

Literature Institute Study Guide

LIT 523 Fiction

Instructions for the Study Guide: Please use the questions to develop a deeper understanding of the text and to review the concepts. As you read, consider the questions. Keeping careful notes or a journal will help you prepare to write the essays at the end of each section as well as the final essay. Your required and supplemental readings can be found in the "Readings" file.

Instructions for Essays: Please write a 1,250 – 1,500 word essay that responds to the essay questions. Then, send your essay to your professor. You may send an outline and drafts to your instructor for feedback and guidance before you send your finished essay.

Instructions for Final Essay: Please write a 5,000 word essay that responds to the essay questions. Then, send your essay to your professor. You may send an outline and drafts to your instructor for feedback and guidance before you send your finished essay.

Required Texts

The Bedford Anthology of World Literature, Volumes 1-6. 2004

Supplemental Reading is optional and is indicated by shading.

| UNIT/ WEEKS | TOPIC | INTRODUCTION |
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| I | | Early Fiction (to 1500 A.D.) |
| 1 | Ancient Fiction | |
| Petronius | <i>Satyricon</i> | <p><i>The Roman Invention of the Prose Orgy</i></p> <p>To come on fiction, at this early stage of Western Literature, may seem surprising, but Petronius (early 1st century A.D.) is in an already developed tradition of fictivesocial satirists, most famously the Greek Menippus (3rd century B.C.) In fact, if one goes back to Euripides and the comic playwright Aristophanes, contemporary of Sophocles, one finds precedents for heavy social satire. The twist in the work of Petronius, which is only fragmentarily preserved, is the hilarious indulgence in elegant/gross/refined/obscene behavior. Trimalchio's banquet is a riot of upper class vices composed by an author who was himself a spoiled child of luxury, and a friend (while it lasted) of the hugely self-indulgent Emperor Nero. You may want to review several questions in coming to terms with this work.</p> |
| | Question | <p>Q1. Is Petronius recognizably kin, as sensibility, to his contemporaries Ovid, Virgil, Catullus? Do you see points of contact among these brilliant writers of the early Roman Empire? (And, incidentally, contemporaries of Jesus Christ.) Do you like this kind of satire? Is it socially useful? Is it self-indulgent? What new expressive possibilities does 'prose fiction' bring into literature? Have we been reading any 'prose' up to this point?</p> |
| | Question Theme: "Carpe Diem" | <p>Q2. Discuss how the "Carpe Diem" philosophy introduced by Horace is illustrated in this work, and how the characters discuss the idea that life is transitory and death inevitable. Give evidence from the text.</p> |
| | Question Character: Trimalchio | <p>Q3. Discuss the character of Trimalchio. What motivates him? What does he most desire? Compare /contrast with the nouveau riche. How do the slaves who are working for Trimalchio regard him, considering Trimalchio himself was a former slave?</p> |

Chaucer***Canterbury Tales****Real People on Pilgrimage*

Many of our introductory notes on Boccaccio need repeating in an introduction to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which were written only shortly after the work of Boccaccio. Chaucer, too, frames a series of tales, but is more interested in the tales as framed pieces than in the flow of the narrative into a pre-novel form. As in Boccaccio, a wide range of tones pervade the Chaucerian tales—from bawdy to uplifting—though Chaucer writes more comfortably inside a theme of social realism than does Boccaccio. The most striking difference between the two authors is Chaucer's language, supple epic poetry. It is usually said that the Western novel, a so dominant form of our literary taste today, springs from the growth of prose in the vernacular forms of late Mediaeval European languages. The epic, by contrast, is tightly linked to poetry. (Do you see why that should be?)

Question

Q1. Does Chaucer's work seem more like epic than does Boccaccio's, and less like novel fiction?)

Question

Theme:
Realism

Q2. According to the Wife of Bath, what is the one thing that the women want most from their partner in marriage? To what degree is she reliable? What are the chief elements of humor in her narrative?

Question

Theme : Sexuality

Q3. Please discuss the Wife of Bath' views on marriage, virginity, and sexuality. How well do her ideas correspond with the "official" Christian views of medieval times? What is the one thing that the women want most from their partner in marriage? How does she manage gain complete control over her husbands? What are the comic turns of the situation and the chief elements of humor in her narrative?

Boccaccio***Decameron****The Novelist's Imagination in a Late Mediaeval Setting*

We have been reading a wide variety of texts, some literary in the traditional sense, some, like the travel writings above, 'documentary.' As we get closer to the so-called Western Renaissance, which some date from the 15th century (in the West), we get closer to narrative tales written for a democratic audience in an easy, or colloquial style. (I am trying to describe the 'progress' toward something like the 'novel' of modern times.) We are, with Boccaccio's *Decameron* in the early 14th century, dealing with a group of tales organized into a narrative fictive whole, an early novel form. (It should be noted, by the way, that Asian novel-like works, such as the 11th century *Tale of Genji*, have already moved close to the modern sense of the novel, long before their counterparts in the West.) Boccaccio's *Decameron* devotes itself to one hundred tales told over a ten day period by a group of young sophisticates on the run from The Black Death. Their theme is love, and they manage to tell stories on every register, from the highly spiritual to the raw. The overarching point, for our reading, is that something like a continuous tale emerges from these partial tales.

Question

Q1. Do you feel you are reading a contemporary novel? How does the treatment of love here compare to that which you have seen, for example, in Sappho, Petronius, Capellanus?

Question

Theme:
Realism

Q2. What kind of behavior does Boccaccio observe during the 1348 plague in Florence? As in times of war, during plague, the codes of behavior change, and people tend to look to personal survival and gain. How does Boccaccio address the issue of mores and human behavior in a time when the social code of conduct totally collapses?

Question

Theme:
Temptation

Q3. In the story "Rustico and Alibech", what does the hermit Rustico experience under the temptation of a beautiful girl? How does he struggle with temptation? How do his ideas and behavior change as he yields to the temptation? Does he experience love or lust towards Alibech? Is

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| | | everything, including deception, fair in love? What do you think of the saints' experience when they lead an ascetic life, and their constant struggle with temptation? |
| Question Theme: Awakening | | Q4. How does the development of Alibech's sexuality progress? In this story, how does the natural development of sexuality take place in the absence of society's acculturation? How does Alibech's behavior change after she experiences sexuality and pleasure? Does this change in women influence who is the initiator and aggressor in sexuality of men and women? |
| Question Theme: Sexuality | | Q5. What are Ghismonda's ideas about her own sexuality? How does Ghismonda explain the rationale for her decision to take a lover? What does she mean that she is "flesh and blood"? How does her father try to suppress her daughter's nature? How did her parents interfere with her decisions of marital status and the choice of marriage and sexual partner and what was the result of this interference? |

II Early Modern Fiction (1500-1800 A.D.)

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| 4 | Renaissance Fiction | |
| Cervantes | <i>Don Quixote</i> | Mockery and Nostalgia: The first Spanish Novelist You have been reading comedy of different kinds, epic poetry likewise, and with Boccaccio the beginnings of prose fiction. With Cervantes' prose epic tale, often considered 'the first novel,' you come onto a work which blends all these earlier styles and genres. At the same time, as critics realize, Cervantes is more 'modern' than any of these background settings can explain. In trying to figure out the modernity of this author you might consider that he and Shakespeare share the same death year. |
| | Question | Q1. Can you see anything in common to the two writers? (You are about to read Shakespeare's artful <i>The Tempest</i> .) Is there some blend of irony, romance, dream in the two works? What, incidentally, do you make of the Don's romantic nostalgia for the past, which is the starting point for the whole work? Have we encountered historical nostalgia up to this point? Is Cervantes as author sentimental about the 'good old days' of Feudalism and Chivalry? |
| | Question Idea: Satire | Q2. Compare and contrast Don Quixote's worldview with Sancho's practical, earth-bound realism. Provide examples and cite passages. |
| Navarre | <i>Heptameron</i> | <i>Woman's Tales at the Crossroads of Desire and Love</i> In the preface to her book of tales, Marguerite de Navarre pays tribute to the example of Boccaccio, whose <i>Decameron</i> we have read. Can you see why? (Both authors work out a set of tales framed by an event which isolates the narrators from society, and throws them back on their own narrative resources. Chaucer did the same). And isn't it relevant, to Marguerite's tribute to Boccaccio, that she too decides to devote her narrative development to 'tales of love.' (By now, after reading Sappho, Ibn Hazm, Louise Labe, Petrarch, etc., you are aware that the tradition of love poetry is long and strong. Remember that the next time you buy your sweetheart a Valentine's day love card!) |
| | Question | Q1. What, finally, do you think of Marguerite de Navarre's treatment of love in the tale of Florida and Amador? How does the development of that tale illustrate the conflict between carnal and Platonic love? |
| | Question Theme: Love | Q2. Compare and contrast medieval chivalric love and worldly or erotic love. How do the concepts of love and honor differ between Florida and Amador? |
| Rabelais | <i>Gargantua and Pantagruel</i> | |

5-6 Enlightenment

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| Swift | <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> | <i>The Human Condition: Between Banality and Viciousness</i> Perhaps you will see the inherent mystery in Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> . The author appears to be creating, in the Houyhnhnms, an attractive model for humanity at its best—until we realize that life among these people is a placid bore. The Yahoos appear malignantly disgusting, yet full of the very life missing among the Houyhnhnms. Swift as author seems to take a bitter view of mankind, yet plainly he is relying on traditional senses of value when he critiques the Lilliputians and the Brobdingnagians. We may finally want to say of this work, which fascinates us on so many levels, not least on the childish level, that it betrays our efforts to pigeonhole it as a genre. |
| Question | | Q1. Once again the questions. Is <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> fiction in the sense you usually understand? If not, what is this text? Satire on Mankind? Fantasy travel literature? Do you see here some traces of the fascination with exotic lands, which is highlighted in <i>Oronoko</i> ? A lot of questions, yes, and none susceptible to a black and white response. |
| Question Theme: Satire | | Q2: How does Swift use <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> to satirize English society? Where does Gulliver encounter the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms? Why does he not see the Yahoos has human physical form at first? When does he start to see that they are, in fact, also humans, like Gulliver himself? How do the Houyhnhnms behave? |

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| Behn | <i>Oroonoko</i> | <i>The Exotic Meets the Quest for Human Equity</i> You will have noted the growing presence of 'fiction' in our reading, and you should ask yourself two questions about that development: what is fictional, in the sense you are accustomed to, about the work of Chaucer, Boccaccio, or Marguerite de Navarre? |
| Voltaire | <i>Candide</i> | <i>Innocence at Grips with the Problem of Evil</i> Voltaire's <i>Candide</i> , in any case, spoke straight from its time, in pillorying naïve faith in the universe, ignorance (Candide's) which leads to massive denial, and mankind's reluctance to use good sense in evaluating and in interpreting human affairs. To proclaim that all is for the best in the best possible world, when disaster is everywhere, seemed to Voltaire the height of insanity. Do you agree with him? In the face of natural disaster do you feel that faith in the order and plan of the universe is undermined? What do you think Sophocles or Virgil would have said to this proposition? After all they too dealt with, and interpreted, crushing tragedy. |
| Question: | | Q1. Have you begun to note the Enlightenment penchant for correcting/critiquing human behavior, in the light of reason? Would it be correct to say that Moliere, Behn, Swift, and Voltaire all work around a reformative view of human nature? If you accept this broad general idea, which would follow from the thought of a century given to clarifying life, would you then agree that this reforming penchant was less apparent in the earlier texts we have read? |
| Question Ideas: Satire | | Q2: How does Voltaire use <i>Candide</i> to satirize French society? Discuss the functions of Pangloss, Cacambo, and Martin. Compare Swift and Voltaire's ideal societies (the world of the Houyhnhnms vs El Dorado). Voltaire's views on the philosophy of Optimism (Leibniz). Contrast the optimism of and Pangloss and the pessimism of Martin. Discuss echoes of courtly love in Candide's pursuit of Cunegonde. What does Candide believe at the beginning and end of the story? How is he criticizing utopianism? |

III Modern Fiction (1800 A.D. to Present)

7-8 19th-Century Fiction

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| Melville | <i>Bartleby, the Scrivener</i> | Herman Melville was born in 1819 in New York City. His family was well-off, but his father went bankrupt and insane, and died when Melville was twelve. Melville briefly attended Albany Classical School in 1835, but left to pursue his own interests. He did most of his learning on his own, reading |
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literature, technical manuals, historical textbooks and religious texts. From the age of twelve he held a variety of jobs, and in 1939 he shipped out as a cabin boy on the whaling ship Achushnet. The experience would later be translated into what is now his most famous novel, *Moby Dick*. Published in 1851, *Moby Dick* was a commercial failure. Depressed by this, Melville turned to more marketable writing, and in this period he began to write his short stories.

The stories were usually published in magazines. The first of these stories was "Bartleby the Scrivener" (1853). Since Melville was "rediscovered" by literary critics in the early twentieth century, "Bartleby" has been one of the most hotly debated stories in all of Melville's work. With its setting at Wall Street and its examination of the legal and business mentality—and the toll the developing business world can take on its workers—Melville's story is surprisingly modern. Like Captain Ahab, Bartleby is a character that has been examined and re-examined by each passing generation, who interpret him differently depending on their political or academic climate. Bartleby has been read as a fool, a tragic hero, and a psychologically-unbalanced individual. Some critics read "Bartleby" as an allegory for the evils of materialism, while still others read it biographically, interpreting Bartleby as a stand-in for Melville. (from Sparknotes.com)

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| Shelley | <i>Frankenstein</i> | <p>In the summer of 1816, a young, well-educated woman from England traveled with her lover to the Swiss Alps. Unseasonable rain kept them trapped inside their lodgings, where they entertained themselves by reading ghost stories. At the urging of renowned poet Lord Byron, a friend and neighbor, they set their own pens to paper, competing to see who could write the best ghost story. The young woman, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, took the prize, having composed a story creepy enough not only to take its place alongside the old German tales that she and her Alpine companions had been reading, but also to become a bestseller in her time and a Gothic classic that still resonates with readers almost two centuries later.</p> |
| Hoffmann | <i>The Mines of Falun</i> | <p>Composer, musician, and artist E. T. A. Hoffmann is best known as a writer of bizarre and fantastic fiction. Drawing from English Gothic romance, eighteenth-century Italian comedy, the psychology of the abnormal, and the occult, he created a world in which everyday life is infused with the supernatural. Hoffmann's tales were influential in the nineteenth century throughout Europe and America. Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Baudelaire, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Heinrich Heine, and George Meredith are among the authors who derived plots, characters, and motifs from Hoffmann.</p> <p>One of Hoffmann's recurring themes was the descent of the artist into a madness caused by being forced to live in a mundane world. While "The Golden Pot" centers on a poet, "Rat Krespel" (1819; "The Cremona Violin," also translated as "Councillor Krespel") portrays a musician's fall into what E. F. Bleiler describes as "sane insanity," a result of his hypersensitivity to daily occurrences. "Die Bergwerke zu Falun" (1819; "The Mines of Falun") was inspired by the real-life discovery of a preserved body in archaic clothing in a Swedish mining tunnel. Hoffman's miner became a supernatural being with intimate knowledge of nature and creation. Hoffmann also produced one Gothic novel, <i>Die Elixiere des Teufels</i> (1815–16; <i>The Devil's Elixir</i>), a doppelgänger tale in which two characters' identities are so intermeshed that neither can tell where one begins and the other ends. (from enotes.com)</p> |
| Flaubert | <i>Simple Heart</i> | <p><i>Reducing the Size of the Hero, Finding the True Hero</i></p> <p>In the traditions of classical mythology, the proper subject of imaginative literature is typically a person of dignity and high birth. While this tradition does not dominate subsequent writing—see Catullus, Boccaccio, Chaucer—it is not until the 19th century, in the West, that we see a conscious effort to write fiction about 'ordinary people'—though of course as you and I know, nobody is ordinary. In both Wordsworth's lyrics, and Pushkin's 'Bronze Horseman,' for example, you found tributes to the voice of the little person, themes which were rarely promoted with such intimacy prior to our</p> |

times, prior to the last two centuries. (To what do you attribute this growing attention to the 'man or woman on the streets, or in the corner of the city'?) In any case, Felicite speaks for the saintly element in many lives of quiet fidelity, personal observation, and love of good people and good parrots.

Question Q1. Do you know the renowned novel, *Madame Bovary*? There, of course, Flaubert brings to full detail his interest in quiet lives which are pressed to the max. Do you also notice that the movement of Realism, to which Flaubert is here in the process of giving a name, coincides with great fastidiousness in art? Do the two go together—realism and aesthetic preoccupation?

Question Theme: Love and Loss Q2: As opposed to Romanticism, Realism uses as its subject the lives of ordinary people in ordinary circumstances. In "A Simple Heart," the life of Felicite, a servant woman, is traced. Felicite loves many people and then loses them. Discuss her condition at the beginning of the story, and how things change over time. Discuss her parrot, Lou-Lou, and what the parrot does for her, and the parrot's role. Explain the similarities between the parrot, Lou-Lou, and things you might find in a church. How does Lou-Lou's appearance at the end of the story reinforce Felicite's losses and her relationships?

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| Dostoevsky | Notes from Underground | <p><i>Ruminations of a Man out of Sync with Society</i></p> <p>In his <i>Notes from Underground</i>, Dostoyevsky goes far beyond the realism of the little person that we have mentioned in connection with Wordsworth, Pushkin, and Flaubert, all of whom were in that regard promoting the broad agenda of Romanticism. Dostoyevsky here becomes the persona of a bitter, sarcastic clerk, whose contempt for humanity informs his life. Among the cultural values he scorns is his time's longing—as embodied in the London Crystal Palace—for functional, lifelessly streamlined perfections.</p> |
| Question | <p>Q1. The mere existence of such striving for social purity drives the underground man to revel further in the dysfunctional existence he himself occupies. Do you see a connection between this harsh and lastingly modern text, and the viewpoint emerging from the speech of the Grand Inquisitor in <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>? Does the Grand Inquisitor believe in the simple people Jesus Christ has come to save, or is the Inquisitor just the cynical CEO of a vast manipulative organization? Is the Underground Man of a mindset which resembles that of the Inquisitor? Do you find these Dostoyevsky texts of interest? Have they an interface with your life as you live it?</p> | |
| Question Theme: Alienation | <p>Q2: Discuss the theme of alienation of "The Underground Man." Why does he never experience friendship and love? Describe his interactions with his friends and Liza. How and why, and with whom, does he fail to make connections? When and how does his mental condition take a turn for the worse? Why do you think that this novel is considered a realistic work?</p> | |
| Tolstoy | <i>The Death of Ivan Ilich</i> | <p>It is not insignificant that <i>The Death of Ivan Ilich</i>, written in 1886, was the first major fictional work published by Tolstoy after his crisis and conversion. Tolstoy's religious philosophy serves as a background to the understanding of the novel. Brotherly love, mutual support, and Christian charity, values that became essential to Tolstoy in the second half of his life, emerge as the dominant moral principles in <i>The Death of Ivan Ilich</i>. And just as Tolstoy's discovery of the true meaning of life led him to fulfillment and an acceptance of death, so too, Ivan Ilich's awakening exposes him to the light of a meaningful life and assuages his fear of dying. Thus, <i>The Death of Ivan Ilich</i> can be seen as a reflection and an elaboration of Tolstoy's post-conversion philosophical concerns. The novel is a fictional answer to the questions that plagued Tolstoy during the mid 1870s. (from sparknotes.com)</p> |

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| Chopin | <i>The Story of an Hour</i> | <p><i>Restive Women and Oppressive Men</i></p> <p>We have read texts dealing with woman's predicament in society and culture: works of Mary Wollstonecraft and Flaubert come to mind. We have read poetry by sensitive women suffering in the throes of love. Don't you think though, that the Feminist material under review here is different in focus from what we have been reading? Think of 'The Story of an Hour,' 'The Yellow Wallpaper,' and 'The Revolver.' Don't all those stories portray women in extreme situations, taking the full measure of their dominated and isolated position?</p> |
| Gilman | <i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i> | <p>Charlotte Perkins Gilman was best known in her time as a crusading journalist and feminist intellectual, a follower of such pioneering women's rights advocates as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, Gilman's great-aunt. Gilman was concerned with political inequality and social justice in general, but the primary focus of her writing was the unequal status of women within the institution of marriage.</p> <p>Today, Gilman is primarily known for one remarkable story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," which was considered almost unprintably shocking in its time and which unnerves readers to this day. This short work of fiction, which deals with an unequal marriage and a woman destroyed by her unfulfilled desire for self-expression, deals with the same concerns and ideas as Gilman's nonfiction but in a much more personal mode. Indeed, "The Yellow Wallpaper" draws heavily on a particularly painful episode in Gilman's own life. (from sparknotes.com)</p> |
| | Question | <p>Q1: Does this Feminist writing seem to you to belong to the Realist/Naturalist movement? Or is it rather a new kind of prose fiction, ideologically driven? That interpretation could draw support from the wealth of women's movements erupting in the late 19th and early 20th century West. These movements form a setting for the texts of this assignment. So, in a broader sense, does the work of social critics such as Karl Marx, who in mid-19th century were analyzing the economic bases of social oppression. D/o you find the above Feminist texts good literary reading, or propagandistic? Or both?</p> |
| | Question Theme: Gender Inequality | <p>Q2: In the nineteenth century, the roles for women were very limited and constrained. When the attempt was made to transcend the role, the woman was forced into a place of "no place" – a no man's land of non-identity. How do the authors of the stories explore the relations between the powerful and the powerless? Do these circumstances justify the movement of feminism in the nineteenth century?</p> |
| 9-10 | 20th Century Fiction | |
| Conrad | <i>Heart of Darkness</i> | <p><i>Colonialism and the Myth or Mystery of Africa</i></p> <p>Does Conrad's text, which vaults us into the 20th century, carry a universal meaning? If so, what is it? If not, is the story about the particular historical situation, Colonialism, and the evils (or passions) associated with it? What is Conrad's attitude toward that historical situation, which was so all powerful during the later 19th and first half of the 20th century? Was Conrad an admirer of Marlowe, who narrates the story? What about Kurtz? Was Conrad appalled by him?</p> |
| | Question | <p>Q1. These difficult questions cluster about the tale before us, and are not easily put to rest. Why? Is it that one's response to these questions depends on one's own ideology? Chinua Achebe, cited in our Bedford textbook, views Conrad as an outright imperialist. But the editors of the Bedford volume appear to view Conrad as a stark opponent of Colonialism. So here is another question. How is it possible for a literary work to provoke such contrary evaluations? Widen your response to that enquiry. Have many of the texts we have read been inherently ambiguous? Does</p> |

literature strive to be clear, or does it gladly put up with ambiguity? Many questions. Note the brilliance of Conrad's easy narration, the sinister quality of the heart of darkness itself, and the unique English of this novelist of Polish birth, who first learned English in his teens.

Question Theme: Evil
 Q2. Discuss the theme of evil in human beings in the case of Kurtz. How was Kurtz transformed from an idealistic person to an evil person? Does Conrad believe that all human beings have a primitive "dark" side of their personality to carry out evil acts if unconstrained by the civilization? How does Marlow's story about human evil affect the listeners?

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| Kafka | <i>Metamorphosis</i> | <p><i>The Helplessness of the Human in the Grips of a Meaningless Existence</i> Kafka jacks up Eliot's criticism, in <i>The Waste Land</i>, to a new level. Eliot savaged the cultural ambience of European society in the early 20th century; Kafka went for the contemporary sickness of mankind itself. When Gregor Samsa wakes, to find his physical form changed into that of a beetle, he realizes in himself the absurd vulnerability of the entire human condition. We call this kind of literary art surrealism because it keeps the real but transforms it into something beyond itself. (You may soon, with Marquez' 'Old Man' story, begin to wonder what the difference is between Surrealism and Postmodernism in literature.)</p> |
| | Question | <p>Q1. Have you read any previous radical critique of the human condition? Would <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> or <i>The Underground Man</i> be such a critique? Would those works cut as deeply as Kafka does into our sense of wholeness as human beings? Would Saint Augustine have been able to understand Kafka's perception of the human condition? Do you see our human condition as adequately represented in 'Metamorphosis'?</p> |
| | Question Experience: Alienation | <p>Q2. Surrealism employs the subconscious and the non-rational to cause readers to view subjects in a new way. By using exaggeration and distortion it represents reality, and even makes it grotesque in order to get at the heart of human nature and institutions. Kafka's work illustrates the Surrealist movement in literature. Describe the elements of surrealism in "Metamorphosis." Discuss the theme of isolation and alienation in the case of Gregor Samsa and compare it to the bureaucratic isolation in the modern world. How does the family react? What does the sister do after he dies? As his world becomes smaller, their becomes larger. Show how the family space and Gregor's space change and shift.</p> |
| Joyce | <i>The Dead (from Dubliners)</i> | <p><i>Gaiety and Weltschmerz in Upper Class Dublin</i> 'The Dead' relies less than Conrad's story on historical context. Joyce takes us to a traditional middle class Christmas Party in Dublin, and lets us see it/evaluate it through the eyes of Gabriel, a member of the society but a person somewhat superior and detached. We feel the festivity --as well as the overfamiliar, cliché-quality of the group gathering--and we see what that gathering means to the participants. Throughout, we feel the tinge of sadness which marks the event. (How is that touch introduced into the story? What about the tale, as it unfolds, conveys the mood of human loss and pretence?) The post-party situation is where the 'sadness' sets in fully. Gabriel wishes to make love to his wife, but finds she is thinking of a young man, now dead, who once loved her. Meanwhile the snows falls outside.</p> |
| | Question | <p>Q1. The memory of the dead crowd the room, and seem to fill it as does the white stillness of the snow outside. How does Joyce use descriptions of landscape and interior décor, to enforce his story's mood of sadness? Does Joyce want to make a point, or just to establish an atmosphere? Does Joyce go for universal qualities of the human situation? Does he reach them? Is sadness, as distinct from tragedy, a condition of human sensibility, and can it pervade an entire tale?</p> |
| | Question Theme: Memory | <p>Q2. Discuss the theme of memory and past in relation to Gretta's past memory of a friend who died. How does it relate to mortality in relation to Gabriel's statement "His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead?" It isn't only the lover who is dead, but the whole society. Discuss the various symbols of death and futility, social as well as</p> |

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| | | personal, in the story. Show the ways in which they anticipate Gabriel's final vision. |
| Borges | <i>Garden of Forking Paths</i> | <p><i>The Unreality of Time and the Layers of Historical Meaning</i></p> <p>We have struggled with a definition of Modernism—to characterize various major works from the early 20th century—and now we are dealing with the effort to do so for Postmodernism, a century later. Does this story by Borges give any hints toward the meaning of this still newish term? You will notice that the narrative line is intentionally broken, that the perspective of the narrator is constantly being diffracted by new textual information, that the very firmness of time as a foundation for narrative structure is shaky. (Am I correct that all these features display in Borges' tale?) Is it that literature is calling itself into question as an art project, even while it is being created? Would that perspective apply at all to the pieces of Mann, Conrad, or Joyce, that we considered earlier? (If you want to say <i>no</i>, could you explain yourself?)</p> |
| Sartre | <i>The Flies</i> | <p><i>The Pride of the Individual Making his/her own Life</i></p> <p>Do you recall the issues that were central to Aeschylus' play, <i>The Eumenides</i>? You will recall that an entire cycle of mythic tales was involved: the immediate sources were in the tales of the Trojan War. Agamemnon returned to Mycenae, after the war, bringing his concubine, Cassandra, along with him. Upon return, this hero found his wife involved with a lover, Aegisthus, and found himself killed by his vengeful son, Orestes. In the final play of the <i>Oresteia</i>, which we did not read, Orestes was exonerated, and a new reign of non-revenge justice was instituted by the Gods. Sartre builds into this legend the tale of an Orestes who kills Agamemnon, does so out of vengeance in a free act, then is left to bear proudly the consequences of his act. No final exoneration of Orestes is needed or offered. We are looking at secular vengeance freely undertaken by Orestes, in an act of independent decision. We are looking at an embodiment of the ethical principle of independent choice, which Sartre developed at length as a philosophy of existentialism.</p> |
| | Question | Q1. What is the nature of philosophical thought, when it is expressed in literature? How does literature deal with philosophical ideas? What other writers have we read who seem to create philosophical ideas directly into their work? Is that effort often successful? Is it successful here? |
| | Question Theme: Freedom | Q2. Compare and contrast Orestes' and Electra's motives for their actions. Are they successful? Show the process by which their positions become reversed. Explore the implications and consequences of their actions. |
| Camus | <i>The Guest</i> | <p><i>Isolation and Moral Decision in the Sahara</i></p> <p>Like Sartre, Camus was drawn to the philosophy of Existentialism, with its stress on freedom and intellectual choice in a godless universe in which 'man is on his own.' In the present story the schoolmaster finds his desert solitude broken into. The Arab, dragged on a rope, represents a legal challenge the schoolmaster does not wish to accept. The schoolmaster backs out of the alleged responsibility to transport the Arab to prison. It is also a tenet of Existentialism, however, that one's voluntary, and self-defining act entails consequences one has to live with. In the end, the schoolmaster has to live with a world in which his action toward the Arab has won him unexpected enemies. Like Orestes, the schoolmaster must live his choices.</p> |
| | Question | Q1. In case it is not apparent on the surface of the story before you, Camus (like Sartre in 'The Flies,' is writing in the context of compelling war time events in which the action of individual choice is called upon for passionate partisan purposes—in the present case, for meaningful behavior in the midst of the War of Algerian Liberation from France. How important is it, to understanding a story like 'The Guest,' to know the philosophical background to it? Do great works of literature like <i>The Iliad</i> or <i>The Inferno</i> have a 'philosophical background'? At the opposite extreme, is there a "philosophical background" behind a lyric poem? |

Question Theme:
Freedom

Q2. Discuss the theme of freedom of decision and action in the case of Daru and the prisoner. Is Daru any freer than the prisoner? What is the point of making him a teacher? Of putting him in an isolated setting? What are the moments of irony and absurdity?

IV Non-Western Literature

11 Indian Fiction

Tagore

***The Hungry
Stones / Short
Stories***

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was the youngest son of Debendranath Tagore, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, which was a new religious sect in nineteenth-century Bengal and which attempted a revival of the ultimate monistic basis of Hinduism as laid down in the Upanishads. He was educated at home; and although at seventeen he was sent to England for formal schooling, he did not finish his studies there. In his mature years, in addition to his many-sided literary activities, he managed the family estates, a project which brought him into close touch with common humanity and increased his interest in social reforms. He also started an experimental school at Shantiniketan where he tried his Upanishadic ideals of education. From time to time he participated in the Indian nationalist movement, though in his own non-sentimental and visionary way; and Gandhi, the political father of modern India, was his devoted friend. Tagore was knighted by the ruling British Government in 1915, but within a few years he resigned the honour as a protest against British policies in India. http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1913/tagore-bio.html

Narayan

Short Stories

R. K. Narayan (Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan) , 1906-2001, Indian novelist, b. Madras (now Chennai). Narayan, who wrote in English, published his first novel, *Swami and Friends*, in 1935. While he wrote hundreds of short stories for the Madras newspaper *Hindu*, he first came to international attention when his works were hailed in England by Graham Greene. His humorous novel *The Financial Expert* (1952) was the first of his works published in the United States. Frequently set in the fictional town of Malgudi, many of Narayan's 14 novels and numerous stories provide exquisitely crafted, witty, vital, and perceptive descriptions of everyday village life in S India. His fiction often deals with the protagonist's search for identity. Narayan's major works, usually centering around a modest hero and containing portraits of a variety of eccentrics, include *The English Teacher*, also known as *Grateful to Life and Death* (1945), *The Printer of Malgudi* (1949), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs* (1976), and *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983). Among his short-story collections are *Malgudi Days* (1982) and *The Grandmother's Tale and Selected Stories* (1994). http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/R_K_Narayan.aspx

12 Chinese Fiction

Wu Cheng-
En

Monkey

R. K. Narayan (Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan) , 1906-2001, Indian novelist, b. Madras (now Chennai). Narayan, who wrote in English, published his first novel, *Swami and Friends*, in 1935. While he wrote hundreds of short stories for the Madras newspaper *Hindu*, he first came to international attention when his works were hailed in England by Graham Greene. His humorous novel *The Financial Expert* (1952) was the first of his works published in the United States. Frequently set in the fictional town of Malgudi, many of Narayan's 14 novels and numerous stories provide exquisitely crafted, witty, vital, and perceptive descriptions of everyday village life in S India. His fiction often deals with the protagonist's search for identity. Narayan's major works, usually centering around a modest hero and containing portraits of a variety of eccentrics, include *The English Teacher*, also known as *Grateful to Life and Death* (1945), *The Printer of Malgudi* (1949), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs* (1976), and *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983). Among his short-story collections are *Malgudi Days* (1982) and *The Grandmother's Tale and Selected Stories* (1994). http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/R_K_Narayan.aspx

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| Comparative Literature: Quest | Homer (<i>The Odyssey</i>) Cervantes (<i>Don Quixote</i>) It's important to recognize that although the quest is a predominant theme in literature, the conditions, beliefs, and prevailing attitudes that inform the various quests in literature make each one quite unique. For example, the quest in Homer serves to illustrate valor and heroism. In Cervantes, the quest functions to parody the chivalric code and what are considered to be effete, delusional values. What happens in the quest in Monkey? What is Tripitaka's role? |
| Comparative Literature: Founding Story | Virgil (<i>The Aeneid</i>) Milton (<i>Paradise Lost</i>) The epic is considered a narrative of origin(s) and as such, it establishes the foundations of an emergent nationalism. How does Monkey relate to the origins of a particularly Chinese consciousness, with attendant differentiations of religion (Buddism). Monkey also sets the stage for a sense of separate identity. |
| Comparative Literature: Fantasy | Arabian Nights Garcia Marquez (<i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i>) Each work deals with an encounter with alternative realities, even magic. Is the magic functional or is it merely perceptual? |
| Theme Growth | Monkey learns special daoist (taoist) powers: a magic staff and the ability to summersault huge distances and to grown or shrink, for example. He even learns the supreme secret of Daoism: immortality. But Monkey also demonstrates some less exalted aspects of human personality and behavior, and he is thrown out of the Celestial Kingdom until he learns better behavior. What has Monkey done wrong and what do those mischievous deeds show about his character? What does Monkey have to learn before he can reenter the Celestial Empire? What human traits does he demonstrate and which of these endear him to readers? |

13

Japanese Fiction

Tale of Heike

The Tale of the Heike is a long narrative about the fall of the Taira clan and the victory of the Minamoto. It has no single author and was probably compiled from various oral sources, but it does present a comprehensive tale of the rise and fall of Kiyomori. The sympathy of the Heike is with the Taira, who are presented as tragic aristocrats, overcome by the rough forces of the provincial Minamoto. The tale nonetheless valorizes the courage and shrewdness of the Minamoto, even as it laments the downfall of the Taira. The tale embraces the Japanese sense that their tradition is both courtly and military; both urban and provincial; both elegant and rustic.

The Tale of the Heike is a one of a genre of gunki monogatari (military tales) and probably played a significant role in shaping military ethics and values: personal loyalty to one's lord; negation of the self; self-sacrifice unto death; an austere and simple life; control of the appetites and emotions; an honorable death. Loyalty to one's lord superceded all other loyalties, even to one's family and children whose lives, in extreme situations, could be sacrificed to protect the life of one's lord.

<http://f99.middlebury.edu/JA216A/heike/heike.html>

Comparative Literature:

Beowulf
For the community reflected in Beowulf, honor and allegiance in battle are reflections of one's tribal / familial fealties. In fact, one might even say that the monster (Grendel) is not a literal beast, but is an extended metaphor for collective or individual doubt and disloyalty. Are there similar possible interpretations in *The Tale of the Heike*? What happens to people who refuse to sacrifice themselves? What does disloyalty look like? What does loyalty and honor look like? Are there potential extended metaphors in the narrative?

Comparative
Literature:

Shakespeare
Henry V

The idea of honor and valor in battle; military ethics, values, and the notion of self-sacrifice appear in *Henry V*. However, the world of *Henry V* is not one of *Beowulf*, and loyalty is also linked to the notion of the Great Chain of Being, and the high standards set for the king. How could the “gunki monogatari” genre parallel that of Shakespeare’s plays in the way that narratives lead to an enactment of values?

**Murasaki
Shikibu**

Tale of Genji

Written 1,000 years ago, *The Tale of Genji* has 54 chapters and over 1,000 pages of text in its English translation. It is generally considered to be the world’s first true novel, and was certainly the first psychological novel ever written.

Genji, the hero of the *Tale*, is the son of the emperor and his favourite concubine, Kiritsubo. A Korean sage predicts a brilliant future for Genji but his mother suffers the jealousy of rivals at court, becomes ill and dies. The distraught emperor becomes obsessed with the tragic story of Yang Kwei-fei, but eventually finds another concubine, Fujitsubo, who reminds him of his former love.

Since Genji lacks backing at court, the emperor makes him a commoner, assigning him membership of the non-royal Genji clan. The eldest son of the emperor and Lady Kokiden is made crown prince.

Genji becomes an uncommonly handsome and gifted young man, admired by all but feared by Lady Kokiden and her family. The first part of the *Tale* follows his amorous exploits with a variety of ladies in and around Heian-kyo, his friendship with To no Chujo and arranged marriage to To no Chujo’s sister Aoi, the birth of his son and his budding relationship with the young Murasaki. <http://www.taleofgenji.org/summary.html>

Comparative
Literature:
Poetry vs. Novel

The *Man’yoshu*
The *Kokinshu*

The role of poetry in courtly life was significantly different than that role of personal writings such as those of the novel. The poems were often written to be performed in a public setting, while novels were definitely to be read in a quieter, more sustained manner. What do the differences mean to the readers? How can different types of human emotions and experiences be expressed through the two entirely distinctive modes?

Comparative
Literature:
Courtly Love and
Culture

Andreas Capellanus
The Art of Courtly Love

During the Renaissance, the “chaplain” Andreas Capellanus wrote what some might consider to be a rather cynical treatise on love in which he discusses the codes of love and amorous conduct. In some ways, the environment of courtly Japan was equally bound by rigid social strictures. How does the existence of such a set of codes lend itself to semi-satire? Where and how does *Tale of Genji* reflect a set of social codes regarding love and its pursuit(s)?

Comparative
Literature:
The heroic

Cao Xueqin
The Story of the Stone

Both *Tale of Genji* and the *Story of the Stone* are populated by amorous heroes and characters who illustrate / reflect Buddhist thought and precepts. The heroic elements, however, are presented in quite different ways. What are they?

**Ihara
Saikaku**

***What the
Seasons Brought
to the Almanac
Maker***

Ihara Saikaku was born Hirayama Togo in Osaka in 1642, and little is known about his early life. Despite sketchy personal details, Saikaku’s reputation as a novelist, poet and playwright who was the toast of Genroku-era Osaka is unquestionable. Saikaku Ihara (1641-93), novelist and poet, is credited with founding the genre called ukiyo-zoshi (books of the floating world), a type of popular fiction written between the 1680s and the 1770s. Once downgraded as vulgar, today Saikaku is acclaimed a great realist, largely because of his minute and accurate delineation of characters, customs, and events of his day.

<http://www.powells.com/biblio/2-0804801843-3>

Five Women Who Loved Love

This book follows five determined women in their always amorous and usually illicit adventures. The five heroines are Onatsu, already wise in the ways of love by the age of sixteen; Osen, a faithful wife unjustly accused of adultery; Osan, a Kyoto beauty who falls asleep in the wrong bed; Oshichi, willing to burn down a city to meet her samurai lover; and Oman, who has to compete with handsome boys to win her lover's affections. (Wikipedia)

Comparative Literature:

Lady Murasaki
The Tale of Genji.

Both authors discuss the traits of the ideal woman. The woman with the traits considered most ideal might not be one accorded the highest rank, status, or prestige in society. In *Five Women Who Loved Love*, the women who seem to meet society's ideals of femininity may seem rather scandalous. In certain ways, the women who are most adept at meeting society's expectations are the most wily and uninhibited in using their charm to achieve their rather self-gratifying ends. How did their behavior surprise you as a reader, and what did it make you think of the role of women in society?

Comparative Literature:

Moliere.
Tartuffe.

Love outside the bounds of marriage was accepted in some societies as long as it followed certain proscribed conventions. Japanese customs may shock people from other societies, but they had definite implicit codes to follow. However, there are always the outlaws and transgressors whose behavior serves to reinforce the codes, and to function as cautionary tales (even as they titillate the readers. Both works involve adultery. How are the cultural conventions different in each? Were there any gender-based double standards?

Comparative Literature

James Joyce.
The Dead.

Both Joyce and Saikaku present their stories as objectively as possible, without adding a great deal of sentimentality. What is the impact on the reader? How are the two authors similar? Different?

Idea: Fantasy

The adventures of the women in *Five Women Who Loved Love* are larger than life, and they pique the imagination of the reader. How is the series of adventures akin to fantasy? How does fantasy fuel the imagination, and a sense of reality?

Theme

Love comes in many shapes and forms in *Five Women Who Loved Love*. What does love reveal about values, attitudes, and beliefs?

14

African Fiction

Achebe

Things Fall Apart

The Depredations of Colonialism and Self Inflicted Cultural Conflict
Globalism is dramatized here. Writing in a language promoted for him by Colonialism, the English Colonialism of Nigeria, Achebe returns with that English in a subtle critique both of the colonizer and of the African tradition itself. What could better illustrate the capacity of literature to testify—to give a uniquely nuanced picture of the mind at the cross roads of different cultures? What do you think Achebe's own attitude is, finally, to the breaking up of the old world through Colonialism? Is he emphatically opposed to the Colonial heritage? It was Achebe, after all, who in a renowned speech condemned the Conrad of 'Heart of Darkness' as a bloody Colonialist. Was Achebe correct in his view of the Conrad whose story we read? Finally, what about the importance of literature itself, in opening out the global perspective?

Question

Q1. As you look back on the many texts we have read, in this sequence of courses of Literature, do you feel that literature has often served the cause of human liberation, of helping people to come to terms with their traditions

and their future possibilities? Is literature typically respectful of the growing process in human culture? If so, would that be a consequence of the very fact of the creative act, which is from the outset an act of assertive sharing?

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| 15 | Question Theme: Clash of Cultures Latin American Fiction | Q2. What establishes Okonkwo as a hero in his culture? Do we see him as a hero? What is the process which leads to his tragic end? |
| Borges | <i>Garden of Forking Paths</i> | <p><i>The Unreality of Time and the Layers of Historical Meaning</i></p> <p>We have struggled with a definition of Modernism—to characterize various major works from the early 20th century—and now we are dealing with the effort to do so for Postmodernism, a century later. Does this story by Borges give any hints toward the meaning of this still newish term? You will notice that the narrative line is intentionally broken, that the perspective of the narrator is constantly being diffracted by new textual information, that the very firmness of time as a foundation for narrative structure is shaky. (Am I correct that all these features display in Borges' tale?) Is it that literature is calling itself into question as an art project, even while it is being created? Would that perspective apply at all to the pieces of Mann, Conrad, or Joyce, that we considered earlier? (If you want to say <i>no</i>, could you explain yourself?)</p> |
| | Question | Q1. What, finally, could be the reason for the unmistakable flight from straightforward narrative, that we find in Postmodernism? Is there some meaningful reason for the questioning of the narrative? Would it be extreme to say that we live in an age when many of the dominant accounts of reality are under question? |
| | Question Reality | Q2. Describe how Borges creates a puzzle within a puzzle, first with the attempt to break codes used in war, and then, the use of an ancient riddle. How do riddles of the past, false information, subterfuge, and spying affect one's sense of reality in "The Garden of the Forking Paths"? Explore interweaving of realism and fiction, the power of story-telling over so-called reality. |
| Fuentes | <i>The Prisoner of Las Lomas</i> | <p>This novel uncovers the truth behind the mirages of upper classes, political characters, and the way of life of those who abuse their power in Mexico. A tale of deception and lies which takes place in Mexico City among the social and political elite.</p> <p>Carlos Fuentes is one of Mexico's leading writers, known for his experimental novels and his social criticism. A lawyer by training, Fuentes published his first work, a collection of surrealist short stories, in 1954. The interaction of myth and history has been an important theme in his work. Fuentes is also the author of two absurdist plays, and collections of essays on American and Mexican writing and art.</p> |
| Gordimer | <i>As Others See Us</i> | Internationally celebrated for her novels, Nadine Gordimer has devoted much of her life and fiction to the political struggles of the Third World, the New World, and her native South Africa. Living in Hope and History is an on-the-spot record of her years as a public figure--an observer of apartheid and its aftermath, a member of the ANC, and the champion of dissident writers everywhere. |

V **Finals**
Review, Annotated Bibliography, Research Paper