

## Writing 4A—The Critical Essay: Literature and the Arts

**Texts:** Sylvan Barnet et al., *Literature for Composition: Essays, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*; Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

**Monday, 19 July:** Morning: Discuss how students learned to read, including reading processes and how we read different texts (letters, notes, sacred texts, literary texts, etc.). Discussion of literacy and what it means to be literate and illiterate. Can we measure literacy? Give students "Waiting for Moke," fourth grade literacy test and questions. Discuss the possibility that a value-free text exists, including the possibility of non-objectivity and bias in "Waiting for Moke." Afternoon: Read and discuss kiddies' book *Tootle the Train* as both child's text and as adults' text for children and its values. Introduce notions of interpretive communities and subject (sujet) and fable (fabula) and expectations we have when we read various types of texts. Assign for reading "The Writer as Reader" and Kate Chopin short stories, pp. 3-35. Assign: Paper One: Due: **Friday, 23 July**. Study Hall: Begin reading *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Day's Objectives:

- Students will learn to find common elements within stories and draw upon their lives as a way of understanding texts.
- Students will discuss how they acquired print literacy.
- Students will be introduced to reading in slow motion as a way of reading literature.

**Tuesday, 20 July:** Morning: Discuss storytelling and Chopin stories. Discuss relationship of anecdote to literary work. Class tells favorite stories, ghost stories, family legacy stories. Read class urban legends. Read Woolf's "A Haunted House," pp. 101-102. Discuss archetype and possibility there are transferable/transcendent elements in art. Discuss how we mark passages through stories, how story serves as a placeholder in life. Afternoon: Read Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," p. 704.

Study Hall: First Hour: Work on paper one; second hour: attend Joyce Carol Oates reading.

Day's Objectives:

- Students will learn stories are about something (gender, theme, life, etc).
- Students will learn that many literary works have common stories within stories.
- Students will hear a famous fiction writer read.

**Wednesday, 21 July:** Morning: Discuss intertextuality and love stories. Read "Love Stories," pp. 604-608, "The Love Bloat," pp. 608-609, and Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain," 610-613. Discuss and introduce irony. Read and discuss Dorothy Parker's "You Were Perfectly Fine" (handout). Afternoon: Introduce possibility that we read in both individual and communal ways. Introduce possibility that we interpret even simple cultural signs (signifiers) and their significance (signifieds) in personal as well as socially positioned ways and apply to metonymy (1372) and synecdoche (1375). Late afternoon: Read Raymond Carver short stories, "Mine," "Little Things," p. 641 and "What We Talk about When We Talk about Love," p. 643. In groups draw distinctions among Chopin, Gilman, Parker, Hemingway, and Carver's characterizations and symbolic and thematic treatments of love. Study Hall: First Hour: Work on paper 1. Second hour: Read *Mrs. Dalloway*

Day's Objectives:

- Students will read intertextually; they will be shown that they can enrich, clarify, and complicate their reading of one story in terms of a second story.

**Thursday, 22 July:** Discuss the author's "signature." What elements mark the short stories of Chopin, Gilman, Parker, Hemingway, Carver? Discuss character, language, world view, and attitudes toward characters and love. Do "ghost chaptering" exercise. In groups, "ghost chapter" and story-board a Chopin, Gilman, Hemingway, Parker, or Carver story. Afternoon: present storyboards. Read and discuss *Mrs. Dalloway*. Check paper assignments with students and go over how to write drafts of literary interpretations with appropriate pages in the textbook. Go over citation form, stress no plot retelling and that the audience are all readers familiar with the text. Derive list of thoughts about what constitutes valid interpretation and invalid interpretation.

Day's Objectives:

- Students will focus on the ways language and style contribute to an author's "signature."
- Students will see how analysis requires work on the reader's part. Reading robustly requires filling in gaps.
- Students will be given strategies for writing detailed, involved, thoughtful analytical essays.

Study Hall: Write and finish paper one.

**Friday, 23 July:** Morning: Read Paper 1 for workshops. Workshop papers until break. After break: Discuss ways to view film analytically. Discuss expectations of *Mrs. Dalloway* as film. Afternoon: Show film of *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Day's Objectives:

- Students will be introduced to peer critiquing of analytical essays.
- Students will observe how a literary text can serve as core for two different artistic media (literary into visual).

**Sunday Study Hall, Sunday July 25:** Workshop of paper 1. Read Louise Erdrich's "The Red Convertible" in class, p. 1028 and/or Tobias Wolff's "Powder" (handout)

**The overall goals for week one are the following:**

**To instruct students in ways of becoming more critical, attentive readers.**

**To heighten students' ability to scrutinize literary texts.**

**To give students strategies for transferring close reading and analysis of others' works to their own writing.**

**To show students that they can rise to the challenge of analyzing and interpreting demanding literature (*Mrs. Dalloway*).**

### \*\*\*Week Two\*\*\*

**Monday, 26 July:** Morning. Brief overview of what happened the first week. Finish workshops of paper 1. Class reads either the Erdrich short story and presents group reports on the Erdrich and Wolff short stories on cars and coming of age themes. Afternoon: Woolf walk (weather permitting) Read in class/study hall Woolfian reverie or moment papers. Assign: Paper Two. **Due Wednesday, July 28.** Study Hall: finish reading *Mrs. Dalloway*; brainstorm paper two.

Day's Objectives:

- To show students what interpretation built upon close reading and analysis requires of the reader and writer.
- To have students work from personal reader response (Woolf walk exercise) to interpretation of a section in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

**Tuesday, 27 July:** Morning: Discuss transformative elements in *Mrs. Dalloway*. 10:00-noon: Show film of *The Hours*, PG-13. Afternoon: Discuss *The Hours*, critique Stephen Daldry's directing, David Hare's screenplay, the acting. If time, read Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," and discuss modernism, p. 553. Study Hall: Write and complete paper two.

Day's objectives:

- To show students how interpretations of a common text often clash, to derive what constitutes a valid vs. invalid interpretation.
- To have students see a core text transformed into another artistic genre, to have them discover what's sacrificed/gained in transformation of a literary text into another medium.

**Wednesday, 28 July:** Two groups workshop paper two in class. Afternoon: writing classes meet to read works in progress (Davis Auditorium). Computer Room work to finish paper 2. Assign Paper Three on Flannery O' Connor short stories, "A Good Man is Hard to Find," p. 297 and "Revelation," p. 308, and Raymond Carver's "Cathedral." Goal: Assign paper three: comparison/contrast of Flannery O' Connor and Carver short stories. Study Hall Reading Night: Read the three short stories.

Day's Objectives:

- To introduce students to critical perspectives as a way to interpret fiction.
- To guide students in writing a more sophisticated detailed analytical paper than paper 1.

**Thursday, 29 July:** Morning: Discuss O'Connor and Carver short stories. Divide into three groups, present interpretations. 10:30: Trip to Tang Teaching Museum. Afternoon: Discuss "Word and Image" section in *Literature for Composition*. Compare/Contrast Icarus myth to Auden's "Musee des Beaux Arts" with Brueghel's "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus," William Carlos Williams's "The Great Figure" with the Charles Demuth print, and Greg Pape's "American Flamingo" with the Audubon print. Discuss museums and museum art. Study Hall: Visit Mass MoCA web site. Work on paper three. Assign: Freewrite on museum trip: A Visitor's Impressions of Mass MoCA.

Day's Objectives:

- To have students apply critical perspectives and unpacking of symbols to reading analytically and interpreting fiction.
- To have students apply critical reading methods and strategies to analyzing images in visual art.

**Friday, 30 July:** Field Trip to Mass MoCA. Micro-paper 3 on Mass MoCA

Day's Objectives:

- To discuss with students museums and museumship.
- To have students look with analytical and critical eyes upon visual art and texts on display.

**Sunday study hall, Sunday, 1 August:** Finish writing Mass MoCA visit papers. Work on paper three. Second hour begin reading aloud *The Glass Menagerie*.

**The overall goals for week two are the following:**

- **To have students practice carefully supportive and imaginative analytical reading of texts and work with them to construct interpretations of different literary works.**
- **To show students the uses and abuses of critical methodology in interpreting fiction.**
- **To have students apply their textual scrutiny to writing detailed, sophisticated well supported analytical papers that engage the ambiguities of the texts.**
- **To have students transfer the strategies of close reading to analysis of the visual arts.**

### \*\*\*Week Three\*\*\*

**Monday, 2 August:** Morning: Recap week two and set up third week. Discuss visit to Mass MoCA. Read mini-papers on Mass MoCA visit. Morning: Discuss differences between drama and other forms of art. Afternoon: Continue reading and discussing *The Glass Menagerie*. Study Hall: Finish writing paper three. Read Elizabeth Glaspell's short play "Trifles," p. 404.

Day's Objective:

- To ask students to apply elements of analysis to the dramatic arts: to see stage and actor in terms of textual analysis and visual aesthetics.

**Tuesday, 3 August:** Turn in paper three. Morning: watch film version of *The Glass Menagerie*. Afternoon: Compare and contrast film version *The Glass Menagerie* with play. Study Hall: free-write paper 4 on *The Glass Menagerie* or *Trifles*.

Day's Objectives:

- To have students critique Paul Newman's directing of *The Glass Menagerie*.
- To have students continue their thinking about transforming texts by sketching out director's notes to either *The Glass Menagerie* or "Trifles."
- To show students that they can build upon close reading to think like a director.

**Wednesday, 4 August:** Morning: **Paper 4 due.** In-class workshops of paper 4 (two groups). Afternoon: Read aloud *Six Degrees of Separation*. Workshop on revision, followed by take-home lesson: "Robust Revision and a little lecture on grammar, mechanics, and punctuation so you won't ever make these mistakes again." Study Hall: Work on revision paper (papers 1 or 2, 3, or mini-paper 4.) Conferences on revision choices.

Day's Objectives:

- To have students read and discuss a contemporary, mixed-media drama that questions or breaks traditional dramatic rules; to talk about the serious work of revision.
- To have students consider and work with the potential in a previous paper.
- To re-enforce upon students the vital role of revision in writing analytical papers.

**Thursday, 5 August:** Morning: 9:00-11:00 (break): Each student works on his/her revision. 11:00-lunch; afternoon: Each student reads class selections from his/her revised paper and class votes for students who will read at tomorrow's final reading. Afternoon: Discuss identifying with literary texts and art. Handout of Robert Ray's "The Culmination of Classic Hollywood: *Casablanca*." Discuss film *Casablanca* as core text for United States' values and identifying with central texts. Administer "Student Program Evaluations." 2:15-3:00. Study Hall: Show *Casablanca*.

**Day's and Week's Objectives:**

- To assist students in writing a final paper they can take home that is critically involved, supported with textual evidence, well written, and which they can feel proud of having produced.
- To leave students appreciating that they can grow up alongside art as a companion.

**Friday, 6 August:** Morning: Final reading for all writing classes. Afternoon: Writing Program Closing Ceremonies. Conferences with parents.

Day's Objective:

- To celebrate the writing we have produced and our accomplishments as a writing community.