

Literature Institute

Study Guide

LIT 541 English Literature

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

Norton Anthology of English Literature. Volume A: The Major Authors. The Middle Ages through the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century Eighth Ed. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, General Editors. NY: Norton, 2006.

Norton Anthology of English Literature. Volume B: The Major Authors. The Romantic Period through the Twentieth Century and After. Eighth Ed. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, General Editors. NY: Norton, 2006.

UNIT/ WEEKS / AUTHOR	TOPIC / WORK	INTRODUCTION
I		
Middle Ages (to ca. 1485)		
Overview	Medieval English Literature	Medieval English literature generally consists of work that was written in the emerging vernacular, spoken and written by the Anglo-Saxons. The language evolved, and Old English (varieties of Anglo-Saxon discourse) evolved into Middle English. The language is rich in terms and vocabulary, and the works themselves provide insight into the beliefs of the times, as well as social and political arrangements. The early Christian church was a dominant, unifying force in a time of warring nobles, while political and community leadership were largely tied to kinship ties.
Chaucer	<i>Canterbury Tales</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London about 1340 into a family of French descent who had made their fortune in trade. (p. 878)
		The Canterbury Tales is a long poem considered by most critics to be Chaucer's greatest work. It consists of a General Prologue and twenty-four stories told by pilgrims making their way as a group to Canterbury. (p. 885)
	<i>Beowulf</i>	
	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>	
Langland	<i>Piers Plowman</i>	
Julian of Norwich	<i>Book of Showings</i>	
Malory	<i>Morte D'Arthur</i>	
II		
Renaissance		

Overview	The Sixteenth Century (1483-1603)	In England, the Renaissance was marked by the ascent of Queen Elizabeth, whose strategic prowess resulted in an expansion of influence and a sense of prosperity and enhanced world position, particularly as traditional rivals began to lose ground. Elizabethan England was a time of great flowering of literature, particularly in drama and poetry.
Overview	Early Seventeenth Century (1603-1660)	After the death of Elizabeth I, England experienced a civil war between Cromwell's "Roundheads" and Monarchists. The desire for a new system of government, together with a rise in literacy and technology gave a boost to new literary trends.
Shakespeare	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	William Shakespeare was born in the small market town of Stratford-on-Avon in April 1564, the son of a successful businessman and governmental official who then suffered financial losses. Shakespeare began his career as a playwright in the early 1590s by writing comedies and history plays. Twelfth Night was probably written in the same year as <i>Hamlet</i> (c. 1601), which is in a time when there was a shift in the tone and character of Shakespeare's writing. Many have suggested that it was a time of personal anguish, but there are no direct records. What we can say is that there is a more biting tone, an uneasiness with comic conventions, and a ruthless questioning of the values of the characters. (p. 495) There are dark notes in <i>Twelfth Night</i> – mourning, betrayal, and tragic isolation, but all are swept up in a "giddy, carnivalesque dance of illusion, disguise, folly, and clowning" (p. 510)

Spenser	<i>Faerie Queene</i>
Sidney	<i>Astrophil and Stella</i>
Marlowe	<i>Dr Faustus</i>
Donne	<i>Songs and Sonnets</i>

III The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century

Overview	The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century	The Restoration of 1660 – the return of Charles Stuart and, with him, the monarchy to England – brought hope to a divided nation, exhausted by years of civil war and political turmoil. Almost all of Charles's subjects welcomed him home. (p. 854). Much of the powerful writing after 1660 exposed divisions in the nation's thinking that derived from the tumult of earlier decades. As the possibility of a Christian Commonwealth receded, John Milton published <i>Paradise Lost</i> (final version, 1674), and John Bunyan's immensely popular masterwork, <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> (1679), expressed the conscience of a Nonconformist. Conversely, an aristocratic culture, led by Charles II himself, aggressively celebrated pleasure and the right of the elite to behave extravagantly (p 857). Early in the eighteenth century , a new and brilliant group of writers emerged; Swift, Addison, Steele, and Pope. It was a time of literary innovation, and the novel began to gain great attention, with authors such as Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson. Diarists and non-fiction writers kept careful observations of their life and the ideas around them. Burney, Johnson, Boswell, and Wollstonecraft figured prominently.
Swift	<i>Gulliver's Travels</i>	Jonathan Swift , a posthumous child, was born of English parents in Dublin in 1667. Through the generosity of an uncle, he was educated at Kilkenny School and Trinity College. About 1698-97, he wrote his powerful satires on corruptions in religion and learning, which were published in 1704 and reached their final form in the fifth edition in 1710. At age thirty-two, he returned to Ireland where he devoted his talents to politics and religion, and his works in prose were written to further a

specific cause (p. 971).

Gulliver's Travels is Swift's most enduring satire. Although full of illusions to recent and current events, it still rings true today, for its objects are human failings and the defective political, economic, and social institutions that they call into being. Swift adopts an ancient satirical device: the imaginary voyage (p. 975). The structure of his narrative also mirrors the travelogues and explorationist diaries that were very popular in the centuries following encounter with the Americas, and the ensuing colonial efforts.

Dryden	<i>Essay of Dramatic Poesy</i>
Pope	<i>Essay on Man</i>
Equiano	<i>Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano</i>
Burney	<i>Journal and Letters</i>

IV Nineteenth Century

Overview	Romanticism (1785-1830)	The imagination of many Romantic-period writers was preoccupied with revolution, and from that fact and idea, they derived the framework that enabled them to think of themselves as inhabiting a distinctive period in history (p. 1369). The emphasis in this period on the spontaneous activity of the imagination is linked to a belief ... in the essential role of passion, whether in the province of art, philosophy, or morality (p. 1373). According to Coleridge, "deep thinking is only to be obtained by a man of deep feeling; hence, a metaphysical solution that does not tell you something in the heart is grievously to be suspected as apocryphal." (p 1371).
Overview	The Victorian Age	The Victorian Age represented a time of rapid expansion in British influence in the world, which was accompanied by a prodigious level of energy and output. Technological innovations and advances enabled much of the expansion, and the holdings of the British Empire allowed unprecedented growth, development, and anxiety. The literature of this times reflects the energy, optimism, expansiveness, and anxieties of the times.
Blake	<i>Songs of Innocence and of Experience</i>	William Blake was born in 1757 to a London tradesman. Blake's only formal education was in art; he taught himself to read, write, and to write poetry. At twenty-four, he married Catherine Boucher, who was, at the time, illiterate, but whom he taught to be his assistant. Blake earned a living producing engravings, setting type, and giving drawing / engraving lessons. <i>Songs of Innocence and of Experience</i> (1794) are poems accompanied by engravings. They are meant to represent what Blake refers to as "two contrary states of the human soul." (p 1407)

Wollstonecraft	<i>Vindication of the Rights of Women</i>
Wordsworth	<i>Lyrical Ballads</i>
Coleridge	<i>Poems and Biographia Literaria</i>
Lord Byron	<i>Don Juan</i>

Keats	<i>Poems and Letters</i>
Hopkins	<i>Poems</i>

V Twentieth Century

Overview	Twentieth Century	<p>The Twentieth Century represents a break from the preceding times, not only because of the emergence of globally-encompassing “total war,” but also because the technologies developed during this time made human tampering with fate, human history, and nature a matter of the touch of a button. Sweeping political change and social movements characterize the twentieth century, and they provide much of the underlying tension and motivation in the literary works of the time. While one might imagine that the century’s preoccupation with self-awareness would lead to evidence that consciousness of self was, in fact, heightened, the events of the period would argue just the converse to be true. Case in point: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Communism seemed to usher in a freedom from totalitarianism and the threat of globalized war. In retrospect, the “Cold War” seems to have been a time of unique structure – freedom when accompanied by corruption and chaos is not freedom at all. Consumerism and materialism co-opt self-consciousness by reducing spirituality itself to a commodity. At least these were the insights of the late twentieth century. Perhaps they were simply the self-evident truths of a planet of Peter Pans who use the promise of technology to gain power of nature in order to provoke disruption – not just in the status quo, but in processes that were, in the past, known to be inviolable law (of nature, of humanity).</p>
Joyce	<i>Ulysses</i>	<p>James Joyce was born in Dublin, son of a father who, though talented, had difficulty earning a living. Consequently they moved from home to home, each one successively shabbier. Joyce studied voraciously to break from what he considered to be the intellectual shabbiness of Dublin. In rejecting Dublin, he embraced continental Europe, and sought to shape his mind into a new way of thinking, and in doing so reinvent literature. To do so required a fervent and unwavering belief in his own genius, which his circle of friends found trying at times.</p> <p><i>Ulysses</i> was first published in book form on February 2, 1922, Joyce’s fortieth birthday. The book contains innovations in organization, style and narrative technique that have influenced countless other writers. Joyce had difficulty with publication; it was deemed obscene by the U.S. Post Office. Eventually, bans were lifted and it was able to be circulated more freely (p. 2500).</p>
Beckett	<i>Endgame</i>	<p>Samuel Beckett was born near Dublin. He came from an Anglo-Irish Protestant family. Beckett received a B.A from Trinity College, Dublin, and after teaching English, he returned to earn his M.A. in 1931. In 1937, Beckett settled permanently in Paris, where he wrote in French, then translated his work into Irish-inflected English. He is best-known for his plays, especially <i>Waiting for Godot</i>, and <i>Endgame</i>. Beckett focuses his work on fundamental questions of existence and nonexistence, the mind and the body.</p> <p><i>Endgame</i> has, at the heart of it, a vexed relationship between master and servant. They bicker and clearly dislike each other; yet they stay together despite their claims to end it all – to leave, die, or simply depart. The overall sense of the play is tragicomic, and it fits well with an absurdist world, where existentialist ideas can be seen at every turn.</p>

Hardy	<i>Poems</i>
Yeats	<i>Poems</i>
Auden	<i>Poems</i>

Gordimer *The Moment
Before the Gun
Went Off*

Walcott *Poems*

VI

Finals

Review, Annotated Bibliography, Research Paper