertains to the music, but the way that jazz springs from and reflects the racial, cultural, and economic history of this country. It is the most "American" and democratic of all music. You may also want to have students discuss the place of music in their own lives.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. To what extent can you identify with the sibling relationship in this story?
2. Compare this sibling relationship with that in Louise Erdrich's "The Red Convertible."

3. Discuss the place of music in Sonny’s life. To what extent can you identify with this need or know someone who can? Are there other activities that fulfill you or draw you in the same way that music attracts Sonny?

4. Discuss the economic and cultural setting of this story and how it affects conflict and characterization.

Web Sites

James Baldwin <www.uic.edu/depts/quic/history/james_baldwin.html>

Teacher Resource File. Internet School Library Media Center <falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/baldwin.html>

John Cheever, “Reunion”

This story takes being embarrassed by a parent to an extreme. We have an alcoholic, know-it-all father who manages to bully and insult everyone he meets. And we have a son who clearly needs and wants a father in his life—but a father he can admire and learn from. It is an especially sad story, of course, because the boy is disappointed by the father’s antics—and so are we. The spare, non-judgmental narration of the boy allows us to experience the father’s behavior first hand, and it comes as no surprise to us that this was the last time the narrator saw his father.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. How important is the first-person narration of the boy to this story? How would the story be different if told by an omniscient narrator or by the father?
2. At the beginning of the story the boy says, “... as soon as I saw him I felt that he was my father, my flesh and my blood, my future and my doom.” What do you think he means? Have you ever felt this way about a parent? Explain.

3. How would you characterize the father and his behavior? What do you think is motivating him to behave as he does? Do you think the narrator should have said something to him about his behavior? Explain.

4. The story ends when the narrator says “...and that was the last time I saw my father.” Do you think he will see his father again? Would it be better if he didn’t? Explain.

5. Compare Cheever’s writing style in this story with Hemingway’s in “Hills Like White Elephants” on page 486.

Web Sites

<www.todayinliterature.com/biography/john.cheever.asp>

Additional Reading


Louise Erdrich, “The Red Convertible”

This is another story about brotherly love that reflects a cultural and historical context. Many students are not as aware as they might be of the plight of Native Americans as an oppressed group nor are they as aware as they might be of the Vietnam War and its consequences here and abroad. The lives of
these brothers, and their limited opportunities, seem determined by their origins. We can only imagine what Lyman's brother has seen and experienced in Vietnam, but it's clear he has come home damaged by his time there and here.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. To what extent is the red Oldsmobile the central symbol in the story? In what way do the changes the car goes through seem to reflect the changes in Lyman and Henry and their relationship?

2. Break this story down into its parts or episodes. Take one of those episodes (e.g. the trip to Alaska) and discuss its significance in relation to the whole story.

3. Henry comes back from Vietnam changed. To what extent do subsequent events send him deeper and deeper into his depression. Do you think they should? Explain.

4. At the end of the story, why do you think Lyman sends the car into the river? Do you think there is a reason why he left the lights on? Explain.

**Web Site**

Louise Erdrich: Official website of the author. Features biography, bibliography, mailing, etc. Erdrich, Louise <www.harpercollins>

**Additional Reading**


**D.H. Lawrence, “The Horse Dealer's Daughter”**

A fundamental question students might pursue here is the question of what the phrase "I love you" means. Like so many of Lawrence's stories, this one is literally and figuratively "earthy." Mabel, her father, her brothers, and Fergusson all seem driven by the natural world they inhabit. Where is love or comfort in such a bleak, unforgiving environment? Is there a difference between "I love you" and "I want you"? How would your students define the difference?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. The collapse of the family fortune leaves the brothers "no inner freedom." How does it affect Mabel?

2. In what ways do Mabel and Fergusson lead similar lives? Do you think they have similar temperaments?


5. Fergusson does not want to love Mabel because "he had never intended" to love her. Do you think “intention” plays a role in love? Explain.

6. To what extent is Fergusson afraid of love? Do his feelings about love tell us a great deal about him? Explain.

7. What images, emotions, and language are used to describe love in this story?

Web Sites

*DH Lawrence* resources at The University of Nottingham. Category: Lawrence, D.H. <mss.library.nottingham.ac.uk/dhl_home.html>

*D.H. Lawrence Review*: University of Texas Web site for the consummate academic serial focusing on Lawrence scholarship. <www.utexas.edu/research/dhlr/>

*Tillie Olsen, “I Stand Here Ironing”*

This story usually brings a variety of responses from students, some sympathetic, some angry. In fact, some students may identify with the daughter and ask how the mother can express such frustration when she should be showing "unconditional love" for her offspring. It might be interesting to probe the depths of parental love and responsibility. For what are parents responsible? Finally, does this come close to home? Do students see themselves anywhere in this picture, as mother or daughter?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. The story is a monologue. Who is the speaker? Who is she talking to?

2. Describe Emily’s life in as much detail as possible. Cite the text of the story to support your description.
3. What do you think is the significance of ironing in the title and in the story?

4. Identify some of the conflicts in the story. To what extent are they resolved?

5. To what extent is the speaker responsible for Emily and her success in life?

6. What would the story be like if it were told from Emily's point of view?

**Audio**

"I Stand Here Ironing." 77 min., 1 cassette. Includes several selections. Available from American Audio Prose Library.

**Web Site**

*Nebraska Center for Writers*

<mockingbird.creighton.edu/NCW/olsen.html>

**Additional Reading**


**Linda Ching Sledge, “The Road”**

This story is a chapter-excerpt from an historical novel, *A Map of Paradise*, set in Hawaii and California in the 19th century. This excerpt from the novel gets at the essence of a father-son relationship—and the father’s painful, loving realization that his son must live a different kind of life than he has had to live himself. Because of the time and place specific language, there are a number of footnotes it would be helpful to look at before reading or discussing the story.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. To what extent is “The Road” an appropriate title for this story?

2. Describe Pao An and his relationship with his son. Do you think he is so gruff with Lincoln because he does not love him? Explain.

3. How would you describe Lincoln’s attitude toward his father? Why does he “pretend an enthusiasm” for the work when he hates it so much?

4. Discuss Pao An’s poem at the end of the story. What does it mean? What do you think he is saying about the future of his relationship with his son?
Web Site

_Catharton: Authors_: Linda Ching Sledge
<www.catharton.com/authors/602.html>

Additional Reading


John Updike, “A&P”

Given the narrator's vernacular and its publication date, this story seems to have aged well. And it brings a variety of responses. Some students may even confuse the author with the narrator and claim that Updike is "sexist" because of the terms Sammy uses to describe the girls. Students who expect lots of action in a story may be disappointed by the low-keyed "epiphany" at the end of the story, but by connecting students to their own moments of realization, they may become more sensitive to the nuances of the story. And, of course, Updike's use of concrete detail in the story is well worth discussion, not only for its effectiveness in this story, but as a model of the way that supporting detail brings writing to life, and may do so in students' own writing as well.

Exploring “A&P”: Two Readers, Two Choices

Both student essays make their points well. But they make different points and come to different conclusions about Sammy's actions and what they will mean to him. In addition to providing an examples of the validity of multiple valid interpretations, they in themselves provide effective prompts for a discussion of the story.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. This story is told from Sammy’s point of view. Describe Sammy. Cite comments from the story that provide insights into his age and personality.
2. Sammy makes a number of "sexist" observations, and some readers have suggested that this is a sexist story. Do you agree? Explain.

3. Why do you think the story is written in mixed past and present tense?

4. Why does Sammy quit his job? Why does he see it as an act of chivalry?

5. As the story closes, Sammy thinks "how hard the world was going to be to me hereafter." What does he mean? Do you agree? Explain.

6. Compare Sammy to the boy in "Araby." Both of these characters end their stories with a moment of realization. Compare their "realizations."

Audio


Web Sites

New York Times Life and Times
<www.nytimes.com/books/97/04/06/lifetimes/updike.html>


Additional Reading


**Eudora Welty, “A Worn Path”**

Phoenix is an ingenious survivor, and as the first question in the text indicates, appropriately named. A question that might be asked of students in relation to any story is "Who is in control here?" Is Phoenix in control—if so, how she has gotten and how does she maintain that control in a society that seems to defer to her but doesn't seem to take her very seriously?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. How would you describe Phoenix's responses to the white people she encounters? What do these brief meetings suggest about her? About the people she meets?

2. Some readers have suggested that Phoenix's grandson is already dead. Do you agree? Explain.

3. Interpret the scene between Phoenix and the hunter. To what extent is this scene a microcosm of the whole story?

4. It has been suggested that Phoenix has a special relationship with nature. Cite specific passages in the story where natural objects or creatures appear along her journey.

5. Some have suggested that “A Worn Path” is an archetypal quest. Where does this path or journey lead her? Does she learn anything from this journey? Do you? Explain.
Audio


Web Site

Biographical and bibliographic information on Eudora Welty, produced by the University of Mississippi
<www.olemiss.edu/depts/english/ms-writers/dir/welty_eudora/>

Additional Reading

Poetry

Connecting through Comparison: Remembrance

Elizabeth Gaffney, “Losses that Turn Up in Dreams”

Students can probably think of lots of losses of their own that still stick with them despite their physical absence. You might ask them to draw up their own lists of objects and people that are "homing pigeons" and continue to have meaning to them. The last stanza shifts to losses of a more meaningful kind, and the last image of "a daughter, filling up with milk and love" is a compelling one and worth exploration.

William Shakespeare, “When to the Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought”

Unlike the free verse of the Gaffney poem, this sonnet has a prescribed formal structure and rhyme scheme. It also leans on one central metaphor—the court or legal system—as its unifying source of comparison. In addition to comparing the ways that each poem addresses the impact of memories, it might also be illuminating to compare their very different forms and how these forms deliver their content.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Remembrance

1. What memories of long departed people or objects, what “homing pigeons” do you have? Make a list of people, pictures, and other objects, and discuss their symbolic importance in your life.

2. To what extent do you, like the speaker in Shakespeare’s sonnet, “sigh the lack of many a thing [you] sought”?

3. Do you think it’s better to retain painful memories or simply forget the past and move on? Explain.
Julie Alvarez, “Dusting”

The speaker in this poem is determined to break away from the image she has of her mother. There are many options for the word she chooses at the end of the poem, so it might be useful to discuss her response. Is it fair? Is it just an indication of the daughter going in a new direction, trying to avoid becoming like her mother, or is their anger and resentment being expressed? Attention might also be paid to the plight of the mother. Does she have the choice the speaker-daughter has? Is the daughter really being "erased" by the mother's dusting? To what extent has the mother's "anonymity" paved the way for the daughter to have choices?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. If the speaker was the mother in this poem, how do you think she would describe this event?

2. Do you think the speaker is being fair to the mother? Explain.

3. Compare this poem to Robert Hayden’s “Those Winter Sundays” on page 13. Do you think the speaker will see her mother in a different light later in life?

Robert Frost, “Mending Wall”

This poem expresses so much about human relationships in general. If we applaud Peter Meinke's statement in his poem “Advice to My Son” that we should "work with one man/speak truth to another," we seem to agree it's good advice to "wall out" the one we work with. Do we not fundamentally trust one another? Do your students think people are dishonest or self-serving by nature? There is lots to discuss here about human nature and what drives us. Another good source of comparison is Tess Gallagher's “The Hug.”

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Who is the speaker in the poem? What kind of person is he/she? What
are his/her feelings about the wall? How do you know? Cite the text for evidence.

2. What kind of person is the neighbor? What does the speaker say about the neighbor to indicate this? If the neighbor were writing this poem, how would it be different?

3. To what extent does it matter that the wall in the poem is made of stones? Are there other symbols in this poem? If so, what are they?

4. Given their attitudes, why do you think the speaker initiates the mending of the wall?

5. What is the central point or theme of the poem? Cite the text for evidence to support your view.

**Seamus Heaney, “Digging”**

Because so many students are first-generation college students, it might be worthwhile to explore how they feel about what their parents and grandparents did to make their livings and how that influences their own choices for a livelihood. Clearly, the speaker in this poem is proud of and does not disparage his father and grandfather's "digging," but simply has different skills and has chosen different tools with which to dig.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. What is the speaker’s attitude toward his father? Is he embarrassed by what his father does? Explain.

2. What is the tone of this poem? Cite passages from the text to support your view?

3. If you were writing this poem, how would you describe what you do in comparison to your parents and / or grandparents?
4. Compare this poem to “Those Winter Sundays” on page 13, “My Papa’s Waltz” on page 297, and/or “The Road” on page 260.

“Midterm Break”

This clear recollection of a deeply sad moment in the speaker's life usually brings ready understanding from students. There may be some questions about the boy's age and the word "college" (interchangeable in the U.K. and Northern Ireland for school) and why he is waiting in the "sick bay," but what has happened here is pretty accessible, more so, of course, for students who have had an event like this happen in their own lives.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Describe the setting and the reception the speaker receives when he arrives home. Cite individual responses he receives. Are they realistic? What can be read into them beyond the words?

2. Discuss the structure of the poem. Why are the lines bunched together as they are? Why is the last line isolated from the rest? To what extent does the form match the content?

3. In what way does the title, “Midterm Break,” fit the poem?


Philip Larkin, “This Be the Verse”

Most students, as you can imagine, are attracted to this poem immediately. As one of my students wrote, "I've never seen those [four letter] words used in a text before." Those words, of course, spring naturally from the speaker in this poem, and the challenge here has less to do with these words than identifying the offhand and whimsical tone of the speaker, since some students will take the poem very literally. Is what the speaker recommends even possible?
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Describe the speaker in this poem. To what extent does his choice of words tell you about his background? Does that matter? Explain.

2. Describe the tone of this poem. What words and phrases in the poem indicate this tone?

3. Do you agree with the speaker’s advice at the end of the poem? Do you think we do children an injustice by bringing them into this world? Do you think it is inevitable that parents will “screw up” their children’s lives? Explain.

4. Compare this poem to “35/10” on page 296 or “The Gift” on page 293. Do you think the speakers in those poems would agree with the speaker in “This Be the Verse”? Explain.

Michael Lassell, “How To Watch Your Brother Die”

This is a deeply moving and transformative poem. It is transformative in the sense that the speaker presents very painfully and accurately the discomfort of the heterosexual brother (as many of us and most of our students might feel it) as he struggles with his brother's lifestyle and illness. Many of my students have said they have never read anything that changed their views of AIDS or gay life in the way this poem does, and that's a pretty impressive accomplishment for the poet. In addition to discussing the content of this poem, it would be very instructive to discuss the "how." How does Michael Lassell shape this poem to capture our attention and move us to appreciate the speaker's dilemma? One answer, of course, is how the speaker defines himself and how that perspective enables us to take this journey of discovery and understanding with him.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Identify and explain the contrasting images of love and hate in this poem.
2. Dialogue is an important part of this poem. Identify the individual conversations the speaker has with other characters in the poem and what these conversations indicate about the speaker and/or these characters?

3. The speaker in this poem is heterosexual and is not always comfortable with what he encounters. How are you affected by this narrative perspective? What difference does it make to you? To what extent would this be a different poem if the speaker were gay? Explain.

**Li-Young Lee, “The Gift”**

This poem is an upbeat interlude in the midst of poems that focus on the harshness of family life and death. Students might be encouraged to recall "gifts" they have received from their parents or other family members, and how they may have shared or passed along those gifts to others. It might also be of some interest to discuss the way that we learn from the behavior of others we admire. Does one good turn or "gift" give birth to a whole family of descendant good turns?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Think of a “gift” that you were given by someone earlier in your life. To what extent has that gift influenced you? Have you been able to pass it on to someone else? Explain.

2. The italicized phrases in the poem *Metal that will bury me*” and “*Death visited here!*” seem at odds with the language and tone of the rest of the poem. Why do you think they are here?

3. Compare the father-son relationship in this poem with that in “Those Winter Sundays” on page 13 or “My Papa’s Waltz” on page 297.

**Janice Mirikatani, “For My Father”**

Who is this father who seems only capable of discipline? What has formed him? What motivates him? One obvious source of comparison for this poem
is Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays." Students tend to feel much sympathy for the father in that poem because of the speaker's stance. Here the stance of the speaker seems to be frustration and regret of a different kind. How much do students sympathize with this daughter and this father?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. If this poem were told from the perspective of the father how would it be different?

2. Describe the father. What do you know of his background from the poem? Can you justify the way he has brought up his children? Explain.

3. To what extent are the strawberries significant in this poem? What do you think they symbolize?

4. Compare this poem to "The Gift" on page 293 or "Those Winter Sundays" on page 13.

Sharon Olds, "35/10"

Whether students identify with the mother or the daughter in this piece, they usually have something to say about it. You might ask students if they have ever thought of themselves as "replacements." And if so what that means to them. How much of their parents or previous generation relatives do they see in themselves? Do they find this comforting or disturbing? A good source of comparison for this poem might be Elizabeth Bishop's "In the Waiting Room," which is seen from the perspective of the replacement not the replaced.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Unlike so many of the poems in this section, the speaker in the poem is the parent. How does that change the voice and tone of the poem? If this poem were told by her daughter how would it change?
2. Like the title, much of this poem is a comparison and contrast. Identify what’s being compared and the images, metaphors, and similes that are used. Do they work? Explain.

3. To what extent—as child or parent—can you identify with the feelings expressed in the poem. What additional comparisons and observations can you add?

Theodore Roethke, “My Papa's Waltz”

The scene the speaker describes is vivid enough and taps our senses very effectively, but it is just ambiguous enough to make us wonder what kind of relationship he has with his father and how he feels about it. Was this a joyous experience as the word "romp" implies? Is the mother's "countenance" that "Could not unfrown itself" simply aggravation at the male rough-housing? Or is there something more ominous going on here. My students always have a variety of responses---many of them derived from personal experiences and their own fathers. So you might want to ask them about their experiences of their own fathers, and the similarities and differences they find.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Describe the relationship between the father and son in this poem. Cite the text of the poem to support your view.

2. This poem is narrated in the past tense—indicating that the speaker is sharing this anecdote from the perspective of an adult—not the small boy in the poem. What difference does that make? If it were told from the perspective of the small boy, how would it change?

3. A waltz is a graceful dance. As described by the speaker, this dance is anything but graceful. To what extent is the title of the poem appropriate? Explain.
Cathy Song, “The Youngest Daughter”

When compared with the other poems in this volume about parent-child relationships The Youngest Daughter has a warmth that makes its tone a bit different. Here is a daughter lovingly caring for her mother, now an old woman, and seeing the imprint of her mother's history on her mother's body. But we also get a strong sense of the mother’s controlling hold on her daughter—and the daughter’s need to break away in the lines "she knows I am not to be trusted, / even now planning my escape." Good sources for comparison are other mother-daughter poems Dusting and 35/10.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Describe the speaker's relationship with her mother. Discuss the reciprocal nature of this relationship. What keeps the mother and daughter bound to each other? What power do they have over each other?

2. What does the narrator tell us about her life by emphasizing the darkness of the sky and the shades of her skin?

3. Why does the speaker have a sour taste in her mouth when she considers her mother's nipples?

4. Do you think the speaker's mother trusts her? Explain. What does the speaker mean, “even now planning my escape”?

5. Discuss the image at the end of the poem, “a thousand cranes curtain the window, / fly up in a sudden breeze.” In what way is it related to the toast to her mother’s health?
Drama

Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*

Like most drama, this play is best appreciated when seen. One of the better films of the production is the 1987 version (see Videos below) with Joanne Woodward and John Malkovich (and produced by Paul Newman). There are many, many issues to be discussed here and lots of places where students might connect. What kind of family environment is this? What do students believe their responsibilities to their own families are? Should they give up their own dreams to take care of other family members? What responsibilities do Tom, Amanda, and Laura have for one another?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Tom Wingfield seems to live as much in his imagination as Amanda or Laura do in theirs, but what is different about Tom?

2. At the end of Tom's final speech, he says, "Blow out your candles, Laura . . ." Why?

3. As different as they first appear to be, Amanda, aging mother of grown children, and Jim, shipping clerk, turn out to be alike in many ways. How are they alike? What sets them apart from each other?

4. "You live in a dream; you manufacture illusions!" Amanda tells Tom once the gentleman caller has left. Does he? Explain.

5. While the absent father in this play has no lines, he seems to have an important influence. What role does he play? To what extent would the play be different if he was never mentioned?

6. Williams does a great deal of explaining and illustrating the set and the play, both in the stage directions, and through his narrator, Tom. Is all of this necessary? What might be gained or lost if this were all eliminated?
Audio


Videos


*The Glass Menagerie.* TV production: 120 min., color, 1973. With Katherine Hepburn as Amanda, Sam Waterston as Tom, Joanna Mills as Laura, and Michael Moriarity as Jim. Distributed by ABC.

*The Glass Menagerie.* TV production: 120 min., color, 1966. With Shirley Booth as Amanda, Hal Holbrook as Tom, Barbara Laden as Laura, and Pat Hingle as Jim.


Web Sites

*Tennessee Williams: Mississippi Writers Page.* A catalog of links to Web resources on the playwright. www.olemiss.edu/depts/english/ms-writers/dir/williams_tennessee/

*The Glass Menagerie: Teacher CyberGuide.* From the Schools of California Online Resources for Education (SCORE) project. This site has links to resources, discussion questions and exploratory activities. <www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/Glass/glasstg.html>
Additional Reading

Essays

Doris Kearns Goodwin, “From Father with Love”

Most of us are probably familiar with Doris Kearns Goodwin as historian and the biographer of Lyndon Johnson, the Kennedys, and Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt. But she loves baseball too, and the ways that it has enhanced important relationships in her life. This essay predates her autobiographical book, *Wait Till Next Year* by about ten years, and you might encourage those who find this essay compelling to follow up by reading that book. This essay gets at the heart of what happens for her while baseball is going on, and what that means to her. It might be very worthwhile to ask your students about activities and events in their own lives that work in the same way, as an event and opportunity for connections and communication with loved ones that might otherwise be missed.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. This is an essay about a father-daughter relationship. It has been suggested that while women are often able to discuss their feelings directly, men are less comfortable doing that—that men need an event or a pastime like sports to prompt conversation. Do you agree? Explain.

2. Many people seem to live and schedule the seasons of their lives around sports. Do you think they are wasting time that could be used for something more useful and productive? Explain.

Maxine Hong Kingston, “No Name Woman”

This is the haunting first chapter of Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and it certainly leaves us wanting to read more, so it's not a bad idea to suggest to students that they might want to follow up by reading Kingston's book. It might also be useful to get students to think about their own family stories. Have they ever wondered about family members who are not talked about or talked about in such a way that either they or their stories seem unwelcome in the conversation?
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What does the narrator mean in the last paragraph when she declares “I alone devote pages of paper to her, though not origamied into houses and clothes.”

2. Why do you think the narrator’s mother told her this story?

3. If this story were told from the perspective of the villagers responsible for the aunt’s death, how would it be told and how would the emphasis change?

Mark Twain, “Advice to Youth”

Like all humorous writing that pokes fun through exaggeration, picking up the tone is the key for students. Advice of this nature hasn't changed much since Twain wrote this piece, and students can probably call up lots of equivalents from their own experience. Having them try to match Twain's cautions with some of their own could be very entertaining and illuminating.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Understanding the tone of this story is crucial to its effectiveness. What is the tone and what words and phrases in the text indicate that?

2. Twain’s essay was written over a hundred years ago. If you were writing a tongue-in-cheek “Advice to Youth” today, what issues would you address? How would you satirize them?
Case Studies in Composition:
Thinking about Interpretation and Biography

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

For anyone interested in having students do biographical research or investigating critical responses to Lorraine Hansberry's work over time, this is rich soil. Personally, I find Hansberry's comments about her growing up and the influences on her writing to be of great interest, especially the influence of Sean O'Casey on her work. A comparison of O'Casey's *Juno and The Paycock* and *A Raisin in the Sun* might make a worthwhile project.

*Raisin in the Sun* has been a favorite for many of my students. Students who are often reluctant to talk about racism usually have no trouble talking about the characters and issues in this play, including the racist views of Lindner and his community organization. Lately, however, I've heard more students express the cynical view that the Youngers should take the money, as much money as they can get, that this would be a fitting retribution for what's been done to them, so you might want to use such a stance as a prompt, and ask what is gained and what is lost and what message is sent by having the Youngers move into their house—and what cost should be paid for self-respect and dignity.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. What is the significance of the title? It's taken from Langston Hughes’ poem “A Dream Deferred” on page 76. Take a look at the poem and explain why you think Hansberry chose *A Raisin in the Sun* for her title.

2. Compare and contrast the dreams of Walter, Mama Beneatha, and Ruth. Which one of these characters do you find most admirable?

3. Who is the play's protagonist? Who (or what) is the antagonist? Is the central conflict within the Younger family? Explain.

4. What function do Joseph Asagai and George Murchison have in the play?
5. Do you think the play is out of date? Have the conflicts that it presents been resolved?

6. What conflicts between men and women do you see in this play? How do the gender conflicts in this play compare to similar conflicts in other works you have read recently?

7. The entire play is set in the Youngers' apartment. Discuss the effect of this setting on the characters and the action.

8. Choose a scene in the play in which you believe each major character most clearly reveals his / her true nature. Explain how the characters behavior in the scene is most characteristic of him/her.

9. Imagine the Younger family ten years later. What has happened to their dreams? Where are they living, and what are they doing?

Videos


Web Site

*Voices from the Gaps: Lorraine Hansberry.* Includes biography, criticism, bibliography, and related links.

<http://voices.da.umn.edu/authors/LorraineHansberry.html>
Women and Men

Fiction

Anton Chekhov, “The Lady with the Pet Dog”

This is a very sophisticated story and requires readers who are sensitive to the nuances of language and relationships. Some students may even be offended by the extra-marital nature of the relationship. It may help to focus on what's going on inside Gurov. Is he a sympathetic character? Is he thoughtful? Does he try to do the right thing? What seems to be true of Chekhov's fiction, as
well as his drama, is that he is fond of his characters. They are rarely heroic and many are silly and ineffective at times, but they usually try to do the right thing as they understand it. Students might be asked how they would respond in his circumstances. It's likely their responses will range from condemnation for his immoral behavior to sympathy.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Characterize Gurov. Is he a static or dynamic character? Refer to passages in the text to support your view.

2. Characterize AnnaSergeyevna. Does she change as the story progresses? Explain.

3. Do you think Gurov is a better or a worse person because of his love for Anna? Explain.

4. To what extent does the story end on a positive note? In what way has this relationship changed since the story began? Do you think it has a future? Explain.

**Web Sites**

*Brief biography of Anton Chekhov, plus links to all of his works currently in print.* <www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc6.htm>

*A profile with collections of quotations on writing, his critical reception, and his legacy.* <mockingbird.creighton.edu/NCW/chekhov.htm>

**William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily”**

Faulkner has described this as his “ghost” story, but in addition, it’s filled with all the southern cultural context and flavor usual to Faulkner’s fiction. It might be worthwhile to talk about the foreshadowing in the story. When did students figure out that “something was up”? What do they think about
what Emily has done, and why she choose this way to “preserve” Homer’s loyalty to her?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Why do you think that Faulkner does not tell this story in strict chronological order? Do you think it would be a better story if he did? Explain.

2. How would you describe the point of view here? Who is the narrator? For whom does he seem to speak? Do you find this perspective effective? Why, or why not?

3. What kind of person is Emily Grierson? Why does she live in the past? How do the townspeople feel about her? How do you feel about her?

4. What kind of person is Homer Barron? Why do the townspeople consider him not good enough for Miss Emily? Do you?

5. Discuss Emily’s relationship with her father and its significance in the story.

6. What does the last sentence of the story mean? Does it make sense to you? To what extent does dust and decay play an important part in the story from beginning to end?

**Web Site**

*Commentaries on his work, and extensive character and place-name glossary, bibliographies*

<www.mcsr.olemiss.edu/~egjbp/faulkner/faulkner.html>

**Additional Reading**


Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”

The voice in this story is probably a bit different than what students are used to, but they do adjust. With some patience, they will begin to understand that something is a little off here. As much recent feminist criticism emphasizes, one of the questions might be, "Why is something off here?" Ask students how they would describe the narrator and what her statements indicate about the nature of her life and how she has been treated. Despite the fantastic nature of some of the things she says, are there parts of her narration that are believable?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Characterize the relationship between the narrator and her husband John. How are the narrator and John contrasted in the first few paragraphs of the story? What happens to this contrast as the story progresses? How does John defend the claim that he knows his wife better than she knows herself? Does he?

2. How do the narrator's descriptions of and feelings towards the wallpaper change? Does the wallpaper have an “everlastingness” to it?
What is the narrator looking for in the wallpaper? Does she find it? Explain.

3. The narrator says she is tempted to jump out of the window. Why doesn't she?

4. Who is the woman in the wallpaper? What connection does she have to the narrator? To what extent is the yellow wallpaper an appropriate metaphor in this story? Would another color make a difference?

5. What does the narrator mean toward the end of the story when she says, “I’ve got out at last”? Has she? Explain.

Web Sites

*The Life and Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, UPress of Virginia, 1990*
Description: Biography, bibliography, critical essays, and research guide.
<www.womenwriters.net/domesticgoddess/gilman1.html>

*The Yellow Wallpaper Site*
<www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~daniel/amlit/wallpaper/wallpaper.html>

Additional Reading


99
Ernest Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants”

An important choice here is whether or not to announce in advance what the couple is discussing. Does it matter? In my experience, it does. Those students who think it's a matter of no consequence tend to take the story less seriously and wonder where the story is here. That is not to say, of course, that the story is about "abortion" rather than the communication, or lack of it, in this relationship. But the stakes are raised here by the what of the conversation. And I've found that once students know what the couple is talking about talking, they can more easily appreciate the intensity of the conversation and the importance of what's not said.

I have also found that having students read this conversation out loud in class, as if it's a play, can be a very fruitful activity. Its third-person objective point of view makes it a good candidate for dramatization, and it gives students a chance to hear the tone, even debate the tone, of the conversation.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. This story has very little description and exposition. What problems does the story’s dependence on dialogue pose for you? Based on their conversation, what difference can you see between the man's and the woman's feelings about an abortion?

2. What is a "white elephant"? What is significant in the woman's initial comparison of the hills to white elephants? To what extent are her later thoughts revealed through her comment that they "don't really look like white, elephants. I just meant the coloring of their skin through the trees"?

3. Describe the two characters. How old are they? Have they known each other long? Are there differences in their levels of life experience? How
did they meet? What kind of past relationship has led up to their present situation? What details in the story support your description of the couple?

4. Why does the man keep repeating that he knows the operation is simple? Why does the girl want the man to stop talking?

5. Why do they place so much emphasis on having "a fine time"? How do you think they would define "a fine time"? Do you think “fine times” are enough to keep them together? Explain.

6. What is the main point or theme of the story? Is abortion the central issue? Lack of communication between the lovers? Something else?

Videos

"An Introduction to Ernest Hemingway's Fiction." Lecture. 45 min., color. Available from Filmic Archives.


Hemingway. 54 mins; b&w, 1962) Biography narrated by Chet Huntley. CRM Films or Michigan Media.

Web Site

The Hemingway Resource Center contains an extended biographical essay on Hemingway, several bibliographies, and a FAQ section that answers some often asked questions about certain aspects of his life and writings. The site also contains a multimedia section that is a clip of Hemingway reading an excerpt of his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, which includes the line where
he notes that, "Writing, at its best, is a lonely life." The links section rounds out the site, providing numerous related Web sites of note, such as those to the Hemingway Society site, and a link to an online tour of Hemingway's home in Key West. <http://www.lostgeneration.com/>

Additional Reading


James Joyce, “Araby”

Given its subject matter, a young boy's crush on his friend's older sister, we might anticipate a quick connection. But those of us who have taught this story know that it doesn't happen easily most of the time. This is a story that can use some emotional scaffolding. I've found that it helps to have students think about their own experiences and remember how preoccupied they were or how silly they behaved when so affected.

And, of course, Joyce doesn't waste a word. The bright and dark images are crisp, the rhythms of the language and the story are evocative, and the
epiphany is gradually developed. It's a story that deserves a slow reading with lots of digestion. Reading sections out loud in class may help students "hear" the voice it's so important to hear in this story and feel the emotional roller-coaster ride the boy takes.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Describe the narrator in the story. Is he telling the story from the perspective of boy “in the moment” or as an adult looking back at it? Explain.

2. Describe the tone of this story and the attitude of the narrator toward the events he describes. Consider the narrator’s choice of words and the light and dark images in the narration. Compare the passages in which he describes Mangan’s sister with those in which he describes the setting of the neighborhood or the bazaar.

3. How does the narrator's attitude toward life change after he speaks with Mangan’s sister and decides to attend the bazaar? To what extent is “Araby” a quest story. What does the narrator seek? What must he overcome? What does he ultimately find?

4. How does the narrator feel about himself at the end of the story? What has brought about this change in self-perception? Do you think he has found more or less than he sought? Explain.


**Web Sites**

*Joyce Resources on the Internet:* 15 Joyce-related resources with critical descriptions of each. <www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/rickard/Joyce.html>

*Joyce Resource Center.*
<www.cohums.ohio-state.edu/english/oganizations/ijjf/jrc/>
Online Literary Criticism Collection: Joyce, his work, life, and times.
<www.ipl.org/cgi-bin/ref/litcrit/litcrit.out.pl?au=joy-47>

Additional Reading


Bobbie Ann Mason, “Shiloh”

To borrow Mason's own description of her writing, this story is "southern Gothic going to the supermarket." It's a story that many non-traditional students or first-generation students may identify with very well, so it may be illuminating to discuss issues of "growing up and away" from friends and families, even spouses, as reflected in *Shiloh.* Students might be asked if they have had or are having similar experiences.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Compare and contrast Norma Jean and Leroy. What do each of them want from life? What indications of that are there in the story?
2. Describe their marriage. Has it always been this way? If not, what has changed it?

3. Do you believe that people are “made for each other”? Or do you believe that people in a relationship must learn and grow together? Explain.

4. It’s clear that Norma Jean has changed in ways that make it very difficult for her to stay with Leroy. If you were a marriage counselor, and Norma Jean and Leroy came to you for help, what would you suggest to them? Would you suggest they stay together? Do you think this relationship should be saved?

Web Site

Bobbie Ann Mason Home Page
<www.eiu.edu/~eng1002/authors/mason2/welcome.html>

Rosario Morales, “The Day It Happened”

Many students may be able to identify with or recognize the abuse part of this story—if not the resolution. It’s a story of courage and transformation for one character, cowardice and potential realization for another. Having students imagine the future here may bring lots of rich discussion. Many women in this situation, perhaps most, eventually take their spouses back, or never leave them, and continue the pattern of abuse. Do students believe that is recommended here? Is the husband a lost cause? Is she better off without him? Can he change? Students might even do research into the issue of spousal abuse itself and see how this story fits into what other researchers have discovered about this type of situation.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Have you ever been in or witnessed an abusive relationship like this? If so, how did that experience influence your response to this story?

2. How would this story be different if it were told from the point of view
of Josie? Do you think it would be harder or easier to sympathize with Josie if we knew what she was thinking?

3. Do you have any sympathy for Ramon? What are your feelings at the end of the story when he begs Josie not to leave? Do you think she should take him back? Explain.

4. Compare Josie with Nora Helmer in A Doll’s House. Do you think she is more or less justified in leaving her husband than Nora? Explain.

Poetry

Connecting through Comparison: Be My Love

Christopher Marlowe, “A Passionate Shepherd To His Love”

This is a good warm-up for the Marvell poem to follow. There's a lot of irresistible stuff promised here. But can he deliver? That question and its answer are explored in many other poems in this section—and in many other stories and plays in this text, especially those below.

Walter Raleigh, “The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd”

This is, as the title suggests, a response to Christopher Marlowe's “A Passionate Shepherd to His Love.” It also works well as a response to a number of other "seduction" poems in the text. What do students think are the reasons to be skeptical of the "come-ons" in those other poems. How is the "live for the moment" in these urgent requests answered by the stability of "moderation and reason"? Are these answers a sufficient rebuttal?

Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress”

This, students will recognize quickly, is a "seduction" poem. Obvious sources of comparison in the text are the two poems that precede it, Christopher Marlowe's “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” and Walter Raleigh's
“The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd.” Contemporary poems like Sharon Olds' “Sex Without Love” or Judy Grahn's “Ella in a Square Apron, Along Highway 80” might also be seen as counter-arguments to Marlowe's poem. Apart from its titillating objective, it is also a great poem. A discussion of its allusions and structure make clear its exquisite balance and the build to its passionate conclusion.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Be My Love

1. What does the passionate shepherd offer his love? What season dominates the poem? What seasons are left out? What difference does it make?

2. Does the passionate shepherd have credibility? Is there any variety in the passionate shepherd’s appeals? Is there any indication that his love is rejecting him? Do you think his offer should be accepted? Explain.

3. Do you think the nymph in Raleigh’s poem counters the shepherd's pleasant pastoral images? If so, how? What are the dominant seasons of Raleigh’s poem? What would you write in response to the shepherd?

4. The structure of "To His Coy Mistress" is based on a classical pattern of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Discuss the content of each of section and describe how the speaker builds his argument.

5. How do you like the term "vegetable love" to describe how love ought to play itself out? Given the restraints of time, is “vegetable love” ever possible? Explain.

6. If Raleigh’s poem counters Marlowe’s, does Marvell’s counter Raleigh’s? Would Raleigh’s argument work against the appeal of the lover in “To His Coy Mistress”? 

Maya Angelou, “Phenomenal Woman”

This is a big favorite among many students, particularly students who see
their strengths elsewhere than in the "lean and hungry look" that is so popular today. It is a poem passionate about an "inner core" that feeds on its own confidence. Marge Piercy’s “Barbie Doll” makes an excellent source of comparison, and students might conjecture about who the speaker in that poem might become with this kind of self-esteem and confidence.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. What makes this woman so phenomenal? Do you think the qualities she mentions really make her attractive or that she is just talking herself into believing it? Explain.

2. To what extent is confidence an attractive quality in itself? Do you think it can be unattractive? Do you think the speaker in this poem thinks “too much” of herself? Explain.

**Margaret Atwood, “You Fit Into Me”**

A brief but powerful poem, discussion of it is helped by an explanation of "hook and eye" in the first stanza. In most common use, a hook is the fastener that goes into the opening or eye of the garment to join the two. Obviously, the second stanza is a hook and an eye of a very different kind and indicates a very different relationship. However, I have had students write that this was a "good" relationship without fully realizing the nature of the image, so it might help to have them hook this image into their own "mind's eye" and digest what that feels like.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. There is no punctuation in this poem. Do you think there should be? What difference does it make?

2. Make a list of personal connotations for “fish hook” and “open eye.” What feelings and sensations do these words evoke from you?
“Siren Song”

It would help to explain who the Sirens are in Greek mythology before tackling this poem. Sirens were half-woman, half-bird nymphs who lured sailors to their deaths by singing hypnotically beautiful songs. The irresistible nature of the song here is that it sneaks up on the hearer who doesn’t know to resist it in this form. The poem can prompt lively discussion about the “savior” mentality and its consequences for both parties for both the saved and the savior.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. To what extent is this siren song similar to the siren song of Greek mythology? To what extent different?

2. Do you think this siren song exists more in the hearer or in the singer? Explain.

3. Do you really think this song is irresistible? Explain.

**Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “How Do I Love Thee?”**

This is, of course, one of the most popular love poems of all time. If students are not familiar with the entire sonnet, they are still likely to be familiar with some of its lines. A legitimate issue when discussing the poem is its sentimentality. The images are passionate and powerful, but do they go over the top? And if they do go over the top, is the beauty and passion of the language itself enough to justify this piece as good poetry?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Do you think the depth of love described in this poem is possible? Is the poem too sentimental? Explain.

2. This poem is written in answer to the question it poses: “How Do I Love Thee?” With specific reference to the text of the poem, pick out passages
and discuss the effectiveness of the speaker’s language as she answers that question.

3. Compare the tone of the speaker in this poem with that of the speaker in Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “Love Is Not All” on page 522 and “What Lips My Lips Have Kissed, and Where, and Why” on page 522. Cite the text of the poems for support.

**Robert Browning, “Porphyria's Lover”**

This a haunting narrative poem and a good example of a speaker who is (from all that we know) not the poet. Students might be asked, apart from what he has done, what is so disturbing about the speaker. Can they explain him or his motivation? Do they know of news stories like this in the contemporary world? Is he a tragic or a pathetic figure? Why?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. To what extent is the title of this poem ironic? Do you think the speaker in this poem is really Porphyria’s lover? Explain.

2. This poem is a dramatic monologue told from the speaker’s point of view. What difference does that make? How would this story be told by someone else (e.g. a newspaper reporter or the policeman investigating the case)?

3. Compare this poem to William Faulkner’s short story “A Rose for Emily” on page 467.

**Nikki Giovanni, “Woman”**

This is a poem of self-discovery and liberation. The “she” described seems to have tried to be all the things she imagined her lover would like her to be, only to discover she needed to be herself, regardless of what he chose to be. The poem is a good prompt for a discussion of male-female relationship, or
for that matter any relationship where one party feels the need to define him or herself through the other person.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Who is the “she” in the poem? What difference would it make if “she” were the speaker in the poem?

2. Identify each of the metaphors for the woman and the man and discuss the kind of relationship they create. Would it have been better if he was the things she wanted him to be? Explain.

3. At the end of the poem, the speaker says “she decided to become a woman” and “he still refused to be a man.” What do you think she means?

**Judy Grahn, “Ella, in a Square Apron, Along Highway 80”**

The image of a woman depicted here is quite different than many of the others in the text. But like many of these other women she does what she needs to do to survive. Students might be asked if she reminds them of people they’ve known—or, in fact, if she reminds them of themselves in some way.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Describe Ella. What do you think has formed her attitudes? What helps her survive? To what extent is she like a “rattlesnake”?

2. What does the word “common” mean to you? Has the speaker in the poem defined it differently? Can you think of people in your own experience that this redefinition of “common” might be applied to? Explain.
A.E. Housman, “When I Was One-and-Twenty”

Students will probably find this poem very accessible and be able to identify with the sentiments of the speaker. They might be asked if the advice given is realistic, and if they believe the speaker would have really been better off to have heeded it before he “gave his heart away.” And of course, it helps to have them tap their own experience as a reference point.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Do you think “it’s better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all”? Does the speaker in this poem? Explain.

2. Is there a difference between the advice given by the wise man in the first and second stanza? Explain.

3. Do you think the speaker will feel the same way when he is two-and thirty? Explain.

4. Compare this poem to Millay’s “What Lips My Lips Have Kissed, and Where, and Why” on page 521 and “Love Is Not All” on page 522. Do you think the speakers in those poems would agree with the view expressed in this poem? Explain.


This is a particularly sad poem because the speaker talks of romantic love in the past tense. This not just the loss of a particular love—with a glimmer of hope for renewal in someone else, but a requiem for the speaker’s participation in romantic love itself. The images are particularly strong and deserve attention and discussion.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Discuss the imagery in this poem, especially the winter and summer
images at the beginning and end of the poem.

2. To what extent does sound reinforce the meaning and contribute to the tone of sadness?

3. Compare this sonnet in both form and content to Millay’s “Love Is Not All” on page 522.

“Love Is Not All”

Unlike the sense of loss expressed in “What Lips My Lips Have Kissed, and Where, and Why,” this poem is a tribute to the necessity and power of love. Picking up the speaker’s tone is essential here. Some students will miss the understated tone, take the title literally, and see her early statements about “what love is not” as the theme of the poem.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What is the tone of this poem? Is this a poem about what love is not—or about what love is? Explain.

2. Discuss the structure, the images, and sounds in this sonnet. Where is the turning point?

3. Compare this sonnet to Shakespeare’s “When in Disgrace with Fortune and Men’s Eyes” on page 81 and Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “How Do I Love Thee” on page 515.

Sharon Olds, “Sex Without Love”

The image of “performance” and disconnectedness here is a powerful one. The “ice-skaters” never touch each other emotionally, and the poem raises lots of questions about physical pleasure and the needs it satisfies or what it substitutes for in many people’s lives. Students might be asked about this issue in contemporary culture. What do they believe is the place of sex in
modern society and its relationship to committed love? And in what way does “love” alter the scene in the poem?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. How would you characterize the speaker’s attitude toward “sex without love”?

2. What is the “truth” referred to at the end of the poem? How would you describe it in your own words?

3. We are regularly bombarded by popular media, especially through advertising, by “sex without love.” Do you see this as a problem? Does it matter? Explain.

**Sylvia Plath, “Mirror”**

One of the challenges with any Silvia Plath poem is to have students avoid connecting it directly to her life, in particular, the end of her life. Her provocative biography, complete with description of her suicide and various suicide attempts, seems to make students jump to conclusions about her poems. One of my students recently wrote that this was a poem about suicide, in fact, he wrote, it indicated *why* Plath committed suicide. So you may want to shift the focus toward the poem and their response to it, and how it makes sense in students’ own experience. What does the mirror show? And in what way does the mirror and the images in the poem "reflect" that?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Discuss the personification of the mirror in the poem. The mirror has a voice. How does the mirror describe itself? Cite lines from the text of the poem to support your response.

2. To what extent do the mirror and the lake help the woman discover who she is? In what ways do they interfere with her self-discovery?
3. Discuss the importance of the “terrible fish” that rises toward the woman in the last stanza. Are the mirror and the lake responsible for what she sees? Explain.

Alberto Rios, “The Purpose of Altar Boys”

See if students can tap their own experiences with this one. Have they ever been placed in the position of passing judgment, yet also being aware of their own inclinations? What are the different sides of human nature being revealed here? Do we all put ourselves in these positions from time to time?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What is the point of view in this poem? Is the speaker telling his story in the present tense or looking back? What difference does it make?

2. What does the speaker mean at the end of the poem when he says, “I would look with authority down the tops of white dresses.”?

3. To what extent does being an altar boy serve a larger “purpose” than what is indicated in the poem?

Connecting Through Comparison: Shall I Compare Thee?

William Shakespeare “Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?” (Sonnet 18)

This is one of the most straightforward of Shakespeare’s sonnets—and students usually catch on to it pretty quickly. Like sonnet #130, this sonnet is as much about the limitations of exaggerated comparisons to nature in romantic poetry as it is about the speaker’s admiration for his subject.

Howard Moss, Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day

This is, of course, a parody of Shakespeare’s sonnet—and it’s fun to compare the diction and rhyme scheme of one with the other. It might also be
interesting to talk about the conventions of modern speech and poetry, and what our expectations / limitations are as compared to readers of other eras.

“My Mistress's Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun” (Sonnet 130)

Students can jump to conclusions about this one pretty quickly and not wait for its last line—a line that turns it all around. They may especially find humorous or “nasty” the reference to his mistress’ “reeking breath”—although you might want to point out, as the footnote indicates, that the word “reeks” had a somewhat different meaning in 1600. Students often indicate that they wouldn’t want to be described by their boyfriends/husbands/lovers this way, so take them through it all the way—with particular reference to the last line. And once again ask them to consider what the speaker is saying about the use of language here.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Shall I Compare Thee?

1. Discuss the use of language in all three poems. To what extent is the language used in any one of them up to the task announced by the speaker?

2. Both of Shakespeare’s sonnets are written in formal blank verse. The Moss sonnet is not. What effect does the irregular meter and rhyme scheme have on you? To what extent is the form part of the message?

3. Many readers have commented that they wouldn’t want to be described the way that the speaker in Sonnet #130 describes his mistress—and yet he clearly intends to compliment her. Do you think that this sonnet is insulting or realistic? Explain.

Drama

Anton Chekhov, “The Proposal”

This is a farcical, fun play, with only three characters. If the time is available, it’s a good play to read aloud in class. Despite the farcical
nature of the play, these characters and their encounters offer us a whimsical glimpse of human nature and the larger human comedy we participate in every day.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Characterize Chubukov. What do we learn about him from his conversation with Lomov at the beginning of the play?

2. Characterize Natasha. What do we learn about her from her first conversation with Lomov?

3. Why do they want to marry each other? Does either of them have a good reason?

4. Describe the relationship between Natasha and her father. What family traits do they have in common?

5. What makes this play a farce? When did you first realize the play was funny? Explain.

6. Do you think this play has anything serious to say about human nature? If so, what?

Video


Web Sites

Brief biography of Anton Chekhov, plus links to all of his works currently in print. <www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc6.htm>
A profile with collections of quotations on writing, his critical reception, and his legacy <mockingbird.creighton.edu/NCW/chekhov.htm>

Additional Reading


Connecting through Comparison: Cinderella across Genres

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, “Cinderella”

Those familiar with the Grimm brothers rendering of this tale know that it's not the usual modernized, sanitized cartoon version. The lengths the stepsisters go to get the Prince are pretty extreme and bloody. Punishment for the mean-spirited stepsisters is brutal. Most students are familiar with the modernized version, so comparing this version with what they remember should bring some interesting discussion. You might ask which they prefer and why, and perhaps what the need to update this says about our culture and that of the Grimms. Even more obvious, perhaps, is the issue of what this tale says about women and the limitations of they might aspire to. The Anne Sexton poem and the Bruno Bettelheim essay are part of a threesome and all three have been placed in the text and this section for the purpose of comparison.

Anne Sexton, “Cinderella”

Once again, a comparison with the sanitized modern version of this tale can yield a good discussion. The “that story” and the ending are a bit different
from the Grimm brothers tale, and it might be worthwhile to talk about this 20th century view of the same sometimes grisly story.

Essays

Bruno Bettelheim, “Cinderella”

Discussion of this essay will not be worthwhile unless students are familiar with the folk tale, though it's hard to imagine many students who are not familiar with some version of it. In any case, this works best as a companion piece to the Grimm tale and the Ann Sexton poem. Once they figure out what he is saying about the tale here, students might be asked if they agree with Bettelheim’s view of the tale and its place in our culture.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Cinderella across Genres

1. This is the fairy tale as rendered by the Grimm Brothers—not the sanitized modern version. Which do you prefer? Explain.

2. What assumptions does this fairy tale make about women and their aspirations? Do you have a problem with that? Explain.

3. What do the stories in the first four stanzas of Anne Sexton’s poem have in common? How are they related to the Cinderella tale?

4. Some aspects of this poem are intended to be humorous. How can you tell? Is there a serious point as well as a humorous one?

5. What attitude toward the Cinderella story does the poem project? How does “Cinderella” differ from the usual telling of the tale? Does it differ primarily in content or in style?

6. Do you remember how you felt as a child about this tale? Do you agree with the Bettelheim’s premise of the place that the Cinderella tale plays in our lives? Explain.
Sei Shonagan, “A Lover’s Departure”

Over 1,000 years old, this brief piece seems very modern. What is the speaker saying about “leave-taking”? In what way does she feel it gets to the heart of her attachment to a man? Do students agree with this? You may get very different responses from women and men. Does behavior under certain circumstances tell us a lot about a person? You might want to ask your students if they can think of any other circumstances when someone’s behavior seems to tell us a lot about them.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What is the tone of this piece? How can you tell?

2. To what extent does this piece tell you as much about the narrator as about the subject she addresses? What kind of person do you think she is? How can you tell?

Virginia Woolf, “If Shakespeare Had a Sister”

The premise here is pretty direct and by extension the title might be “If Shakespeare Was a Woman?” But have things changed? Students might be asked if a woman of Shakespeare’s ability was writing today would she get the encouragement and the credit she deserved? Woolf, a prominent writer herself, writes from personal experience.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What is the tone of the essay? What indications of tone can you cite in the essay to support your conclusion?

2. Do you think that Woolf’s position is outdated? Do you think that women now have equal opportunity to develop their talent and to succeed as men do? Explain.
Case Study in Composition:  
Thinking about Interpretation in Cultural and Historical Context

Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll’s House*

This play still works well today and usually prompts rich discussion about the nature of the relationship between men and women and marriage. Students are usually sympathetic to Nora’s plight, but while they believe that she is justified in leaving Torvald, many are upset that she leaves her children behind. Many of them, too, believe that Torvald is as much a victim of the cultural imperatives of the time as Nora is and that her enthusiasm in playing the role of his helpless “squirrel” only encourages him to behave as he does.

The “artifacts” of writing from the 18th and 19th centuries that follow the play offer a cultural and historical context for the play (and many of the other pieces in this theme section). Some, like the Ibsen statements and his changed ending, can be used directly to prompt discussion about the play. Others provide a sense of the atmosphere that led to the plays creation—and reception. In any case, these pieces may provide valuable documentation for research in this period.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. To what extent does the first act foreshadow the whole play?

2. Why do you think Ibsen sets the play in the winter? At Christmas?

3. What is the function of Mrs. Linde in the play? Why is so much of the beginning of the play devoted to her conversation with Nora?

4. What is the function of Dr. Rank in the play? Why is Nora so upset with him when he declares his love for her?

5. What or who is the main antagonist? Is it a person, an environment, or a social force? Is there more than one?
6. Though the play is revolutionary in its treatment of a social issue, it has a traditional dramatic structure. Discuss the structure of the play, particularly its exposition, rising action, climax, and resolution.

7. Why doesn’t Helmer’s argument against Nora’s leaving work? Is he right to protect his own honor? Do you agree with Nora’s decision to leave her family? Does she have other options? Explain.

8. Compare Nora with Antigone or Ruth in *A Raisin in the Sun*. Which character do you think is the strongest? What would Antigone or Ruth do if either were in Nora’s place?

**Videos**


**Web Site**

*Ibsen Net.* A large collection of information about Ibsen and links to other resources. <www.ibsen.net>

**Additional Reading**


Heritage and Identity

Fiction

Julia Alvarez, “Snow”

Some of us may remember the Cuban Missile Crisis and the air-raid drills that the narrator describes, but it’s not likely that most of our students were even born when these events took place. But this is a story about being overwhelmed by a new environment, not the Cold War, and asking students about their own adjustments growing up or getting used to a new culture may provide a good entry into the story.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Think back to a “disorienting” or embarrassing classroom experience that you had as a young child. Write a narrative of the experience that makes a point.

2. This brief story is written from the first person point of view. What difference does that make? How would it change if written in the third-person?

3. Compare this story with Sandra Cisneros’ “Eleven” on page 26. Both stories are told in the first person, but to what extent do they differ in important ways?
Web Site

*Voices From the Gaps: Julia Alvarez*
<voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/JuliaAlvarez.html>*

Willa Cather, “Paul's Case”

Almost a century old, this story is a timeless classic. One effective way to get students talking about this story is to have them role play what they would do to get Paul out of his "funk" and in position to deal with reality. Is Paul's "case" a lost cause? What would help him see the world differently? Does it only require a change of scenery, a move from his drab house on Cordelia Street? Or is there something fundamentally wrong with Paul himself? If students seem to think so, then what is it? Have they ever felt some of these same things themselves?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Imagine that you are Paul’s guidance counselor when he is having his trouble with school and with his teachers. What would you say to him to try to “straighten” him out?

2. Do you think "Paul's Case" is an appropriate title for this story? What if it were called “Paul’s Story” instead? What’s the difference?

3. Why are the teachers so angry at him when they get together? Do you think this has more to do with them than Paul? Explain.

4. Compare the descriptions of the concert hall, the theater, and New York with the descriptions of his home, Cordelia Street, and his school.

5. When did you first get a sense that his stay in New York would was over? To what extent were you surprised by his suicide?

6. Compare this story with James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues” on page 209.
Video

"Paul's Case." 52 minutes, color. Introduction by Henry Fonda; with Eric Roberts. Available from Filmic Archives.

Audio

"Paul's Case." 54 minutes, 1 cassette. Performed by Carole Shelley. Available from Filmic Archives.

Web Sites

The official website of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation <www.willacather.org/>

Biographical and bibliographical information, quotations, news, and numerous links <icg.harvard.edu/~cather/home.html>

Additional Reading

Jamaica Kincaid, “Girl”

The first feature of this story that students will notice is the non-stop paragraph, but they tend to react well to this story and often can identify with the plight of the girl. It helps to hear this story out loud, and its unrelenting advice, to appreciate the accumulation of pressure. You might ask students to read one sentence apiece, one after another, to have them fully appreciate its rhythms and their effect.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What is the impact of the non-stop barrage of advice? Do you think this advice is helpful? Explain.

2. This is not a conventional story, yet we learn a great deal about two characters. Pick out the elements of this monologue that tell us about the mother and the daughter.

3. Compare the advice given in this story to that in the poem “Advice to My Son” on page 9.

Web Site

Biography, list of major themes, suggested readings, and links.
<www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Kincaid.html>

Tahira Naqvi, “Brave We Are”

Set against a backdrop of preparing a meal, this is a delicately written, carefully developed story about parenting, growing up, and perceptions of ethnic or cultural differences. As a preparation for reading and discussing this story, students might be prompted to think about the kinds of issues that might have confused them as children and the kinds of questions, silly or otherwise, they might have asked in similar circumstances.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. This story is told through the point of view of the mother. How would it change if told from the perspective of her son?

2. In giving her explanation, what is the narrator’s conflict? What is she concerned about? Should she be? Would you be in this circumstance? Explain.

3. To what extent is the meal the narrator is preparing a metaphor for what she is explaining? What does she mean in the last line of the story, “The strands must remain smooth, elusive, separate”?

Web Site

SAWNET bio: Tahira Naqvi
<www.umiacs.umd.edu/users/sawweb/sawnet/books/tahira_naqvi.html>

Interview with Tahira Naqvi
<www.monsoonmag.com/interviews/i3inter_naqvi.html>

Frank O'Connor, “My Oedipus Complex”

This is a delightful story filled with ironic humor, and O'Connor's point of view and voice as the jealous infant son is hilarious. Despite its humor, the story accurately illustrates Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex, but does so in such a light-hearted way, that students learn about it tacitly while enjoying the story. An obvious but unlikely source of comparison and contrast is Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex. Rich and entertaining discussion can be generated by discussing the two in tandem.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. This story is told completely from the child's point of view. How reliable is Larry as the narrator of events? Why is his narration humorous? To
what extent is sexuality involved in the story's humor?

2. If the story were told from the mother or father’s point of view, would the humor be lost? Explain.

3. Irony is at the heart of much of the humor in this story. Find examples of irony in Larry’s comments and behavior and describe what makes them humorous.

4. What is Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex? To what extent does the theory fit the story?

Web Sites

Frank O'Connor.  
www.sleeping-giant.ie/literature/foconnor.html

Frank O'Connor. (Michael O'Donovan).  
<www.wiu.edu/users/muvck/franko.html>

Additional Reading


Amy Tan, “Two Kinds”

Most students will readily recall their own experiences handling the pressures and expectations that parents or others have placed on them. So, to establish an emotional context, it may be helpful to start with their own experiences of this pressure. They might be asked about times in their own lives when they felt like Jing-Mei at the piano recital. There are, of course, many other issues here as well connected with assimilation and mother-daughter tensions. The mother sees Jing-Mei as an extension of herself and her entry into this new culture. The mother seems well-meaning, but children don’t come equipped with the wisdom to appreciate this. There are many sources of comparison for this story throughout the text, positive and negative, and it might be helpful to bring these in as points of reference.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. The mother in the story claims there are two kinds of daughters. Do you agree? Do you think the daughter agrees at the end of the story? Explain.

2. Do you think this kind of conflict is unique to particular families or cultures? Explain.

3. If you have experienced a conflict like this in your own life, how did that influence your response to this story?

4. Compare this story with other stories that exemplify difficult parent-child relationships like “Everyday Use” (page 682) and/or “Marriage is a Private Affair” (page 204).

Web Sites

Amy Tan
<voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/AmyTan.html>
Two Readers/Two Choices: Alice Walker, “Everyday Use”

Students are often quick to criticize Dee, so it might prompt worthwhile discussion to ask them about their own aspirations in comparison to their parent(s). Many of our students are the first generation in their families to go to college. Do they ever feel dragged down by where they come from? Do they aspire to do different things with their lives than their parent(s)? Can they identify a legacy passed along to them? The issue of point of view is important here as well. Does Dee see herself the way that Mama depicts her?

There are many sources of comparison for this story throughout the text. For example, many of the poems in the Family and Friends section address the relationship between parent and child from the child's perspective. What kind of poem would Dee write about her mother? Many students are reminded of the mother in this piece when they read/view Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun*.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Do you think that Mama is a reliable narrator? If this story were told by Dee, to what extent would it be different?

2. Do you think that it would be "backward" to put the quilts to everyday use? Explain.

3. How does Maggie's character change in the course of the story? What do you think prompts this change?

4. Why does Dee say that her mother and sister don't understand their heritage? Do you agree? Explain.

5. Compare Mama and Dee in "Everyday Use," to Mama (Lena) and
Beneath in *A Raisin in the Sun*. To what extent do both stories deal with the issue of heritage?

**Audio**

*Interview with Alice Walker.* 45 min. Available from American Audio Prose Library.

**Video**


"*Alice Walker: A Portrait in the First Person.*" The author talks about her life and works. 28 min., color. Available from Films for the Humanities & Sciences.

**Web Sites**

*Anniina's Alice Walker Page.* Links to online resources, articles, interviews, essays and criticism, bibliographies, reviews, and excerpts from Walker's work. <www.luminarium.org.contemporary/alicew/>

*Voices from the Gap: Women Writers of Color.* Includes photographs and illustrations with a biography, bibliography, and links to interviews and essays. <www.voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/AliceWalker.html>

**Additional Reading**


**Poetry**

*Connecting through Comparison: The Mask We Wear*

**W.H. Auden, “The Unknown Citizen”**

The literal minded among our students may think that Auden is seriously singing the praises of the unknown citizen, much as we honor the "unknown soldier." Addressing the question Auden asks, “Was he free? Was he happy?,” is a good prompt for discussion. Comparing this with Stevie Smith’s "Not Waving But Drowning" might prompt a worthwhile discussion. And expanding this question into one about the relationship between individuals and society might also prove worthwhile. Citing the images in the poem as examples of this relationship might help to trigger this discussion.

**Paul Laurence Dunbar, “We Wear the Mask”**

In their initial responses, most of my students do not connect Dunbar's African-American heritage with this poem. The mask they "see" is the one they believe all of us wear from time to time. And this is a great place to begin. On the other hand, it is hard for any of us who have grown up in an age of overt racism to see the date of this poem's publication and not imagine the many masks that Dunbar had to wear in a racist society. It is a tribute to
the quality of the poem that it works on so many levels. So let the connections happen and then bring in the historical and cultural context of the author/speaker's experience to enrich the discussion.

**T.S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”**
This is a long poem but well worth the journey. And it fits neatly within this theme and as a source of comparison to the poems that surround it. Before reading and discussing this poem, you may find it helpful to start with Dunbar's “We Wear the Mask” or with Auden's “The Unknown Citizen” to establish students' focus and an emotional context. For those students who know it, reference to theBeatle's song*Eleanor Rigby*may also prove a useful introduction to a speaker who "prepares a face to meet the faces that [he] meets" or "measures out his life with coffee spoons" (though it may help to explain what a coffee spoon is and to account for a number of the other allusions in this poem, e.g. Michelangelo and Hamlet).

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: The Mask We Wear**

1. What is the tone “The Unknown Citizen”? What indications of tone are there in the text of the poem? For example, why does the poem contain names like “Fudge Motors Inc.”?

2. Why does the speaker use “our” and “we” and include us (the readers) in the point of view? Can he assume he speaks for us? Explain.

3. Who is the speaker in “We Wear the Mask”? Who are the "we" he refers to? Does it matter? Explain.

4. Have you ever behaved as if happy when secretly seething over some real or imagined wrong.? If so, to what extent did your feelings match those expressed in Dunbar's poem?

5. In addition to comparing Dunbar’s poem to the other poems in this section, compare it to Claude McKay’s “America” on page 1044 or Langston Hughes’ “A Dream Deferred” on page 76.
6. Who is J. Alfred Prufrock? Citing the lines in Eliot’s poem, make a list of things that he is anxious about. Why is he so anxious about them? Do you think he should be? Would you be? Explain.

7. Look at the translation of Dante’s opening epigraph. What is its function? To what extent does it set the mood for the poem? What is its relationship to the poem itself? What is the theme of the poem?

8. Pick out the strongest images and most memorable lines in the poem. Discuss the relationship of those images and lines with the meaning of the poem as a whole.

**Sherman Alexie, “On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City”**

There is a crisp clarity in the language of this poem and the speaker’s anger and frustration. Students should have an easy time picturing this scene and hear the voice of the elderly woman pointing out the “historical” gems along the way. It has been said that the “victors” get to interpret and write history according to their own needs. You might want to explore this idea as it resonates in this poem.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. The speaker refers to the passenger on the train as “the white woman.” What does his word choice tell you about his tone and point of view?

2. Given how annoyed he is by her reference to Walden Pond, why doesn’t the speaker say something to the woman?

3. To what extent does the speaker see his response to the woman as a microcosm to the history of Native Americans in this country?

**Gloria Anzuldua, “To Live in the Borderlands Means You”**

Many of our students live on the border, if not by geography, by ancestry. It might be worthwhile to get them talking about what this means and how it
makes them feel. America has been described as a melting pot, but is it really? When people themselves are melting pots of mixed heritage do they feel included in one ethnic group more than another? Do they feel excluded from all and permanently on the border?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. How are you affected by the mixture of English and Spanish words in the text of the poem? To what extent is this mixture especially appropriate in this poem?

2. Consider your own ethnic background. To what extent do you live in the “borderlands”? To what extent does it define who you are?

Elizabeth Bishop, “In the Waiting Room”

Students might be asked if they have had moments like this—when they saw a genetic rendering of their later selves. In what ways do they see themselves in their parents or other siblings or biological relatives? And how does it make them feel when they realize the connections? And how does it make them feel when they realize the connections? A good source of comparison in reverse is Sharon Olds' "35/10."

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. To what extent is reading the National Geographic magazine an appropriate activity for the narrator in this poem?

2. The aim of poetry is not always to be rational. In what way is the narrator exploring something that can’t be explained in rational terms but is compelling and quite real in her mind and emotions? Cite the text for items that seem to prompt the narrator’s reactions.

Gwendolyn Brooks, “We Real Cool”

The "we," of the title matters a great deal here, but students seem to get to it quickly. You may find it helpful to discuss how the positioning of words
creates the rhythm and the stresses and the tone, and ultimately the meaning, of the poem.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. No sentence in the poem is more than three words long, and almost every line ends with the same word. What does that diction say about the speaker in the poem?

2. What do you understand about the narrator and his companions? What do they understand about themselves and their plight?

**e.e. cummings, “anyone lived in a pretty how town”**

Most students revel in the sounds of this poem even if they become frustrated from time to time by the meaning of all the phrases. It may help to read this one aloud and let the meanings roll over the students through the sound. Examining the phrases and sorting out the meanings helps students understand the delightful and rational/irrational nature of how words mean.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Rewrite this poem in standard English. What is the difference?

2. Pick out poetic devices in the poem, like the many repetitions. What is their function? How well do they work?

**Martin Espada, “Latin Night at the Pawn Shop”**

Short but powerful, this poem requires sensitivity to the contrasting words and objects. Students who read this poem quickly may miss some of the words and objects of the poem and the sadness, futility, and irony, the lives and deaths of people, that the "Liberty Loan" pawnshop and its holdings seem to represent. You may find it helpful when discussing this poem to ask students about the places and objects that have meaning in their lives, and the variety of emotions they conjure up.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. “Latin Night at the Pawn Shop” is a spare poem that simply presents the picture of “previously owned” items in a pawnshop window. Make a list of important items of your own. To what extent do these items represent you and your life?

2. Identify each of the items you see in the poem and its importance in the picture. In what way are their price tags “like the city morgue ticket on a dead man’s toe”?

Pat Mora, “Immigrants”

Many of our students are immigrants, so the tone of this poem may not seem surprising to them. But for students who have always assumed their place in this country, it may be hard to understand the complex fears that people harbor as they become "Americanized." Why do the immigrants "whisper in Spanish and Polish / when the babies sleep"? It has been suggested by some that the idea of America as a "melting pot" is simply romanticized wishful thinking. What do your students think of this idea? Have their backgrounds "melted" into American stew? Is something important lost if they do? Do most Americans respect the "differences" that people bring from other cultures? Their language? Their customs? Why or why not?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Discuss the different voices represented in the poem? How many are there? What do they represent?

2. Do you think that people who come to this country should become “Americanized” and give up their own cultures? Explain.

William Butler Yeats, “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”

This poem springs from the Romantic tradition, and as such seems to identify nature as a balm for the spirit. Students might be asked about their own
responses to nature. Is nature a comfort to them? If not, what is at the source of their "deep heart's core"? There are many sources of comparison and contrast in the text for this poem. One example of a contrasting image of nature is Stephen Crane's *A Man Said to the Universe* on page 1141.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. This is Yeats’ vision of an ideal refuge. What’s yours? What qualities does it have that take you away from care and strife?

2. List the parts of Yeats’ refuge at Innisfree. Identify the qualities that makes each of them a contributing factor to the whole of his ideal escape there.

Drama

Sophocles, “Oedipus Rex”

The conflict in this play is not as immediately accessible for a modern audience as it is in *Antigone*, Sophocles’ other play in the text. The compelling question for many students is: Why is he being condemned for something that he tried so hard to avoid? In fact, it's not clear that he's being condemned as much for his inadvertent parricide and incest as he is for believing that he was above what the gods dealt out to him, that his excessive pride allows him to believe that he is not subject to the same fate as others. In addition to addressing students’ own questions and those in the text, it might be worthwhile to see how well the principles of tragedy in Aristotle's *Poetics* apply here.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Do you think Oedipus deserves his fate? Explain.

2. What does the Priest's speech at the beginning of the play tell us about the kind of ruler Oedipus has been?
3. What do Oedipus’ confrontations with Tiresias and Creon tell us about him?

4. Discuss the images of blindness and vision in the play. To what extent is this a play about human blindness?

5. What has Oedipus learned about himself at the end of the play? About the gods? About self-deception and truth?

6. How do you feel about Oedipus at the end of the play? Do you think he is pathetic or tragic? Why doesn't Oedipus just kill himself, like Iocaste, and thus, end his suffering? Does he behave admirably? Explain.

7. Discuss the role of the other characters in the play. In what ways do Iocaste, Teiresias, and Creon contribute to the theme of the play?

Videos


Web Site

*Sophocles Online.* Comprehensive site dedicated to the works of Sophocles; includes links to texts, biography, description of the Greek theater, books and videos on Greek drama, modern criticism and analyses, study guides, mythology, history, and maps. 
<http://users.50megs.com/zekscrab/Sophocles/index.html>
Additional Reading


Essays

Maya Angelou, “Graduation”

Students might be encouraged to remember their own graduations and what was said to them, if they can remember, and the difference it would have made if one of the speakers implied that they were inferior. You might ask about the structure of this piece. It has all the drama of a story and an exhilarating and uplifting finish. What aspects of its "plot" help that to happen? What is the effect of Henry Reed's speech? Why is his shift to the Negro National Anthem so important to restore the dignity of the students, their parents, and the entire community?
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Discuss the structure of this essay. How does the exposition of the first part of the essay prepare us for the reaction of the students later?

2. Describe the changes that the narrator goes through in the course of the essay. What does she understand at the end of the essay that she didn’t before.

3. Compare this essay with ToniCade Bambara’s Short story “The Lesson” on page 916.

Joan Didion, “Why I Write”

Though it might not provide easy insights into the motivation of a writer, this is a fascinating piece. You might have students pose the same question about themselves. Why do they write? Or why do they hate to write? Obviously, there would be lots of different responses to this question, but many (perhaps most) of our students don't think of themselves as writers, and looking at writing from Didion's refreshing perspective might enable them to think of the prospect of writing differently.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Why do you write? Or why do you hate to write? Cite your own experience to support your response.

2. Didion writes, “Had I been blessed with even limited access to my own mind there would have been no reason to write.” What do you think she means? Does her statement surprise you? Explain.

Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream”

This is one of the most powerful speeches of American history. It is filled with realism yet optimism. Most students will have seen and heard film clips of Martin Luther King Jr. delivering this speech, but many may not have
heard the speech all the way through and experienced its powerful ebbs and flows as it builds toward its exultant last line "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!" The most obvious question you might want to ask students is "has this dream been realized?"

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Discuss the structure of this essay. To what extent do the parts of the essay “build” toward those last inspirational lines, “Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

2. Many other writers in this text have addressed this problem of racial injustice. Compare the tone of this essay with the tone in the poetry of Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, and Paul Laurence Dunbar.

**Neil Miller, “In Search of Gay America”**

Though the topic of gay life is not as sensitive a subject in college classrooms these days as it once was, productive discussion of this essay may depend on the maturity of your students, though in some ways a lack of maturity may be all the more reason for talking about this piece. A discussion of the people and their lives described here may help to break the stereotypes that many students have about gay life. It may be worthwhile to talk about the stereotypes and ignorance surrounding the prejudice that is directed toward gays, and that still occurs frequently in this country. Students might be asked how Al and John would be accepted in their communities, and why.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. This essay was written more than a decade ago. How would you describe the attitude toward gays and lesbians in your community today? Do you think that attitude has changed much in the last decade?

2. Many recent legal rulings have made the possibility of gay marriage a reality. What is your view of gay marriage? Explain.
3. To what extent would marriage change the prospects of a couple like Al and John? Would it present any problems? Explain.

Charles Fruehling Springwood and C. Richard King, “Playing Indian: Why Native American Mascots Must End”

This is an “academic” essay reprinted from The Chronicle of Higher Education. It argues that using “Indian” mascots for athletic teams is discriminatory and racist. It’s an argument that has been made for a number of years with some impact, and some schools have changed their mascots. Many colleges, however, and virtually all professional teams have kept them. Without much encouragement, students love to debate this point. You might start out by asking them how many come from schools where the mascot is some variation of a Native-American and how they feel about that.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. How do you feel about using Native American names as mascots for athletic teams? Would you feel the same way about other ethnic groups? Explain.

2. The authors begin the last paragraph of their essay by saying, “American Indian mascots directly contradict the ideals that most higher education institutions seek—those of transcending racial and cultural boundaries and encouraging respectful relations among all people who live and work on their campuses.” Do you agree? Explain.

3. If you agree that colleges and universities should not have such mascots, do you think professional teams have a similar responsibility to eliminate them? Explain.

4. Compare this essay to Sherman Alexie’s “On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City” on page 699.
Case Study in Composition
Thinking about Interpretation and Performance

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

Students, like most of us, are usually attracted to the character, Hamlet. Among the reasons for this are the powerful soliloquies he shares with us. Unlike many of Shakespeare's plays where the soliloquies are delivered by villains (Iago, Richard III, MacBeth, Edmund), Hamlet is the "good guy" in this play and, other than Horatio, he confides in us alone. So you might want to have students do a close reading of all the soliloquies in this play. What do they by themselves tell us about this character? T.S. Eliot has criticized the play as essentially a weak play with a strong character, but a character whose motivation is not sufficiently clear.

There are many fine performances of this play recorded on video, so if possible have students see the play or at least selected scenes. The four productions cited below are among a number of worthy performances available on video.

Multiple Interpretations of Hamlet

Perhaps the major reason for my inclusion of this section is as an encouragement to students to form their own interpretations. Louise Rosenblatt has described the act of reading imaginative literature as a "performance", that we perform the text when we read. This is clearly true when an actor reads a script. Even the first time through, actors imagine why and how they read the lines the way they do. Each rehearsal is a "re-hearing" and a new reading that builds on the others in response to the lines and to the readings of the other actors in the play.

The Olivier, Jacobi, Gibson, and Branagh productions (indicated under Videos below) are widely available, and if you have the time it might be worthwhile to actually view the soliloquies highlighted in the text or pick different ones, or different performances (Nicol Williamson, Richard Burton, Kevin Kline et al.).
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Hamlet is directly or indirectly responsible for the deaths of a number of characters in this play. Make a list of these characters and discuss his culpability in their deaths. Who deserved to die? Who did not? Explain.

2. Characterize Ophelia. Why does Ophelia allow her father to listen in on her conversations with Hamlet? Why does Hamlet treat Ophelia so nastily? Why does Ophelia go mad?

3. Characterize Gertrude. Do you think she is a strong person? Do you think Gertrude knew about the murder of Hamlet’s father from the beginning? If not, when do you think she realizes it?

4. Why does Hamlet wait so long to kill Claudius? He says he wants to verify the credibility of the ghost or that he doesn’t want to kill Claudius while he is praying. Are those just excuses to avoid acting? Explain.

5. Is Hamlet a different person at the end of the play? To what extent is it possible to trace his development as a character through his soliloquies?

6. T.S. Eliot has suggested that the character Hamlet is larger than the play—and that’s a flaw in the play. Do you agree?

7. What is the theme of the play Hamlet?

Videos

Hamlet, b&w, 1948, 155 min. Starring and directed by Laurence Olivier.


Web Site

Electronic Shakespeare is an excellent web site for all things Shakespearean. It is primarily a link site, but those links are so numerous and comprehensive that I have found it to be the very best first stop. It is a university site that has been carefully screened and assembled by its creator. <http://www.wfu.edu/~tedforrl/shakespeare>

Additional Reading

Culture and Class

Fiction

Toni Cade Bambara, “The Lesson”

The voice and vernacular of the young narrator in this story is very appealing, and it almost makes it difficult to sense the serious lesson that she's learning about the world she lives in. You might want to ask your students what they believe she has learned. Is the lesson clear? Will the disparities they see between what they can afford and what these "others" can spend on toys motivate these children to strive to do better or will they be overwhelmed by the unfairness of it all, and just give up?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Describe Sylvia. What difference does it make that she narrates the story? In what ways would the story change if narrated by one of the other children or by Miss Moore?

2. Describe Miss Moore. Why doesn't Sylvia seem to like her?

3. Do you think Sylvia understands why Miss Moore is taking them to the toy store? Explain.

4. Sylvia says at one point that she is so angry that she wants "to punch somebody in the mouth." Why?

5. Which characters in this story do you find most appealing? How do you think you would have reacted to the items in the expensive toy store? Would your reactions have been similar to theirs? Explain.

6. What’s the central point or theme of the story? Is it preaching or revealing? Explain.
7. Do you think “The Lesson” is an appropriate title for the story? Is this story a lesson or is it about a lesson? Explain.

Audio


Web Site

Voices from the Gaps: Toni Cade Bambara
<voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/BAMBARAtoni.html >

T. Coraghessan Boyle, “Greasy Lake”

This is a gripping, horrifying story in lots of ways. The locale and the plot drip with the “primordial ooze” of the lake. The first person point of view and the attention to graphic detail pull our senses and emotions into the atmosphere and the plight of a number of unsavory characters. The characters and the choices they make should prompt animated discussion.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. This story is told from the first person point of view. How would it be different if described from a more detached perspective? Do you think it would change the way you feel about the characters and what they do? Explain.

2. Compare the narrator at the beginning and end of the story. Has he changed? To what extent does he deal with people and events differently? Do you think he will ever be the same as he was before? Explain.

Web Site

The Official Author's Website. Excerpts/reader's guide, about the author, cartoons, photo gallery, message board,... <www.tcboyle.com/>
Kate Chopin, “Desiree’s Baby”

It may help to begin a discussion of this story by starting at the end. What has happened to Desiree and her baby? What does Armand learn at the end of the story? It might be safe to say that Desiree commits suicide and Armand subsequently discovers evidence that links his heritage with the black race he seems to despise so much, but students may debate these points. This can be the type of discussion where it’s important to remind students to be “anchored” in the text to support their views.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Discuss the ending of the story. What has happened to Desiree and her baby? What does Armand discover at the end? Cite the text in both cases to support your view.

2. This story is a good example of situational irony. What is ironic about this story? Do you think it’s credible that events would come together like this? Explain.

3. Compare this story to Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” on page 1083.

Web Site

Companion web site to the Louisiana Public Broadcasting documentary profiling author Kate Chopin...
<www.pbs.org/katechopin/>

Additional Reading


**Ralph Ellison, “Battle Royal”**

Those familiar with Ralph Ellison's classic novel *Invisible Man* will recognize this as the powerful opening chapter. This is a violent and brutal "nightmarish" story filled with heavy symbolism. So discussion of these symbols and the "racial conditioning" that seems to be going on in this initiation is essential to do justice to the story. And, of course, the image of the protagonist struggling to give the speech he is so proud of in the midst of the craziness is a compelling but an enormously frustrating one. There are many other works in the text that might be compared to *Battle Royal*: Langston Hughes’ *A Dream Deferred* and Paul Laurence Dunbar's *The Mask We Wear*, among others.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Why are the young men blindfolded? Why do they have to scramble for the electrified money before they get paid. What's the message here?

2. In many cultures, the male initiation rite requires an emerging young man to perform a variety of rigorous tasks so that he may achieve adulthood and equality with other men. This initiation seems to have something else in mind. What is it? What do you think these young men are being initiated for?

3. To what extent is the narrator's act of delivering the speech more important to him than its message or the citizens to whom it is delivered? Why do you think he feels this way?
4. To what extent is the American flag tattooed on the dancer's belly an ironic symbol for the difference between what American values are supposed to be and the ways the “white citizens” practice those values?

5. Discuss the narrator's dream in terms of the “battle” he has just fought. What do you think the declaration "Keep This Nigger-Boy Running" means?

Web Sites

*American Masters. Ralph Ellison | PBS*
<www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/ellison_r_homepage.html>

*Ralph Ellison. A biography, links and pictures.*
<www.allperson.com/allperson/legend/000000926.asp>

Additional Reading


Liliana Heker, “The Stolen Party”

While this story is certainly about class struggle, it is most directly the story of a little girl who finds out she isn't valued for what she believed she was. It's a personal loss of innocence, even an epiphany. Students might be asked if they've ever found themselves looked down upon this way, and if so, how that has influenced their view of life. What does Rosaura come away with? Does this make her bitter and hate the idea of class discrimination? Or does it make her aspire to show these people she's as good as they are by becoming just like them?
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Discuss the relationship between Rosaura and her mother. Do you think it’s a good one? Do they learn anything from each other? Explain.

2. Describe Senora Ines. Is she a rich snob? Is she trying to be nice to Rosaura? What conflict is she faced with at the end of the story? Do you think she’ll learn from this event? Explain.

3. Discuss the plot structure of the story. Does it have a traditional plot of rising action, climax, and resolution? Explain.

4. This is a story about class discrimination set in Latin America. Could this story happen in the United States? Have you ever experienced this kind of discrimination? Explain.

Web Site

Liliana Heker - The Stolen Party reviewed by Aaron Morris
<www.peak.sfu.ca/the-peak/96-3/issue2/heker.html>

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”

The premise of this story is very unusual, so it may take some time for students to digest the style of “magical realism,” the school of writing from which the story comes. Once they pass this bump in the road, it’s a delightful story that they will enjoy discussing.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. How does the old man with enormous wings differ from a conventional view of angels?

3. To what extent are Father Gonzaga’s reactions to the angel different from everyone else’s? Are they more or less appropriate? Explain.

4. What’s the point of this less than realistic story?

Web Site

*Gabriel Garcia Marquez: Macondo - Author Homepage*
Features a biography, bibliography of works, book reviews, Nobel Prize lecture, a gallery and links. <www.themodernword.com/gabo/>

Additional Readings


*Flannery O'Connor, “Everything that Rises Must Converge”*

The contentiousness between the Julian and his mother is a classic generation-gap story. What's not classic is what happens at the end of the story. Students might be asked if they can identify with the generation gap issue with their own parent(s). And if they think it's only the mother's prejudice that makes Julian so angry with her. Finally, who do they think Julian is and what drives him? How do they think he feels at the end of the story? Does he have any regrets?
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Describe Julian’s mother. Pick out details from the story that exemplify her attitude toward life—and toward her son.

2. Describe Julian. Pick out details from the story that exemplify his attitude toward life—and towards his mother.

3. Julian and his mother do not seem to have a good relationship. Do you think it had to be this way? What would have been required for them to behave differently toward each other?

4. What is the role of the African-American mother and her son in this story? To what extent is the behavior of Julian and his mother on the bus a microcosm of their behavior generally?

Web Sites

Annotated links to criticism, biography, discussion of stories, and a bibliography.
<www.geocities.com/Athens/3966/>

<endeavor.med.nyu.edu/lit-med/lit-med-db/webdocs/webauthors/o.connor115-au-.html>

Poetry

Connecting through Comparison: The City

William Blake “London”

Blake is uncompromising in depicting the horrors of city life. The language he uses to create the images is particularly bleak, and students might be asked
to comment on his word choices. Ask them to suggest some other phrases he might have used and to consider the difference that makes in conveying the poem's meaning.

William Wordsworth, “Composed on Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802”

This is the other side of Blake’s London view. This early morning "city scene" from two centuries ago still seems to work today. Unlike most romantic poetry that uses nature as its subject, this poem depicts the sleeping city. Students might be asked to compare it with experiences of their own. In what way does the early morning change our surroundings, the pace of life, even our perspective. A look at Wordsworth's choice of words to describe the city at this hour, and in the early fall, might also prove worthwhile. Is all relative? Does the city seem especially quiet relative to the hustle and bustle that will follow later in the day and night? How does his choice of words indicate that?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. In “London,” what words and phrases does the speaker use to convey pain and suffering?

2. "The youthful Harlot's curse" is usually interpreted to be venereal disease. Does this information help you to understand Blake's metaphor in the final stanza? Why is this curse so important to the speaker?

3. Of what importance are the references to a Church, a Soldier, and a Palace?

4. Wordsworth’s view of London is quite different. Take a look at the words he uses to describe what he sees. To what extent could the same “ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples” be described in a negative light?
5. Is it possible to reconcile these two very different views of London? Is it possible to agree with both? Explain.

**Robert Francis, “Pitcher”**

This is a delightful rendering of what’s at the heart of both pitching and poetry—and anyone who has experienced either or both will get a kick out of it. See if you can tap the experience of baseball or softball players in your class and how they might explain what Francis means.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. To what extent does the structure and relationship of words in this poem resemble its content? Why is the tightest rhyme scheme saved for the couplet at the end?

2. To what extent is the speaker in the poem “pitching” to you, the reader of the poem?

**Marge Piercy, “To Be of Use”**

Though the title doesn’t ring with profundity, the poem makes some fundamental points about our place in the world. You might ask students what they see as their purpose in this world—what difference their presence and their usefulness makes. Do they feel the need “to be of use”? What does their being in college say about the “use” they intend to be?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. To what extent is it possible “to be of use” too often—that is, to be so busy that you miss what’s going on around you?

2. How would you define yourself in these terms? Are you glad “to be of use”? Explain.
Edwin Arlington Robinson, “Richard Cory”

Few students will have escaped this in high school, but it still stirs a good discussion and is very comparable to other poems in the text, including Stevie Smith's *Not Waving But Drowning*. Many students will respond simply by reducing this poem to "You can't tell a book by its cover." This is a good start. But what is the "book" of Richard Cory is a question well worth asking.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Discuss the rhyme and structure of the poem? Does it work to convey the meaning of the poem? Explain.

2. Who is Richard Cory? Why does everyone admire him? Do you have enough information to know? Explain.

3. What is the function of irony in the poem, and how does it affect you?

4. What is the implied relationship between us and the narrator? Does the narrator assume too much when he uses the word “we” to describe the response to Richard Cory? Explain.

“Mr. Flood's Party”

Eben Flood is one of E.A. Robinson's more compelling portraits. In this portrait, we see the plight of so many old people, who no longer seem to have a reason to live. Their friends are gone, their usefulness is gone, and society no longer cares about them. There is a rich discussion here of what it means to become old. Age was once revered, in this culture and in others. But what kind of attention is paid to old people in an age that worships youth and physicality over experience and wisdom?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Describe Mr. Flood. Is he a sympathetic character? Cite the text..
2. Imagine yourself in Eben Flood’s shoes. How would you deal with the dilemma of being old and friendless? How would you expect to be treated?

**John Updike, “Ex-Basketball Player”**

I find that it can be very helpful to use the John Updike poem “Ex-Basketball Player” as the subject of an in-class exercise where students work in small groups creating lists of details about Flick or drawing a semantic map containing their conclusions and levels of supporting details in surrounding bubbles. There are many details in the poem, and there probably won't be universal agreement about the fate of Flick or even how he feels about himself. But this exercise can help students understand the difference between unsupported and supported opinion.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. To what extent does Flick Webb’s name fit his fate?

2. Who is the speaker in the poem? What point of view does he represent? If Flick was the speaker in the poem, how do you think it would change?

3. Discuss the structure of the poem. To what extent do each of the five stanzas represent a different aspect of Flick’s life?

4. Compare this poem to A. E. Housman's "To an Athlete Dying Young" on page 1152.

**William Carlos Williams, “At the Ball Game”**

This, of course, is not a poem about a ball game. It's about crowds and what they become. You might want to ask students if they have ever been caught up in the frenzy of a crowd, whether at a sporting event, a concert or elsewhere, and what that felt like. Were the exhilarated by it and/or
frightened by it? What happened to their sense of individuality? What happens to people in crowds that takes over their individuality and renders them part of a larger personality? What's the downside of this?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What does the speaker mean, “So in detail they, the crowd, / are beautiful.” In what way are crowds beautiful?

2. Who is the speaker in this poem? Is he a member of the crowd? Would the poem be different if he was? Explain.

Connecting through Comparison: What is Poetry?

Archibald MacLeish, “Ars Poetica”

Like the other poems that try to define what poetry is or is not, Ars Poetica defines by indirection. Students might take MacLeish's last two lines: "A poem should be equal to: Not true" and apply them to their favorite poems. The Emily Dickinson poems in the text, in particular, might be good sources for this application.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, “Constantly Risking Absurdity”

Much of this poem is humorous as it "flies through the air" but not "with the greatest of ease." Trying to say something meaningful in any medium is to "risk absurdity." HereFerlinghetti addresses the perils of writing poetry. Like Archibald MacLeish, he stops short of being definitive and respects the elusiveness of reality. It might be very helpful as background to discuss the references to Charlie Chaplin and the reliance of the trapeze artist on others in his act.

Billy Collins, “Introduction to Poetry”

This is a poem that many of us can identify with. You may find it useful and fun to have students imagine each of the metaphoric activities Collins
says they ought to do to experience a poem. The discussion itself will take them a long way toward experiencing poetry.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: What Is Poetry?

1. Discuss each of the three things the speaker in Ars Poetica” says a poem should be.

2. The speaker uses the poetic devices of simile and metaphor to make his definition. To what extent do these devices communicate “what” poetry “is” better than a prose definition?

3. The speaker in Ferlinghetti’s poem compares the poet to an acrobat. Is this an appropriate comparison? Explain.

4. To what extent does the structure of Ferlinghetti’s poem convey its meaning?

5. In what way is writing a poem a “life and death” struggle?

6. Make a list of the activities the speaker in Billy Collins’ poem suggests are helpful to experience poetry. Discuss the appropriateness of each. For example, in what way does feeling “the walls for a light switch” help a reader experience a poem?

7. Compare this description of writing with that of Seamus Heaney in “Digging” on page 287.

Drama

Susan Glaspell, Trifles

This play could just as easily have been placed under the theme of Women and Men. But there is a cultural context for this play as well. Students might be asked what assumption both the men and the women seem to be
expressing here about each other's roles. The women certainly seem to know better. Why do they continue to play the role of feeling but not thinking, when it's clear that they know and understand much more than the men whose job it is to investigate? Why can't the men "see or understand" better than they do? Is it their native intelligence or something else that holds them back?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Make a list of relevant events that you think have happened before the play begins. Describe the atmosphere evoked by these events and the play's setting.

2. Characterize Mr. Henderson, the County Attorney. Pick passages from the play to support your characterization.

3. What is the significance of Mrs. Peters' speech about the boy who killed her cat? What is the point of the women's concern about the quilt and whether Mrs. Wright "was going to quilt it or knot it"?

4. What sort of person was Minnie Foster before she married? What do you think happened to her?

5. What do you think of the decision made by Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale to hide the dead bird from the men? Why do they do it? Do you think their actions are immoral? Explain.

6. What is the significance of the last line of the play? Why is it ironic?

7. Compare Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale with Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House* or Lena Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun*. Which one do you think has the most control over her life?
Video


Web Site

*Susan Glaspell, Trifles Drama: Susan Glaspell Biography and related links.* Primary works, selected bibliography, study questions.<www.webenglishteacher.com/glaspell.html>

Additional Reading


Mael, Phyllis. "*Trifles:* The Path to Sisterhood." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 17 (1989): 281-84.


Luis Valdez, *Los Vendidos*

Though the damage done by bigotry and stereotyping is nothing to laugh at, this play pokes fun at its ignorance and makes a serious point as well. Students might discuss the "models" used by the salesman and what stereotypes prompt them. What evidence do they see around them for these stereotypes? In what ways are they harmful to all of society? And what is the harm of complete assimilation into a culture? In what ways is a culture enriched by inclusion rather than exclusion of difference and a demand for sameness?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. The play’s title might be translated as either “the sellouts” or as “those who are sold.” Which title do you think is more appropriate? Why?

2. What stereotypes of Mexican Americans does the play present? Are these stereotypes offensive? Why does Valdez use them?

3. What is the tone of this play? Do you think the play is a satire? Why, or why not?


5. How would different audiences respond to this play? Would Mexican Americans be offended or delighted? Would Anglos enjoy this play?

6. Do you think Valdez wants to make his audience uncomfortable?

7. What social or political messages does the play convey? Do the politics interfere with the play’s dramatic effectiveness?

8. Compare this play's treatment of racial issues and cultural stereotypes with that of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Which approach do you prefer? Explain.
Video


Web Site

*Luis Valdez* An Ongoing Online Project. Paul P. Reuben

www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap8/valdez.html

Additional Reading


Essays

Frederick Douglass, "*Learning to Read and Write*"

In an age when we take so much for granted, Douglass' plight speaks so loudly and clearly about the horror of slavery. Going well beyond "physical
bondage," slaveholders tried to "shackle" the minds of slaves as well. You might want to have students discuss the issue of literacy itself and the difference it makes in imprisoning us or setting us free.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Of all the things he could be taught, why is reading and writing the most important skill for Douglass to learn?

2. Imagine yourself imprisoned as a slave. Make a list of deprivations you would find most difficult to bear and explain why in each case.

**Richard Rodriguez, “Workers”**

It has been suggested that economic class is a greater divide than ethnic or racial background, so the Stanford-educated Richard Rodriguez wants to experience what it means to really "labor," but discovers that though he is connected ethnically to the Mexicans with whom he labors, he cannot imagine what it is really like to be destined to toil this way for the rest of his life. Students might be asked about their own "labors," and what those tasks and jobs have meant to them, and what the education they are pursuing might do to change that.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Who is the narrator of this essay and what difference does it make to the essay.

2. What is the tone of the essay? Do you think the narrator sees himself as better than the workers he describes? Explain.

3. In what way has the author / narrator “grown” from the experience he describes here? What do you think he wants us to learn or understand from his essay?
Jonathan Swift, “A Modest Proposal”

It is obvious that the key to understanding Swift’s essay is to recognize the satirical tone of the piece. Unfortunately, some students may believe that Swift intends this “modest proposal” to be taken seriously, so a discussion of “hyperbole” and how it works might help to prepare them for one of the best satires ever written. Can they think of current social conditions fit for this treatment? Can they think of satires on film, TV (programs and advertising), or video, or in music that use this form? In many respects, we live in an age of “parody” where most commercials don’t even take themselves seriously, so there are lots of contemporary sources of comparison for “exposing by exaggeration.”

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What is the tone of this essay? What words, phrases, or passages indicate this?

2. Who is the narrator? What can you say about him based on the rationale for this proposal?

3. Identify a contemporary problem (e.g. drug or alcohol abuse, violence in schools, homelessness, poverty, care of the elderly) and, using a similar satirical tone, write your own “modest proposal” to solve it.

Mark Twain, “Corn-Pone Opinions”

This is a little-known essay from Twain’s “serious” period, and it was recently chosen by Joyce Carol Oates as one of the best essays of the twentieth century. The point he makes about the origins of our opinions is a provocative one, and it would make a good prompt for classroom discussion and a writing assignment.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Twain uses a number of examples from the 19th century to illustrate his
point. Make a list of current examples that support his notion of where our opinions come from.

2. Why do you think Twain emphasizes that a slave was the person who opened his eyes to this idea?

3. We live in an age when “public-opinion” polls abound. As soon as an issue or controversy arises, someone’s taking a poll to see what percentages of people think what. To what extent does “public opinion” form our individual opinions?

Case Study in Composition:
The Harlem Renaissance

Web Sites: Writers of the Harlem Renaissance

<www.nku.edu/~diesman/harlem.html>

*The Schomburg Exhibition:* Harlem 1900-1940  
<www.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem/>

*The Harlem Renaissance Remembered*  
<www.usc.edu/isd/archives/ethnicstudies/harlem.html>

*A Bibliography of Print Resources on the Harlem Renaissance.*  
The Chicago Public Library  
<www.chipublib.org/001hwlc/litlists/harlemren.html>

*Online NewsHour Forum:* Harlem Renaissance  
<www.pbs.org/newshour/forum/february98/harlem_2-20.html>

*Harlem Renaissance Links*  
<www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/1465/harlem.html>
Harlem Renaissance: Musicians, Artists and Writers
<afroamhistory.about.com/cs/harlemrenaissance/>

Alain Locke, “The New Negro”

I have opened the casebook with this 1925 piece because in many ways this essay was a defining moment for African Americans in this country. For students doing research into this period, the essay provides a social context for much of the literature that follows.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. How does Alain Locke define “The New Negro”?

2. One of the problems Locke cites is the “great discrepancy between the American social creed and the American social practice.” What does he mean?

3. To what extent do the artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance act on and act out the vision that Alain Locke presents in this essay?

Langston Hughes, From The Big Sea

Any students who are interested in Langston Hughes’ work and his background would do well to read the whole of his first autobiography The Big Sea. Both this piece and “Salvation” on page 32 are taken from this volume. Of special note in this excerpt are the house-rent party cards. They provide a delightful flavor for this period.

Prompt for Discussion and Writing

1. Examine the house-rent party cards on pages 1029 to 1031. What is the tone of the invitations? What do they tell you about the participants? Cite details of the cards themselves to support your view.
Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”

This essay is a nice complement to Alain Locke’s essay, and it provides a very clear sense of Hughes’ own philosophy and mission. It also provides a good source of comparison for the other literature in this case study.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Hughes writes, “I am ashamed for the black poet who says ‘I want to be a poet, not a Negro poet.’” Explain why.

2. To what extent does Hughes’ own work in this book exemplify what he states in this essay? To what extent does the work of other Harlem Renaissance writers?

“The Negro Speaks of Rivers”

This poem was Langston Hughes’ “coming out” as a poet. He was 17 years old when he wrote it, and it made a big impression on the literary community. The poem expresses a strong sense of pride in the history and collective unconscious of Africans. It was a powerful statement in support of African history and culture at a time when racial prejudice against African-Americans was dominant in this country.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. In what way does Hughes universalize the speaker in "The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” To what extent does Hughes try to define an entire race of people in this poem?

2. The river is often symbolic of the journey of life. What does it seem to symbolize in this poem? What is a soul that "has grown deep like the rivers”?

3. Identify the experiences highlighted in the second stanza. Why are they significant? Why are these specific activities listed?

"I, Too"

Typical of Hughes’ "oppressed but optimistic" style this poem is filled less with anger than sadness and hope. Students might be asked about this style and how effective it is. Who is the audience for this poem? What readers would be most moved by it? Students might also be asked, given all that has happened since the publication of this poem, if America has been adequately ashamed of its treatment of African-Americans? If so, how has that shame been expressed? The “I, too” phrase is clearly an allusion to the opening of Walt Whitman’s Song of Myself. You might encourage students to check it out for comparison.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Who is the speaker in this poem? What does he mean “I, too”? Who else is referring to?

2. This poem was written in 1925. To what extent do you think “America” has been “ashamed” since then?

"The Weary Blues"

Hughes was a big fan of jazz, and jazz was so important to this period, so it’s quite fitting that this poem be included in this case study. You might want to have students read/perform this poem aloud to try and hear its delightfully syncopated rhymes and rhythms.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. How does Hughes create a blues syncopation in "The Weary Blues"?
2. To what extent do the blues function as a catharsis for the singer in "The Weary Blues.

3. Compare the speakers’ voices in "The Weary Blues" and "Theme for English B." How does the vernacular and diction of the speaker in each poem indicate very different aspirations and cultural identity?

"One Friday Morning"

Though it is very much a product of its age, this 1939 story, written at the end of the Harlem Renaissance, reflects the hopeful attitude of Langston Hughes. Students often respond with disbelief to Nancy Lee and her stoical attitude, not believing nor understanding the pervasive nature of racism in this era or the absence of legal sources of redress.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. What is the effect of third-person narration on the characterization of Nancy Lee? What would this story be like if told in the third-person?

2. In what way is the school setting, and the larger setting of the Midwest, a factor in the outcome of the story?

3. To what extent are Miss Deitrich and Miss O’Shay helpful mentors for Nancy Lee? To what extent are they cooperating with a racist system?

4. What were race relations like in this country in 1939? How does "One Friday Morning" fit within the time period and culture in which it was written? To what extent would the resolution of the story be acceptable today?

"Theme for English B"

It might be illuminating to ask students to do the assignment in the poem and have them compare the "page that comes out of [them]" with the page that came out of the speaker in Hughes' poem. How do they compare with "other
“Folks” who do or do not fit some standard profile? What makes them the same, yet different?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. If you were given this assignment, what would you write?

2. What is the speaker’s attitude toward the assignment? What passages in the text of the poem tell you that?

3. To what extent is the speaker’s race an important part of this poem? Do you think it should be? Would it be for you? Explain.

4. According to the speaker in "Theme for English B" what is an American?

**Web Sites: Langston Hughes**

*The Academy of American Poets.* Includes biography, photographs, selected poems, and links. <www.poets.org/poets/poets.cfm?prmID=84>

*Langston Hughes Teacher Resource File*  
<falcon.jmu.edu/~ramsey/hughes.htm>

*Langston Hughes Symposium*  
<www.kuce.org/hughes/>

*Langston Hughes: Special section from the New York Times*  
<www.langston hughes.8m.com/>

**Claude McKay, “America”**

Though this poem is written in the first person, students might be asked if the speaker in the poem is speaking only for himself. There is a love-hate relationship here. If “she feeds me bread of bitterness,” why does the speaker "love this cultured hell”? Like McKay, many of our students have come here from other lands. If they were writing their own version of America, what
would their poems be like? Do they share the mixed responses of Claude McKay?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Who is the speaker in this poem? Does it matter? Explain.

2. If, as the speaker says, “she feeds me bread of bitterness,” why does he “love this cultured hell”?

3. Pick out the metaphors in the first three lines and explain their connection to the poem as a whole.

4. Compare McKay's feelings to those expressed by Paul Dunbar in "We Wear the Mask" on page 694 and Langston Hughes in “A Dream Deferred” on page 76.

**Gwendolyn B. Bennett, “Heritage”**

This poem is a good follow-up to Langston Hughes’ “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” It’s a sad poem but a poem that celebrates what has been lost and yearns for the return of the confidence and beauty of her African roots.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. In the last line of the poem the speaker refers to “a minstrel-smile.” What is she referring to and how does it counter the beauty she refers to earlier?

2. This poem chronologically follows Langston Hughes’ “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” but pre-dates Alain Locke’s “The New Negro.” To what extent does it speak to the same issues?

**Jean Toomer, “Reapers”**

Like Robert Browning's *Meeting at Night*, this poem paints a clear picture by
tapping several of our senses. Unlike Browning's poem, however, the picture is not a pleasant one. The repetition of the movement, the "steel on stone" emotion, the blood stained blade, the squealing field rat, all speak to a much harsher existence and of men mesmerized by their own labor.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Discuss the sound patterns, the rhyme scheme, and the form of this poem and how they relate to its meaning.

2. Death is sometimes called "The Grim Reaper." To what extent is that image brought to mind by this poem? How do the images in the poem emphasize the plight of the reapers?

**Countee Cullen, “Yet Do I Marvel”**

This is a powerful sonnet. In contrast to Hughes’ voice, Cullen’s tone here is bitter and ironic. Because they address the same issues with a very different voice, it would be illuminating to compare their styles—and the impact of their work on the reader.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. What is the tone of this sonnet? What passages indicate that?

2. This poem has a very traditional structure. Why do you think Cullen has chosen the sonnet form to express such bitter content?

3. What is the significance of the allusions to Tantalus and Sisyphus? For some background on Sisyphus see Albert Camus’ “The Myth of Sisyphus” on page 1277.

**“From the Dark Tower”**

As dark as this seems, it’s upbeat compared to “Yet Do I Marvel.” There is a note of optimism here—at least for the future. It begins with “We shall not
always plant while others reap.” And, in essence, ends with the same feeling. It is an affirmation of the “we,” and a belief that ultimately things will be set right.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Who is the “we” of the poem? Who are the “others” who “reap”? Explain.

2. To what extent is the tone of this poem more positive than “Yet Do I Marvel”?

3. Compare this poem to Paul Laurence Dunbar’s “We Wear the Mask” on page 694.

Anne Spencer, “Lady, Lady”

This seems to be a poem about both gender and race. There is a shift in imagery from the ethereal “…face / Dark as night withholding a star” to the very concrete and contrasting “hands, / Twisted, awry, like crumpled roots.”

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. The title of this poem is “Lady, Lady.” To what extent is this a poem about the plight of women as much as it is a poem about race? Given the imagery in the poem, what is that plight?

2. In what way does the image in the first two lines account for all that follows? Compare the word choices in the later images in the poem with the wording of the image in the first two lines.

Georgia Douglas Johnson, “I Want to Die While You Love Me”

At first blush, this seems an odd title for a romantic poem, but it works. And it worked so well at the time, that it later became a hit song—and, no
doubt, more popular as a song than a poem.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. What was your reaction when you saw the title of this poem? Do you think it’s appropriate? What do you think of the idea it expresses? Is it too weird or too maudlin? Explain.

2. Compare the tone and content of this poem to Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “Love Is Not All” on page 522.

**Zora Neale Hurston, “Sweat”**

This is a gripping, powerful story Hurston writes in the black country dialect of Florida, so students may require some time to adjust to the language. It may help to preview their own reading by reading some passages aloud in class. Giving a voice they can hear may help their own sub-vocalizing when they read it on their own.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. How do you feel about Delia? How do you feel about Sykes? What events early in the story influence your response to them? How would you characterize their relationship?

2. How does the setting of the story influence your response? To what extent does the dialect of the characters help to create the atmosphere of the story?


**Video**

Web Sites

Voices from the Gaps: Zora Neale Hurston
<voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/ZoraNealeHurston.html>

Zora Neale Hurston. The Richard Wright Foundation
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Additional Reading


Faith and Doubt

Fiction

Thomas Bulfinch, “The Myth of Daedalus and Icarus”

This piece provides a background for the Brueghel painting and the poems in response to it in the Poems and Paintings Casebook. This is Bulfinch's rendering of the classic myth of Daedalus and Icarus, and it provides background helpful to an understanding of the painting. It might be useful to discuss the myth and its implications before tackling the painting and poems.
Prompt for Discussion and Writing

1. What is the point of this myth? Do you think the ending is too harsh?

2. Rewrite it in today’s world with contemporary characters—and your own ending.

Web Site

*Thomas Bulfinch’s ageless volumes on the mythology and fable of the ages.* ... <www.bartleby.com/people/BulfinchT.html>

Raymond Carver, “Cathedral”

Students might be asked to recall similar moments in their own lives when they found themselves in an uncomfortable situation but that discomfort turned into a meaningful experience. They might also trace the characterization of the protagonist. Do they feel differently about him at the end of the story than they did at the beginning? Has he changed? What has changed him?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Describe the narrator and your response to him. Do you think he feels threatened by the blind man? Why do you think Carver chose this kind of character to be his narrator?

2. What does the narrator mean, “It’s really something.”? What’s really something?

3. Why are they watching a television show about cathedrals? Why not something else? Why does the narrator keep his eyes closed at the end of the story?
Web Sites

Raymond Carver Links
<www.bedfordstmartins.com/litlinks/fiction/carver.html>

<endeavor.med.nyu.edu/lit-med/lit-med-db/webdocs/webauthors/carver67-au-.html>

Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown”

Students may take a little time adjusting to the language of the story, but it’s very accessible. The symbolism is heavy-handed, but this story often provokes a rich discussion about the nature of good and evil. Does it come from within? Is Goodman Brown destined to find the evil in himself wherever he looks? Students might be asked to compare this story with Shakespeare's Othello, which seems to raise many of the same questions about the origin of evil.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What is the significance of Goodman Brown's name? Is he a “good man”? Explain.

2. Make a list of the tentative words that Hawthorne uses to suggest things may or may not be happening (e.g. seem, appear, fancied, as it were, as if, perhaps.) How do those words influence your response to the story?

3. What do you think causes Goodman Brown's tragedy? What is it that ruins his life? What do you think is the theme of this story?

4. Make a list of possible symbols and discuss the impact of symbolism in this story.

5. Compare this story to Kate Chopin’s “Desiree’s Baby” on page 930.
Web Sites

The Classic Text: Nathaniel Hawthorne
<www.uwm.edu/Library/special/exhibits/clastext/clasp143.htm>

Nathaniel Hawthorne: links to texts, bibliographies, study questions, information
<www.gonzaga.edu/faculty/campbell/enl311/hawthorn.htm>

Additional Reading


Pam Houston, “A Blizzard under Blue Sky”

This is a special favorite of students who love the outdoor life of camping and related activities, but it’s about much more than camping in sub-zero weather. One of Houston’s paragraphs opens, “When everything in your life is uncertain, there’s nothing quite like the clarity and precision of fresh snow and blue sky.” In her story, she shows us the truth of that and demonstrates, for her narrator at least, the healing power of nature.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Paragraph 13 opens, “When everything in your life is uncertain, there’s nothing quite like the clarity and precision of fresh snow and blue sky.” Do you agree? Explain.

2. What difference do the very harsh winter conditions make to this story? If the story were set in summer, do you think the effect on the narrator would be the same? Explain.

Web Site

Talking with Pam Houston
<www.onthepage.org/adolescence/interview_with_pam_houston.html>

Joyce Carol Oates, “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been”

It may help students to know that this story was inspired by a real event (the kidnapping and murder of several teenagers in Tucson, Arizona in the mid 1960's)—though this rendering of the moments of seduction is obviously fictional. Probably the most important question to ask is "Why does Connie give in?" What do students think she believes is waiting for her? They might also be asked about Arnold Friend's motivation. Is he a product of mental illness or has something in society turned him into this perverse monster?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. How is this story different from what you'd expect from a kidnap story? What is the victim's attitude toward being abducted?

2. Music is a recurrent image in this story. To what kinds of music does the narrator refer and in what specific environments? The narrator explains that to Connie and her girlfriends, music "was something to depend on." Do you think it is? Explain.

3. Are Arnold and his friend ordinary teenagers? When do you first suspect
they might mean to harm her? Why? Cite the text to support your views.

4. The girls are described by the narrator as entering the hamburger joint "as if they were entering a sacred building." To what extent is the restaurant like a church? What is worshipped there?

5. Why does Connie ultimately go with Arnold Friend? To what extent does she go voluntarily and to what extent is she coerced by his threat to kill her family? Does Connie have any idea what will happen to her if she goes with Friend? Explain.

Videos


Audio


Web Sites

Celestial Timepiece: A Joyce Carol Oates Home Page. Maintained by a reference librarian from San Francisco State University. Includes pages for news, works, arch, biography, discussion, awards, and photos. <www-personal.usfca.edu/~southerr/about.html>

Bohemian Ink Joyce Carol Oates Directory. Includes links to biographies, bibliographies, text excerpts, interviews, and essays. <www.levity.com/corduroy/oates.html>
Additional Reading


Tim O'Brien, “The Things They Carried”

This is a deeply moving story of war and what it does to the soldiers who must endure it. There are many sources of comparison in the text—from several different eras, and students might be asked to compare and contrast them. How does the graphic horror of Owen’s Dulce et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori compare with the long periods of tedium shattered by flashes of terror and death in this story? How do either or both compare with the ironic, almost detached, musings of the soldier in Hardy’s The Man He Killed?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. The title is repeated many times throughout the story. How does the narrator classify the things they carried? Can you see meaning in the way he orders the categories? How do "the things they carried" serve to reveal theme?

2. Why does the story focus on Ted Lavender’s death? Do you think the narrator is responsible for Lavender's being killed? Explain.


4. What is the relationship between the narrator’s thoughts about Martha and the theme of the story? Why does he stop carrying the idea of Martha with him?

5. For the most part, heroism is absent from this story. Why do you think that is?

Web Site

Tim O'Brien’s Homepage
<www.illyria.com/tobhp.html>
Additional Reading


Luigi Pirandello, *“War”*

This story gets at some fundamental and difficult questions about the nature of war, the responsibility of citizens, and the love of parents for their children. You might ask students to comment on the structure of this piece. How does Pirandello take our emotions on this train ride with the passengers and the conversation? What is the function of the narration? How important is the dialogue?
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. The structure of this story is based on a number of shifts from dialogue to description and from one character to another. Discuss this structure and its effectiveness.

2. This story is less about war than it is about the consequences of war. Compare this work to others that address the consequences of war: “The Man He Killed” on page 1159, “Patterns” on 1160, “Grass” on 1164, or “Facing It” on 1164.

Web Sites

*Features a biography of the Italian writer and links to his works.*
<www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc30.html>

*Biography by the Nobel Foundation.*
<www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/1934/pirandello-bio.html>

*John Steinbeck, “The Chrysanthemums “*

There is much fertile territory in a discussion of Elisa and the way that her surroundings seem so symbolic of her characterization. Her chrysanthemums, the way she dresses, the weather, her husband and his response to her, the tinker, the discarded flowers, the boxing match, and the wine all seem to speak of who she is and what her life has been like. Why is she attracted to the tinker? What does he represent for her? In what ways is he like her husband? In what ways does he seem to her like all men?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. To what extent are the chrysanthemums symbolic in this story? What do they represent for Eliza? Discuss the symbolism of the chrysanthemums.

2. Discuss the interactions between Elisa and the two men in the story. To what extent do the men try to manipulate her and she them?
3. Do you think Elisa encourages the tinker's sexual interest in her? If so, how so? Cite the text of the story for support.

4. Discuss the end of the story. Why is Eliza so disappointed when she sees the flowers by the side of the road? Why does she ask what she asks about the boxing match?

5. What is the central theme of this story? In what ways is it connected to setting and characterization?

Video

"The Chrysanthemums." Film guide with purchase. 24 min., VHS. Available from Pyramid Film & Video.

Web Sites

National Steinbeck Center: author John Steinbeck: multisensory exhibits, artifacts, film, educational programs, annual Festival, Salinas, California. <www.steinbeck.org/>

The Center For Steinbeck Studies <www.sjsu.edu/depts/steinbec/srchome.html>

Additional Reading


**Poetry**

**Connecting through Comparison: September 11, 2001**

In addition to the poems that follow, you may want to include the photograph on page 1067 as part of the discussion. This picture of the young woman lighting a candle at a memorial site in New York City was typical of many scenes like this around the country in the immediate aftermath of the attack.

**Deborah Garrison, “I Saw You Walking”**

Of the three pieces, this one was written closest to the time of the event. It’s what I would call a “witnessing” poem. The poet’s intent is to capture and record the emotion of the moment. Deborah Garrison does this exceptionally well in the imagery of this poem.

**Brian Doyle, “Leap”**

This poem/essay in many ways defies classification by genre. And it certainly defies the notion of “delicacy” as it takes on one of the most unpleasant elements of 9/11—those who jumped from the burning towers. And yet I can’t think of any event that more deserves a sense of, in this case, positive defiance. Despite its subject matter, it finds (in the joined hands of two “leapers”) “faith” not doubt as its theme.
Billy Collins, “The Names”

Those who know the droll wit of Billy Collins’ poetry may be surprised by his entirely serious tone in this poem—but probably not. Those who lost their lives, and those who lost their loved ones, deserve no less a tribute than this touching poem. The key word here is “lives” because this memorial poem celebrates the “lives” of those who are gone rather than emphasizing their “deaths.”

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: September 11, 2001

1. Which of these poems moves you the most or best represents what you feel about the events of September 11, 2001? Explain.

2. Speaking about the need for poetry following this event Seamus Heaney said, “…people needed interior possessions that would keep standing, as it were, even as the rubble of the outer world kept falling around them.” Do you agree? To what extent are these poems “interior possessions that …keep standing”?

3. Take a look at the photograph on page 1067 that opens this theme section. What does it mean to you? Compare it to “I Saw You Walking,” “Leap,” or “The Names.”

Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach”

This poem is a clear expression of the later Victorian Age when intellectuals were questioning and turning away from so many traditional beliefs. And while it is of some interest to know that, this poem and its powerful images still speak to us today. Many people, of course, find their doubts eased by their "faith" in religion. But many do not. So there is great potential for a thoughtful discussion among students about "meaning" in the world and where they believe it is to be found.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Describe the setting of the poem. To whom is the speaker addressing himself? Does it matter?

2. What causes the speaker’s "sadness"? What is the speaker's response to the ebbing "Sea of Faith"? What do you think has caused the "Sea of Faith" to be retreating like the tide?

3. To what extent is there a connection between the images of the sea in the first three stanzas and the imagery of darkness in the last?

4. Does the speaker have a solution to the loss of religious faith? If so, what is it? Do you agree or disagree with his conclusion? Explain.

William Blake, “The Lamb” and “The Tyger”

Taken from Blake’s Songs of Innocence and Experience, these poems seem to represent opposite poles. Both are creatures of the natural world, but their contrasting impression makes the speaker wonder about their creation. Is it possible for the same creator to have created both?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What do the lamb and the tyger seem to symbolize?


3. Make a list of the word choices in each poem. To what extent does the kind of words Blake chose in each case match the poem’s content? Cite your choices for support.

Robert Bridges, “London Snow”

It helps, of course, to be familiar with snow to fully appreciate this one. The
best responses to this poem that I’ve received from students were written on a final exam on a snowy day. Beyond the snow, the speaker poses some interesting questions about the “business” of the rest of our lives and the “charm” that’s broken as we go about our business.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. This poem is filled with images of snow changing the landscape. Pick out some of these images, identify which sense(s) is/are affected, and discuss the poet’s word choices in creating those images.

2. Discuss the structure, rhythm, and rhyme and how they affect the pace of this poem and your response.

**Stephen Crane, “A Man Said to the Universe”**

Crane’s poem is a provocative piece for discussion about the place of humankind in the world, and what we are or are not "owed" by an often indifferent universe.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. What are your feelings about nature? Do you see it as hostile or supportive? Explain.

2. The man in the poem says “Sir, I exist!” What do you think he expects to hear or feel in return? Would you expect the same? Explain.

3. Compare this poem with “London Snow” on page 1140 or “A Blizzard Under Blue Sky” on page 1092.

**Emily Dickinson**

It is easier to address Emily Dickinson's work in general by saying that she seems to embody what all the fuss is about in the struggle that Ferlinghetti,
MacLeish, and Collins refer to when they try to define poetry. Emily Dickinson's work is poetry in its most fundamental sense. Her images, her timing, her sounds and structures, and her “indirections” are "inner life" magical. But it's a magic that students need to spend some time with to appreciate. This is not a liquid diet or speed reading. It is complex yet wonderfully simple. For many of us, as we lead with our "sensibilities," it clicks immediately. When students bang their heads against it with "I don't get it," we tend to respond by thinking "If they don't get it on first look they never will." Not so. Give students a chance to digest it. Encourage them to immerse themselves in the images, to feel them not figure them out. Once they are felt, they will be figured out, "where the meanings are."

“Tell all the truth but tell it slant”

This poem and its images raise delightful issues about "Honesty is the best policy." You might want to have students discuss the way that “slanting” the truth can be a generous act. A good source of comparison is Shakespeare’s Sonnet #130.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Have you ever been on the giving or receiving end of truth that was delivered too “straight”? To what extent is / was that a problem?

2. Is the speaker in this poem encouraging us to be dishonest? Explain.

“After great pain, a formal feeling comes”

It helps to have experienced great emotional pain to feel the impact of this poem. Students might be asked about Dickinson's use of language. Why “formal”? In what way do the "Nerves sit ceremonious like Tombs"?
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

“Much madness is divinest sense”

Students might be asked if they agree that "Much madness is divinest sense"? Is “much reason” divinest sense? Why madness?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Can you think of an example, perhaps historical, of something that was considered madness that turned out to be the truth? Explain.

2. Can you think of something that is accepted by most people in society now that you consider "madness"? Explain.

“There is a certain slant of light”

Like all of her poems, students have to slow down to get this. What slant? What does the "Heft of Cathedral tunes" feel like? Is there something oppressive about them? How could "Heavenly Hurt" leave no scar? In what way does the "Landscape listen"? Depending on where you live, it doesn't hurt to do this poem in winter when the sun seems so far away and the images of the poem so near.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What does the “heft of Cathedral tunes” sound like? What instrument usually makes those sounds? Why “heft”? To what extent is there a connection between sound and light in this poem?

2. What do you think the speaker means “None may teach it.” None may teach what? Explain.

“She sweeps with many-colored brooms”

The “sweeping” images here (in all the ways that means) are very colorful,
and students might be asked to try and describe them or similar ones they’ve seen themselves.

**Prompt for Discussion and Writing**

1. Compare the tone of this light and these colors and the tone of the poem itself with the light and colors of “There’s a Certain Slant of Light.” Pick out words and phrases to support your view.

**“Success Is Counted Sweetest”**

Anyone (everyone) who has not succeeded at some time can identify with this feeling. So it might be helpful to explore the feeling before the poem.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Why nectar? What does it mean to "comprehend a nectar"? Is it possible?

2. To what extent does the example of victory and defeat in battle (stanzas two and three) convey the meaning of the poem?

3. Compare this poem to “Ex-Basketball Player” on page 972.

**“I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died”**

With apologies to T.S. Eliot, if we came back from the dead to tell "all” about what happened not after but at the moment we died, it, too, would make a fascinating tale.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Pick out some other, grander words in the poem and compare and contrast them with the word “fly.” Given the importance of the moment, do you think it’s odd that the focus here is on a fly? Explain.

2. What do you think the speaker means at the end “I could not see to see.”?
**John Donne, “A Valediction Forbidding Mourning”**

Like many of Donne’s poems, this poem can be difficult for students. At first, they may be thrown by the complex vocabulary. Then, vocabulary mastered (e.g. the reference to the “drafting,” not directional, compass), they may be thrown by the metaphysical spirituality, so if you’re going to tackle this one, give your students enough time to digest the complexity.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. What is a "valediction"? Why does the speaker forbid mourning?

2. What distinction does the speaker make between "dull sublunary lovers" and the love that he and his loved one share?

3. What qualities of beaten gold make it an appropriate metaphor for the love that the speaker is describing?

4. Explain the purpose of the first two stanzas. Why does the poet prefer to part from his beloved "As virtuous men pass mildly away"?

5. How is "trepidation of the spheres" in the third stanza of "A Valediction" metaphorically related to the lovers' parting or separation? As he contrasts this trepidation with an earthquake, why does the speaker call it "innocent"? What are the various connotations of this term?

6. Explain how the speaker’s "twin compasses" conceit supports his argument in "A Valediction" that "Our two souls therefore, which are one, / Though I must go, endure not yet / A breach."

**“Death, Be Not Proud”**

This poem is based on Donne’s belief in resurrection. The speaker personifies Death and tries to reduce this “person” to a ("poor Death") pitiful state. The speaker says Death is not "mighty” nor is it "dreadful. It’s just "rest" and "sleep” and goes on to list a number of reasons why it’s less than awesome
or admirable—and should be welcomed not feared.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. What is the speaker's attitude toward Death in this poem? Cite the text to support your view.

2. How is personification used in this sonnet to signify a victory over Death? Summarize each step in the argument which "proves" Death not to be very powerful.

3. Upon what beliefs does the success of the argument depend? Do you agree with his assumptions. If not, is the conclusion problematic? Explain.

**Mark Doty, “Brilliance”**

This touching, “preparing/waiting for death,” poem was published in 1993—at a time when a number of the poet’s friends and acquaintances had died or were dying from AIDS.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. This poem begins with a man who is dying and ends with an image of goldfish darting through the water. Discuss the structure of the poem and how it conveys its content.

2. Compare this poem with Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself 6.”

**Robert Frost, “Fire and Ice”**

There is pure pleasure in the sound of this poem. Students might be asked how that sound highlights the opposites represented by "fire and ice" and the emotions they represent. How does this sound, and the polarities of heat and cold, help to convey the ironic meaning of the poem?
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Why do you think the speaker connects “fire” with “desire” and “ice” with “hate”? Why do you think he chooses “fire” and “ice” as the two ways the world might end?

2. Discuss the conclusion of the poem. How does the word "suffice" as a rhyme for "ice" affect the meaning of the poem?

“Out, Out, . . .”

Since this poem alludes to Macbeth's soliloquy in Act 5 of Shakespeare's play, a good place to start (even before reading the poem) is with that soliloquy. Like so much of Shakespeare's work, the words of this soliloquy (with its existential undertones) reach easily across 400 years and magnify the boy's plight in Frost's powerful poem.

Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing. (5.5.23-28)

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Discuss the attitude toward death presented in "Out, Out…” To what extent does it reflect your own experience.

2. Consider Macbeth’s soliloquy from which the title is taken. To what extent does the meaning of that soliloquy limit or expand the meaning of Frost’s poem?

3. Compare this poem to Seamus Heaney’s “Mid-term Break” on page 288.
Tess Gallagher, “The Hug”

This is a fun poem to read aloud in class. Students seem to picture the scene easily even if they have questions about why the speaker is hugging the homeless man. The speaker seems to have experienced a “special” hug—perhaps one that she has not experienced with her lover—one that has left the “imprint of a planet on her cheek” and all the implications that brings.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Have you ever experienced a hug like this? If so, what did it mean to you? What made it so significant?

2. What are the implications of the speaker looking for a place “to go back to” at the end of the poem? In how many ways has the imprint of the button left “an imprint of the planet”?

A.E. Housman, “To an Athlete Dying Young”

Students can probably think of lots of examples from the entertainment world that are a “fit” for this poem. In what way does a “too early” death keep the dead forever young? And is there something about how the death takes place that stands forever as well?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Who is the speaker in this poem? What do you think his relationship to the athlete is?

2. What is "the road all runners come" in line 5? What is that "stiller town" the road leads to? What is the significance of the laurel in line II?

3. Can you think of examples from your own experience of those whose “name died before the [person].” To what extent can famous people outlive their glory?
John Keats, “When I Have Fears that I May Cease To Be”

Keats had much reason to have fears that he would cease to be. His short life makes this an especially moving poem. It is interesting to note what he fears will be lost, and if his youth may have much to do with that. An older man, having experienced some of the things Keats fears he never will, might write a very different poem.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Keats was 23 years old when he wrote this poem—and died at 26—so this was a real concern. What is the speaker especially anxious about? To what extent is this surprising for a poet?

2. If Keats had lived much longer and was older when he wrote this poem, do you think the speaker’s anxieties might have been different? Explain.

3. This poem is a sonnet. To what extent does the form of the poem fit its subject matter?

Galway Kinnell, “Saint Francis and the Sow”

This is a “lovely” poem in the same sense that it celebrates “the loveliness of sow.” Kinnel, in the spirit of Saint Francis, takes an unlikely candidate for this quality and exemplifies the way that nature gives all things a kind of loveliness.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. According to the speaker the sow has a “broken heart.” Why? What do you think he means?

2. To what extent is it “necessary to reteach a thing its loveliness.” Why is it “necessary, ” and how can you do it?
William Stafford, “Traveling Through the Dark”

Stafford creates a vivid scene, and it serves to highlight the difficult choice the speaker makes. He chooses to push the dead, but pregnant deer into the canyon and kill the life within her body, but he really has no choice. To leave the body of the deer where she is will endanger the lives of those who follow him on this road. The terrain and the difficult choice seem familiar to most of us, and the event seems a metaphor for the difficult choices we often make in the “dark.”

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. To what extent is “Traveling Through the Dark” an appropriate title for this poem?

2. Why do you think the poem has such vivid details of the scene and the speaker’s car? To what extent do they help you understand the poem?

3. Why does he roll the dead deer into the canyon? Does the pregnancy make any difference? Should it? What would you have done?

4. In the last stanza, why do you think the speaker "thought hard" for "us all"? Why does he refer to this as "my only swerving"?

Dylan Thomas, “Do Not Go Gentle Into that Good Night”

His repetition of "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" seems to indicate that Thomas sees life (at any cost) as preferable to death. A rich discussion might be had by addressing this issue. If the father is in unbearable pain, is that preferable to the release of death? It might also be possible to address issues of "metaphorical" death here and compare this poem with Stevie Smith's Not Waving but Drowning or Marge Piercy's Barbie Doll.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. To what extent is the tone of this poem unusual for a statement about death? Do you think it’s right to resist death at any cost? Explain.
2. Compare this poem to John Donne’s “Death, Be Not Proud” on page 1146.

Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself 6”

I chose this section of Whitman’s long poem, Song of Myself, because in many ways it captures the essence of the whole piece. Students might ask why such free-flowing commentary is considered poetry—and it’s a good question. So be prepared to address the issue of what makes poetry “poetry.”

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Who is the speaker in this poem? How would you describe his attitude and the tone of this poem?

2. What does the grass seem to symbolize in this poem?

3. Compare this view of death with the views expressed in “Death, Be Not Proud” on page 1146, “When I have Fears that I May Cease to Be” on page 1153, or “Brilliancy” on page 1147.

Connecting Through Comparison: The Impact of War

Thomas Hardy, “The Man He Killed”

This classic, anti-war poem still works well with students and prompts a rich discussion about the nature of war and individual conscience. In what way do human beings become expendable "tools" in the hands of politicians during a time of war? Explaining some of the period “local” language ("nipperkin," etc.) may help to get students started.

Amy Lowell, “Patterns”

A different perspective on war's consequences than most of the other pieces in this section, it is equally heartbreaking. One obvious source for comparison is Stephen Crane's “War is Kind” where both war itself and its
consequences, including its impact on those at home, are addressed. But “Patterns” is a poem about more than war, and you may find it useful to address the other patterns that seem to dominate our lives, and deaths.

**Wilfred Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est”**

This is one of the most powerful anti-war poems of all time. It juxtaposes the reality of war's unrelenting horror with the seductive appeal of "dying for the fatherland." But the cost of that sacrifice as graphically described in the poem is terrible far beyond elegant death. Students might compare this poem with a number of other pieces about war, including Stephen Crane's *War Is Kind*, Luigi Pirandello's *War*, Thomas Hardy's *The Man He Killed*, and the poem that follows, Carl Sandburg's *Grass*. Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* brings the combat soldier's life forward 40 years. You might find it useful to compare the dramatic compression and impact of this poem with the roller coaster ride of the longer short story about similar circumstances.

**Carl Sandburg, “Grass”**

Students who have visited Revolutionary War or Civil War battlegrounds may have a good picture of this in their minds. Does the grass work too effectively? Does it cover all to our detriment? You might ask students if they can think of any other natural or human made “coverings” of more recent horrors.

**Yusef Komunyakka, “Facing It”**

The speaker in this poem "faces it" in a number of different ways. It's helpful if students know what the Vietnam Memorial looks like and understand how it, too, "reflects" in a number of different ways. You might want to discuss how seeing people's reflections on the "name etched" granite, rather than looking at them directly, affects what the speaker sees and remembers. A good source of comparison is Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried.* O'Brien brings some of these names to life and shows their passage to death. If they read both, students might be asked how their reading of this poem was influenced by their reading of O'Brien's short story.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing: The Impact of War

1. Describe the speaker in “The Man He Killed.” What does his choice of the words “because” and “although” in the third stanza tell you about his thinking and feelings? Is he talking to himself as well? What ultimate question is he trying to answer? Explain.

2. To what extent is the setting and the speaker in this poem effective in conveying its meaning?

3. Identify the different kinds of patterns in Amy Lowell’s “Patterns.”

4. Identify some patterns in your own life. What impact have those patterns had on you? Have they limited you in any way? Have they helped you in any way? Explain.

5. Answer the speaker’s final question: “What are patterns for?”

6. Pick out the most powerful images in this poem. How much does the speaker rely on imagery to achieve his overall effect? Explain.

7. How do you think nature is portrayed in this poem? Is it an ally, an enemy, or both? Explain.

8. The speaker begins "Dulce et Decorum Est" by referring to aged "old beggars," but the poem ends with reference to "innocent tongues" and "children." Does this pattern make sense to you? Explain.

9. “Dulce et Decorum Est" seems to be addressed to a specific listener. To whom is the speaker speaking? What is his attitude toward his listener?”

10. What is the "desperate glory" mentioned in line 26? Can you think of any examples of it in literature you have read? To what extent do people still tell "the old Lie" today?

11. What is the tone of CarlSanburg’s “Grass.” Does the grass ("I cover all")
serve a positive or a negative purpose? Compare this view of nature with Stephen Crane’s “A Man Said To the Universe” on page 1141.

12. Explain the title of the poem “Facing It.” What is "It"?

13. Why do you think the speaker is "half-expecting to find my own [name] in letters like smoke"? What happened to Andrew Johnson? What relation is he to the speaker?

14. What do you make of the speaker’s misperception at the end of the poem? Why does he see a boy and a woman in the wall? How does it serve his poem?

**Drama**

**Exploring Othello: Making Connections**

The “making connections” prompts in the text that precede this play may be very helpful here. I have found that over the years that the issue of race in this play has become more and more prominent. It may be that students years ago wanted to avoid it, but it’s often the first issue to come up nowadays. Given the racial epithets of Iago and Roderigo in the first scene, it’s hard to imagine ignoring it.

**Two Readers/Two Choices: William Shakespeare, Othello**

You may find it worthwhile to go over the first scene carefully, and help students get used to the language. For those not used to Shakespeare’s language, the language of these first few scenes can be very elusive. As the play goes on, and the action and emotions intensify, students usually find themselves in the grip of the plot and Iago’s machinations. They will often say “This is just like a soap opera.” And they’re right. But what makes it extraordinary is the quality of the language used to express the characters and the plot and its insights into human nature.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. What incident first incites Iago to vengeance against Othello? Given his record later on, should we believe Iago about being wronged when passed over for promotion? Explain.

2. What are the implications of the racial slurs throughout the first scene and the rest of the play?

3. In the first act how does Shakespeare establish the dignity, nobility, and heroism of Othello? How does Iago plant the seed of suspicion in Othello's mind (Act III)?

4. How does Cassio's personality make him susceptible to Iago's manipulation, and how does the deception of Cassio parallel the deception of Othello?

5. When Othello, enraged by Iago's insinuations, grovels at the villain's feet, is he a tragic figure or merely pathetic?

6. Explain Desdemona's behavior in the scene in which Othello accuses her of being a whore. Why can't Othello perceive her goodness and innocence? Compare and contrast Desdemona with Emilia. Why do you think Desdemona is so passive in the last part of Act IV?

7. Look at Othello's speech at the start of Act V, scene 2. Why do you think he must kill Desdemona quickly, rather than listen to her pleas?

8. Do you agree with Othello's comment that he has “loved not wisely but too well”? Does Othello regain any of his lost stature and dignity at the end of the play? How?

9. Some readers/viewers think it is inexcusable for Othello to suspect his wife and unbelievable that he would trust Iago before Desdemona. What do you think?
10. Compare the tragedy of *Othello* with the tragedy of *Hamlet*, *Antigone* or *Oedipus*. Compare Desdemona with Ophelia, Nora Helmer or Antigone.

**Videos**


*Othello*. 166 min., color, 1965; 16 mm film. With Laurence Olivier, Maggie Smith, Frank Finlay, and Derek Jacobi. Available from Swank Motion Pictures.


**Web Site**

*Electronic Shakespeare* is an excellent web site for all things Shakespearian. It is primarily a link site, but those links are so numerous and comprehensive that I have found it to be the very best first stop. It is a university site that has been carefully screened and assembled by its creator. 

<http://www.wfu.edu/%7Etedforrl/shakespeare>

**Additional Reading**


**Essays**

**Albert Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus”**

Camus is one of the most provocative and influential thinkers of the 20th century. Building on the ancient myth of Sisyphus, he challenges us to see and celebrate ourselves, like Sisyphus, as “absurd heroes.” This is also a convenient way to introduce students to a bit of Greek mythology.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing**

1. Camus writes that Sisyphus is the “absurd hero.” Based on his essay, what is an absurd hero? How does Sisyphus qualify?

2. Camus says, “The workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks, and his fate is no less absurd [than Sisyphus].” What does he mean? Do you agree? Explain.

3. In the last sentence of the essay, Camus writes, “One must imagine Sisyphus happy.” Why? What is his reasoning for this?

**Plato, “The Allegory of the Cave”**

Plato’s classic essay, starring his favorite narrator, Socrates, always prompts a good discussion about perspective, reality, and illusion. Some students may find it a difficult “read,” so it may be helpful to go through it slowly in class to account for each of the points in his journey.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. The narrator says the prisoners in the cave are like us. What does he mean? Do you agree? Explain.

2. According to the narrator, “the State in which the rulers are most reluctant to govern is always the best … and the State in which they are most eager, the worst.” What does he mean? Do you agree? Explain.

3. Discuss the structure of the narrator’s argument. What makes it effective? Do you agree with his conclusions? Explain.

Philip Simmons, “Learning To Fall”

Perhaps the best example of the philosophy reflected in this wise essay is the author’s own—as he faced his own death from ALS. This piece is the signature chapter of a book of essays by the same name. When I chose this piece, the author was still carrying on a valiant struggle against his illness, but I was saddened to hear before we went to press that he had died. What he writes in this piece, however, deserves a long life of its own.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. Simmons says “I’m writing to say that life is not a problem to be solved.” What does he mean? Cite the text of the essay to support your explanation.

2. What does he mean, “When we learn to fall we learn to accept the vulnerability that is our human endowment, the cost of walking upright on the earth.” Do you agree? Explain.

3. Compare this essay to Pam Houston’s “A Blizzard Under Blue Sky” on page 1092.
Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”

This is Thoreau’s classic essay on the necessity, indeed moral obligation, of resisting / protesting policies with which we disagree. Like most “principled” views, this one has a specific context. Discussing this context and its modern equivalents can prompt a lively discussion.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

1. According to Thoreau, what is the fundamental problem with any government? Do you see this as a problem? Explain.

2. To what extent do you see Thoreau’s ideas as more idealistic than practical?

3. Thoreau says, “The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right.” Do you agree? Has your own experience been an example of that? Explain.

4. Identify a current issue and apply Thoreau’s philosophy. What do you think would result?

5. Are there any issues you would go to prison to defend? Explain.

Case Study in Composition:
Thinking about Interpretation: Poetry and Painting

This casebook is pretty straightforward and offers a variety of possibilities for comparison across the arts, film, and music. And it prompts instructors and students to find other sources of comparison in the "intertextuality" of different forms of artistic expression. Students might be asked if the poems have captured for them all that the painting presented, or if there was something in their experience of the paintings that went beyond what the poems had to say to them.
Prompts for Discussion and Writing: W. H. Auden, "Musee des Beaux Arts"

1. What is the connection between innocence and suffering in the poem's first stanza.

2. The second stanza describes the fall of Icarus into a sea while a ship sails by. What’s the point of that?

3. Compare this poem to Bulfinch’s “The Myth of Daedalus and Icarus” on page 1070 and to Brueghel’s painting on page 1302, and Devenish’s poem on page 1303.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Alan Devenish, "Icarus Again"

1. Written in 1999, this poem is a modern allusion to the Icarus story—with references to space flight and modern aircraft. What additional disasters have occurred since then that fit into this theme?

2. What do you think the speaker means, “How foolish to trust / our waxen wings and how foolish not to”?

3. Compare this poem to Bulfinch’s “The Myth of Daedalus and Icarus” on page 1070 and to Brueghel’s painting on p. 1302 and Auden’s poem on page 1302.

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: N. Scott Momaday, "Before an Old Painting of the Crucifixion"

1. To what extent does the speaker in Momaday’s poem bridge the time between the creation of the poem, the creation of Tintoretto’s painting, and the event that both make reference to?

2. What does the speaker mean when he says, ”Not death, but silence after death is change”?
3. Compare Momaday’s poem with Tintoretto’s painting on page 1304. What is in the poem that is not in the painting?

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Samuel Yellen, "Nighthawks"**

1. What is the tone of the speaker in the poem? Does his tone match that of the painting on page 1306? Explain.

2. Based on what you see in the painting, would you describe the people in Hopper’s painting “Nighthawks” the way the speaker in Yellen’s poem has? Explain.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Anne Sexton, "The Starry Night"**

1. The speaker in Sexton’s poem ends the first two stanzas with “This is how / I want to die.” What is your reaction to those lines. Do they match your response to van Gogh’s painting on page 1308? Explain.

2. Compare your response to both the painting and the poem with the response in the student essay on page 1320. Draw your own semantic map to both painting and poem.

**Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Wallace Stevens, “The Man with the Blue Guitar”**

1. What does the man with the blue guitar play? Who are “they,” and what do they ask him to play?

2. Compare the poem with the painting on page 1310. Is this the man you picture playing on the blue guitar? If so, what is it about him that you think fits this poem? If not, what does your guitarist look like?


1. What is the significance of “Labor Day” in the title of LeClair’s poem?
Who are the “gleaners” and why do you think they are the subject of the painting?

2. What does the speaker in the poem mean “We are all gleaners / In the autumn fields, / Looking for chaffs of hay, of wheat, of light”?

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Adrienne Rich, “Mourning Picture”

1. To what extent does Adrienne Rich’s poem mention all of the items in the painting on page 1314? Make a list of what’s in the painting and what’s in the poem.

2. The narrator in this poem is Effie. She says “the thread that bounds us lies / faint as a web in dew.” Who is the “us,” and what does she mean?

3. Explain the last sentence of the poem, “I am Effie, you were my dream.”

Prompts for Discussion and Writing: Sandra Nelson, "When a Woman Holds a Letter"

1. What does the speaker mean in the title and the first sentence, when she says, “When a Woman Holds a Letter. It is always from a man.”

2. Take a close look at the painting. Interpret the expression on face of the seated woman. Do you agree with the speaker in the poem? Is she probably wrong about Clarissa and her thoughts? Explain.

Appendix A: Critical Approaches to Literature

As explained in the text, the purpose of this appendix is to give students a brief introduction to various critical approaches. If they want more in-depth coverage, or they are interested in a particular approach, the bibliography at the end of each approach provides them with a number of sources. It might
be a useful and illuminating exercise to take several of the works you assign and have students apply these approaches.


**Appendix B: Writing About Film**

This appendix is new to the second edition. An increasing number of instructors are using film in their writing and literature classes, and many have expressed a need for this guide. I am especially pleased that William V. Costanzo, who has spoken and published widely on this topic, including the best selling *Reading the Movies* (NCTE: 1992), agreed to write this section. Bill uses *Exploring Literature* in his English 102 course, and he has seamlessly fashioned this appendix to fit the philosophy and content of the text.

**Appendix C: Documentation**

For the second edition, this guide to documentation has been shifted from Chapter 5 to a separate appendix. This appendix contains all that students need to know about correct MLA style formatting, citation, documentation, and plagiarism. Included are descriptions of the physical layout of a research essay, in-text citation of sources, and what is required to cite different types of book, periodical, electronic and other sources. All of the examples are gathered together and displayed as a sample of an entire alphabetized works-cited end page.
Appendix

Sample Syllabi

Each syllabus that follows represents a different type of course in which *Exploring Literature* has been used: English 101, English 102, and an on-line version of English 102. Each of these classes represents a different approach based on an individual instructor’s philosophy and methodology--and the kinds of information they believe students should have in hand at the beginning of the semester.

Syllabus #1—English 101

**Composition and Literature 1**  
**Instructor: Jillian Quinn**  
**Spring 200X**  
**English Office: 914.785.6933**  
**3 Credit Hours**  
**Office Hours: By Appointment**

**Course Description**

Composition and Literature 1 is the basic college writing and reading course. It is required for the college core, designed for transfer and required by most colleges. It is the first semester of a two-semester sequence of reading and writing.

**Required Texts and Materials**

- A standard paperback dictionary
- A pocket folder and lined loose-leaf paper
- One 3 _”_ hard diskette (for PC) to revise and save your writing
- One journal-type notebook
Course Learning Objectives for Students

1. To write and revise essays for content, form and style which as a minimum meet Level 5 of the CUNY Writing Skills Assessment Test Evaluation Scale. Each student will write a minimum of 4000 words (the equivalent of 16 typed, double spaced pages) of final draft essays.

2. To articulate personal response, to summarize, to draw inferences, to synthesize, and to express informed opinion in class discussion and in written work. Students will develop proficiency in speaking and in evaluating oral discourse.

3. To gather primary and secondary sources, to paraphrase, to quote, to cite, and to document where appropriate in a piece of writing. Each student will write at least five pages of research-based material with a minimum of three sources.

1. To read and demonstrate understanding of texts by identifying core ideas, articulating responses to these ideas in discussion and in writing, and supporting these ideas through reference to the text.

Methods of Instruction
We will interact and learn in many ways, including:

- Small group and whole class discussion
- Process Modeling
- Student Presentations
- Conferences with peers and with instructor
- Word Processing
- Writing/Reading Journals
- Building and revising portfolios
Attendance

This is a collaborative class—discussion is absolutely essential and you are needed! Absences will affect your grade. After more than six hours of absence, you will be asked to withdraw or take a serious grade penalty for the course. You are responsible for assignments made and due when you are absent, so make sure to get phone numbers of two classmates.

Assignment Requirements

- Papers lose 1 letter grade if late
- Essays must be typed and double spaced with proper headings
- Journals and other informal responses may be handwritten and on lined loose-leaf paper

Final Grades

- At-Home Essays 50% (500 points total/100 points each)
- Response Journals 10% (100 points total/11 points each)
- Class Discussion and Participation 20% (200 points total/holistic scoring)
- Portfolio 10% (100 points total/holistic scoring)
- Final Exam 10% (100 points total/holistic scoring)

TOTAL 100% (possible 1000 points)

Your grade will be determined by dividing your total points by 10 for a number grade that will correspond to the following letter grades:

- 90% A
- 85% B+
- 80% B
- 75% C+
- 70% C
- below 65% F
- 65% D

Additional Information

If you have questions about or difficulties with an assignment or anything else, please see me before the situation becomes critical. Rather than be late, hand in something inferior or start skipping assignments or class, just
come and talk to me and we will work it out! We must work as partners to help you succeed in this course. I cannot help you if I don’t know there’s a problem, and you can’t help yourself if you wait too long and get behind.

**Keeping a Response Journal**

As we read, discuss and write together and separately for this course, your response journal will be a very important part of your experience and growth. While the syllabus offers prompts for certain journal responses, you are under no obligation to respond to those particular prompts. What is important is that you begin to write about your reading experiences and that in your writing you begin to reflect upon what you’ve read, how it is written and your own reaction to what you’ve read. Your journal is a place for you to “talk out loud” about what you’re thinking while remaining safe and anonymous. There are times that we will use our journals as resources for other activities, but you only need to share up to your comfort level.

You might use your journal to reflect upon what an author means, how you feel about the way an author expresses ideas, connections that you see between the literature and your experience, or feelings that your reading creates in you. In certain cases, you may want to use one of the prompts from the syllabus to “springboard” into your response. Other times you will feel strongly about what you are thinking or feeling, and will use your journal to express yourself.

While your journals are a part of your portfolio and final grade, you may choose to keep certain responses private by folding over the page. Try not to think of your journal as a chore, but rather as a tool for you to clarify your own thinking and feelings as you read and write.

**Composition and Literature I Portfolio Requirements**

Your portfolio is a compilation of your work for the semester. Included in the portfolio are some additional supporting documents. The portfolio is a place to reflect upon your strengths and weaknesses as a writer, an opportunity to revise and improve your work, and a demonstration of your
progress. It is also a demonstration of your creativity and organizational skills.

All documents other than journal responses must be typed and double-spaced. Journal responses may be photocopied sheets made from your bound journal. The portfolio must contain all required work and be free from any errors. It is a final product, so proofread everything! In addition, portfolios should be contained or held together in a secure and professional way. Completeness, neatness and creativity are expected.

Please include the following in your portfolio:

- A Letter of Introduction
- A Table of Contents
- Your 5 strongest or most interesting journal responses
- Your two strongest essays with all errors corrected
- Your weakest essay and a complete revision with an explanation of changes made
- An evaluation of your growth as a writer with specific references to your work

Although the portfolio is due at the very end of the semester, you should be working on it throughout the semester. Make sure to keep everything you write in connection with this class. Begin compiling and organizing your portfolio early on.

The portfolio counts as 10% of your grade and will be scored holistically. Creating it is an opportunity for you to fine-tune and improve all of your work and to significantly improve your grade. The portfolio will also be something you will have as a record and demonstration of your writing skills. Make it great!

More information will follow in future classes.

Weekly Schedule

**Week 1:** Introductions/Syllabus Overview/Journal Keeping
Learning to Compare and Contrast: Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln
Constructive Communication: Handout
In-Class Diagnostic Essay: A Time for Vengeance
Assignment: Read “I Stand Here Ironing” (p.254)
Journal Response: What was my parent like when I was little?

Week 2: Introduction to Portfolio Requirements
Constructive Communication: Handout
Class Discussion: “I Stand Here Ironing”
In-Class Writing: How does your parent remember you as a child?
Overview of Content/Structure/Style
Assignment: Read “Dusting” by Julia Alvarez (p.284)
“My Papa’s Waltz” by Theodore Roethke (p.297)
“Those Winter Sundays” by Robert Hayden (p. 13)
“Mothers” by Anna Quindlen (p. 30)
Journal Response: An emotional response to a childhood memory

Week 3: Introduction to Think/Pair/Share: Using your journal as a resource for dialogue
Constructive Communication: Handout
Class Discussion: Parents as Rulers--feared, benign, respected?
“Dusting,” “My Papa’s Waltz” and “Those Winter Sundays”
Overview of Essay Model as springboard
Assignment: At-Home Essay #1
Response Essay: Inviting readers into our experiences with literature

Week 4: Constructive Communication: Handout
In-Class Writing: Being burdened with responsibilities
Looking at Introductions: Well-Begun Is Half Done!
Assignment: Read “Cinderella,” the Grimm Brothers (p.539)
“Cinderella,” Anne Sexton (p. 544)
“Cinderella,” Bruno Bettelheim (p.547)
Journal Response: The fairy tale most like my life

Week 5: Petite Presentations: Using your journal as a resource for dialogue
Constructive Communication: Handout
In-Class Reading: “Araby,” James Joyce (p. 490)
Class Discussion: First Love
Assignment: Journal Response: First Love
Read “Hills Like White Elephants” Ernest Hemingway (p. 486)

Week 6: Think/Pair/Share: Using your journal as a resource for remembering
Constructive Communication: Handout
In-Class Writing: Is love an illusion?
In-Class Reading: “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” Christopher Marlowe (p. 508)
“The Nymph’s Reply To the Shepherd,” Walter Raleigh (p. 509)
“To His Coy Mistress,” Andrew Marvell (p. 510)
Class Discussion: Carpe Diem, Persuasion, and a very coy mistress
Developing topic sentences and building support
Assignment: Read “Girl,” Jamaica Kincaid (p.658)
Journal Response: Free-write about your parents’ or the culture’s idea of love.

Week 7: Constructive Communication: Handout
In-Class Writing: Where do your beliefs, values and dreams come from?
In-Class Reading: “Phenomenal Woman,” Maya Angelou (p. 512)
“Barbie” by Marge Piercy (p. 14)
The art and craft of a well-written conclusion
Assignment: At-Home Essay#2
Response Essay: Writing about Gender

Week 8: Think/Pair/Share: Using your journal as a resource for clarification of your values
Constructive Communication: Handout
In-Class Writing: Is man naturally just?
In Class Reading: “I Have A Dream,” Martin Luther King, Jr. (p. 766)
In-Class Discussion: “Dream” and style, structure and figurative language
Writing transitions and creating unity
Assignment: At-Home Essay # 3
Inspirational Essay

Week 9: Constructive Communication: Handout
In-Class Writing: The Secret Story of the Stranger on the Street
In-Class Reading: How To Watch Your Brother Die,” Michael Lassell (p. 290)
Assignment: Read “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” by Joyce Carol Oates (p. 1096)
Journal Response—What effect does this writing have on you?

Week 10: Petite Presentations: Using your journal to support an opinion
Constructive Communication: Handout
In-Class Writing: The tyranny of the selfish and the strong
In-Class Discussion: “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”
Assignment: Read “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien (p. 1109). Journal Response

Week 11: Constructive Communication: Handout
In-Class Writing: War in the Movies
Film Clips: Saving Private Ryan, Gladiator, Black Hawk Down
In-Class Reading:
“The Man He Killed,” Thomas Hardy (p.1159)
“Dulce Et Decorum Est,” Wilfred Owen (p. 1162)
In-Class Discussion: Imagery and Diction
Assignment: Essay #4
Writing about Faith and Doubt
Week 12: Audio: *Goodnight, Saigon* by Billy Joel
Think/Pair/Share: The things they carried in the song
In-Class Discussion: Images of Death
In-Class Writing: How do I feel about death?
In-Class Reading: “Out, out…,” Robert Frost (p. 1149)
In-Class Discussion: Perspectives on Mortality
**Assignment:** Journal Response—The moth with no mouth

Read Chapter 5 (pages 172-197) Research

Week 13: Think/Pair/Share: An image or perspective on death
in film, music, art, etc.
In-Class Reading:
  “To An Athlete Dying Young” by A. E. Housman (1152)
  “Sonnet #18” by Shakespeare (p. 526)
  “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night,” Dylan Thomas (p. 1156)
  “Death Be Not Proud” by John Donne (p. 1146)
In-Class Discussion: The poets on death
**Assignment:** At-Home Essay #5

Documented Research Paper: Death in Literature

Week 14: Think/Pair/Share: “Your Defensible Interpretation”
Writing in the Computer Lab: Your Research Paper
**Assignment:** Finish Research Paper

Week 15: Writing in the Computer Lab: Creating your portfolio
Portfolio due at Final Exam

**Final Exam:** May 12-15 (TBA)
Syllabus #2—English 102

COMPOSITION AND LITERATURE 2
Spring 200X
Dr. Frank Madden  Science Building,  Rm. 301
Office Hours (Mon. 10:30-12:30, 3:30-4:30; Tues. 11-1;
       Wed. 3:30-5:30; Thurs. 12-1)
Phone -785 6932, 785 6933
E-mail- Frank.Madden@sunywcc.edu

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

The second semester of a two semester sequence of reading and writing. Students will augment those skills emphasized in the first semester by writing essays which demonstrate their ability to read, to analyze, to interpret, and to evaluate works from different genres of imaginative literature. Research and its proper documentation will be included in this process.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR STUDENTS

1. To read, analyze, interpret, and evaluate works of literature from different genres; to articulate responses to readings by summarizing and citing the text, relating its ideas to personal experiences and sharing reactions.

2. To write and revise essays for content, form and style that as a minimum meet Level 5 of the CUNY Writing Skills Assessment Test Evaluation Scale. Each student will write a *minimum* of 5000 words (the equivalent of 20 typed, double spaced pages) of final draft essays.

3. To gather information, to paraphrase, to quote, to cite, and to document where appropriate in their writing. Each student will write at least two documented essays of at least 5 pages each with a minimum of 3 sources.
TEXT


READING RESPONSES

You will be posting your written responses to selected poems, stories, and plays on the Response Forum in the WebCT site for the course. These responses will be read by me and other students in the class. You will also be responding to what your classmates have to say about the readings. In this way, everyone will have a chance to participate in class discussion, expressing and exploring a variety of views.

The Response Forum is based on the principle that writing is one of the best tools for sharing and thinking about your responses to literature. What you write in your response is your choice. It should be as unique as your experience with the literature itself. You may or may not like what you read. You may find it engaging or filled with meaning. You may find it confusing or boring. Whatever your response, you'll benefit most if your entries honestly reflect your experience.

ESSAYS

During the course of the semester, you will be writing several kinds of essays:

**Response Essays** develop your personal responses to a literary work; they clarify your thoughts and feelings, consider what may have triggered these responses, and place your reading in the context of your individual history, other readings, and cultural background. There is an example on page 53 of our text: "Twice on Sunday."

**Critical Essays** examine literary works with a more objective eye; they might analyze the style and structure of the writing, explore the writer's
use of formal elements (such as character and plot in stories, rhythm and metaphor in poetry), support a particular interpretation, or evaluate the work's' literary merits. See examples on pages 197 ("Might Against Right") and 303 ("What Makes Sammy Quit?").

**Thematic Critical Essays** compare several works that treat the same theme (such as "family and friends," "culture and class," or "faith and doubt"), often works from different genres (poems, stories, plays). See examples on pages 804 ("The Age of Living Dolls) and 1168 ("Racism").

**Research Essays** expand your understanding of a work by investigating outside sources such as biographies, histories, interpretive essays, documentary films, or the Internet to learn more about the author, the times, or the popular and critical reception of a work that interests you. Examples are on pages 490 ("The Realism of A Raisin in the Sun") and 1279 ("Leaving Home").

All essays should be typed, double-spaced, and follow the assigned format. Response essays should be approximately 3 to 5 pages, the two critical essays 4 to 6 pages, and research essays 5 to 7 pages. The research essay may be a secondary source expansion of one of your critical essays. If you submit a first draft on time, I will be glad to read and return it with suggestions for correcting and developing it. In this way, you can work on it further and send me an improved version by the final deadline.

You are expected to submit all assignments on time. **Poorly written essays are not acceptable.**
GRADING, ATTENDANCE, and PARTICIPATION

Grades will be based on my evaluation of your essays (40%), a final examination (20%), and class participation (40% for your reading responses and involvement in class discussions).

Your written responses will be given 1, 2, or 3 points (based on the amount of thought and effort you put into them) if submitted on the date due. They will be docked one or two points if submitted late and receive a "0" if not submitted at all.

All essays receive a letter grade. The essays and final examination will not be graded on whether your interpretation matches that of the instructor; you will be encouraged to develop your own view. Your grade will depend on how well you articulate, support, and develop your position. Using examples and specific references to the text will help a great deal. Be sure to proofread carefully to avoid errors. Participation in the entire process is important; therefore, regular attendance is essential.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON RESPONDING TO LITERATURE:

1 Writing responses helps you see what you think more clearly.
   Responses can help you view and review your own ideas, and in the process help you modify and extend them in different directions. Write in your most natural voice. Don't worry about sounding profound; try instead to pin down and express what interests or annoys you or makes you curious or confused. One of the best things you can do with your responses is to look for connections to other ideas, themes, essays, stories, poems, or what others in class had to say about these things.

2 Reading the responses of other readers enriches your experience.
   By seeing what your classmates think and feel about the works you read, you have an opportunity to consider other perspectives. Often, someone else's comments will help you understand something new
about the work. When you reply to another student's posting, be generous with your thoughts. Good literature has a way of connecting us as human beings, helping us appreciate our differences while recognizing what we have in common. Seek to make those connections work for you.

3 Your responses will "build" into the material from which you derive your essays.
   If you are conscientious about writing your response, your thesis statements and essays will emerge naturally from them. The most important ingredients in your essay will not be the positions you take, but rather the evidence you bring to support those positions and the clarity with which you express them.

THE ESSAYS SHOULD BE YOUR INFORMED OPINION:

----- Your Own View
----- A Clearly Stated Thesis
----- Logically Developed
----- Supported With References to the Text
----- Carefully Written
----- Proofread
----- NOT A Summary

COURSE SCHEDULE

Listed below is a weekly schedule. Be prepared to discuss each work by reading all assignments and submitting your responses by the due dates. You are expected to meet the deadlines for all essays.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

The Week of 1/21 Participation: "Reading Ourselves"
Read and Discuss Chapter 1, pages 3-10.

Due Monday 1/27 Submit your Reading History response.
Introduction to Poetry:
Read and Discuss Chapter 1, pages 10-20.

Due Monday 2/3 Submit your response to two of the poems in Chapter I
Communication: Writing About Literature
Read Chapter 2, pages 21-37.

Due Monday 2/10 Submit your response to "Eleven," "Mothers," and "Salvation."
From First Response to Final Draft
Read Chapter 2, pages 37-51.
Introduction to Theater (and Greek Theater)
Read Chapter 3, pages 89-96.

Due Monday 2/17 Submit First Draft of Response Essay
Read and Discuss Antigone, pages 104-135.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Due Monday 2/24 Submit response to Antigone
Read and Discuss Genre and the Elements of Literature--Chapter 3, pages 55-71.

Due Monday 3/3 Submit a response to "The Story of an Hour" p. 67 and "Hills Like White Elephants" p. 486
Reading and Analyzing Poetry
Read Chapter 3, pages 71-89.
Submit Final Draft of Response Essay by Thursday.

Due Monday 3/10 Submit a response to any 5 poems in the text.

Spring Break

Submit Critical Essay by Thursday.
Introduction to Shakespeare
Read pages 96-100

Due Monday 3/31 Submit response to Act I of Othello, p. 1167.
Read and Discuss Othello

Due Monday 4/7 Submit Thematic Critical Essay
Continue Reading and Discussion of Othello

Due Monday 4/14 Submit response to all of Othello
Complete Reading and Discussion of Othello.
Read Intro to Modern Drama pages 100-102
RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

Due Monday 4/21 Read Act 1 of A Doll's House (page 557)
and submit response
Read Chapter 5 Research, pages 201-232

Due Monday 4/28 Complete reading and discussion of
A Doll's House
Begin A Raisin in the Sun (p. 363)

Due Monday 5/5 Submit response to Act 1 of A Raisin in the Sun.
Complete reading and discussion of
A Raisin in the Sun

Wednesday 5/14 FINAL EXAM
Submit Final Draft of Research Essay
Syllabus #3—English 102

ENG 102: Composition and Literature 2    Spring 200X
Professor Elizabeth Gaffney    Phone (voice mail): 785-6194
Office: AAB 527    e-mail:elizabeth.gaffney@sunywcc.edu

Composition and Literature 2 is the second half of the required sequence in college writing and reading. This course is designed for transfer, and the prerequisite is Composition and Literature I. In this course, we will read short stories, poems and plays from ancient Greece to the present. We will collaborate in groups, which requires your active, willing participation. We will develop your writing in a variety of assignments, including responses to readings, documented essays and in-class essays.

Required Texts and Materials

Please buy all the following, available in the bookstore.
• A standard paperback dictionary
• A pocket folder, a mini-stapler, and 8 _ by 11 lined paper
• Grammar handbook or style manual from Comp Lit I.
• You must have access to a word processor (or typewriter) to type your essays.

Grades and Evaluation
• 30% Preparation: class work, responses, quizzes, presentation
• 60% Four essays, including midterm in-class essay: 15% each
• 10% Final exam
Course Learning Objectives and Assessment

In this course you will learn:

Objective #1. To read, analyze, interpret and evaluate works of literature, articulate responses to readings by summarizing, interpreting and citing the text, relating its ideas to other readings and personal experience, and sharing reactions in speech and writing.

Assessment: 30% of final grade includes frequent quizzes, weekly journal responses, contributions to group discussions and oral reports. Excellent attendance, good classroom manners and active participation also count towards the final grade.

Objective #2. To write and revise essays for content, form and style which as a minimum meet the criteria described in “Grades and Evaluation.”

Assessment: Essays written at home and in class make up 60% of the final grade. Poorly written essays will not pass.

Objective #3. To gather information, paraphrase, quote, cite and document where appropriate in your writing.

Assessment: Grades for documented essays will reflect mastery of these skills.

Requirements for Passing This Course:

• ATTENDANCE at all classes. Discussion is essential in this English class. Absences affect your grade. Any student who misses more than six classes will be asked to withdraw or receive a serious grade penalty. Perfect attendance is rewarded.
  Being late to class twice counts as one absence.
  You are responsible for assignments made in class when you are absent, so be sure to get phone numbers of two classmates.

• Completion of all written work, including essays, midterm, quizzes and journal responses.
• **Demonstration that you have read the assignments** through passing grades on quizzes, in-class essays and class participation. Being prepared for class means that you have read the assigned reading, completed the writing assignment, and you are alert, willing to share your ideas with others.

**Essays must be typed. Keep a copy of every essay that you submit to me.** Late papers will be penalized one-half letter grade for each class late, and will not be accepted more than two weeks late.

**Quizzes** will not be announced. I give quizzes often and these quizzes can not be made up for any reason.

**Response Sheets:** You will be asked to write **responses** to readings, sometimes in class or sometimes at home, before class discussion of the reading. Your response pages together are worth **15%** of the final grade for this course. These response papers receive checks, check-pluses, or check-minuses, not letter grades. They may be handwritten or typed. Spend about twenty minutes on the response after you have read the text. Write your reactions and questions. Express what interests you or annoys you or makes you curious or confuses you. Make connections with other ideas, themes, readings, or what other people have said in class. Quote from the text. Explain the significance of words, phrases, and sentences for you. Keep response pages together and review them before writing an essay draft or preparing for the midterm and final. **Length: 1-2 pages.**

Here are the criteria that we in the English Department follow in evaluating your essays. Your essay must demonstrate these criteria at a minimum to earn a grade of C or better:

• The essay provides an organized response to the topic.
• The ideas are expressed in clear language most of the time.
• The writer develops ideas and generally signals relationships within and between paragraphs.
• The writer uses vocabulary appropriate for the topic and avoids oversimplification and distortions.
• Sentences are generally correct grammatically, although some errors may be present when sentence structure is particularly complex.
• With few exceptions, grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct.

Weekly Schedule for Eng 102

Week:

1. (1/22) Introduction to course; read Daedalus and Icarus handout

2. (1/29) read Daedalus and Icarus poems pp. 1302-03
   read Greek Drama 94-96;
   OEDIPUS REX 710

3 (2/5) read OEDIPUS (710)
   Essay 1 draft DUE__________

4 (2/12) read EVELINE 188 and background material (handout)
   Essay 1 final version DUE______

5 (2/19) read Shakespearean Drama 96-100; OTHELLO (1167) Act I
   Essay 2 draft DUE __________

6 (2/26) read OTHELLO Act II
   Essay 2 final version DUE ______

7 (3/5) read OTHELLO Acts III and IV response due

8 (3/12) read OTHELLO Act V Essay 3: Mid-Term in class_____

   SPRING RECESS: MARCH 19 TO MARCH 25
9 (3/26) read STORY OF AN HOUR  67 and SHILOH  494

FINAL DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH A "W" GRADE:  Friday, March 30

10. (4/2) read EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE 954 and CATHEDRAL 1072


12. (4/16) read poems on pp. 526-527; 1044. “Phenomenal Woman” 512; “Immigrants” 708; “Barbie Doll” 14, and others

Essay 4 DUE _______


14. (4/30) read A RAISIN IN THE SUN (I 402-30; II 431-56; III 456-67 response due

15 (5/7) Pick-a-Poem Week; review for final

FINAL EXAM: May  14, 200X, 8:30 TO 10:30 AM

Guidelines for Essays

All essays must be typed, double-spaced, with quotations from the texts and a Works Cited page. Edit and proofread your essay BEFORE you submit it, and make a copy for yourself. Poorly written essays will not receive credit. Essays make up 60% of the grade for this course. Late essays will be penalized one-half letter grade for each class meeting late and will not be accepted more than two weeks beyond the due date.
(Standard font size for college essays is 12, not 14 or 16)

You have TWO opportunities to revise essays, available for essays 1 and 2 only.

**OPTION 1. Hand in a draft of your essay on the draft due date. Late drafts will not be accepted.** I will read the draft, write comments and suggestions on it and return it to you. Then you revise and submit both draft and revised version on the final due date for the essay.

**--OR--**

**OPTION 2. You revise your essay after discussion with me and re-submit the original and the revision within two weeks only if the essay was handed in on time. Late essays cannot be revised.** Your overall grade for the essay will be an average of the original grade and the revision grade.

**Essay 1**: Analysis of a version of the myth of Daedalus and Icarus: four pages. See Daedalus handout for complete explanation of this topic.
DRAFT DUE DATE: _____________________
FINAL VERSION DUE: _____________________

**Essay 2**: Literature and Cultural Contexts: “Eveline,” four pages. This is your research essay, using source material in our textbook and in the handout ONLY
DRAFT DUE: _____________________
FINAL VERSION DUE: _____________________

**NO REVISIONS OR EARLY DRAFTS FOR ESSAYS 3 AND 4!**

**Essay 3**: Midterm in-class essay on Shakespeare play.
DATE OF EXAM: during the week of March 12 (before spring break)
Essay 4: *Connections*, five pages. CHOOSE ONE:

1. **Interpretive Essay**

Choose one quotation (or more) from one of the introductory sections of *Exploring Literature*: *family and friends*, pp. 201-202, *gender issues: women and men*, pp. 452-453, *heritage and identity*, pp. 639-640, or *culture and class*, pp. 913-914. Pair this quotation with one or more of our longer readings that either supports or argues against it. For example, the quotation “With women the heart argues, not the mind” (452) might be applied to Norma Jean in “Shiloh,” or to Anna in “The Lady with the Pet Dog.” For another example, the quotation “Men can starve from a lack of self-realization as much as...from a lack of bread” (640) might support the theme of identity and heritage in “Sonny’s Blues” or “Everything that Rises Must Converge.”

Write an essay which compares or contrasts a quote from one of the introductions with a story, novel and/or poem that we have read. Be sure to support your interpretations with direct quotations from the text.

2. **Dialectical Essay**

Using one of the stories or novel as your reference point, write an essay showing how your life “intersects” with the circumstances, issues, characters of the story. In what ways does the story relate to your own experience, values, questions? How does reading the story touch you emotionally, ethically, intellectually? Be specific in writing about yourself and in discussing the fiction’s relevance to you. Use plenty of direct quotes and examples from the fiction and specific examples from your experience. The ideal essay will be a balanced discussion, showing how literature touches your own life.
3. **Creative Option**

Retell one (or part of one) of the stories from a different character’s point of view. For example, what story would Sonny tell if he narrated “Sonny’s Blues”? How would “Shiloh” or “Everything that Rises Must Converge” change if the story were told through the central consciousness of Norma Jean or Julian’s mother? What would Anna’s story be in “The Lady with the Pet Dog?” …and so on. Pay close attention to the author’s effective use of language and the elements of fiction: plot, characters, setting, dialogue, as you construct your own story.

ESSAY DUE: **Week of April 16**
Syllabus #4– An On-line Course

COMPOSITION AND LITERATURE 2
Westchester Community College
Online Course

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. William Costanzo, Professor of English

Office: Science Building, Room 360
Phone: 785 6930
E-mail: bill.costanzo@sunywcc.edu
I will be available for face-to-face conferences in my office as well as during online office hours. Times will be announced when the course begins.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

The second semester of a two-semester sequence of reading and writing. Students will augment those skills emphasized in the first semester by writing essays which demonstrate their ability to read, to analyze, to interpret, and to evaluate works from different genres of imaginative literature. Research and its proper documentation will be included in this process.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To read, analyze, interpret, and evaluate works of literature from different genres; to articulate responses to readings by summarizing and citing the text, relating its ideas to personal experiences and sharing reactions.

2. To write and revise essays for content, form and style that as a minimum meet Level 5 of the CUNY Writing Skills Assessment Test Evaluation Scale. Each student will write a minimum of 5000 words (the equivalent of 21 typed, double spaced pages) of final draft essays.
3 To gather information, to paraphrase, to quote, to cite, and to
document where appropriate in their writing. Each student will
write at least two documented essays of at least 3 pages each with
a minimum of 3 sources.

TEXT

Frank Madden. Exploring Literature: Writing and Thinking

ONLINE CLASSWORK

The entire course, with the exception of a final exam taken at the WCC
campus, will be available on line through WebCT, the World Wide
Web (Internet) site that houses the online materials for our course. In
addition to an online Calendar, Syllabus, Assignment Board, and
Resources list of useful websites, you will have access to me and to
each other through a Response Forum, Chat Rooms, and Email. These
features are intended to make your learning convenient, flexible,
structured, and engaging.

Check Assignment for each week’s assignment and Calendar for
special dates. This Syllabus can be printed out at any time.

READING RESPONSES

You will be posting your written responses to selected poems, stories,
and plays on the Response Forum, where these responses can be read
by me and other students in the class. You will also be responding to
what your classmates have to say about the readings. In this way,
everyone will have a chance to participate in class discussion,
expressing and exploring a variety of views. Don’t forget to reply to at
least two other student responses every week in addition to the reading
itself.
The Response Forum is based on the principle that writing is one of the best tools for sharing and thinking about your responses to literature. What you write in your response is your choice. It should be as unique as your experience with the literature itself. You may or may not like what you read. You may find it engaging or filled with meaning. You may find it confusing or boring. Whatever your response, you'll benefit most if your entries honestly reflect your experience.

ESSAYS

During the course of the semester, you will be writing four kinds of essays and submitting them to me through WebCT’s email and dropbox features. If you submit a first draft at least ten days before the due date, I will be glad to read and return it with suggestions for correcting and developing it. Please use Microsoft Word, the college’s standard word processing software, so I can insert my remarks directly into your document and email it back to you as an attachment. You will then be able to read my comments by placing your cursor over any words highlighted in yellow. In this way, you can work on it further and send me an improved version by the final deadline. All first drafts should be sent as an email attachment in Microsoft Word. All final drafts should be submitted through the drop box.

**Response Essays** develop your personal responses to a literary work; they clarify your thoughts and feelings, consider what may have triggered these responses, and place your reading in the context of your individual history, other readings, and cultural background. There is an example on page 49 of our text: “Twice on Sunday.”

**Critical Essays** examine literary works with a more objective eye; they might analyze the style and structure of the writing, explore the writer’s use of formal elements (such as character and plot in stories, rhythm and metaphor in poetry), support a particular interpretation, or
evaluate the work’s’ literary merits. See examples on pages 169 ("Might Against Right”) and 274 ("What Makes Sammy Quit?").

**Thematic Essays** compare several works that treat the same theme (such as “family and friends,” “culture and class,” or “faith and doubt”), often works from different genres (poems, stories, plays). See an example on pages 632 ("The Age of Living Dolls").

**Research Essays** expand your understanding of a work by investigating outside sources such as biographies, histories, interpretive essays, documentary films, or the Internet to learn more about the author, the times, or the popular and critical reception of a work that interests you. Examples are on pages 445 ("The Realism of A Raisin in the Sun") and 194 ("Leaving Home").

All essays should be typed, double-spaced, and follow the assigned format. Response essays should be approximately 3 to 5 pages, critical and thematic essays 4 to 6 pages, and research essays 5 to 7 pages.

**Warning:** I expect your essays to be your original work. Plagiarism—the failure to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, or the use of other writers’ work without proper acknowledgement—is a serious academic offense. If you plagiarize, you will receive a 0 for the essay and are liable to fail the course. Contact me before submitting your work if you have questions about plagiarism.

**CHAT ROOM DISCUSSIONS**

From time to time, there will be opportunities to join a live discussion through WebCT’s **chat room** feature. This feature allows you to interact with me and other students in the class through an exchange of written comments in real time. It also enables you to chat with authors and at students at other colleges. WebCT saves a transcript of each session so it is possible to trace the evolution of ideas. Early in the course, I will be setting up small groups to hold chats on topics related to the readings.
RESOURCES

One of the great advantages of taking an online course is easy access to the many excellent resources on the world-wide-web. These include electronic libraries, background information on the readings, and live discussions with authors. I will be adding links to selected websites in the Web Resources section of WebCT.

STUDENT WEB PRESENTATIONS

In place of the thematic essay, or for extra credit, you may have the option of creating a web presentation related to the readings in this course. Typically, a student web presentation uses the resources of the Internet to link your essay to online information, including multimedia. Let me know if this option interests you. Ask me about this option if you are interested.

GRADING AND PARTICIPATION

Grades will be based on my evaluation of your essays (50%), a final examination on campus (20%), and class participation (30% for your responses and involvement in on-line discussions). You can estimate your running grade by dividing your accumulated points by the total number of possible points.

Your written responses to the readings (posted by you on the Response Forum) will be given up to 25 points for each week’s reading (based on the amount of thought and effort you put into them) if posted on the date due. They will be docked one or two points if posted late and receive a “0” if not posted at all.

All essays receive a numerical grade (up to 100 points for each essay). The essays and final examination will not be graded on whether your interpretation matches that of the instructor; you will be encouraged to develop your own view. Your grade will depend on how well you
articulate, support, and develop your position. Using examples and specific references to the text will help a great deal. Be sure to proofread carefully to avoid errors.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON RESPONDING TO LITERATURE:

1 **Writing responses helps you see what you think more clearly.**
   Responses can help you view and review your own ideas, and in the process help you modify and extend them in different directions. Write in your most natural voice. Don't worry about sounding profound; try instead to pin down and express what interests or annoys you or makes you curious or confused. One of the best things you can do with your responses is to look for connections to other ideas, themes, essays, stories, poems, or what others in class had to say about these things.

2 **Reading the responses of other readers enriches your experience.**
   By seeing what your classmates think and feel about the works you read, you have an opportunity to consider other perspectives. Often, someone else’s comments will help you understand something new about the work. When you reply to another student’s posting, be generous with your thoughts. Good literature has a way of connecting us as human beings, helping us appreciate our differences while recognizing what we have in common. Seek to make those connections work for you.

3 **Your responses will "build" into the material from which you derive your essays.**
   If you are conscientious about writing your response, your thesis statements and essays will emerge naturally from them. The most important ingredients in your essay will not be the positions you take, but rather the evidence you bring to support those positions and the clarity with which you express them.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Listed below is a weekly schedule. **Be prepared** to discuss each work online by reading all assignments and posting your responses by the due dates. You are expected to meet the deadlines for all four essays.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAKING CONNECTIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Participation: “Reading Ourselves” – Read Chapter 1, pages 3-10. Post your <em>Reading History</em> and respond to two other student postings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>Introduction to Poetry - Read Chapter 1, pages 10-20. Post your <em>response</em> to two of the poems in Chapter 1 and respond to one other student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>Communication: Writing About Literature-Read Chapter 2, pages 21-37. Post your <em>response</em> to “Eleven,” “Mothers,” or “Salvation,” Respond to one other student posting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>From First Response to Final Draft – Read Chapter 2, pages 37-51. Participate in a <em>Chat Group Discussion</em> on one of the stories. Submit <em>First Draft of Response Essay</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>2/20</td>
<td>Read Ibsen’s play, <em>A Doll’s House</em> (p. 557). Post <em>response</em> to the play and respond to two other postings. Submit <em>Final Draft of Response Essay</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>Reading and Analyzing Poetry – Read Chapter 3, pages 71-89. Participate in one of the poetry <em>Chat Groups</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>3/13</td>
<td>Submit <em>First Draft of Critical Essay</em> (with references to three stories and/or poems)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3/20</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>3/27</td>
<td>Introduction to Theatre. Read Chapter 3, pages 89-96. Submit <em>Final Draft of Critical Essay</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>4/3</td>
<td>Read <em>Antigone</em>, p. 104-135.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post critical response to *Antigone* and to two other postings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME AND PERSPECTIVE</th>
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| 11. 4/10 Begin reading of *Othello*, p. 1167.  
Post initial response to *Othello* and to two other postings.  
Submit First Draft of Thematic Essay |
| 12. 4/17 Continue reading of *Othello*. Participate in one of the *Othello* Chat Groups.  
Submit Final Draft of Thematic Essay |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION</th>
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| 13. 4/24 Complete reading of *Othello*.  
Read Chapter 5 (on Secondary Source Materials), pages 201-232.  
Post final response to *Othello* and to two other postings. |
| 14. 5/1 Submit First Draft of Research Essay |
| 15. 5/8 Submit Final Draft of Research Essay |

*FINAL EXAM (May 13) AAB-414 6-8 p.m.*