

# Literature for the Humanities



# Literature for the Humanities

*FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE AT  
JACKSONVILLE*



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PART I

# FACULTY RESOURCES





# 1. I Need Help



Need more information about this course? Have questions about faculty resources? Can't find what you're looking for? Experiencing technical difficulties?

We're here to help! Contact [oe@achievingthedream.org](mailto:oe@achievingthedream.org) for support.



PART II

# MODULE I: THE READER AND THE TEXT



## 2. Introduction

### Module 1 – The Reader and the Text

#### Module Introduction

##### Introduction

Literature in the Humanities is an introduction to the study of the characteristics, conventions, and socio-historical contexts of the major literary forms, including the analysis and interpretation of literary elements and devices, and the application of literary theory and criticism. This course is designed to encourage a deep appreciation of literature, hone critical thinking skills, and to illustrate the importance of literature as an expression of the human cultural experience.

LIT2000, as well as all Humanities General Education courses, approaches the concept of culture as a system of meanings allowing groups and individuals to give significance to the world and mediate their relationships with each other and their known universe. Humanities courses are distinguished from traditional Liberal Arts disciplines through an emphasis on interdisciplinarity and comparative cultural contexts. Through these approaches to cultural texts and artifacts, the humanities attempt to investigate, contest, analyze, and synthesize the phenomena of human agency and subjectivity both within and between cultures. By pursuing these forms of inquiry we may better understand our world and our places within it.<sup>1</sup>

## Course Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking
- Understand cultural expressions
- Interpret and evaluate cultural artifacts and/or their contexts for significance
- Understand basic literary elements of specific genres: short story, poetry, and drama
- Analyze and evaluate selected works of literature in classroom or online settings
- Analyze and evaluate both in class discussions (whether face-to-face or electronic) and in class writing, selected works of literature
- Demonstrate and understand how literature is relevant to their personal, social, and historical awareness<sup>1</sup>

## Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Discuss the purpose of literature
- Identify metaphors and explain their role in literature
- Evaluate their own prior relationship with reading and literature<sup>1</sup>

## Readings and Resources

- Read: Learning Unit – The Reader, the Text, and the

World <sup>1</sup>(below)

- Read: Module 1 Readings (Link to [Module\\_01.pdf](#) . You will need [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to access this file) <sup>1</sup>

## Optional Further Reading

- Baldwin, James. "Letter from a Region in My Mind." *The New Yorker* 17 Nov. 1962.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By* . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* . Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

# 3. The Purpose of Literature

## What is literature for?

One of the primary goals of this course is to develop an understanding of the importance of literature as a vital source of cultural knowledge in everyday life. Literature is often viewed as a collection of made-up stories, designed to entertain us, to amuse us, or to simply provide us with an escape from the “real” world.

Although literature does serve these purposes, in this course, one of the ways that we will answer the question “What is literature for?” is by showing that literature can provide us with valuable insights about the *world* in which we live and about our *relationships* to one another, as well as to *ourselves*. In this sense, literature may be considered a vehicle for the exploration and discovery of our world and the culture in which we live. It allows us to explore alternative realities, to view things from the perspective of someone completely different to us, and to reflect upon our own intellectual and emotional responses to the complex challenges of everyday life.

By studying literature, it is possible to develop an in-depth understanding of the ways that we use language to make sense of the world. According to the literary scholars, Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, “Stories are everywhere,” and therefore, “Not only do we tell stories, but stories tell us: if stories are everywhere, we are also in stories.” From the moment each one of us is born, we are surrounded by stories — oftentimes these stories are told to us by parents, family members, or our community. Some of these stories are ones that we read for ourselves, and still others are stories that we tell to ourselves about who we are, what we desire, what we fear, and what we value. Not all of these stories are typically considered “literary” ones, but in this course, we will develop a more detailed



understanding of how studying literature can enrich our knowledge about ourselves and the world in which we live.

If literature helps us to make sense of, or better yet question, the world and our place in it, then how does it do this? It may seem strange to suggest that literature performs a certain kind of work. However, when we think of other subjects, such as math or science, it is generally understood that the skills obtained from mastering these subjects equips us to solve practical problems. Can the same be said of literature?

To understand the kind of work that literature can do, it is important to understand the kind of knowledge that it provides. This is a very complex and widely debated question among literary scholars. But one way of understanding the kind of knowledge that can be gained from literature is by thinking about how we use language to make sense of the world each day.<sup>(1)</sup>

## What does literature do?

Every day we use **metaphors** to describe the world. What is a metaphor? According to A DICTIONARY OF LITERARY TERMS AND LITERARY THEORY, a metaphor is “a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another.” You have probably heard the expressions, “Time is money” or “The administration is a train wreck.” These expressions are metaphors because they describe one less clearly defined idea, like time or the administration of an institution, in relation to a concept whose characteristics are easier to imagine.

A metaphor forms an implied comparison between two terms whereas a **simile** makes an explicit comparison between two terms using the words like or as — for example, in his poem, “A Red, Red Rose,” the Scottish poet Robert Burns famously announces, “O my Luve is like a red, red rose/That’s newly sprung in June.” The association of romantic love with red roses is so firmly established

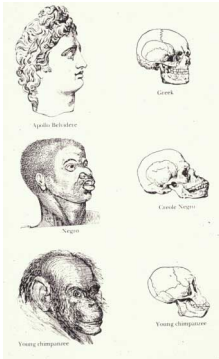
in our culture that one need only look at the imagery associated with Valentine's Day to find evidence of its persistence. The knowledge we gain from literature can have a profound influence on our patterns of thought and behavior.

In their book *METAPHORS WE LIVE BY*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson outline a number of metaphors used so often in everyday conversation that we have forgotten that they are even metaphors, for example, the understanding that "Happy is up" or that "Sad is down." Likewise, we might think "Darkness is death" or that "Life is light." Here we can see that metaphors help us to recognize and make sense of a wide range of very complex ideas and even emotions. Metaphors are powerful, and as a result they can even be problematic.

The author Toni Morrison has argued that throughout history the language used by many white authors to describe black characters often expresses ideas of fear or dread — the color black and black people themselves come to represent feelings of loathing, mystery, or dread. Likewise, James Baldwin has observed that whiteness is often presented as a metaphor for safety.<sup>(1)</sup>

Figure 1 is taken from a book published in 1857 entitled *INDIGENOUS RACES OF THE EARTH*. It demonstrates how classical ideas of beauty and sophistication were associated with an idealized version of white European society whereas people of African descent were considered to be more closely related to apes. One of Morrison's tasks as a writer is to rewrite the racist literary language that has been used to describe people of color and their lives.

By being able to identify and question the metaphors that we live by, it is possible to gain a better understanding of how we view our world, as well as our relationship to others and ourselves. It is important to critically examine these metaphors because they have very real consequences for our lives.<sup>(1)</sup>



**Figure 1** – “[Races and Skulls](#)” by Nott, Josiah, and George R. Giddon, [Wikimedia Commons](#) is in the [Public Domain, CC0](#) An illustration demonstrating the racist belief that people of African descent were as distinct from so-called “Caucasians” as the Chimpanzee.

## 4. Literature's Forms and Parts

### Literature's forms and parts

This course will explore three main categories or **genres** of literature – fiction, poetry, and drama. For each one of these genres of literature, there are numerous **subgenres**, which consist of different styles or approaches to writing stories, composing poems, and performing dramas. Although these genres all differ from one another in significant ways, the general approaches to reading and interpreting that we will develop in this course can be somewhat easily be applied from one genre to another.

Most works of literature may be understood to be composed of three major aspects: **content**, **form**, and **context**. Taking an active approach to reading means focusing on the relationship between these three major aspects of a literary work. While at first it can be difficult to analyze the content, form, and context of a text simultaneously, learning to break down these key aspects and focus on them one at a time will help develop your abilities to think critically and write specifically about literature. Over time, as you become more comfortable and confident with the tasks of analysis, you will be able to see how each of these key aspects are interconnected and work together to create sophisticated works of literature. <sup>(1)</sup>

## Content

**Content** includes the themes, ideas, and the subject matter of a specific poem, story, or play.<sup>(1)</sup>

## Form

**Form** is a broad term that encompasses all the specific literary or rhetorical elements that make up how a poem, story, or play is written. Examples include sentence-level literary devices with which you may already be familiar, such as metaphor, simile or personification. But form also includes the overall structure and style of a work, such as whether a poem is written in a specific pattern, as in a sonnet, or whether a story is narrated from a specific point of view, such as the first-person perspective.

There are seemingly innumerable literary and rhetorical devices, which vary slightly depending on the genre of literature. Later modules in the course will enumerate some of the most useful literary devices for each genre, but broadly, analyzing the form of a literary work means analyzing the structure and the use of language. Increasing your understanding of different types of literary structures, literary devices, and rhetorical strategies can become a very useful toolkit for writing effective analyses.<sup>(1)</sup>

## Context

Every work of literature was created in a specific historical and literary **context**. Likewise, almost all literary works will refer to elements of other literary works. Analyzing how the literary, social, and cultural dynamics of that specific context may have influenced the writing of the literary work — or perhaps how it was published

and received in its time — adds another important layer of understanding. However, interpretations of literary texts also change over time as the expectations and values of readers change. Further consideration of the context may benefit from targeted analysis of the **audience**. As a reader, you are also a crucial member of any text's audience. <sup>(1)</sup>

## Close reading

To conclude, let's take a close look at a short poem by the British poet John Keats. In this poem, the poet reflects upon the transformative experience of reading the epic poetry of Homer translated into English by the playwright George Chapman. In contrast to other popular translations of Homer's work, the translation by Chapman was instantly more relatable for Keats due to its less formal tone and more lively style of writing.

First listen to the recording of the poem, and then read it a second time on your own. Perhaps do some research to look up the definitions of any unfamiliar words. <sup>(1)</sup>

### *“On First Looking into Chapman's Homer”*

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold, And many  
goodly states and kingdoms seen; Round many western  
islands have I been Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told That deep-browed  
Homer ruled as his demesne; Yet did I never breathe its pure  
serene Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold: Then  
felt I like some watcher of the skies When a new planet  
swims into his ken; Or like stout Cortez when with eagle  
eyes He star'd at the Pacific — and all his men Look'd at each  
other with a wild surmise — Silent, upon a peak in Darien. <sup>(2)</sup>

The poem contains a number of implied and explicit metaphors. Try

to identify some on your own, and then click on the words below to view the completed metaphors. <sup>(1)</sup>

*Click on the missing word in each sentence below to reveal the answer*

Reading is \_\_\_\_\_

A poem is \_\_\_\_\_

Poetry \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Module 1 Assessments

### Module 1 Discussion: The Purpose of Literature

#### Directions:

Choose this link to access *Module 1 Discussion: What is the purpose of literature?*

After reviewing the content in this module's learning object, consider this statement from the American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, "That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, and that you are not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong." Does this statement reflect your own experience with literature? Why or why not?

#### Submission:

Reply to at least two other students, aiming to notice patterns, commonalities and interesting differences in our learning community. All posts should be written in complete sentences and are expected to meet the standards for college-level writing. Original posts should be at least five sentences in length; replies should be at least three sentences in length.

#### Grading:

This discussion is worth 20 points toward your final grade and will



be graded using the Discussion Rubric. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this discussion.<sup>1</sup>

## Course Journal: Your Experience as a Reader.

**Directions:** Choose this link to access *Journal 1: Your Experience as a Reader*.

At the beginning of this course, pause for a moment and consider your reading history, not simply as a college student but as a human being. For example:

- What are your earliest memories of reading literature?
- What is the most difficult literature you have ever read? The most inspiring?
- Have there been relationships that have influenced or impacted your experience of reading literature?

While you need not respond to all of these questions in writing, actively use them as springboards to consciously consider the attitudes and formative experiences you are bringing with you into this course. Write a reflective journal that takes stock of your attitude toward reading literature; refer to specific examples and/or experiences wherever possible. Required length: 300 – 400 words.

**Submission:** To submit your entry, choose the link titled, *Journal 1*, above. Choose the “Create Journal Entry” button and complete your entry using the text editor box. Include hyperlinks to relevant texts, videos, or images. Also consider embedding images or videos in your entry to make it more interactive. Be sure to give your entry a title and complete your submission by choosing the “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 10 points and will be graded

using the Journal Rubric. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this assignment.<sup>1</sup>

## Course Assignment: Exploring Metaphors

**Directions:** Read Emily Dickinson's poem "There is no Frigate like a Book" in the Module 1 Readings. Then, listen to the recording of it below. After reading the poem carefully and looking up any unfamiliar words, write a 400 – 600 word essay in which you identify the poem's central metaphor and explain what that metaphor reveals about the work that literature can perform. To fully develop your idea, explain how the poem's central metaphor relates to each complete thought in the poem (note that each pair of lines forms a complete sentence)<sup>1</sup>.

["There is no Frigate like a Book"](#)<sup>3</sup> ([LibriVox recording](#)<sup>4</sup>)

### Submission:

To submit your essay, choose the link titled, *Essay 1: Exploring Metaphors*, above. Use the "Browse My Computer" button in the Attach File area to attach your document. Be sure to complete your submission by choosing the "Submit" button at the bottom of the screen.<sup>1</sup>

### Grading:

This assignment is worth 80 points and will be graded using the *Essay* rubric. Please use it as a guide to successful completion of this assignment.<sup>1</sup>

PART III

# MODULE 2: RESPONDING TO FICTION



# 6. Introduction

## Module 2 – Responding to Fiction

### Module Introduction

#### Introduction

Perhaps you have heard the expression, “Everybody loves a good story.” Reading fiction is widely thought to be for the purpose of enjoyment. In fact, that is why some people were skeptical of fiction (novels in particular) when it began to rise in popularity in the 18th century. It was feared that reading and enjoying literature based on the imagination – even fantasy – might corrupt the moral reasoning of the audience, although these fears did not significantly dampen the growth and popularity of the genre. In addition to providing entertainment, reading fiction is a particularly effective way of developing complex reasoning and active reading skills that can be applied to numerous other professional and academic pursuits.

The selection of fiction included in this module is not intended to represent a comprehensive survey of every major time period, literary style, or culture. Instead, the works of fiction included in this module were selected because of their unique narrative complexity. Adding to our close reading skills, we will aim to deepen our analysis more actively consider how an understanding of the formal elements of fiction can help us to analyze and interpret literary texts. This module will focus on works of short fiction by Edgar Allan Poe, Franz Kafka, and William Faulkner. The genre of fiction includes of course much longer works than short stories.

Novels (full-length books) and novellas (shorter books that are still longer than a short story) have played a major role in the development of the genre. For the purposes of introductory study, however, this module focuses on short fiction, or the short story.<sup>1</sup>

## Course Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking
- Interpret and evaluate cultural artifacts and/or their contexts for significance
- Understand basic literary elements of specific genres: short story, poetry, and drama
- Analyze and evaluate selected works of literature in classroom or online settings
- Analyze and evaluate both in class discussions (whether face-to-face or electronic) and in class writing, selected works of literature
- Demonstrate and understand how literature is relevant to their personal, social, and historical awareness<sup>1</sup>

## Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Describe the general history of the development of literary genres
- Recognize literary elements and formal structures of fiction
- Describe themes and major ideas of selected short fiction

- Interpret selected short fiction for meaning and significance
- Analyze fiction in writing
- Develop a literary analysis of a specific short story<sup>1</sup>

## Readings and Resources

- Read: Learning Object: Fiction and Active Reading<sup>(1)</sup> (see below)
- Read: Module 2 Readings (Attached above [Module\\_02.pdf](#) . You will need [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to access this file)

## Optional Further Reading

- Eagleton, Robert. *Contemporary Fiction: A Very Short Introduction* . Oxford: OUP, 2013.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Malden: John Wiley & Sons, 2011.
- Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five: A Novel* . New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2009.

# 7. Active Reading and Fiction

## Active Reading

One of the goals of this course is to develop complex **reasoning skills** by learning how to **actively** read literary texts. Firstly, what are complex reasoning skills? Complex reasoning can be understood as the ability to analyze and interpret many different kinds of information, and then to draw conclusions based on the inferences you develop about the meaning of that information. To infer means to find a non-obvious answer to a complex problem or question. **Inferences** are developed by making use of the knowledge that you already have, by combining that with insights you gain from reading and research, and finally by applying that knowledge to offer a unique conclusion to a problem or question that is often open-ended — a problem or question for which there might be numerous possible solutions.

Studying literature and writing about it are particularly effective ways of developing complex reasoning skills because the best literary texts always pose readers with certain kinds of intellectual or **interpretive challenges**. An interpretive challenge can be any aspect of a work of literature that motivates us to ask the very basic question, “What does this mean?” By seeking to answer this question, we are motivated to dig deeper into questions about language, human life, and our responses to the conflicts and challenges we encounter each day.

To take an **active** approach to reading means to read with a purpose. Rather than treating texts as a set of instructions with a clearly specified purpose or meaning, when we read actively, we look for patterns, contradictions, and challenges within in a text. Studying literature is an effective way of developing active reading skills because the language of literary texts is uniquely designed



to stimulate and challenge our imaginations. What distinguishes literary texts from other kinds of texts is the way that creative writers use language in very unique, often confusing ways. This is also the thing that can frustrate students most about reading literature. Because authors often make it a point not to tell us explicitly what their texts mean, many people find their ambiguity to be troubling, even unsettling.

In this module, you will learn about the basic history of short fiction and the literary movements that have contributed to the development of fiction in English literature. Most importantly, you will be introduced to some basic approaches to reading actively which will help you to identify and respond to the interpretive challenges posed in works of short fiction. You will learn to apply your complex reasoning skills by developing a written analysis of a work of fiction. **Analytical writing** is grounded in strong critical thinking and attention to specifics in supporting ideas. The word analysis literally means to break something down into parts. A scientist may analyze a chemical compound to determine the elements from which it is made. Similarly, **analyzing literature** — and learning to write analytically about literature — consists of reading for specific elements and noticing how those elements are assembled to form a whole work. An effective literary analysis involves active reading and complex reasoning skills.<sup>(1)</sup>

## About Fiction

The genre of fiction consists of written works of any length that narrate events that are mainly imaginary. Of course, many works of fiction are inspired by and often incorporate “real world” events. Nevertheless, a work of fiction is the product of the author’s imagination. As discussed in Module 1, the important thing to remember about works of fiction is that they are fundamentally metaphorical in nature. Works of fiction offer their readers the

opportunity to follow them as they complete the proposition, “Imagine the world as if...” By portraying or representing unique characters, conflicts, and imaginary worlds to readers, fiction writers provide us with the opportunity to reflect back on the ways that we view our own “real-world” conflicts and perhaps offer us opportunities to imagine new ways of thinking, acting, and living in our own world.

Many works of fiction aim to be **realistic** in that the stories attempt to represent people and society as the author perceives them to be. However, other fictional works may aim to create more **fantastical** realities. Such works may take the form of myths and legends or more contemporary fantasy literature. Fiction may take the form of a novel, a novella, or a short story. Some of the earliest novels were even published as **serials**, stories which were printed as short chapters in newspapers and magazines before being released as a whole book.

The origins of the **short story** may be traced to the oral traditions of many cultures, whether in the origin stories (sometimes called myths) of indigenous cultures, Greek drama, or European epics (long, narrative poems). A few early examples of short stories printed separately between 1790 and 1810 exist, but the first collections of short stories appeared between 1810 and 1830 in several countries around the same time. One of the earliest short stories was by the American writer Charles Brockden Brown. *MEMOIRS OF CARWIN THE BILOQUIST*, a fragment of what was intended to be a larger work, was published from 1803–1805. Other U.S. authors such as Washington Irving (author of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and “Rip Van Winkle”), Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allen Poe, further popularized the short story in America. In Europe, Thomas Hardy (England), Guy de Maupassant (France), and Anton Chekhov (Russia) were, and are, considered to be masters of the short story.

The short story cemented its status as a commercial success with the rise of printed journals and magazines in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, writers such as Ernest

Hemingway, William Faulkner, Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Eudora Welty, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce, to name but a few modern writers, refined and stretched the formal structures and literary styles of fiction, elevating the genre from popular status to be considered high art as well. In contemporary times, while novels remain popular, the short story seems to have an increasing readership with subgenres such as micro-fiction, flash fiction or nanofiction (super short stories), and graphic fiction (illustrated stories) continuing to broaden the appeal of the genre.<sup>(1)</sup>

# 8. Literary Movements

## Literary Movements

As mentioned in the previous module, attention to the **context** in which a work of literature was created and distributed is a critical layer to include in one's analysis. Beyond specific historical or cultural events relevant to a given literary work, appreciating the rise and fall of the prominence of particular literary movements can inform the interpretations of what we read. There are four major literary movements applicable to the study of modern short fiction: **Romanticism**, **Realism**, **Naturalism**, and **Modernism**.

**Romanticism** was an artistic and intellectual movement that originated in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century characterized by a heightened interest in nature and an emphasis on individual expression of emotion and imagination. Romanticism flourished from the early to the mid-nineteenth century, partly as a reaction to the rationalism and empiricism of the previous age (the Enlightenment). In fiction, Romanticism is often expressed through an emphasis on the individual (a main character) and the expression of his or her emotional experience, such as by having the plot coincide with the character's emotional conflicts. In opposition to the logic of the previous age, Romantic fiction sometimes even returns to Gothic elements, which often includes stories about the supernatural or the uncanny. (An example of this literary movement in this module is Edgar Allan Poe's "A Descent into the Maelström.")

**Realism** was an artistic and intellectual movement of the late nineteenth century that stressed the faithful representation of reality or **verisimilitude**. Realism was a reaction to what were viewed as the exaggerations or flights of fancy of Romanticism. Realists sought to develop an artistic style that valued the faithful portrayal of everyday experience, what Henry James described as

“the drama of a broken tea cup.” The development of realism coincided with the rise of social reform movements and many realistic writers and artists chose to focus on social issues, such as poverty and the plight of the working class, in cities as well as in the country. The height of realist writing in American literature is considered to have occurred from the time of the U.S. Civil War (c. 1865) to the turn of the century (c. 1900). Realism as a literary movement swept across the country. This wave also fostered an interest in **Regionalism**, the realistic portrayal of specific areas and locales almost as a fictional form of travel literature. It should be noted that literary realism was equally popular in Europe, such as in the work of Charles Dickens or George Eliot in England, Honoré de Balzac and Gustave Flaubert in France, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Leo Tolstoy in Russia.

Overlapping with the development of Realism was the literary movement known as **Naturalism** (approximately 1880–1930). Naturalist literature sought to apply scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to the characters and subjects represented in novels and short fiction. In this way, Naturalism is influenced more by philosophical ideals than literary techniques including, though not exclusively, existentialism and social determinism. Characters in naturalistic stories frequently confront social conditions or personal conflicts which cannot be reconciled through the exercise of free will alone; these characters may fall upon tragic circumstance due to their social class, the harsh realities of nature or the inner strife of conflicting emotions, morals, and passions. Naturalist authors borrowed some of the stylistic innovations of Realism, yet often felt Realist works did not portray everyday experience in its full grit and trauma, remaining more to middle class tastes. In order to convey what they felt to be the harshness of life circumstances across the spectrum of human experience, some Naturalist writers combined elements of Realism (a focus on the everyday) with elements of Romanticism (a focus on emotion and symbolism) in order to portray what they understood to be the futility of human striving in an indifferent universe.

**Modernism** became the predominant literary and artistic movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Modernism is a broad term referring to the social thought, cultural expressions, and artistic techniques that broke with past traditions following the political upheavals across Europe in the mid-1800s (including the French Revolution) through the horrors of the first World War, as well as the scientific and technological developments flowing from the Industrial Revolution. Yet, ‘modernism’ also is a term that is specifically used in relation to a precise style of fiction that attempted to chronicle the personal alienation, cultural disruption, and even loneliness of living in a century of rapid and often traumatic change. Some modernist literature (Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, William Faulkner) relied on a style of writing known as **stream-of-consciousness**, where the narrative followed the organic (and sometimes chaotic) pathways of one or more characters’ thoughts. Other modernist authors, such as Hemingway, sought to pare down the comparatively flowery language of previous literary movements and present the complexity of modern life through crisp, sharp detail. Many modernist writers sought to create work that represented not simply a moment or a region (as in Realistic fiction) but a larger, universal truth that transcended personal experience. (Examples of this literary movement in this module include William Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily” and Franz Kafka’s “Before the Law.”)

The Modernist movement (which many believe is still active) is followed by **postmodern** innovations in fiction; post-modernist literature extends the disillusionment and disruption that characterized modernism by further fragmenting language and literary structures, even by creating “hybrid” forms so that it becomes less clear what is a poem and what is a story, for example. Some postmodernist literature exaggerates the irony at the height of Modernism to the point of becoming parody, obscuring what is comic and what is tragic about the subjects being represented. This course does not include an example of a postmodern short story (largely due to the difficulty in securing copyright of recent works) but students should be aware that a sizable body of literature

exists that would no longer be best classified as “Modernist.” The work of the American author Kurt Vonnegut, particularly his novel SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE, is a prime example of postmodern fiction.<sup>(1)</sup>

# 9. Elements of Fiction

## The Formal Elements of Fiction

Active reading involves reading a text and analyzing its features to determine its potential meanings. A common approach to analyzing short fiction is to focus on five basic elements: **plot** , **character** , **setting** , **conflict** , and **theme** .

The **plot** of a work of fiction is the series of events and character actions that relate to the central conflict. A **character** is a person, or perhaps an animal, who participates in the action of the story. The **setting** of a piece of fiction is the time and place in which the events happen, including the landscape, scenery, buildings, seasons, or weather. The **conflict** is a struggle between two people or things in a short story. The main character is usually on one side of the central conflict. The **theme** is the central idea or issue conveyed by the story. These five basic elements combine to form what might be called the overall **narrative** of story. In the next section, we will discuss the narrative arc of fiction in more detail.

Below are the formal elements of fiction and questions that will help you to read texts actively.

## Questions for Active Reading:

### *Plot*

- How does the text present the passing of time?
- Does it present time in a chronological way?
- Or does it present the event in a non-chronological way?



- What verb tenses are used? (i.e. past, present, future)

## *Character*

- How are the characters described?
- Do the characters talk in unique or peculiar ways?
- Are the names of the characters important or meaningful?
- What kind of conflicts emerge between the characters?

## *Setting*

- When and where does the story seem to take place?
- Is there anything important or meaningful in regards to the time of day or time of year the story seems to take place?
- Is there any significance to the atmospheric, environmental, or weather events that take place?

## *Conflict*

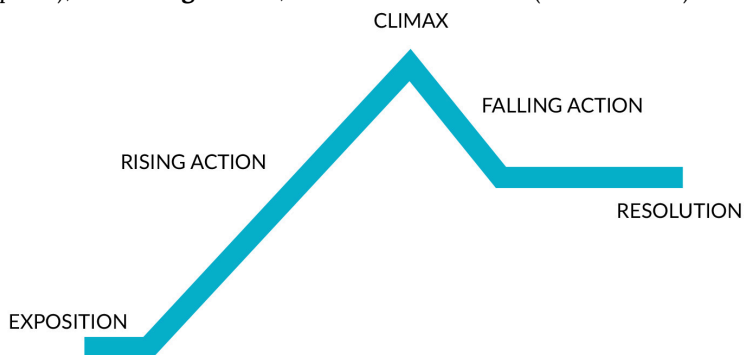
- What problem or issue serves as the story's focus?
- Is the conflict an explicit one between the story's characters?
- Or is there a larger question or concern that is implied through the story's narration?

## *Theme*

- What is the relationship between the title of the story and the text?
- What main issue or idea does the story address? <sup>(1)</sup>

## Narrative Arc

The narrative arc — or dramatic structure — of a story may be divided into several phases of development. One traditional method of the analysis of fiction involves identifying five major stages of the development of the plot. The five major stages are known as the **exposition** (or introduction), **the rising action** (sometimes referred to as complicating action), **the climax** (or turning point), **the falling action**, and **the denouement** (or resolution).



The narrative arcFSCJ | licensed under CC-BY 4.0

The **exposition** of a story introduces characters' backstory and key information about the setting. With this foundation laid, the dramatic tension then builds, thus creating the **rising action** of the story through a series of related events that complicate and exacerbate the major conflicts of the story. The turning point of the story occurs at the **climax** that typically changes the main character's fate or reveals how the conflict will move toward resolution, either favorably or perhaps tragically. The **falling action** works to unravel the tension at the core of the major conflict or conflicts in the story and between the characters, although it may include one last twist that impacts the resolution of events. **Denouement** is derived from the Old French word *desnouer* ("to untie"); the term suggests that the knot of conflict generating the tension in the story at last is loosened. Of

course, not every aspect of the conflict may be resolved or may be resolved to the satisfaction of the reader. Indeed, in some stories, the author may intend that the reader should be left to weigh the validity or even the morality of further outcomes.

While these five stages of dramatic structure are very helpful in analyzing fiction, they can be applied too strictly making a story seem like one linear series of events in straight chronological order. Some of the most engaging and well-crafted works of fiction break or interrupt the linear structure of events, perhaps through the manipulation of time (as in the use of **flashback** or **flash forward**) or through the inclusion of an extended **interior monologue** (a digression into the interior thoughts, memories, and/or feelings of a particular character). Therefore, readers should be careful not to simplify the plot of a story into an ordered, numerical list of events.

The terms **protagonist** (main character, or hero/heroine) and **antagonist** (anti-hero/ine) can be helpful in highlighting the roles of the major characters in a story. The story also may unfold through a particular **point-of-view**, or even through alternating points-of-view. The two most utilized narrative perspectives to consider are **first-person point-of-view** where the protagonist narrates the story from the voice of “I,” and **third-person point-of-view**, or **omniscient** point-of-view, where the narrative refers to each character as “he,” “she,” or “it” thus offering a more distanced perspective on events.

Readers may be persuaded, or not, of a narrative’s **credibility** through point-of-view(s) and/or the presentation of the **persona** of the narrator (if there is one). A persona is the role that one assumes or displays in public; in literature, it is the presented face or speaking voice of a character. Credibility is the quality of being believed, convincing, or trustworthy. When the credibility of a text is called into question, perhaps as a result of conflicting accounts of events, or detected bias in a point-of-view, the text is said to have an **unreliable narrator**. Sometimes authors choose to intentionally create an unreliable narrator either to raise suspense, obscure their own

position on a subject, or as a means of critiquing a particular cultural or social perspective.

Additionally, to analyze a short story more closely, as in poetry, students may also pay attention to the use of **figurative language** . Figurative language, such as the use of **imagery** and **symbol** can be especially significant in fiction. What brings value to one's analysis is the critical thought that prioritizes which of these many formal elements is most significant to communicating the meaning of the story and connects how these formal elements work together to form the unique whole of a given fictional work. <sup>(1)</sup>

# 10. Module 2 Assessments

## Discussion Board

**Directions:** Choose this link to access *Module 2 Discussion: Kafka's Dark Sayings: Interpreting the Parable of "Before the Law"*.

Franz Kafka's short story "Before the Law" (see Module 2 Readings and [LibriVox](#) <sup>(6)</sup> recording) was first published in a Jewish magazine in 1915. It was later included in his novel, *The Trial* which was published after his death in 1925. "Before the Law" has traditionally been interpreted by scholars as a parable. The word *parable* comes from the Greek word *parabolē*, which means side throwing or comparison, and thus a parable is a short story, like a fable, which presumably teaches a moral or lesson in the form of an extended analogy. Parables are often associated with the Hebrew Bible as well as the New Testament. In Hebrew, the word for parable can also be translated as a "dark saying." This translation suggests that the meaning of a moral of parable is not always immediately clear to the reader. After reading Kafka's "Before the Law," offer your own interpretation of the parable's meaning. What moral or lesson does it seem to be offering? How do you interpret the story's main conflict and the characters involved in it?

**Submission:** Reply to at least two other students, aiming to notice patterns, commonalities and interesting differences in our learning community. All posts should be written in complete sentences and are expected to meet the standards for college-level writing. Original posts should be at least five sentences in length; replies should be at least three sentences in length.

**Grading:** This discussion is worth 20 points toward your final grade and will be graded using the Discussion Rubric. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this discussion <sup>1</sup>.

## Course Journal: Journal 2 – Exploring Narrative Perspective in Poe’s “A Descent into the Maelström”

**Directions:** Choose this link to access *Journal 2: Exploring Narrative Perspective in Poe’s “A Descent into the Maelström”*.

Read the text and listen along to the audio recording of Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “A Descent into the Maelström.” The [LibriVox](#) <sup>(8)</sup> audio recording features a brief and informative biography of Poe. This enigmatic story describes the experience of a sailor’s escape from a whirlpool. It is constructed as a story within a story features a complex narrative perspective. In this journal entry, you will reflect upon the story’s use of differing narrative perspectives.

- How many narrators or voices are present within the story?
- What skill ultimately enables the sailor to escape the whirlpool?
- What relationship does the story’s title have to its approach to narrative perspective?
- Finally, can you connect this story’s narrative style to another work of fiction, such as another book, film, television show, or perhaps even a song?

**Submission:** To submit your entry, choose the link titled, Journal 2, above. Choose the “Create Journal Entry” button and complete your entry using the text editor box. Include hyperlinks to relevant texts, videos, or images. Also consider embedding images or videos in your entry to make it more interactive. Be sure to give your entry a title and complete your submission by choosing the “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 10 points and will be graded using the Journal Rubric. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this assignment. <sup>1</sup>

## Course Assignment: Essay 2 – Literary Analysis

**Directions:** In this essay, you will write an 800 – 1000 word literary analysis of William Faulkner’s short story, “A Rose for Emily” in the Module 2 Readings. Using the formal elements of fiction described in the learning object for this module, identify an interpretive challenge in this story – some aspect of the story that begs the question, “What does this mean?” If you have difficulty identifying or describing an interpretive challenge for the story, consult the list of questions that correspond to each element of fiction in the **Questions for Active Reading** diagram (see tab 4 of the Module 2 Learning Unit).

In order to provide a detailed and well-supported answer to your interpretive challenge, in your essay you must refer to each other elements of fiction in the story. For example, if you choose to describe the story’s main theme, your essay must also examine aspects of the story’s plot, characters, setting, and conflict.

**Submission:** Post the assignment using the *Essay 2: Literary Analysis* link above. Use the “Browse My Computer” button in the Attach File area to attach your document. Be sure to complete your submission by choosing the “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 80 points and will be graded using the Essay rubric. Please use it as a guide to successful completion of this assignment <sup>1</sup>.





PART IV

# MODULE 3: THE ART OF POETRY



## II. Introduction

### Module 3 – The Art of Poetry

#### Module Introduction

##### Introduction

A key skill to develop in reading literature is the ability to perform what is known as a “close reading.” Beyond reading for basic understanding of the main ideas, “close reading” demands attention to detail and an appreciation for how a piece of writing is constructed. Upon completing a “close reading,” you will be able to answer not only the more obvious “what” questions

- “What was that poem about?”
- “What does it mean?”

You also will be able to answer the more complex “how” questions ...

- “How did the writer use language in a unique or challenging way?”
- “How does the reader respond to the writer’s unique use of language?”

and more challenging “why” questions, such as

- “Why did the writer use that metaphor?” and
- “Why did the author risk confusing the reader with ambiguous

language?”

An effective way to practice close reading is to focus our attention on the precise use of language and the structure of a poem. Perhaps you may feel less experienced or less confident in reading poetry in comparison to reading a short story. (Or perhaps you are very experienced and can help guide your classmates.) Wherever you are on the spectrum of novice to expert, learning to actively read poetry will ensure that whatever genre we read we will have the skill set to notice detail, appreciate the use of language, and to discern subtlety in literary craftsmanship.

This module contains a variety of types of poetry from different time periods and different literary traditions. The selections are not meant to be inclusive of every tradition of poetry; rather, these poems offer good opportunities to practice active reading and complex reasoning skills and to build a strong foundation in “close reading” that will serve us well for the duration of the course.<sup>1</sup>

## Course Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking
- Recognize the relationships between cultural expressions and their contexts
- Understand cultural expressions
- Interpret and evaluate cultural artifacts and/or their contexts for significance
- Understand basic literary elements of specific genres: short story, poetry, and drama
- Analyze and evaluate selected works of literature in classroom or online settings

- Analyze and evaluate both in class discussions (whether face-to-face or electronic) and in class writing, selected works of literature
- Demonstrate and understand how literature is relevant to their personal, social, and historical awareness<sup>1</sup>

## Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Recognize literary elements and formal structures of poetry
- Describe themes and major ideas of selected poems
- Interpret selected poems for meaning and significance
- Analyze poetry in writing
- Develop a full-length analysis of a specific poem<sup>1</sup>

## Readings and Resources

- Read: Learning Object: The Art of Poetry<sup>(1)</sup>
- Read: Module 3 Readings (Attached above [Module\\_03.pdf](#) . You will need [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to access this file)
- Listen: “Ode to the West Wind” by Percy Bysshe Shelley ( [LibriVox](#)<sup>(14)</sup> recording)
- Listen: “Sonnet 19” by John Milton ( [LibriVox](#)<sup>(16)</sup> recording)

## Optional Further Reading

- Hirsch, Edward. *How to Read a Poem: And Fall in Love with Poetry* . New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1999.

- Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* . London; New York: Routledge, 1982.

## 12. Poetic Forms and Language

### What does poetry do?

In the introductory module, it was suggested that all literature is basically metaphorical in nature. We also explored the important role that **metaphors** play in everyday life — in short, we use metaphors each day to make comparisons between the concrete world that we inhabit and the abstract world of ideas and human experience. In this module, we will explore the art of poetry and, once again, we will develop an understanding of how metaphors, in addition to other types of literary and figurative language, are used in poems to give shape and meaning to a wide range of human experiences.

In his book *HOW TO READ A POEM AND FALL IN LOVE WITH POETRY*, Edward Hirsch suggests that “Poetry is made of metaphor. It is a collision, a collusion, a compression of two unlike things: A is B.” Therefore, reading poetry helps to broaden our understanding of power of language to provide more than just literal meaning — the sort of meaning that can be obtained from a dictionary. Instead, as Hirsch argues, “Poetry evokes a language that moves beyond the literal and, consequently, a mode of thinking that moves beyond the literal.” Because poets use language in unique and often challenging ways, reading poetry, like reading fiction, is an ideal way of developing complex reasoning and proficiency in active reading.

Poetry invites the reader to actively participate in the process of making meaning through language. The basic structure of metaphors consists of drawing comparisons between unlike things, and when we strive to understand, or infer, the connections that may exist between these unlike things, we begin to build our ability

to think critically and creatively about language. From a literary standpoint, poetry is an essentially oral art form. It is meant to be read aloud. When we participate in constructing meaning by reading actively and making inferences, we participate in a kind of performance that is very similar to the dynamic between a singer and her audience. The poet will often even rely on the reader to fill-in the gaps or spaces in a poem with our own thoughts and emotions. The very best poetry is, therefore, deeply participatory.

Metaphors are essential to this participatory dynamic. Oftentimes, an entire poem can function as a kind of metaphor that attempts to make an abstract, or less clearly defined, concept more accessible for the reader. Poems do this by employing vivid **imagery** and **similes** (the comparison of two unlike things using *like* or *as* ). For example, in his poem “Dulce et Decorum est,” the British poet Wilfred Owen challenges a romantic understanding of the “glories” of war by offering the reader a vivid portrayal of the suffering that he witnessed on the battlefield during World War I. In this poem, Owen contradicts the ancient, patriotic motto, “It is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country,” by portraying war as a kind of twisted nightmare.

Read and listen to the poem, and pay particular attention to how the poem uses imagery and similes to make the experience of war accessible to readers. <sup>(1)</sup>

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#### “Dulce et Decorum est” <sup>(17)</sup>

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks, Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge, Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs And towards our distant rest began to trudge. Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind; Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind. Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling, Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time; But someone still was yelling out and stumbling And flound’ring like a man in fire or lime... Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light, As under a green sea, I saw him



drowning. In all my dreams, before my helpless sight, He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning. If in some smothering dreams you too could pace Behind the wagon that we flung him in, And watch the white eyes writhing in his face, His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin; If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs, Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,— My friend, you would not tell with such high zest To children ardent for some desperate glory, The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori* .

## Poetic Forms

The earliest recorded poems are part of **oral tradition** and often are musical. In his book *ORALITY AND LITERACY* , Walter Ong suggests that “language is nested in sound,” and scholars who study the origin of language have theorized that music and language developed alongside of one another in our evolutionary past. Reflecting on the relationship between poetry and African American musical traditions, such as the blues and work songs, Edward Hirsh suggests that “all these forms model a particular kind of participatory relationship between the poet and the community.” Many modern poetic forms are also clearly influenced by musical forms. For example, Langston Hughes’s “The Weary Blues” borrows heavily from jazz and blues rhythms, yet does not follow classical metrical patterns. Like songs, poems are meant to be performed, recited, and perhaps in their own, sung.

Most traditional forms of poetry have their origins in forms of popular music. Longer poetic artifacts such as the great **epics** of the Greeks (Homer’s *ILIAD* and *ODYSSEY* ), the Romans (Virgil’s *AENEID* ), and from India (the *VEDAS* , written in Sanskrit) are well-known. Ancient Babylonian hymns, like the **Enûma Eliš** , written in cuneiform, are widely regarded as the earliest known poems; likewise, the Sumerian *EPIC OF GILGAMESH* is one of the earliest

popular epic. Many scholars have observed the similarities the Babylonia flood myth in the EPIC OF GILGAMESH and the biblical story of the flood in the book of Genesis.

An **epic poem** is a lengthy narrative poem (a poem that tells a story, often an adventure) written in verse. Similar to music, in poetry, **verse** refers to a piece of writing composed in meter or rhyme. The word verse may appear in some contexts as a synonym for poetry of any meter (or non-meter); this is not precise usage of the word and usually aims to distinguish the form of literature from **prose**, which is structured without the same attention to the meter and length of **line** in poetry.

One of the earliest known works of English poetry is CAEDMON'S HYMN, composed sometime between 658 and 680 A.D. According to accounts by an English monk and scholar known as St. Bede or the Venerable Bede, the poem was originally composed by an illiterate herdsman who had miraculously acquired the gift of poetry and song from an angel. Its lyrics are composed in a form of early English that originated in a form of ancient German.

Listen to a recording of the poem in West Saxon, a dialect of Old English. <sup>(1)</sup>

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"CAEDMON'S HYMN" <sup>(10)</sup>

Nú scylun hergan hefaenrîcaes Uard, metudæs maecti end  
his módgidanc, uerc Uuldurfadur, suéh é uundra gihwaes, éci  
dryctin ór ástelidæ hé ærist scÅp aelda barnum heben til  
hrófe,& háleg scepen. Thá middungeard moncynnæs Uard, eci  
Dryctin, æfter tiadæ frum foldu, Fréa allmectig.

A **ballad** is another type of narrative poem that contains repeated phrasing and is intended to be sung. Ballads often relate the deeds, and sometimes suffering, of a protagonist whose life serves as a metaphor for the day-to-day trials of the average person. (An example of a ballad in this module is "The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver" by Edna St. Vincent Millay). Ballads are typically arranged into **quatrains**, four-line stanzas, with usually only the second and fourth lines rhyming.

In contrast to narrative poetry (poetry that tells a story), **lyric** poetry focuses primarily on conveying emotion through melody and imagery. **Sonnets** fall under the category of lyric poetry; a sonnet is a poem consisting of fourteen lines with a metric pattern and variable rhyme scheme. Elegies (lamentations), haiku, and **odes** (praise poems) are other examples of lyric poetry. (Examples of lyric verse in our course readings include John Milton's Sonnet 19, Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," and Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum est").

**Blank verse** is the term for poetry that *does* have a set metrical pattern, yet *does not* rhyme. John Milton's epic poem, *PARADISE LOST*, is a masterful work of blank verse poetry that was highly influential as a work of English literature. However, many modern and contemporary poets write blank verse poetry, such as Robert Frost's "The Death of the Hired Man" and Amy Beeder's "Dear Drought," **Free verse**, which did not develop until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, follows no metrical pattern or rhyme scheme; much of modern poetry is free verse, although many modern poets who usually write in free verse will produce patterned verse on occasion. (Examples of free verse in this module include H.D.'s "Oread" and William Carlos Williams's "Blizzard.")<sup>(1)</sup>

## Poetic language

All writing makes use of **figurative language**. Yet, the language of poetry focuses specifically on discovering meaning based on the way that certain combinations of words sound, as well as the way that groups of words appear on the page. Poetic language is fundamentally figurative; figurative language is language used in a nonliteral manner, as in words or phrases that convey meaning beyond or in addition to the dictionary definition of those words. For example, the statement "The town judge is intelligent" is a direct description. However, the sentence "The town judge holds the keys

to the kingdom of knowledge” offers a similar description yet with added layers of creative images and associative meaning that connects with other symbols of power (keys, kingdom); it also uses **alliteration** (repetition of consonants) to create **rhythm** and **pattern**.

Below are the types of figurative language and a full description of common forms of poetic language.

## Common Type of Figurative Language:

**Apostrophe** — A direct address to a person or object not literally listening; ex: “Oh, Great Mother Nature how you test our spirit...”

**Allusion** — Reference to a well-known object, character, or event, sometimes from another literary work.

**Hyperbole** — Exaggeration used for emphasis.

**Imagery** — Words and phrases that appeal to the senses, particularly sight.

**Metaphor** — A direct comparison of two seemingly dissimilar items (does not use the words *like* or *as* ).

**Onomatopoeia** — A word that imitates the sound of the object the word represents.

**Personification** — The attribution of human characteristics to nonhuman places or things.

**Simile** — A comparison of two seemingly dissimilar items using *like* or *as* .<sup>(1)</sup>

# 13. Elements of Poetry

## Formal Elements of Poetry

Learning to read how a poem is **lineated** is an important skill to develop for understanding poetry. **Lineation** controls where lines of verse begin and end in a poem. These artistic choices can significantly impact the rhythm of a poem and in some cases can be used to create dramatic or thematic tension, as in the use of an **enjambed line**. **Enjambement** is a French word that means ‘to step over.’ In poetry, the shifting from one line to the next without concluding a thought or without the use of closing punctuation creates a sense of connection and movement that can increase the pacing of the meter of a poem and/or can productively complicate the meaning of the ideas or images between one line and another.

The grouping of lines into organizational units in poetry is known as a **stanza**. Some poetic forms, such as the **couplet**, are identified by how many lines constitute a stanza. (A couplet has two lines per stanza; many poems are composed of a series of couplets rather than a single couplet.)

**Rhythm** is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. Everyday speech has rhythm, yet poets make conscious choices to arrange and highlight particular rhythms and rhythm patterns to create meter. Meter refers to specific syllabic patterns in the rhythm of a line of poetry. Learning to **scan** the rhythm and meter of a poem, a process referred to as **scansion**, focuses analysis on the line-by-line structure. A **foot** is the basic unit of rhythm, usually composed of two or three syllables, used in scansion. Four major types of feet are found in most verse: **anapest**, **dactyl**, **iamb**, and **trochee**:

Foot Names	Syllable Arrangements	Examples
Anapest	X X /	X X / X X / X X /
dactyl	/ X X	/ X X / X X Take her up tenderly
iamb	X /	X / X / X / X / The falling out of faithful friends. X / X / X / renewing is of love
trochee	/ X	/ X / X / X / X

Less frequently occurring types of feet in poetry are: **pyrrhic** and **spondee** .

Foot Names	Syllable Arrangements	Examples
pyrrhic	X X	/ / XX // XX X / X My way is to begin with the beginning
spondee	/ /	XX / / XX / /

The number of feet in a line of poetry determine its length. Although a line may be of any length, common line lengths in verse include: **tetrameter** , **pentameter** and **octameter** .

Line Length Names	Number of Feet	Number of Syllables	Examples
tetrameter	four	eight	How dreary to be somebody! How drear   y to   be some   body
pentameter	five	ten	Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Shall I   compare   thee to   a sum   mer's day?
octameter	eight	sixteen	And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain. And the   silken   sad un   certain   rustling   of each   purple   curtain.

William Shakespeare is renowned for his use of iambic pentameter.

Read and listen to his poem “Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day (Sonnet 18)” and pay close attention to how his rhythm and meter enhance the auditory effects of his poetry. As a famous playwright, Shakespeare was especially concerned with the verbal performance of poetic language. Some scholars have even argued that Shakespeare’s use of iambic pentameter resembles the *lub-dub* rhythm of the human heartbeat. <sup>(1)</sup>

[“SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER’S DAY \(SONNET 18\)” <sup>\(19\)</sup>](#)

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, And summer’s lease hath all too short a date. Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, And often is his gold complexion dimmed; And every fair from fair sometime declines, By chance, or nature’s changing course, untrimmed; But thy eternal summer shall not fade, Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st, Nor shall death brag thou wand’rest in his shade, When in eternal lines to Time thou grow’st. So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

**Rhyme** is created when two words are similar in sound, as found in the words ‘dog’ and ‘fog.’ **End rhyme** occurs when the last words in two lines of poetry rhyme. Rhyming between two words within the same line is called **internal rhyme**. **Slant rhyme** (or approximate rhyme) is the term used to refer to the suggestion of a rhyme that is not exact, as found in the words ‘laugh’ and ‘taught.’

The larger pattern of rhyme in a poem is referred to as the **rhyme scheme**. Rhyme schemes are commonly indicated by a letter pattern where a different represents a new rhyme, as in *abab cdcd efef gg*. The effectiveness of a poem’s rhyme scheme is shaped not only by the **repetition** of, but the **variation** between, the types of rhyme and meter. Analysis of poetry frequently looks at the occurrence of ‘repetition and variation’ as a linked literary device.

Besides rhyme, poets also may make use of other sound patterns including **assonance**, **consonance**, and **alliteration**. Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds, usually two or more times in short succession, whereas consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds. Alliteration is the repetition of the identical initial consonant in neighboring or consecutive words. <sup>(1)</sup>

## Reading in Context

While it is important to ground our analysis of poetry in a **close reading** based on a detailed understanding of formal elements and poetic structure, we should not become so carried away that we neglect the roles history and cultural circumstance can play in shaping a poem. Likewise, as Edward Hirsch suggests, it is also important to recognize the contribution that you make as a reader to the construction of a poem's meaning.

Consider, once more, “Dulce et Decorum est” by Wilfred Owen. The content of the poem is moving enough, yet the added emotional weight of understanding the poem's **context** — the mass casualties in Europe during World War I — lends a potent specificity to the imagery in Owen's poem. The poem's effect is made all the more palpable by the knowledge that he was killed in action one week before the Armistice that ended the fighting in Western Europe. With this historical context in mind, it might be possible then to consider what your own experience or views on war might be. What is your response to Owen's portrayal of the battlefield? What knowledge or insight can be gained from the way that the poem attempts to make the violence of war intelligible to its reader?

The context of a poem can play a major role in what gives it a lasting literary value. However, when a powerful historical context meets masterful formal execution, it can be tempting to assume everything in the poem is a direct line to the poet's heart and mind. But when analyzing a poem, the **speaker** of the poem, the



“I” voice, should not be conflated with the author of the poem. In written analysis we refer to “the author” when speaking of his or her craftsmanship and authorial choices, as in “the author repeats the symbol of the bird at the beginning and the end of the poem.” We use “the speaker” when discussing the point-of-view of the “I” speaking in the poem, as in “the speaker longs to be free” or “the speaker bemoans the impending loss of her child.” In our analysis we can suggest that “the poet” is closely aligned with “the speaker,” but we should not assume they are one in the same. The conventions of poetry veil a direct connection in contrast to a literary form, such as autobiography.

Even more than historical periods, we can connect the analysis of one particular poem to a wider literary movement. In our course readings, for example, are two writers whose poems exemplify the modernist movement known as Imagism: H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) and William Carlos Williams. **Imagism** valued precision and clarity of both image and language; it rejected the sentimentality of the previous generation of poets and sought to create poems around single, powerful images that might speak of the essential nature of a thing, person, or place. Understanding a poem’s historical and literary context is important, but it is equally important to acknowledge the active role that the reader plays in the construction of meaning, as Edward Hirsch suggests. <sup>(1)</sup>

# 14. Module 3 Assessments

## Discussion Board

**Directions:** *Discussion 3: The Poetry of the Present.*

To prepare for this discussion, read D.H. Lawrence's preface to his volume of poetry, *New Poems* in Module 3 Readings. This preface has been published elsewhere under the title "The Poetry of the Present." In this essay, Lawrence distinguishes between two different types of poetry – the poetry of the beginning and the poetry of the end, and what he refers to as the poetry of the present.

In this discussion, briefly explain in your own words the characteristics of the poetry of the present according to Lawrence's account. Next, after reading the poem "Coming Awake" (also included in Module 3 Readings), briefly explain what this poem reveals about the purpose of poetry in everyday life.

**Submission:** Reply to at least two other students, aiming to notice patterns, commonalities and interesting differences in our learning community. All posts should be written in complete sentences and are expected to meet the standards for college-level writing. Original posts should be at least five sentences in length; replies should be at least three sentences in length.

**Grading:** This discussion is worth 20 points toward your final grade and will be graded using the Discussion Rubric. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this discussion <sup>1</sup>.

## Course Journal: Journal 3: Sing me a Song

**Directions:** *Journal 3: Sing Me a Song.*

In his book *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*,

Edward Hirsch explains that historically poetry evolved alongside of art forms such as dance and music. “Poetry and music are sister arts,” according Hirsch, and therefore, “The poem appeals to the ear.” Edna St. Vincent Millay’s poem, “The Ballad of the Harp Weaver”, draws upon a long established tradition of folk ballads which describe the sacrifices, suffering, and joy that parents, and mothers in particular, have experienced throughout time.

After reading the poem, compose a journal entry in which you relate its imagery and themes to a song of your own choosing. The song can belong to any genre or historical time period. In addition to examining lyrical and thematic similarities between the song and the poem, also consider the ways that musically the song either resembles or differs from tone of “The Ballad of the Harp Weaver”

**Submission:** To submit your entry, choose the link titled, Journal 3, above. Choose the “Create Journal Entry” button and complete your entry using the text editor box. Include hyperlinks to relevant texts, videos, or images. Also consider embedding images or videos in your entry to make it more interactive. Be sure to give your entry a title and complete your submission by choosing the “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 10 points and will be graded using the Journal Rubric. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this assignment <sup>1</sup>.

## Essay 3: Imagist Poetry: A Comparative Analysis

**Directions:** As suggested in the learning object for this module, Imagist poets wrote in a minimalistic, often stark, manner that attempted to express very complex ideas, emotions, and experiences in the form poems that fixated on the presentation of single, seemingly mundane image. In this essay, you will explore two imagist poems – “Oread” (pronounced Oh-ree-ad) by H.D. and “Blizzard” by William Carlos Williams. H.D.’s poem takes its name

from a figure in Greek mythology by the same name – an Oread is mountain nymph or what might be considered a kind of fairy. In contrast to the mythical, otherworldly quality of “Oread”, Williams’ poem contains a kind of stark realism. Both poems are included in the Module 3 Readings.

In this essay, you will offer a comparative analysis of the two poems. After considering each poem’s theme, as well as its use of figurative language and poetic form, explain whether you think that both of these poems should be considered part of the same literary movement.

- What do these poems share in common?
- How do they differ?
- What larger concept, problem, or issue are these poems attempting to address metaphorically?

**Submission:** Post the assignment using the *Essay 3: Imagist Poetry: A Comparative Analysis* link above. Use the “Browse My Computer” button in the Attach File area to attach your document. Be sure to complete your submission by choosing the “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 80 points and will be graded using the *Essay* rubric. Please use it as a guide to successful completion of this assignment <sup>1</sup>.

PART V

# MODULE 4: THE ART OF TRAGIC DRAMA



# 15. Introduction

## Module 4 – The Art of Tragic Drama

### Module Introduction

#### Introduction

Many scholars trace the origins of the genre of drama to ritual tradition, whether in ancient Greece, China, India or African cultures. A history of theater course would offer a fascinating diversity of various traditions of classical and modern theater. This module focuses on the idea of tragedy and tragic drama through a discussion of one work of classical Greek tragedy and two modern one-act plays.

Notably, the creation of a theatrical work is collaborative. This is in marked contrast to the other two genres we have studied so far, fiction and poetry. Although there are no prohibitions against fiction or poetry being collaborative works (and there are examples of this), writing in these literary genres historically is a much more individualized creative process.

Because of the collaborative process in staging a play – or adapting a play written in a previous time – reading a dramatic text in print offers different imaginative challenges than reading a poem or a work of fiction. We might suggest that combining the skills of reading poetry and reading fiction prepares us rather well for studying drama. We still can rely on the active reading skills and the appreciation of cultural context when analyzing drama. Yet we will need to add an understanding of staging and performance<sup>1</sup>.

## Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

1. Demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking
2. Demonstrate understanding of Global Sociocultural Responsibility
3. Recognize the relationships between cultural expressions and their contexts
4. Understand cultural expressions
5. Interpret and evaluate cultural artifacts and/or their contexts for significance
6. Understand basic literary elements of specific genres: short story, poetry, and drama
7. Analyze and evaluate selected works of literature in classroom or online settings
8. Analyze and evaluate both in class discussions (whether face-to-face or electronic) and in class writing, selected works of literature
9. Demonstrate and understand how literature is relevant to their personal, social, and historical awareness<sup>1</sup>

## Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Recognize literary elements and formal structures of drama
- Describe themes and major ideas of selected plays in historical context
- Interpret selected plays for meaning and significance
- Analyze drama in writing
- Develop a full-length analysis of a specific play<sup>1</sup>



## Readings and Resources

- Read: Learning Unit: The Art of Drama <sup>(1)</sup> (see below)
- Read: Module 4 Readings ([Attached Module\\_04.pdf](#)). You will need [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to access this file)
- Listen: Antigone [LibriVox](#) <sup>(26)</sup> by Sophocles (trans. Storr)
- Listen: Riders to the Sea [LibriVox](#) <sup>(28)</sup> by J.M. Synge
- Listen: Trifles [LibriVox](#) <sup>(34)</sup> by Susan Glaspell

## Optional Further Reading

- Poole, Adrian. *Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Sands, Kathleen M. "Tragedy, Theology, and Feminism in the Time after Time." *New Literary History* 35.1 (2004): 41-61.
- Williams, Raymond. *Modern Tragedy*. London: Vintage Books, (1966) 2013.

# 16. About Drama

## About Drama

Drama as a literary genre offers a unique challenge to the reader. Created to be performed, to become a **spectacle**, drama is based in large part on imitative action and gesture. The written works of the theater present the reader with only one dimension of what, when fully realized, becomes a multi-sensory experience. Western drama, the dramatic literature of “the Western World” of Europe and North America, has its origins in ancient Greek theater.

**Medieval theater**, dated after the fall of Rome and before the Renaissance, was composed largely of **liturgical drama** (of religious sources) and **morality plays**. Morality plays focused more on human drama than specific Biblical storylines as liturgical drama did, but they still emphasized strongly moralistic themes with characters often personifying good and evil, justice, or one of the virtues.



A photograph of Lady Macbeth calming the guests at Macbeth's palace in Act II, Scene 1, of the Federal Theatre Project production

of MACBETH at the Lafayette Theatre, 1936“[Macbeth-35-Palace](#)” by Federal Theatre Project, [Library of Congress American Memory Collection](#) is in the [Public Domain, CC0](#).

**Renaissance drama** can be divided into two distinct categories: private performances that took place in indoor (often aristocratic) halls and public, open-air performances. Of historical significance, this period saw the rise of the professionalization of theater troupes with the craft of acting and the skill of dramatic production (staging, costuming, etc.) becoming more organized and regulated, including the formation of professional membership groups or **guilds**. In Italy, drama returned to an appreciation of classical staging ( **Neoclassicism** ) and the development of *Commedia dell'Arte*, a style of drama based on four principal characters, each with a fixed costume and mask. Spanish drama, likewise experienced a golden age and French theater shared in a neo-classical revival. In England, large public theaters became profitable, most notably the Globe in London, and a bounty of playwrights from William Shakespeare to Ben Johnson and Christopher Marlowe, among many others, forged lasting reputations.

**Melodrama** is a style of drama that exaggerates characters, often through the strong use of stereotypes, and presents emotionally charged plots. Rising to popularity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the style was at a peak in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with many approaches to melodrama, including the use of music and dance to augment performances. Victorian melodrama particularly is known for its use of stock characters: the hero, the villain, the damsel in distress, the clownish sidekick. Students may even recall some of these stylized characters in early examples of silent film.

Relatedly, a **farce** is a type of comedy that relies on deliberate absurdity, nonsense, and/or physical humor, even to the point of extravagance or improbability; the popularity of farce, however, was not restricted to the same time period as melodrama and examples of the dramatic style may be found even in antiquity. Literal readings of the written scripts of farces would prove disappointing

for it is the enjoyment of the live experience of accumulating absurdity that is central to the style.

The rise of **Vaudeville** flowed out of the popularity of melodrama and merged with the growth of saloons, musical halls, and burlesque houses in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Featuring similar stock characters in the context of a variety show, Vaudeville performances added elements of acrobatics, impressions, and stylized interpretations of famous scenes from Shakespeare and classical drama. The culturally problematic (from our current cultural perspective) tradition of **minstrel shows**, collections of skits and slapstick routines by troupes performing in blackface that were at the height of popularity just after the U.S. Civil War, was overtaken by the success of Vaudeville. (Indeed, some early Vaudeville productions included minstrel acts.) The rise of Vaudeville also was supported by the growth of a middle class that could afford an afternoon or evening diversion to the theater.

**20<sup>th</sup> century drama** experienced a surge of creative experimentation including stylistic developments introduced by Expressionism, Impressionism, Modernism, and various forms of political theater; it also was influenced by the developments in the new genre of film and other media technologies. Realistic drama drawing upon the theories of modern psychology (Freud, Jung, et al.) aimed to present authentic characters and gestures, leading to the development of the **Stanislavski method** of acting (or method acting). **Radio dramas** enjoyed a huge surge of popularity over a number of subgenres from detective shows to Westerns, and many traditional “literary” writers tried their hands at crafting **screenplays** for Hollywood. Television scripts, whether for dramas or sitcoms (situation comedies) still rely on a written, literary document to guide the creation of multi-media productions. <sup>(1)</sup>

# 17. The Importance of Tragedy

## The Importance of Tragedy



A panoramic view of the ancient Greek theatre in Taormina, Sicily, Italy in 2009 [“Greek Taormina Theatre \(Sicily-2009a\)”](#) by [Bart Hiddink](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

It is important to note that the dramatic performances of the ancient Greek theater were part of the annual religious and civic celebration known as the City Dionysia – an annual festival in Athens, commemorating Dionysus, the god of wine, fertility, and ritual madness. The theatrical performances were the central focus of the festival and included two major types of drama: **tragedy** and **comedy** (also known as satyr plays). Although it is difficult to tell when tragic drama first emerged, many scholars suggest that it was formally introduced by the actor Thespis in 533 BCE. The word tragedy comes from the ancient Greek word *tragodia*, which literally translates as “goat song.” This is important because scholars have speculated that tragic drama, as a religious ritual, originated in the sacrificial killing of a goat, or scapegoat. The song may have functioned as a kind of prayer, as well as a commemoration of the life of the sacrificial animal. Once again, we can see that like poetry, tragic drama has its origins in musical composition and performance.

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE)

provided one of the earliest accounts of the formal elements of tragic drama in his treatise entitled *POETICS*. According to Aristotle, tragedies involved a main character of high social standing falling out of favor or perpetrating his or her own demise through **hubris** (excessive pride or self-conceit, in Greek tragedy often in defiance of the gods) or a tragic flaw that leads to a substantial error in judgment (what the Greeks called **hamartia**). Most importantly, the suffering of the tragic figure provoked strong feelings of both pity and fear on the part of the audience. The notion of the tragic scapegoat, then, relates to the role of the sacrificial animal in ancient religious rituals of sacrifice. According to Aristotle, when the dramatic performance reaches its resolution, the audience experiences a therapeutic release of these feelings of pity and fear. He termed this therapeutic aspect of tragedy **catharsis**. Many scholars maintain the theater continues to serve this therapeutic function today.

In the media, the word “tragedy” is commonly used to describe accidents, natural disasters, and even acts of seemingly random violence. Is there any relationship between this common use of the word tragedy and tragedy as a dramatic form? Theatrical performances in ancient Greece were not simply, or even primarily, for the purposes of entertainment. Tragic drama provided the audience with an opportunity to reflect on its own social, political, and religious values. Likewise, whenever so-called “tragic” events occur in our contemporary world, they often lead us to ask searching questions about the nature of our society, the possibility of justice, and perhaps they even cause us to reflect upon our own mortality. In works of ancient Greek tragedy, there is always a **chorus**, a group of actors who sing and provide commentary on the action taking place in the play. The chorus serves as kind of substitute for the audience and often express ideas or opinions that both reflect and also guide the interpretations of the audience.

The dramatic readings in this module consist of one work of ancient Greek tragedy, *ANTIGONE* by Sophocles, and two plays from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. *ANTIGONE* will provide a vivid portrayal of

the lasting literary, as well social and political importance of tragedy and the idea of the tragic in everyday life. The **one-act plays** in this module provide an opportunity to explore how dramatic works continue to provide a unique space for dealing with the challenges and complexities of human life. Recalling our discussion of metaphors, it can be argued that the theater provides its audience with a metaphorical space for making sense of the darkest and often most difficult aspects of human life. <sup>(1)</sup>

# 18. Elements of Drama

## Formal Elements of Drama

The elements of fiction discussed in Module 2 — **plot**, **character**, **setting**, **conflict**, and **theme** — can be applied to drama. An additional concept to consider relating to the plot of a play is the common convention of the play beginning in the middle of the action. The Greeks referred to this convention as ***in medias res*** — literally “in the midst of things.” A literary advantage for drama beginning *in medias res* is that without an exposition, the dramatic tension and conflict is presented immediately to the audience, which is more conducive to live performance.

An **act** is a major division in the action of the play, often used to demarcate key parts of the plot. Plays may have only one or as many as five or more acts. A **scene** is a smaller unit within an act, often signaled by the entrance or exit of a character or change in setting or focus of the action.

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

Clearly the **setting** of a play takes on extra importance as readers can pay close attention to the staging, costuming, and other



directorial notes included in the text of the play. For example, the content of one scene can be set in an incongruous location or a character might be wearing a costume that contradicts the actions he is performing, thus resulting in **dramatic irony**. Understanding the subtleties between what is written as dialogue to be spoken by the actors and what is written to be gestured or achieved through **lighting**, **scenery**, **costumes**, **props**, and other elements of staging is critical for interpreting the meaning of a given scene. (The professional term for staging a character's movements and position on the stage is known as **blocking**.)

As always, attention to the use of **figurative language** whether presented in dialogue between characters or in monologue or soliloquy, will end layers of depth and add compelling specificity to any analysis " and a robust consideration of the historical **context** including relevant social issues or cultural norms (or resistance to those norms) represented directly or indirectly in the play will demonstrate a more advanced level of critical thinking.<sup>(1)</sup>

# 19. Module 4 Assessments

## Discussion Board

**Directions:** Choose this link to access *Module 4 Discussion: Justice in Tragedy*.

Read (see Module 4 Readings) and listen (see the link in Module 4 Introduction) to the performance of *Antigone* by Sophocles. The character of Antigone has been considered by many scholars to be an early example of feminist hero due to her steadfast commitment to the justness of her cause. However, like all tragic figures, she possess her own tragic flaw. Likewise, Creon has often been interpreted as kind of totalitarian dictator who disregards the will of his people in order to assert his own strength and political. Nevertheless, in some respects, Creon's resistance to honoring Polyneices, who he deems a kind of terrorist, is not very different from the way that contemporary society treats so-called enemies of the state.

Choosing either Antigone or Creon, discuss how this character presents the idea of justice. What arguments or reasons does the character employ to justify his or her actions? Describe a contemporary situation which you feel reflects this character's approach to justice.

**Submission:** Reply to at least two other students, aiming to notice patterns, commonalities and interesting differences in our learning community. All posts should be written in complete sentences and are expected to meet the standards for college-level writing. Original posts should be at least five sentences in length; replies should be at least three sentences in length.

**Grading:** This discussion is worth 20 points toward your final grade and will be graded using the *Discussion Rubric*. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this discussion<sup>1</sup>.

## Course Journal: Tragedy and History

**Directions:** Choose this link to access *Journal 4: Tragedy and History*.

In this journal entry, you will explore the historical context for John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. In his 1911 introduction to the play, an American writer named Edward J. O'Brien suggests that Maurya's suffering is a virtue: "It is their virtue in life to be lonely, and none but the lonely man in tragedy may be great. He dies, and then it is the virtue in life of the women mothers and wives and sisters to be great in their loneliness, great as Maurya, the stricken mother, is great in her final word." Using the idea of tragedy to describe actual suffering sometimes suggests that there is something noble and mysterious about the difficulties people face. The word *tragedy* may even suggest that some larger or uncontrollable force, much like the sea, may be the ultimate source of the suffering.

However, historical studies of Ireland in the mid to late 19th century reveal that many Irish people were driven from their farmlands to the less fertile lands along the coast after the Great Famine (1845 – 1852). Fishing was not a primary occupation for most of the people displaced to the coast, and in contrast to farming, it proved to be a much more dangerous way of acquiring food and money. Synge's family, however, belonged to the wealthier, landowning class in Ireland. The very same class of people who were largely responsible for the evictions that took place during the Great Famine. Begin your research by reading a short entry on *Riders to the Sea* in *The Encyclopedia of Americana* from 1920. Next, your Module 4 Readings document includes a few pages of Richard Barry O'Brien's account of the evictions in his book, *Fifty Years of Concessions to Ireland* (1883). Compare his account to a report given by the Liberal Union of Ireland in *The Plan of Campaign* (1892) on pages 36 – 37. This reading is also included in the Module 4 Readings.

Finally, on your own, find three sources of information about the Great Famine or the Irish Potato Famine, as it is commonly referred to in America. These sources can include other artistic works such as songs, paintings, or documentary films. Explain how this historical context helps to provide a better understanding of Synge's play. Do you think Synge's play sheds more light on the socio-economic factors surrounding the difficult lives of the people of Aran, or does the playwright tend to romanticize or idealize their suffering?

**Submission:** To submit your entry, choose the link titled, Journal 3, above. Choose the "Create Journal Entry" button and complete your entry using the text editor box. Include hyperlinks to relevant texts, videos, or images. Also consider embedding images or videos in your entry to make it more interactive. Be sure to give your entry a title and complete your submission by choosing the "Submit" button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 10 points and will be graded using the *Journal Rubric*. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this assignment<sup>1</sup>.

## Course Assignment: Interpreting Tragic Drama

**Directions:** In this module, we have briefly discussed Aristotle's assertion that tragedy's primary purpose is to provide the audience with an experience of catharsis. According to his account, by witnessing the suffering of the tragic figure, the audience is purged of its feelings of pity and fear – as a result, they leave the dramatic performance feeling energized and also curiously relieved of anxiety. However, we have read one work of ancient Greek tragedy that seems to complicate this view. In *Antigone*, we are presented with a strong female protagonist whose commitment to a higher form of love and justice challenges the audience to gain any satisfaction from her suffering. Similarly, Susan Glaspell's one-act

play, *Trifles*, focuses on a conflict between competing notions of justice. Once again, it is the female protagonist and her companions who come into conflict with a male dominated society.

In this essay, you will consider whether or not it is appropriate to interpret this play as a work of tragic drama. After reading Part XIII of Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which he offers his definition of an ideal tragedy, explain whether or not *Trifles* ought to be considered a tragedy.

- Does Mrs. Wright possess a tragic flaw, or like Antigone, is it possible that she does not fit easily into Aristotle's definition of tragedy?
- Finally, does Glaspell's play offer its audience an experience of catharsis?

**Submission:** Post the assignment using the *Essay 4: Interpreting Tragic Drama* link above. Use the "Browse My Computer" button in the Attach File area to attach your document. Be sure to complete your submission by choosing the "Submit" button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 80 points and will be graded using the *Essay* rubric. Please use it as a guide to successful completion of this assignment <sup>1</sup>.



PART VI

MODULE 5: THE TEXT AND  
THE WORLD: THE HARLEM  
RENAISSANCE, A CASE  
STUDY





## 20. Introduction

## **Module 5 – The Text and the World: The Harlem Renaissance, a Case Study**

# Module Introduction



Image Source: "Zora Neale Hurston, Beating the Hountar, or Mama Drum" by World telegram

# Introduction

From the very beginning, one of the goals of this course has been to demonstrate that literature is indeed capable of performing a certain kind of work in the world. Although people read literature for a variety of reasons, not least of all entertainment or pleasure, like other sources of knowledge, literature plays an active role in shaping how understood ourselves and the world which we inhabit. In this module, we will explore the relationship between literature, history, culture, and politics through an examination of work of Harlem Renaissance writers.

As we will discuss in the learning unit for this module, the Harlem Renaissance was an important literary and artistic movement which took place in the early to mid twentieth century. Building on our discussion of the power of metaphors, this module will explore how artists and writers associated with Harlem Renaissance actively sought to transform the racial dynamics of American culture through the creation of artistic forms that spoke to the radical individuality and undeniable humanity of black artists. By exploring a fraction of the influential work produced during the Harlem Renaissance, this module will provide an introduction to this pivotal artistic revolution and offer a glimpse into the ways that black artists actively resisted forms of institutional and cultural racism in America<sup>1</sup>.

## Course Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking
- Demonstrate understanding of Global Sociocultural Responsibility

- Recognize the relationships between cultural expressions and their contexts
- Understand cultural expressions
- Interpret and evaluate cultural artifacts and/or their contexts for significance
- Analyze and evaluate selected works of literature in classroom or online settings
- Analyze and evaluate both in class discussions (whether face-to-face or electronic) and in class writing, selected works of literature
- Demonstrate and understand how literature is relevant to their personal, social, and historical awareness<sup>1</sup>

## Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Describe the cultural importance of the Harlem Renaissance
- Describe themes and major ideas of selected literary works in historical context
- Interpret selected literary works for meaning and significance
- Analyze the relationship between poetry and music
- Develop a full-length analysis of a specific play<sup>1</sup>

## Readings and Resources

- Read: Learning Unit: The Text and the World: The Harlem Renaissance<sup>1</sup> (see below)
- Read: Module 5 Readings ([Attached Module\\_05.pdf](#). You will need [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to access this file)
- View: [Study of Negro Artists](#)<sup>(35)</sup> (Silent Film)

- Listen: “The Forethought” from The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. DuBois ( [LibriVox](#) <sup>(37)</sup> Recording)
- Listen: “Chapter 1: Of Our Spiritual Strivings” from The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. Du Bois ( [LibriVox](#) <sup>(39)</sup> Recording)
- Listen: “O Black and Unknown Bards” by James Weldon Johnson ( [LibriVox](#) <sup>(42)</sup> Recording)
- Listen: “Lawing and Jawing” by Zora Neale Hurston ( [LibriVox](#) <sup>(45)</sup> Recording)

# 21. What was the Harlem Renaissance?

## Introduction

In the introductory module for this course, it was suggested that literature is capable of performing a certain kind of work in the world. One of the ways that literature influences our lives is by providing us with ways of making sense of the complex experiences and challenges that we encounter in daily life.

Literature, like other representational art forms, uses metaphors to make connections between the concrete and the abstract, as well as between the known and the unknown. Metaphors can also be problematic depending upon the way that they are constructed and employed. African American writers such as James Baldwin and Toni Morrison have noted the ways in which the idea of “whiteness” in works of literature came to evoke ideas of safety, purity, and life, whereas images of “blackness” came to represent ideas of danger, uncleanness, and even death.

These notions of blackness were often transposed onto portrayals of black people in works of fiction by white authors. For example, in his famous novel *HEART OF DARKNESS*, the Polish-British novelist Joseph Conrad uses the image of darkness to describe the jungles surrounding the Congo River. Moreover, in the novel, African people are described with images that present them as beasts. In his critique of Conrad’s novel, the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe suggests that the story “projects the image of Africa as ‘the other world’ the antithesis of Europe and, therefore, of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality.” Nevertheless, Conrad’s novel, among



other works of English literature, have fundamentally shaped cultural attitudes to the present day.



[“Ivory 1880s”](#) by Unknown [Wikimedia Commons](#) is in the [Public Domain, CC0](#)

In this module, we will explore the important cultural, social, and political role that a literary movement like the Harlem Renaissance played in challenging a Western literary tradition that was to a great extent based upon the prejudices and cultural values of Anglo-European society in America. By doing so, we will explore the work that literature can do in helping to reshape the values and beliefs that give rise to the social world that we inhabit. <sup>(1)</sup>

## What was the Harlem Renaissance?

The Harlem Renaissance was an artistic and political movement among African Americans that originated in the Harlem district of New York City. Although the precise dates are difficult to pinpoint, the period is typically dated from 1920 up to the mid to late 1930s. A number of important social and economic factors contributed to

the movement's emergence. Firstly, after World War I, America's northern industrialized cities experienced a severe labor shortage.

At the same time, after a brief period of social and political reform in the South, which took place during the Reconstruction period, life for African Americans grew particularly difficult with the rise of Jim Crow laws and the resurgence of racial violence and segregation. Many African Americans left the South as part of what would become known as the Great Migration, a movement which ultimately led to migration of nearly six million African Americans from the South to the Northeast, and later the Midwest and West. In the Northeast, this mass migration of African Americans led to the emergence of urban cultural centers in Harlem, in addition to parts of Chicago, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis, among others (see Jacob Lawrence's portrayal of the Great Migration in Figure 1).



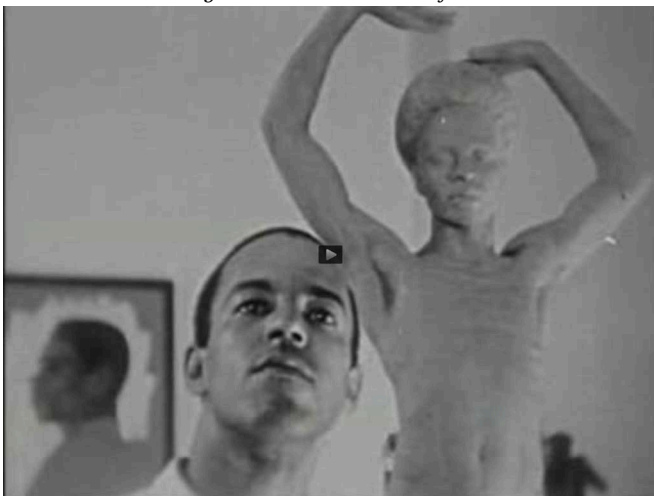
**Figure 1** – [“During World War I there was a great migration north by southern Negroes” by Jacob Lawrence](#) [Wikimedia Commons](#) is in the [Public Domain, CC0](#)

During the more than four centuries of Chattel slavery in America, African Americans were largely denied their own literary culture. Although some slave-owners chose to teach their slaves to read, writing was mainly forbidden. Reading was seen as a useful tool for instruction and religious indoctrination, but writing opened the

possibility for slaves to communicate with one another covertly. Nevertheless, African American slaves brought with them a rich literary and artistic heritage that stemmed from the cultures of their ancestral homelands. The Harlem Renaissance was primarily a Modernist literary movement. In an effort to reclaim and to create their own distinct literary tradition, the work of many Harlem Renaissance artists is characterized by a fusion of African folk traditions with aspects of secular southern folkways, as well as aspects of Christianity, including spirituals, gospel music, and biblical imagery. However, other artists were deeply secular and non-traditionalist in their creative outlooks.

The Harlem Renaissance was not even exclusively a literary movement but an artistic movement that encompassed multiple art forms including musical composition, visual arts, and drama (see the silent, black and white documentary film, “Study of Negro Artists” in Figure 2).

*Click on the image to watch the silent film.*



[Figure 2 – “Study of Negro Artists”Prelinger Archives](#) is in the [Public Domain, CC0](#)

Although it is possible to identify some commonalities among Harlem Renaissance artists and writers, it is also important to

emphasize that there was widespread debate among its key writers and thinkers about precisely how African American artists in the early twentieth century should go about creating their work, and many writers did not wish to be associated with any particular artistic movement. <sup>(1)</sup>

## 22. Key Writers

### Who were its key writers?

Although the Harlem Renaissance represents a unique revolution in the history of American literature, there were a number of African American writers who came to prominence before the movement began. Jupiter Hammon is considered the first published African American writer in America, and Phillis Wheatley is credited with being the first African American female to be published. Likewise, the abolitionist writings of authors such as Frances Harper and Frederick Douglass were also widely read and published.

However, W. E. B. Du Bois could be considered a forerunner of the Harlem Renaissance. In his highly influential book *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK*, published in 1903, Du Bois expresses an artistic and political vision of equality for African Americans which inspired artists in the early twentieth century and later the early Civil Rights movement. Read and listen to two excerpts from *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK* entitled “THE FORETHOUGHT” and “OF OUR SPIRITUAL STRIVINGS,” paying particular attention to his recollection of African American history and the importance he places on folk musical traditions as a record of African American’s struggle for freedom.

[“THE FORETHOUGHT” \(36\)](#)

[“OF OUR SPIRITUAL STRIVINGS” \(38\)](#)

(37)(39)

Music played a particularly prominent role in the development of the Harlem Renaissance. The work of musicians and composers such as Duke Ellington, Paul Robeson, and Ella Fitzgerald, among others, grew in popularity among white and black audiences during the Harlem Renaissance. Like Du Bois, many of the movement’s writers drew explicitly upon the folk traditions of spirituals, blues music, and work songs to create a unique literary language that

reflected some aspects of the everyday speech of African Americans. (In this module, you will read two musically inspired works by the writer James Weldon Johnson, “O BLACK AND UNKNOWN BARDS” and “LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING.”)

For the purposes of this course, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive overview of the numerous influential artists and writers associated with the Harlem Renaissance. An anthology published in 1925 entitled *THE NEW NEGRO* helped to solidify the group of writers typically associated with the movement. The book included work by writers such as Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, and Eric Walrond. (In this module, you will read the essay, “THE NEGRO ARTIST AND THE RACIAL MOUNTAIN” and the poem “THE NEGRO SPEAKS OF RIVERS” by Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen’s poem “I HAVE A RENDEZVOUS WITH LIFE,” and the play “LAWING AND JAWING” by Zora Neale Hurston.)

*THE NEW NEGRO* was edited by Alain Locke, and it included his title essay “ENTER THE NEW NEGRO” in which he describes the creative and social attitudes of the modern African American as being more assertive and openly critical of racial prejudice and injustice. Contrasting the “New Negro” to the “Old Negro” of the past, Locke suggests that the ideal African American citizen is one who “lays aside the status of beneficiary and ward for that of a collaborator and participant in American civilization. The great social gain in this is the releasing of our talented group from the arid fields of controversy and debate to the productive fields of creative expression.” This participation was, however, contingent on being granted equal legal and political status to white Americans. In contrast to Du Bois, who believed the African American art ought to contribute to the social and political liberation of black people, Locke believed that African American art should demonstrate the uniqueness of the artist in order to demonstrate his or her undeniable humanity.<sup>(1)</sup>

## 23. Importance of the Harlem Renaissance

### Why was the Harlem Renaissance important?

The Harlem Renaissance was important because, aside from the limited role that a few prominent individuals occupied in public life, the voices of African Americans were largely absent from the cultural and political life of America. Writers like Alain Locke maintained that it was necessary for African Americans to demonstrate through their artistic endeavors a shared human experience that transcended racial boundaries. In the 1920s and 30s, America remained a deeply segregated society, even in the more urbanized areas of the Northeast.

It is important to note that although the right to vote was granted to African Americans through the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, in the South and elsewhere, there was still widespread violence and intimidation which was aimed at disenfranchising black voters. Arguably the political consequences of the Harlem Renaissance were not even apparent until the emergence of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, which is also when there became a renewed scholarly interest in the works of these authors. It would take many more years for the work of Harlem Renaissance writers to become incorporated into literature courses across the country.

By narrating the experiences of African Americans, and by producing a lively literary and artistic movement, the Harlem Renaissance demonstrated the undeniable role that African Americans have played in the formation of America's cultural landscape. But most importantly, hearing the voices of black writers is crucial for understanding the truth of their struggle for the fundamental freedoms that presumably define American life.

Speaking of the importance of music in expressing the truth of black experiences of oppression, Anthony Pinn claims that “this struggle is known by and through the body, in the ways in which bodies occupy time and space, and chronicled in a variety of forms including musical production.” Moreover, Edward Hirsch suggests that like music, poetry “calls us deeply to each other.” The creative power of the voice contends with dehumanizing power of institutionalized racism and oppression. <sup>(1)</sup>

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A MOTHERLESS CHILD

Listen carefully to the emotive quality of the voices singing the spiritual:

(46)



To the Schumann Club  
Percy Rector Stephens, Conductor

1

# Sometimes I feel like a Motherless Child /

Negro Spiritual  
Arr. for Women's Voices  
by H. T. BURLEIGH

*Lamentoso*  $\text{♩} = 50$  *p*

Soprano I  
Oh — Oh — Oh — Oh —

Soprano II  
Oh — Oh — Oh — Oh —

Alto  
*mf*  
Some-times I feel like a moth-er-less chile, —

Piano  
*pp* *p* *ben sostenuto*

Hm — Oh — Oh — Oh — Hm — Oh —  
Oh — Oh — Oh — Oh — Oh — Oh —  
Some-times I feel like a moth-er-less chile, — Some-times I feel like a

116543 - 5

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[“Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child”](#) (notated music) by G. Ricordi.[Library of Congress Music Division](#) is in the [Public Domain](#), [CCO](#)

## 24. Module 5 Assessments

### Module 5 Discussion: Climbing the Racial Mountain

**Directions:** Choose this link to access *Module 5 Discussion: Climbing the Racial Mountain* .

In his preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, James Weldon Johnson describes the obstacles that face aspiring African American writers of his time. He suggests, “The Negro in the United States has achieved or been placed in a certain artistic niche. When he is thought of artistically, it is as a happy-go-lucky, singing, shuffling, banjo-picking being or as a more or less pathetic figure.” Do you think that similar racial stereotypes persist today? Why or why not? Can you provide examples of African American artists who challenge racial stereotypes in their work?

**Submission:** Reply to at least two other students, aiming to notice patterns, commonalities and interesting differences in our learning community. All posts should be written in complete sentences and are expected to meet the standards for college-level writing. Original posts should be at least five sentences in length; replies should be at least three sentences in length.

**Grading:** This discussion is worth 20 points toward your final grade and will be graded using the Discussion Rubric. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this discussion<sup>1</sup>.

### Journal 5: Music and the Harlem Renaissance

**Directions:** Choose this link to access *Journal 5: Music and the Harlem Renaissance* .

In the learning unit for this module, the Harlem Renaissance was described not only as a literary movement but as an artistic movement included the fine arts and music. In terms of the it most longstanding cultural legacy, the music of the Harlem Renaissance has had perhaps the most significant influence on American popular culture. The 1920s was also known as the Jazz Age, and Influential musical artists such as Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington, to name only a few, became popular among white audiences. Meanwhile, African American composers such as Florence Beatrice Price and William Grant Still made important contributions to the world of classical music. All of these artists drew upon the rich musical tradition of spirituals, work songs, and gospel music in order to create a unique form modern American music.

In this journal entry, you will respond to two poems – one by poet James Weldon Johnson and another of your choosing. Along with his brother J. Rosamond Johnson, he compiled the lyrics for over a hundred traditional spirituals in two volumes – *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925) and *The Second Book of Negro Spirituals*. Johnson's poetry was heavily by the spiritual tradition. After reading his poem "O Black and Unknown Bards" (see the Module 5 Readings), search the internet for examples of African American spirituals, focusing on their lyrical as well as their musical content. Next compose a journal entry in which you describe the relationship between Johnson's poem and one spiritual of your choosing. Does Johnson borrow lines, images, or themes from specific spirituals? Does Johnson address a certain theme or idea in his poetry that is also reflected in the spiritual you've chosen?

**Submission:** To submit your entry, choose the link titled, *Journal 5: Music and the Harlem Renaissance*, above. Choose the "Create Journal Entry" button and complete your entry using the text editor box. Include hyperlinks to relevant texts, videos, or images. Also consider embedding images or videos in your entry to make it more interactive. Be sure to give your entry a title and complete your

submission by choosing the “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 10 points and will be graded using the Journal Rubric. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this assignment <sup>1</sup>.

## Essay 5: Zora Neale Hurston and Black Experience in America

**Directions:** Zora Neale Hurston is perhaps one of the mostly widely read authors associated with the Harlem Renaissance – *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is her most well-known work. However, during her own lifetime, Hurston was a very controversial figure. Her work was often considered to be too “black” for many white publishers who shunned her realistic portrayals of African American life, particularly in the South. When *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was first published, the influential black novelist Richard Wright criticized Hurston, stating that “Miss Hurston voluntarily continues in her novel the tradition which was forced upon the Negro in theater, that is, the minstrel technique that makes ‘white folks’ laugh.” The black minstrel shows of the nineteenth and early twentieth century mainly consisted of white actors playing the role of black people. Their comedy was based on racist stereotypes and portrayals of black people as ignorant and buffoonish. Occasionally black actors would be cast in the shows, and there were even some all black minstrel groups. To a certain extent, it is true that Hurston worked in the black minstrel tradition. The question is whether or not her work in this tradition remains connected to racial stereotyping. Or perhaps it represents a sophisticated effort to reappropriate black culture, while also enticing white audiences to pay for productions which they perceived to be extensions of the more racist minstrel shows with which they were more familiar.

In order to gain a better understanding of Hurston’s complex

relationship to her own racial and cultural identity, you will first read an essay about how Hurston came to study anthropology and ethnography (see “The Wellspring of Zora Neale Hurston’s Creative Imagination” in the Module 5 Readings). After reading this essay, you will read and/or listen to “Lawing and Jawing” (see the Module 5 Readings and the Module 5 Introduction).

In your essay, you will consider Hurston’s portrayal of black culture in her one-act play. Do you tend to agree with Richard Wright’s characterization of Hurston’s work? In this play, is she simply perpetuating racist stereotypes of black people? Why or Why not? Additionally, you might consider examining what aspects of the play seem to offer a more complex portrayal of black culture. Are there aspects of the play in which you can see her effort to capture the creativity and adaptability of black language?

**Submission:** Post the assignment using the *Essay 5: Zora Neale Hurston and Black Experience in America* link above. Use the “Browse My Computer” button in the Attach File area to attach your document. Be sure to complete your submission by choosing the “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 80 points and will be graded using the Essay rubric. Please use it as a guide to successful completion of this assignment <sup>1</sup>.



PART VII

# MODULE 6: RESEARCH FOR LITERARY ANALYSIS





# 25. Introduction

## Module 6 – Research for Literary Analysis

### Module Introduction

#### Introduction

Writing analytically takes time, both for complex reasoning and for writing. Students and scholars alike strongly benefit from a writing process that involves multiple drafts—either through the creation of outlines, journaling, the writing of partial or full drafts, the preparation of abstracts, or a combination thereof—prior to final editing.

Approaching writing as a multi-phase process allows us to accomplish smaller steps along the way and build off our successes. By making time to focus on key aspects of analytical writing over several work sessions, we can build strong, well-developed final papers. In this module you will develop a literary analysis paper by completing pre-writing journal assignment in which you begin to develop a topic and thesis, by preparing a rough draft of your paper to submit to your instructor for feedback and research guidance, and finally by completing a final draft of your paper that includes appropriate academic citations and references.

This approach to writing and research as a process is not something only asked of students. Professional writers, whether journalists or literary authors, engage in similar multi-phase approaches to creating and polishing their best work. Most, if not all, professional writers will admit that frustration and fatigue will

occur at some point during the writing process. Such feelings are deeply human and are not signs of limited ability. Indeed, the best writers learn to acknowledge and work with these feelings or perceptions as they steadily craft their next great piece. The activities in this module are designed to encourage you to work in at least a few stages to build your major essay for the course. Doing so will not only help ensure your final paper is of higher quality; working in this way also will help instill good habits for future writing, research and project completion <sup>1</sup>.

## Course Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking
- Demonstrate understanding of Global Sociocultural Responsibility
- Recognize the relationships between cultural expressions and their contexts
- Understand cultural expressions
- Interpret and evaluate cultural artifacts and/or their contexts for significance
- Understand basic literary elements of specific genres: short story, poetry, and drama
- Analyze and evaluate selected works of literature in classroom or online settings
- Analyze and evaluate both in class discussions (whether face-to-face or electronic) and in class writing, selected works of literature
- Recognize selected major critical approaches to works of literature
- Analyze selected text from one or more critical perspectives

- Demonstrate and understand how literature is relevant to their personal, social, and historical awareness<sup>1</sup>

## Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Draft original thesis statements for analytical writing
- Identify relevant sources of quality through online research
- Incorporate diverse sources into a full-length essay
- Document sources using MLA, APA, or Chicago style
- Apply critical approaches to literature to specific texts<sup>1</sup>

## Readings and Resources

- No additional readings are required in this Module.

## Optional Further Reading

- Bate, Jonathan. *English Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008.

# 26. Developing Analysis

## Developing Analysis

The root of the word **essay** comes from the French verb *essayer*, meaning ‘to attempt’ or ‘to try.’ Like anything we may ‘attempt’ or ‘try,’ effort — sometimes significant effort — is involved and it is highly unlikely our first attempt or first try will yield perfection, nor should it. If you can approach the writing of analysis more as a journey of discovery, a series of attempts or tries at more and more complex levels of understanding, then it will be more likely that you may feel some sense of satisfaction about wherever you find yourself in the process. Students who approach writing analytical essays as a task to complete or a thing to produce are less likely to find the twists and turns during the process of critical thinking, writing, research, and revision at all enjoyable.

As we discussed in the introductory module for this course, academic writing requires **active reading** and **complex reasoning**. That is, writing analysis, as opposed to writing summary, demands extended contemplation over multiple sittings. Discovering a specific interpretive challenge is an excellent way to begin to develop a writing topic. In addition to the questions for active reading we discussed in Module 2, when focusing on a literary text, you may also consider the following three questions as starting points for discovering the focus of your analysis:

- What theme is being expressed or represented in the literature?
- How does the author construct that expression or representation formally?
- Why might the author have chosen to create that particular literary work in that specific manner?

When it is time to sit down and write, one must approach the task with the intentions of an author. Even if writing a paper for class, this kind of focus can be helpful in discerning what to specifically discuss in your essay. Another way to think about the critical choices you're required to make in the drafting of an analytical essay is that they are creative choices. Consider the following organizational questions:

- What do you most want to express via a thesis or purpose statement?
- How will you accomplish expressing your thoughts? What organizational strategies and types of support will work best to develop your topic?
- What is at stake in this essay? What is the larger meaning or value for understanding the ideas presented in your writing? How does your analysis help your audience more fully comprehend the culture and/or cultural object about which you are writing?

Writing critical analysis takes time, both for critical thinking and for writing. Students and scholars strongly benefit from a writing process that involves **multiple drafts** — either the creation of outlines, journaling, the writing of partial or full drafts, the preparation of abstracts, or a combination thereof — prior to final editing. A multi-stage process is more than a required exercise; it is time invested in one's own development of thought that allows for connections to be made, ideas to become more advanced, and understanding evolve beyond original perceptions. <sup>(1)</sup>

## 27. Preparing for Research — Knowing Your Thesis

### Preparing for Research — Knowing Your Thesis

If we truly are engaging writing and research as a process, then finding the **thesis** or purpose statement that will ground and drive your analysis essay will not be instant. Drafting different versions of what will be your thesis is advisable. The term ‘thesis’ has linguistic origins in the Greek word *tithenai*, which means to place, as in to place a proposition before an audience. Consider the preparation that would occur for other things you would place before an audience, like a business proposal or an invitation to a party; some refinement would be required.

For example, if your goal was to write an analysis of Mark Twain’s novel *HUCKLEBERRY FINN*, it is likely that several ideas for a thesis statement would come to mind.

*The friendship between Huck and Jim reveals Twain’s commentary on the moral dilemma of slavery.*



This is a fair enough focus. It is analytical; it does more than summarize. It places a proposition before the reader and upon consideration of that proposition would lead to a richer understanding of the novel. However, slight alterations in this thesis statement may offer improvements or interesting variations. For instance, an emphasis on form could add to the analysis of the content of the novel.

*The friendship of Huck and Jim reveals Twain’s commentary on the moral dilemma of slavery as revealed through the use of dialogue and interior monologue.*



Further refinement might manage to incorporate form, content AND context. Notice that a fully developed thesis — a fully developed analytical proposition — may well require more than one long, run-on sentence.

*Mark Twain encourages the reading audience of his day to question the moral dilemma of slavery through his portrayal of the friendship between Huck and Jim. By revealing differing social perspectives and moral positions through the dialogue between the characters and the interior monologues of Huck, Twain allows his readers to have multiple opinions while nudging their sympathies toward a critique of slavery.*

The advantage of establishing your thesis before embarking upon outside research is that you are more likely to be focused on the kinds of sources that will be most useful and less likely to be overwhelmed or sidetracked by tangential information. You may want to look up general information, such as confirming historical dates or clarifying the use of certain vocabulary, but entering the process of looking for quality sources without a clear sense of the thesis you intend to place at the center of your analysis may muddle your thinking. Certainly, as you continue your research and draft and revise your essay, your thesis and/or your supporting ideas may shift somewhat. That is a natural part of the writing process, but that kind of adjustment in thinking deepens or refines your analysis.<sup>(1)</sup>

# 28. Discovering and Documenting Sources

## Discovering Sources

Through your institution's library you can gain access to a wide range of academic sources for literature and the humanities. Be sure to search for sources through your library's website. This is important because your ability to access the full range of resources available in the databases depends upon you being recognized as a paying student at the college. Your library can provide detailed advice and tutorials for effectively locating resources for your research topic. Below, we will discuss, very generally, the main types of sources that you will encounter as you begin exploring your topic.

## Types of Sources

Researchers may encounter three general types of sources: **primary**, **secondary** and **tertiary**.

### *Tertiary sources*

Sources that collect, summarize, and/or consolidate information from other sources into a more basic format, such as in an almanac or an encyclopedia, are considered tertiary sources. Tertiary sources are useful reference guides, particularly to confirm factual information; however, they often do not satisfy the aims of including "outside sources" in literary research. For example, if a professor



asks for “three outside sources” and you want to use the Encyclopedia Britannica as a source on World War II, it would be acceptable to incorporate it as support and document it; however, it probably is not adding much scholarship to your analysis. To put it another way, if it is important to include a tertiary source in your analytical writing, consider that an additional source beyond the minimum number required. An exception to this advice would be if your desired tertiary source is providing collected statistical information (such as socio-economic demographics) that would be difficult to document otherwise. <sup>(1)</sup>

### *Secondary sources*

These sources are published writing that discusses or draws upon material originally presented elsewhere with the benefit of hindsight, include journal articles, criticism, biographies, and textbooks. These sources are especially helpful in constructing an analysis of a particular literary work because they offer insight into established scholarly opinions. One of the goals in incorporating secondary sources into your own analysis is to demonstrate that you are able to place yourself in conversations with intermediate to advanced ideas on a subject.

### *Primary sources*

The selected readings in this course are **primary sources**, for they are original material that may be used as direct evidence in discussing and analyzing a culture and its history. Primary sources include formal documents, such as essays and other published literature, yet may also be less polished writing such as letters and diaries, or more mass produced texts like newspaper advertisements, political pamphlets, and event brochures. Visual

artifacts such as paintings, photographs, and other art forms also are considered to be primary sources if they are the original creations. The advantage of a primary source is its direct connection to the time period.

## Documenting Sources

All sources must be accurately referenced in analytical writing using a proper **citation**. A citation is a quotation from, or reference to, a book, article, or other source material that is formally documented. Professional organizations such as the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) have developed formal systems to document references when writing. Literary Studies is governed by the **Modern Language Association (MLA)**, a body of professionals including academics from the disciplines of English, Humanities, and Foreign Languages. The vast majority of literary scholarship is written according to MLA Style, the citation guide of the Modern Language Association. (Exceptions might be an article in an education journal that uses APA, for example.) Students always should confirm with their instructors which method of citation is preferred or required for each specific course and write accordingly. Print and online manuals for all major citation guides also are available through your institution's library or writing center. There are a number of MLA guides available online. The exact details and format required varies slightly for each type of source, whether a book, an article, a film, a website, or an online video. **Do not guess**. Use the reference guides available to you — and double-check your work.

## Incorporating Quotations

Incorporating a quotation may be accomplished directly through the use of exact phrasing, clearly punctuated with quotation marks and documented, or indirectly through paraphrase. Instances of paraphrase cannot use the original language of the source (or the use of direct quotation would be the better choice), but must be documented as the idea has been borrowed.

Beyond the grammatical and punctuation requirements, the importance of working with quotations is to do more than simply quote a source. To fully develop analysis, explaining the connection of a quotation or reference to your focus, as well as commenting upon it in your own words, is key to demonstrating that your analysis is an example of mature writing. That means do not simply “parachute” a quotation or reference it without introduction. Nor should you dramatically insert an important quotation or reference at the end of one paragraph and assume that it speaks for itself; take the time to explain and develop how it is significant. <sup>(1)</sup>

# 29. Approaches to Literary Analysis

## Approaches to Literary Analysis

Since the 1960s, a number of schools or approaches to literary analysis have emerged in the academy. Some of the sources you discover may seem to obviously derive from one of the following traditions. Others may be indirectly influenced by one or more of these approaches:

### Formalist

Formalist, or New Critic, analysis prioritizes close reading based solely on the text itself, its language, structure, symbols, and themes, and eschews interpretation based on the influence of outside information (such as personal history of the author, for example).

### New Historicist

New Historicist analysis values the particulars of the time period and location in which the author created the text, as well as any influencing circumstances of the author's life.

## Psychoanalytic

Psychoanalytic, or psycholinguistic, analysis emphasizes the interpretation of characters' mental and emotional states, narrative point-of-view, the unconscious potency of symbol and imagery, and/or the psychological implications of linguistic pattern, tone, and word usage.

## Feminist

Feminist analysis examines the text through the lens of women's experience and may also consider factors in the publishing or critical reception of the work when influenced by gender norms.

## Marxist

Marxist analysis addresses the text as a material product of the society from which it emerged, with particular attention to socio-economic issues.

## Queer

Queer analysis reads the text with strong consideration of “queer” identity and/or “queering” of characters, actions, and/or speech; for example, the cross-dressing and gender switching that occurs in some of Shakespeare's plays can take on more significance than mere dramatic convention.

## Reader-Response

Reader-Response analysis seeks to reveal the activity of the reader as contributing to — even completing — the meaning of the text by applying his or her own experiences, perspectives and cultural values; this approach is not done personally, but in consideration of “the reader” as a type or a social category.

Today, many literary scholars engage in the practice of **intersectionality**, that is the attention to the complexity of how cultural views and traditions often fall into more than one category. For example, while we might gain a great deal by interpreting a short story through a psychoanalytic lens, focusing only on this approach may foreclose the possibilities for our analysis to become as deeply grounded in formalist analysis, or may offer only a passing look at historical issues.

Analytical writers should not base their essays on a particular approach simply for the sake of following that school of thought, but rather to further their understanding of, and appreciation for, the literature in question, as well as the clarity of the interpretation offered. Often hybrid approaches, approaches that combine aspects of two or more of these analytical traditions, are very successful, so long as the thesis remains focused and the support specific and well-documented. As ever, consult with your professor about the specifics of your analytical project and the particular expectations he or she may have for a given assignment. <sup>(1)</sup>

# 30. Module 6 Assessments

## Pre-Writing and Research

**Directions:** Choose this link to access *Journal 6: Pre-Writing and Research* .

For the final literary analysis and research paper, you will choose one text from any module in the course to analyze in detail. In this journal entry, you will begin developing your research and pre-writing for the paper. Firstly, in this entry you will identify the text that you want to write about. Next, you will identify a theme, question, or specific interpretive challenge that you would like to explore in more detail through your paper. Finally, you will briefly explain what your motivation is for this essay. What knowledge do you hope to gain from this research? What is at stake in this study? What are some of the potential personal, social, cultural, or even political consequences of conducting this research? In other words, why does your research matter? Once you have submitted your journal entry, your instructor will provide you with feedback and guidance on your topic. They will also begin directing you toward academic sources that will help to inform and deepen your reading of the text in question. As with previous journal entries, feel free to make connections to other sources of media in this post.

**Submission:** To submit your entry, choose the link titled, Journal 6, above. Choose the “Create Journal Entry” button and complete your entry using the text editor box. Include hyperlinks to relevant texts, videos, or images. Also consider embedding images or videos in your entry to make it more interactive. Be sure to give your entry a title and complete your submission by choosing the “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 10 points and will be graded

using the Journal Rubric. Please use it as a guide toward successful completion of this assignment <sup>1</sup>.

## Course Assignment: Essay: Rough Draft

**Directions:** Submit a rough draft of your *Essay 6: Literary Analysis* in order to obtain detailed feedback from your instructor. Once you have received feedback, you must revise and proofread the paper before submitting the final draft of your paper below

**Submission:** Post the assignment using the *Essay 6: Rough Draft* link above. Use the “Browse My Computer” button in the Attach File area to attach your document. Be sure to complete your submission by choosing the “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 60 points and will be graded using the *Draft Final Essay* rubric <sup>1</sup>.

## Essay 6: Literary Analysis

**Directions:** For the final paper, you will develop a detailed literary analysis and research essay that builds on the work which you began in Journal 6. Having broadly described your research topic, you will now begin to develop a clear thesis or main argument concerning a key theme, question, or interpretive challenges posed by the text in question. In order to develop your literary analysis, you will consult **a minimum of three academic sources** which will provide support as well as a critical perspective from which to conduct your analysis.

For a reminder of some of the important schools or approaches to literary analysis, refer back to the learning unit in this module. You may decide to choose one of these schools to guide your research,



or you may simply decide to draw from a range of relevant scholarship on your text. In your essay you should use a specific style of referencing and citation, such as MLA, APA, or Chicago. Your essay should also incorporate direct quotes from the primary text in order to provide specific evidence for your analysis.

You will submit a rough draft of your paper in order to obtain detailed feedback from your instructor. Once you have received feedback, you will revise and proofread the paper before submitting the final draft of your paper.

**Submission:** Post the assignment using the *Essay 6: Literary Analysis* link above. Use the “Browse My Computer” button in the Attach File area to attach your document. Be sure to complete your submission by choosing the “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth **200 points** and will be graded using the *Final Essay* rubric. Please use it as a guide to successful completion of this assignment <sup>1</sup>.



PART VIII

# ATTRIBUTIONS



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