

Summer Assignments for English 12 AP Literature and Composition

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Remind.com: text 81010 with class code: @12AP-17

AP English and Composition is a first year college literature and composition class and the quality of work, focus, motivation, and dedication required to this course will be that of a college student. This work will be rigorous and demanding and as a student, you will be expected to study a range of literary works that reflect a college curriculum.

I understand that the summer work may seem extensive, but it is because portions of October and November will be dedicated for college applications and the personal statement. Just stick with it - you will understand why the class schedule is this way.

This course work will help you develop a deep, focused, sophisticated, and dynamic critical voice that will serve you well in all your university level work. It is expected that you come to the class with a solid background in academic writing that exhibits organization and proper mechanics (a.k.a. grammar) and will hone those skills as well as develop your ability to write for a specific audience and purpose. Initially, your essays will be analyzed and deconstructed to develop and improve your style in order to become a more effective writer. However, as you write and respond to cold reads, the AP style essay will become second nature to you, and you will begin to respond to literary writing intelligently, quickly, and articulately with critical and unique analysis. As the course is also explicitly designed to prepare you for the AP English Literature and Composition exam in May, each student is expected to take the test.

The following list of assignments required for the summer. Many of the works can be found in the X.J. Kennedy textbook which is available in the library. You must check out this book before the library closes for the summer!

Required Reading - These novels are either in the X.J. Kennedy textbook or online for free download. You are required to write a book report for each work (See Outlining a Work of Fiction):

- *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles (in X.J. Kennedy textbook) *
- *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe *
- *Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare (download for free on Amazon.com) - watch the BBC version on youtube.com or the Elizabeth Taylor/Richard Burton version.
- *Wit* by Margaret Edson *

Optional, but recommended - this is information is that important in order to understand allusions within literature:

- *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster (a digital copy is available online: http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/huron.english/files/howtoreadliteraturelikeaprofessor_ft.pdf)
- *Mythology* by Edit Hamilton* or if you really want to go wild, the Percy Jackson series
- The Bible - Books: *Genius*, *Exodus*, and one of the Gossips (*Matthew*, *Mark*, *John*, or *Luke*)

*available in the DAL library

Assignment for *Wit*: Outlining a Work of Fiction and TP-CASTT

Annotate the poem, "Death, Be Not Proud" and then answer the questions below to help you fill out the TP-CASTT.

"Death, Be Not Proud" By John Donne

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,¹
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,²
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest³ our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave⁴ to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well⁵
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?⁶
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

Answer these questions:

1. Who is the speaker and to whom is the poetry addressing?
2. Why would this poem be one that Professor Bearing examines without the play? Take into consideration her situation.
3. Examine the tone of the poem. How would you read it out loud if you were reciting it in front of an audience (yes, that's a thing)?
4. Does the speaker's view of Death change from the beginning of the poem to the end or does it remain stagnant?
5. Why would "Death" be capitalized? Does it make a difference or was John Donne being fancy?

TPCASTT Analysis for "Death Be Not Proud"

TPCASTT: title, paraphrase, connotation, diction, attitude, tone, shift(s), title revisited and theme

Title Before you even think about reading or trying to analyze the work, speculate on what you think it *might* be about based on the title. Oftentimes, authors conceal or give clues in the title. Jot down what you think this poem will be about...

Paraphrase Before you begin thinking about meaning or trying to analyze the poem, don't overlook the literal meaning of the poem. One of the biggest problems that students often make in poetry analysis is jumping to conclusions before understanding what is taking place in the poem. When you paraphrase a poem, write in your own words exactly what happens in the poem. Look at the number of sentences in the poem—your paraphrase should have exactly the same number. This technique is especially helpful for poems written in the 17th and 19th centuries. Sometimes your teacher may allow you to *summarize* what happens in the poem. Make sure that you understand the difference between a *paraphrase* and a *summary*.

Connotation Although this term usually refers solely to the emotional overtones of word choice, for this approach the term refers to any and all poetic devices, focusing on how such devices contribute to the meaning, the effect, or both of a poem. You may consider imagery, figures of speech (simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, etc), diction, point of view, and sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and rhyme). It is not necessary that you identify all the poetic devices within the poem. The ones you do identify should be seen as a way of supporting the conclusions you are going to draw about the poem.

Attitude Having examined the poem's devices and clues closely, you are now ready to explore the multiple attitudes that may be present in the poem. Examination of diction, images, and details suggests the speaker's attitude and contributes to understanding. You may refer to the list of words on *Tone* that will help you. Remember that usually the tone or attitude cannot be named with a single word. Think *complexity*.

Shift Rarely does a poem begin and end the poetic experience in the same place. As is true of most us, the poet's understanding of an experience is a gradual realization, and the poem is a reflection of that understanding or insight. Watch for the following keys to shifts:

- key words, (but, yet, however, although)
- punctuation (dashes, periods, colons, ellipsis)
- stanza divisions
- changes in line or stanza length or both
- irony
- changes in sound that may indicate changes in meaning
- changes in diction

Title revisited Now look at the title again, but this time on an interpretive level. What new insight does the title provide in understanding the poem?

Theme What is the poem saying about the human experience, motivation, or condition? What subject or subjects does the poem address? What do you learn about those subjects? What idea does the poet want you take away with you concerning these subjects? Remember that the theme of any work of literature is stated in a complete sentence.

Assignment for *Things Fall Apart* and *Taming of the Shrew*: Outlining a Work of Fiction (use Shmoop.com for help!)

Outlining a Work of Fiction

While this assignment has been called an "outline," it is a slight misnomer. All of the analysis will be written in **paragraph form, single-spaced, with a one-inch margin**. Only the general format of the "book report" will be in an outline format. Include quotations from the works and from any criticism that you have found.

I. Themes/Motifs

This section consists of a detailed explanation of the novel's motifs as they relate to the themes. Motifs are reoccurring images that sometimes help to create the themes. What are some universal themes within the novel? Explain how these themes relate to the story plot and characters.

II. World of the Work

Give a detailed description of the novel's society's values, traditions, culture(s), and social status. This part may need some extra research if there is a specific era in history in which the story is set. What are the values of the society? The customs? The cultures? The mores? Include examples through excerpts and detailed analysis from the work if possible. This has very little to do with the characters. Explain the era, location, traditions, etc (ex. *The Crucible* has a long description of the Puritan society, their values, religion, morals, and etc.). Do not include a plot summary!

III. Character Description

This section consists of five characters and a detailed analysis of each. Explain why each character is important, his/her purpose within the plot, and how any minor characters relate to, influence, and/or affect the main character. How do these characters change and evolve throughout the novel? What are their struggles? Include personality descriptions, character flaws, and strengths. Each description will be a paragraph long in-depth analysis using textual support (excerpts/quotations).

- A. Main character
- B. Main character or minor character
- C. Minor character
- D. Minor character

IV. Quotations

This section consists of ten (10) quotations that you feel are the most important to the novel/work. These quotations can be about the characters, the plot, themes, or general message that the author may have wanted to convey. You will include the quotations (with proper MLA citations) along with a detailed explanation of its significance.

1 - Every Trip Is a Quest (Except When It's Not)

OKAY, SO HERE'S THE DEAL: let's say, purely hypothetically, you're reading a book about an average sixteen-year-old kid in the summer of 1968. The kid - let's call him Kip - who hopes his acne clears up before he gets drafted, is on his way to the A&P. His bike is a one-speed with a coaster brake and therefore deeply humiliating, and riding it to run an errand for his mother makes it even worse. Along the way he has a couple of disturbing experiences, including a minorly unpleasant encounter with a German shepherd, topped off in the supermarket parking lot where he sees the girl of his dreams, Karen, laughing and horsing around in Tony Vauxhall's brand-new Barracuda. Now Kip hates Tony already because he has a name like Vauxhall and not like Smith, which Kip thinks is pretty lame as a name to follow Kip, and because the 'Cuda is bright green and goes approximately the speed of light, and also because Tony has never had to work a day in his life. So Karen, who is laughing and having a great time, turns and sees Kip, who has recently asked her out, and she keeps laughing. (She could stop laughing and it wouldn't matter to us, since we're considering this structurally. In the story we're inventing here, though, she keeps laughing.) Kip goes on into the store to buy the loaf of Wonder Bread that his mother told him to pick up, and as he reaches for the bread, he decides right then and there to lie about his age to the Marine recruiter even though it means going to Vietnam, because nothing will ever happen for him in this one-horse burg where the only thing that matters is how much money your old man has. Either that or Kip has a vision of St. Abillard (any saint will do, but our imaginary author picked a comparatively obscure one), whose face appears on one of the red, yellow, or blue balloons. For our purposes, the nature of the decision doesn't matter anymore than whether Karen keeps laughing or which color balloon manifests the saint.

What just happened here?

If you were an English professor, and not even a particularly weird English professor, you'd know that you'd just watched a knight have a not very suitable encounter with his nemesis.

In other words, a quest just happened.

But it just looked like a trip to the store for some white bread.

True. But consider the quest. Of what does it consist? A knight, a dangerous road, a Holy Grail (whatever one of those may be), at least one dragon, one evil knight, one princess. Sound about right? That's a list I can live with: a knight (named Kip), a dangerous road (nasty German shepherds), a Holy Grail (one form of which is a loaf of Wonder Bread), at least one dragon (trust me, a '68 'Cuda could definitely breathe fire), one evil knight (Tony), one princess (who can either keep laughing or stop).

Seems like a bit of a stretch.

On the surface, sure. But let's think structurally. The quest consists of five things: (a) a quester, (b) a place to go, (c) a stated reason to go there, (d) challenges and trials en route, and (e) a real reason to go there. Item (a) is easy; a quester is just a person who goes on a quest, whether or not he knows it's a quest. In fact, usually he doesn't know. Items (b) and (c) should be considered together: someone tells our protagonist, our hero, who need not look very heroic, to go somewhere and do something. Go in search of the Holy Grail. Go to the store for bread. Go to Vegas and whack a guy. Tasks of varying nobility, to be sure, but structurally all the same. Go there, do that. Note that I said the stated reason for the quest. That's because of item (e).

The real reason for a quest never involves the stated reason. In fact, more often than not, the quester fails at the stated task. So why do they go and why do we care? They go because of the stated task, mistakenly believing that it is their real mission. We know, however, that their quest is educational. They don't know enough about the only subject that really matters: themselves. The real reason for a quest is always self-knowledge. That's why questers are so often young, inexperienced, immature, sheltered. Forty-five-year-old men either have self-knowledge or they're never going to get it, while your average sixteen-to-seventeen-year-old kid is likely to have a long way to go in the self-knowledge department.

Let's look at a real example. When I teach the late-twentieth-century novel, I always begin with the greatest quest novel of the last century: Thomas Pynchon's *Crying of Lot 49* (1965). Beginning readers can find the novel mystifying, irritating, and highly peculiar. True enough, there is a good bit of cartoonish strangeness in the novel, which can mask the basic quest structure. On the other hand, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late fourteenth century) and Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queen* (1596), two of the great quest narratives from early English literature, also have what modern readers must consider cartoonish elements. It's really only a matter of whether we're talking *Classics Illustrated* or *Zap Comics*. So here's the setup in *The Crying of Lot 49*:

- 1) Our quester: a young woman, not very happy in her marriage or her life, not too old to learn, not too assertive where men are concerned.
- 2) A place to go: in order to carry out her duties, she must drive to Southern California from her home near San Francisco. Eventually she will travel back and forth between the two, and between her past (a husband with a disintegrating personality and a fondness for LSD, an insane ex-Nazi psychotherapist) and her future (highly unclear).
- 3) A stated reason to go there: she has been made executor of the will of her former lover, a fabulously wealthy and eccentric businessman and stamp collector.
- 4) Challenges and trials: our heroine meets lots of really strange, scary, and occasionally truly dangerous people. She goes on a nightlong excursion through the world of the outcasts and the dispossessed of San Francisco; enters her therapist's office to talk him out of his psychotic shooting rampage (the dangerous enclosure known in the study of traditional quest romances as "Chapel Perilous"); involves herself in what may be a centuries-old postal conspiracy.
- 5) The real reason to go: did I mention that her name is Oedipa? Oedipa Maas, actually. She's named for the great tragic character from Sophocles' drama *Oedipus the King* (ca. 425 B.C.), whose real calamity is that he doesn't know himself. In Pynchon's novel the heroine's resources, really her crutches - and they all happen to be male - are stripped away one by one, shown to be false or unreliable, until she reaches the point where she either must break down, reduced to a little fetal ball, or stand straight and rely on herself. And to do that, she first must find the self on whom she can rely. Which she does, after considerable struggle. Gives up on men, Tupperware parties, easy answers. Plunges ahead into the great mystery of the ending. Acquires, dare we say, self-knowledge? Of course we dare.

Still...

You don't believe me. Then why does the stated goal fade away? We hear less and less about the will and the estate as the story goes on, and even the surrogate goal, the mystery of the postal conspiracy,

remains unresolved. At the end of the novel, she's about to witness an auction of some rare forged stamps, and the answer to the mystery may appear during the auction. We doubt it, though, given what's gone before. Mostly, we don't even care. Now we know, as she does, that she can carry on, that discovering that men can't be counted on doesn't mean the world ends, that she's a whole person.

So there, in fifty words or more, is why professors of literature typically think *The Crying of Lot 49* is a terrific little book. It does look a bit weird at first glance, experimental and super-hip, but once you get the hang of it, you see that it follows the conventions of a quest tale. So does *Huck Finn*. *The Lord of the Rings*. *North by Northwest*. *Star Wars*. And most other stories of someone going somewhere and doing something, especially if the going and the doing wasn't his idea in the first place.

A word of warning: if I sometimes speak here and in the chapters to come as if a certain statement is always true, a certain condition always obtains, I apologize. "Always" and "never" are not words that have much meaning in literary study. For one thing, as soon as something seems to always be true, some wise guy will come along and write something to prove that it's not. If literature seems to be too comfortably patriarchal, a novelist like the late Angela Carter or a poet like the contemporary Eavan Boland will come along and upend things just to remind readers and writers of the falseness of our established assumptions. If readers start to pigeonhole African-American writing, as was beginning to happen in the 1960s and 1970s, a trickster like Ishmael Reed will come along who refuses to fit in any pigeonhole we could create. Let's consider journeys. Sometimes the quest fails or is not taken up by the protagonist. Moreover, is every trip really a quest? It depends. Some days I just drive to work - no adventures, no growth. I'm sure that the same is true in writing. Sometimes plot requires that a writer get a character from home to work and back again. That said, when a character hits the road, we should start to pay attention, just to see if, you know, something's going on there.

Once you figure out quests, the rest is easy.

Assignment for "An Occurrence on Owl Creek Bridge" by Ambrose Bierce:

First assignment:

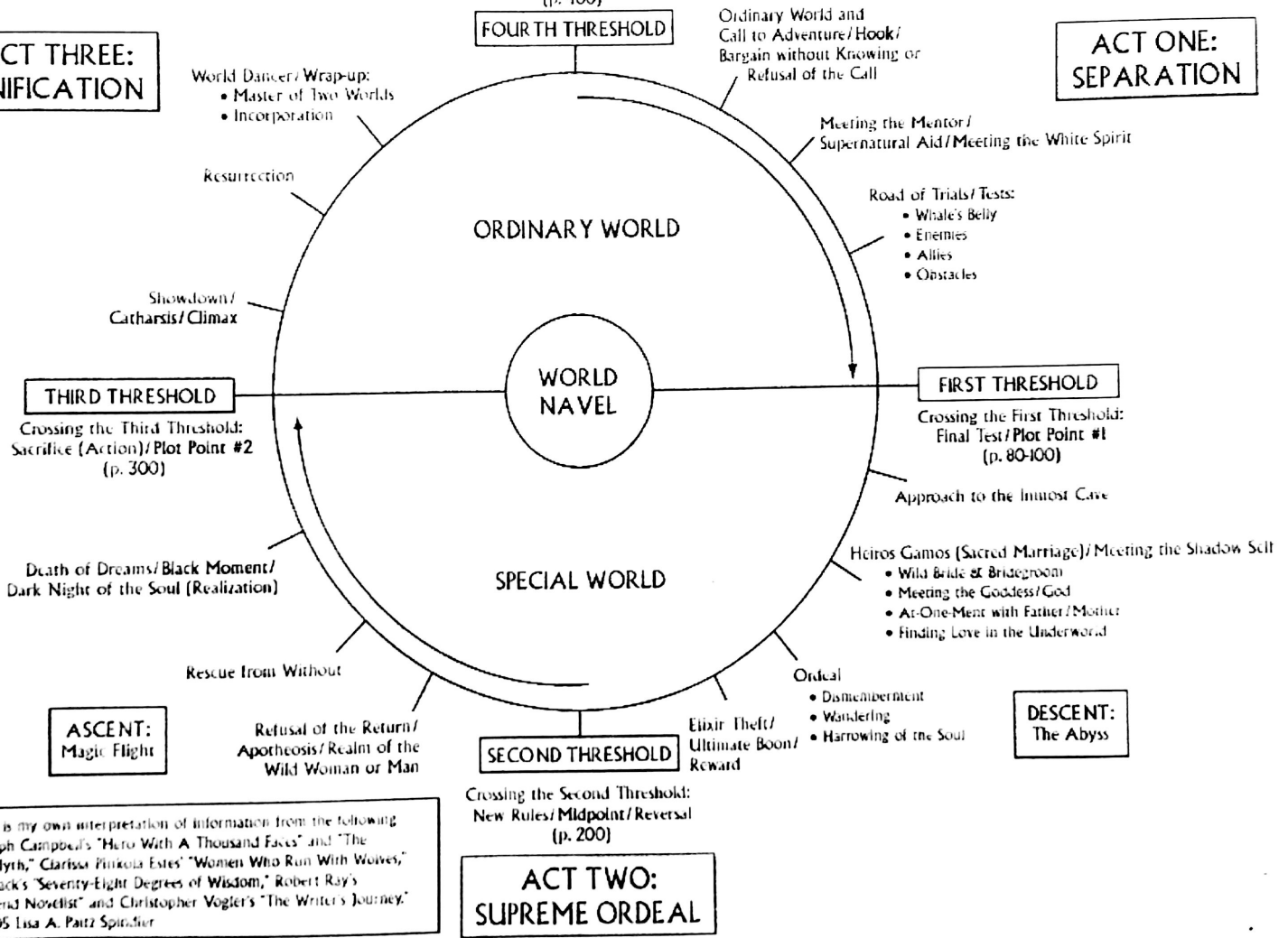
Exam the attached chart "The Hero's Journey" and think back to freshman year when you read *The Odyssey* (remember, Odysseus? Cyclops? Scylla and Charybdis? Argos, the dog?). Create a hero's journey for Peyton Farquhar (pronounced *far-quar*. Yup, it rhymes) on the "more" blank second sheet - not all steps are in the story and don't be so literal with the titles of each step. These are only elements that are present in more Hero's Journey stories.

The Hero's Journey

Crossing the Fourth Threshold:
Freedom to Live
(p. 400)

**ACT THREE:
UNIFICATION**

**ACT ONE:
SEPARATION**



This model is my own interpretation of information from the following books: Joseph Campbell's "Hero With A Thousand Faces" and "The Power of Myth," Clarissa Pinkola Estes' "Women Who Run With Wolves," Rachel Polack's "Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom," Robert Roy's "The Weekend Novelist" and Christopher Vogler's "The Writer's Journey." © 1997-2005 Lisa A. Patz Spindler

Ordinary World

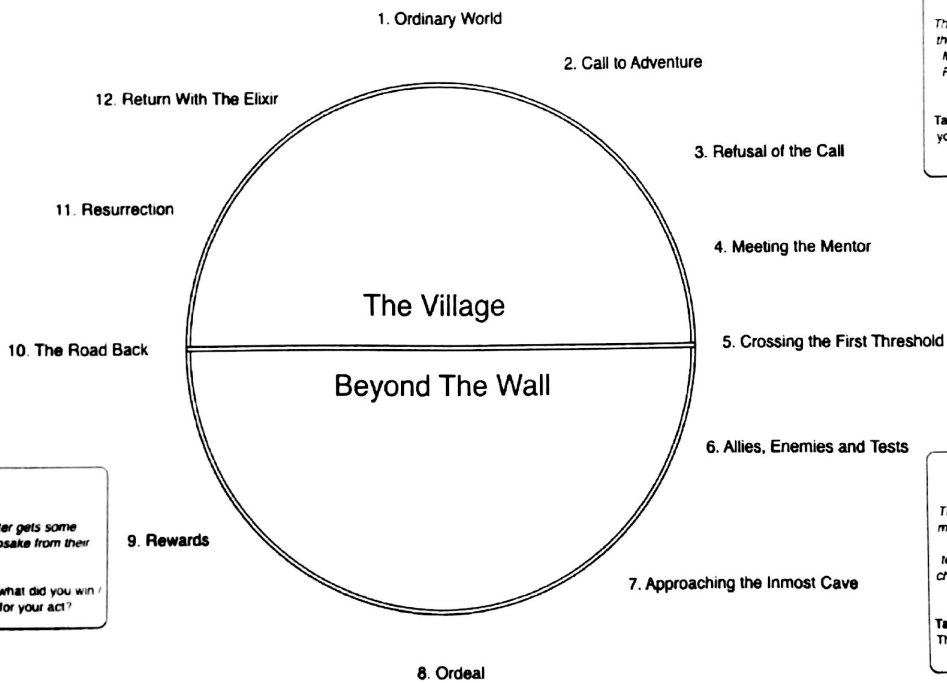
This set of tables forms the first 3 tables in the playbook and establishes the PC's "ordinary world." The tables for villagers are usually consistent, but for Demi-humans, or City or Castle dwellers they may change within that group of playbooks. Look at the sample playbooks for ideas.

Table: What did your parents do in the village?
Table: How did you distinguish yourself as a child?
Table: Who else befriended you as you were growing up?

The Call, the Mentor, Crossing the Threshold

This section is all about what motivated the character to be the person they are today. Not all playbooks include literal Mentor figures; where you have solitary figures (e.g. the Forgotten Child) there is often some object or event that inspires them, rather than another person.

Table: who was your instructor? What distinguished you to your Mentor? What was the book that inspired you? What early test showed you what you are good at?



The Road of Trials

This part is about the actual training the character gets. Any magic spells the character learns are usually recorded here. Some tables may be focused on the secrets the Mentor teaches the character; others may consider the secrets the character learns for themselves, or the routine they establish as a Warrior, a Rogue, etc.

Table: what did the sorcerer teach you? What sort of Warrior, Thief or Mage are you? What secrets did you learn about the castle that no-one else knows?

Reward and Return

This is the final table where the character gets some additional boon, piece of equipment, keepsake from their Mentor, etc.

Table: What did your Mentor leave to you / what did you win / what was your reward from the village for your act?

Ordeal

Think of the trial the character went through where they distinguished themselves, and where their friend helped them. This section is about personal ordeal in which the hero grows. Forming a personal relationship with another PC is a critical part of growth.

Table: You went through an ordeal, what was it? The player to your right helped you.

22 - He's Blind for a Reason, You Know

HERE'S THE SETUP: You have a man, a largely admirable man - capable, intelligent, strong, if slightly quick to anger - with a problem. Unbeknownst to him, he has committed the two most hideous crimes in the human catalog of evil. So unaware is he of his sins that he agrees to hunt down the criminal, promising all kinds of punishment. An information specialist, someone who can shed light on the search he has undertaken, who can show our hero the truth, is summoned. When the specialist arrives, he's blind. Can't see a thing in the world. As it turns out, though, he is able to see things in the spirit and divine world, can see the truth of what's actually happened, truth to which our hero is utterly oblivious. The blind specialist gets into a heated argument with the protagonist, who accuses the specialist of fraud, and is accused in turn of being the worst sort of malefactor, one who by the way is blind to what really matters.

What did this fellow do?

Nothing much. Just murder his father and marry his mother.

Two and a half millennia ago Sophocles wrote a little play called Oedipus Rex. Tiresias, the blind seer, does indeed know the whole truth about King Oedipus, sees everything, although that knowledge is so painful that he tries to hold it back, and when he does blurt it out, it is in a moment of such anger that no one believes him. Oedipus, meanwhile, who until the very end remains in the dark, makes constant reference to sight. He will "bring the matter to light," will "look into things," will "show everyone the truth." Every time he says one of these things, the audience gasps and squirms in its seats, because we see what's going on long before he does. When he finally sees the horror that is his life - children who are also siblings, a wife-mother driven to suicide, a curse like no other on him and his family - he exacts a terrible punishment indeed.

He blinds himself.

There are a lot of things that have to happen when a writer introduces a blind character into a story, and even more in a play. Every move, every statement by or about that character has to accommodate the lack of sight; every other character has to notice, to behave differently, if only in subtle ways. In other words, the author has created a minor constellation of difficulties for himself by introducing a blind character into the work, so something important must be at stake when blindness pops up in a story. Clearly the author wants to emphasize other levels of sight and blindness beyond the physical. Moreover, such references are usually quite pervasive in a work where insight and blindness are at issue.

For example, first-time readers or viewers will observe that Tiresias is blind but sees the real story, and Oedipus is blind to the truth and eventually blinds himself. What they may miss, though, is the much more elaborate pattern running through the fabric of the play. Every scene, it seems, every ode by the chorus, contains references to seeing - who saw what, who failed to see, who is really blind - and images of light and darkness, which have everything to do with seeing or not seeing. More than any other work, Oedipus Rex taught me how to read literary blindness, taught me that as soon as we notice blindness and sight as thematic components of a work, more and more related images and phrases emerge in the text. The challenging thing about literature is finding answers, but equally important is recognizing what questions need to be asked, and if we pay attention, the text usually tells us.

I didn't always know to look for the right questions - I grew into asking. Coming back to "blindness," I distinctly remember the first time I read James Joyce's little story "Araby." The first line tells us that the street the young narrator lives on is "blind." Hmm, I thought, that's an odd expression. I promptly got hung up on what it meant in the literal sense (a blind alley in British/Irish English is a dead-end street, which has another set of connotations, some related and some not), and missed entirely what it "really" meant. I got most of the story, the boy watching the girl at every opportunity, even when the light is poor or he has the "blinds" (I'm not making this up) pulled almost all the way down; the boy blinded by love, then by vanity; the boy envisioning himself as a hero out of a romance; the boy going to the supposedly exotic bazaar, Araby, arriving late to find much of it already in darkness, registering it as the tawdry and antiromantic place that it is; and finally the boy, nearly blinded by his own angry tears, seeing himself for the ridiculous creature he is. I think I had to read the story two more times before I got hooked into North Richmond Street being "blind." The significance of that adjective isn't immediately evident or relevant in itself. What it does, though, is set up a pattern of reference and suggestion as the young boy watches, hides, peeks, and gazes his way through a story that is alternately bathed in light and lost in shadow. Once we ask the right question - something like, "What does Joyce intend by calling the street blind?" - answers begin presenting themselves with considerable regularity. A truly great story or play, as "Araby" and Oedipus Rex are, makes demands on us as readers; in a sense it teaches us how to read it. We feel that there's something more going on in the story - a richness, a resonance, a depth - than we picked up at first, so we return to it to find those elements that account for that sensation.

Periodically throughout this book, I have felt obliged to issue disclaimers. This is one of those times. What we have discussed is absolutely true: when literal blindness, sight, darkness, and light are introduced into a story, it is nearly always the case that figurative seeing and blindness are at work. Here's the caveat: seeing and blindness are generally at issue in many works, even where there is no hint of blindness on the part of windows, alleys, horses, speculations, or persons.

If it's there all the time, what's the point of introducing it specifically into some stories?

Good question. I think it's a matter of shading and subtlety - and their opposite. It's a little like music, I suppose. Do you get all those musical jokes in Mozart and Haydn? Well, neither do I. The closest I came to classical music in my youth was Procol Harum ripping off a Bach cantata for "A Whiter Shade of Pale." Eventually I learned a little, including the difference between Beethoven and "Roll Over Beethoven," even if I prefer the latter, and between Miles Davis and John Coltrane at their peak, but I remain a musical numskull. Those subtle jokes for the musical initiates are lost on an ignoramus such as myself. So if you want me to get the point musically, you'd better be fairly obvious. I get Keith Emerson better than I get Bach. Any Bach. And some of the Bachs aren't that subtle.

Same with literature. If writers want us - all of us - to notice something, they'd better put it out there where we'll find it. Please observe that in most works where blindness is manifest, the writer brings it up pretty early. I call this "the Indiana Jones principle": if you want your audience to know something important about your character (or the work at large), introduce it early, before you need it. Say we're two-thirds of the way through Raiders of the Lost Ark and suddenly Indy, who has heretofore been afraid of absolutely nothing, is terrified of snakes. Do we buy that? Of course not. That's why Steven Spielberg, the director, and Lawrence Kasdan, the writer, installed that snake in the airplane right in the first sequence, before the credits, so that when we get to the seven thousand snakes, we'll know just how badly they frighten our hero.

The principle doesn't always work, of course. In his absurdist dramatic masterpiece Waiting for Godot (1954) (about which, more later), Samuel Beckett waits until the second act to introduce a blind

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- 3) A stated reason to go there: she has been made executor of the will of her former lover, a fabulously wealthy and eccentric businessman and stamp collector.
- 4) Challenges and trials: our heroine meets lots of really strange, scary, and occasionally truly dangerous people. She goes on a nightlong excursion through the world of the outcasts and the dispossessed of San Francisco; enters her therapist's office to talk him out of his psychotic shooting rampage (the dangerous enclosure known in the study of traditional quest romances as "Chapel Perilous"); involves herself in what may be a centuries-old postal conspiracy.
- 5) The real reason to go: did I mention that her name is Oedipa? Oedipa Maas, actually. She's named for the great tragic character from Sophocles' drama *Oedipus the King* (ca. 425 B.C.), whose real calamity is that he doesn't know himself. In Pynchon's novel the heroine's resources, really her crutches - and they all happen to be male - are stripped away one by one, shown to be false or unreliable, until she reaches the point where she either must break down, reduced to a little fetal ball, or stand straight and rely on herself. And to do that, she first must find the self on whom she can rely. Which she does, after considerable struggle. Gives up on men, Tupperware parties, easy answers. Plunges ahead into the great mystery of the ending. Acquires, dare we say, self-knowledge? Of course we dare.

Still..

You don't believe me. Then why does the stated goal fade away? We hear less and less about the will and the estate as the story goes on, and even the surrogate goal, the mystery of the postal conspiracy,

1 - Every Trip Is a Quest (Except When It's Not)

OKAY, SO HERE'S THE DEAL: let's say, purely hypothetically, you're reading a book about an average sixteen-year-old kid in the summer of 1968. The kid - let's call him Kip - who hopes his acne clears up before he gets drafted, is on his way to the A&P. His bike is a one-speed with a coaster brake and therefore deeply humiliating, and riding it to run an errand for his mother makes it even worse. Along the way he has a couple of disturbing experiences, including a minorly unpleasant encounter with a German shepherd, topped off in the supermarket parking lot where he sees the girl of his dreams, Karen, laughing and horsing around in Tony Vauxhall's brand-new Barracuda. Now Kip hates Tony already because he has a name like Vauxhall and not like Smith, which Kip thinks is pretty lame as a name to follow Kip, and because the 'Cuda is bright green and goes approximately the speed of light, and also because Tony has never had to work a day in his life. So Karen, who is laughing and having a great time, turns and sees Kip, who has recently asked her out, and she keeps laughing. (She could stop laughing and it wouldn't matter to us, since we're considering this structurally. In the story we're inventing here, though, she keeps laughing.) Kip goes on into the store to buy the loaf of Wonder Bread that his mother told him to pick up, and as he reaches for the bread, he decides right then and there to lie about his age to the Marine recruiter even though it means going to Vietnam, because nothing will ever happen for him in this one-horse burg where the only thing that matters is how much money your old man has. Either that or Kip has a vision of St. Abillard (any saint will do, but our imaginary author picked a comparatively obscure one), whose face appears on one of the red, yellow, or blue balloons. For our purposes, the nature of the decision doesn't matter anymore than whether Karen keeps laughing or which color balloon manifests the saint.

What just happened here?

If you were an English professor, and not even a particularly weird English professor, you'd know that you'd just watched a knight have a not very suitable encounter with his nemesis.

In other words, a quest just happened.

But it just looked like a trip to the store for some white bread.

True. But consider the quest. Of what does it consist? A knight, a dangerous road, a Holy Grail (whatever one of those may be), at least one dragon, one evil knight, one princess. Sound about right? That's a list I can live with: a knight (named Kip), a dangerous road (nasty German shepherds), a Holy Grail (one form of which is a loaf of Wonder Bread), at least one dragon (trust me, a '68 'Cuda could definitely breathe fire), one evil knight (Tony), one princess (who can either keep laughing or stop).

Seems like a bit of a stretch.

On the surface, sure. But let's think structurally. The quest consists of five things: (a) a quester, (b) a place to go, (c) a stated reason to go there, (d) challenges and trials en route, and (e) a real reason to go there. Item (a) is easy: a quester is just a person who goes on a quest, whether or not he knows it's a quest. In fact, usually he doesn't know. Items (b) and (c) should be considered together: someone tells our protagonist, our hero, who need not look very heroic, to go somewhere and do something. Go in search of the Holy Grail. Go to the store for bread. Go to Vegas and whack a guy. Tasks of varying nobility, to be sure, but structurally all the same. Go there, do that. Note that I said the stated reason for the quest. That's because of item (e).

character. The first time Lucky and Pozzo show up to relieve the boredom of Didi and Gogo, the main characters, Pozzo is a cruel master who keeps Lucky on a leash. The second time, he's blind and needs Lucky to escort him around, although he's no less cruel for all that. Of course, what this means is up for grabs, since Beckett is employing irony, and not very subtly. More commonly, though, the blind character will show up early. In Henry Green's first novel, *Blindness* (1926), his schoolboy protagonist is blinded by a freak accident when a small boy throws a rock through a railway carriage window. John, the schoolboy, has just become aware of, has just begun to see, life's possibilities, and at that moment in his life a rock and a thousand shards of glass come sailing in to rob him of that vision.

Back to Oedipus. Don't feel too bad. When we meet him again, in *Oedipus at Colonus*, it's many years later, and of course he's suffered greatly, but that suffering has redeemed him in the eyes of the gods, and rather than being a blight on the human landscape, he becomes a favorite of the gods, who welcome him into the next world with a miraculous death. He has acquired a level of vision he never had when he was sighted. Blind as he is, he walks toward that death without assistance, as if guided by an unseen power.

Assignment for *Oedipus Rex*:

Now read *Oedipus Rex* in the X.J. Kennedy textbook on page 1365.

While you read, focus on the character development of *Oedipus Rex*, consider these questions and, based on your reading of chapter 22 of *HTRLLAP*, look for ten (10) quotations/excerpts from the play to help analyze the characters:

- How would you describe him at the beginning of the play?
- What does his behavior toward Tiresias show about his character and faults as a man/king?
- Does hubris (extreme pride) help or hinder his cause?
- Why does he choose to ignore Tiresias' warnings? There is a superficial answer and a deeper psychological answer (hint hint: what would make me happy?).
- How does his behavior toward Creon's advise further reveal the theme of Fate vs. Free Will?
- Examine lightness and darkness as motifs (reoccurring images or objects that help to build themes) and how do those images show the subtext of what is happening in the play?

Modified Dialectical Journal - "The Yellow Wallpaper" Sample

<p style="text-align: center;">Quotation</p> <p>Choose a quotation that relates to one of the themes of the work and one that resonates with you on a personal level</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Theme</p> <p>Identify the theme and explain how it relates</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Personalize It</p> <p>Explain why you chose this quotation - What does it mean to you and how does it relate to your experiences and personal identity?</p>
<p>1. "He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction. I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more."</p>	<p>The theme is societal control of the individual because her husband is controlling every aspect of her day - he has every hour planned out for her!</p>	<p>I understand her frustration because every hour of my day is planned out too. I have to do what other people tell me or else I get in trouble AND I'm supposed to be grateful for it. I can't wait to have control over my own life - I'm so tired of that stupid bell! But how much control do adults have over their own lives? Is control a myth?</p>
<p>2.</p>		
<p>3.</p>		
<p>4.</p>		
<p>5.</p>		

6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

2 - Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion

PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD THE ANECDOTE about Sigmund Freud. One day one of his students, or assistants, or some such hanger-on, was teasing him about his fondness for cigars, referring to their obvious phallic nature. The great man responded simply that "sometimes a cigar is just a cigar." I don't really care if the story is true or not. Actually, I think I prefer that it be apocryphal, since made-up anecdotes have their own kind of truth. Still, it is equally true that just as cigars may be just cigars, so sometimes they are not.

Same with meals in life and, of course, in literature. Sometimes a meal is just a meal, and eating with others is simply eating with others. More often than not, though, it's not. Once or twice a semester at least, I will stop discussion of the story or play under consideration to intone (and I invariably intone in bold): whenever people eat or drink together, it's communion. For some reasons, this is often met with a slightly scandalized look, communion having for many readers one and only one meaning. While that meaning is very important, it is not the only one. Nor, for that matter, does Christianity have a lock on the practice. Nearly every religion has some liturgical or social ritual involving the coming together of the faithful to share sustenance. So I have to explain that just as intercourse has meanings other than sexual, or at least did at one time, so not all communions are holy. In fact, literary versions of communion can interpret the word in quite a variety of ways.

Here's the thing to remember about communions of all kinds: in the real world, breaking bread together is an act of sharing and peace, since if you're breaking bread you're not breaking heads. One generally invites one's friends to dinner, unless one is trying to get on the good side of enemies or employers. We're quite particular about those with whom we break bread. We may not, for instance, accept a dinner invitation from someone we don't care for. The act of taking food into our bodies is so personal that we really only want to do it with people we're very comfortable with. As with any convention, this one can be violated. A tribal leader or Mafia don, say, may invite his enemies to lunch and then have them killed. In most areas, however, such behavior is considered very bad form. Generally, eating with another is a way of saying, "I'm with you, I like you, we form a community together." And that is a form of communion.

So too in literature. And in literature, there is another reason: writing a meal scene is so difficult, and so inherently uninteresting, that there really needs to be some compelling reason to include one in the story. And that reason has to do with how characters are getting along. Or not getting along. Come on, food is food. What can you say about fried chicken that you haven't already heard, said, seen, thought? And eating is eating, with some slight variations of table manners. To put characters, then, in this mundane, overused, fairly boring situation, something more has to be happening than simply beef, forks, and goblets.

So what kind of communion? And what kind of result can it achieve? Any kind you can think of.

Let's consider an example that will never be confused with religious communion, the eating scene in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), which, as one of my students once remarked, "sure doesn't look like church." Specifically, Tom and his lady friend, Mrs. Waters, dine at an inn, chomping, gnawing, sucking on bones, licking fingers; a more leering, slurping, groaning, and, in short, sexual meal has never been consumed. While it doesn't feel particularly important thematically and, moreover, it's as far from traditional notions of communion as we can get, it nevertheless constitutes a shared experience. What else is the eating about in that scene except consuming the other's body? Think of it as a consuming desire. Or two of them. And in the case of the movie version of *Tom Jones* starring Albert Finney

elaborate setting of this scene makes us feel as if we're seated at that table. So we notice, a little before Gabriel does, since he's lost in his own reality, that we're all in this together, that in fact we share something.

The thing we share is our death. Everyone in that room, from old and frail Aunt Julia to the youngest music student, will die. Not tonight, but someday. Once you recognize that fact (and we've been given a head start by the title, whereas Gabriel doesn't know his evening has a title), it's smooth sledding. Next to our mortality, which comes to great and small equally, all the differences in our lives are mere surface details. When the snow comes at the end of the story, in a beautiful and moving passage, it covers, equally, "all the living and the dead." Of course it does, we think, the snow is just like death. We're already prepared, having shared in the communion meal Joyce has laid out for us, a communion not of death, but of what comes before. Of life.

Assignment for "Cathedral" by Raymond Carver

After reading *Oedipus Rex*, here is another story about a blind man. On page 109 in the X.J. Kennedy textbook, read the short story, "Cathedral," and write a 700 - 1000 word essay (MLA format with word count in the heading).

Source: <http://www.shmoop.com/cathedral-carver/three-act-play.html>

Act One, the main character is drawn in completely to a conflict. During Act Two, she is farthest away from her goals. At the end of Act Three, the story is resolved.

Act I

The curtains open, and we find the narrator worrying about the fact that Robert, his wife's blind friend, is coming to spend the night. In the process, he reveals his assumptions about blind people. He also thinks about his wife's first marriage, her suicide attempt before her divorce, and her relationship with Robert. His wife tells him about Robert's life with his wife, Beulah, who recently died of cancer.

Act II

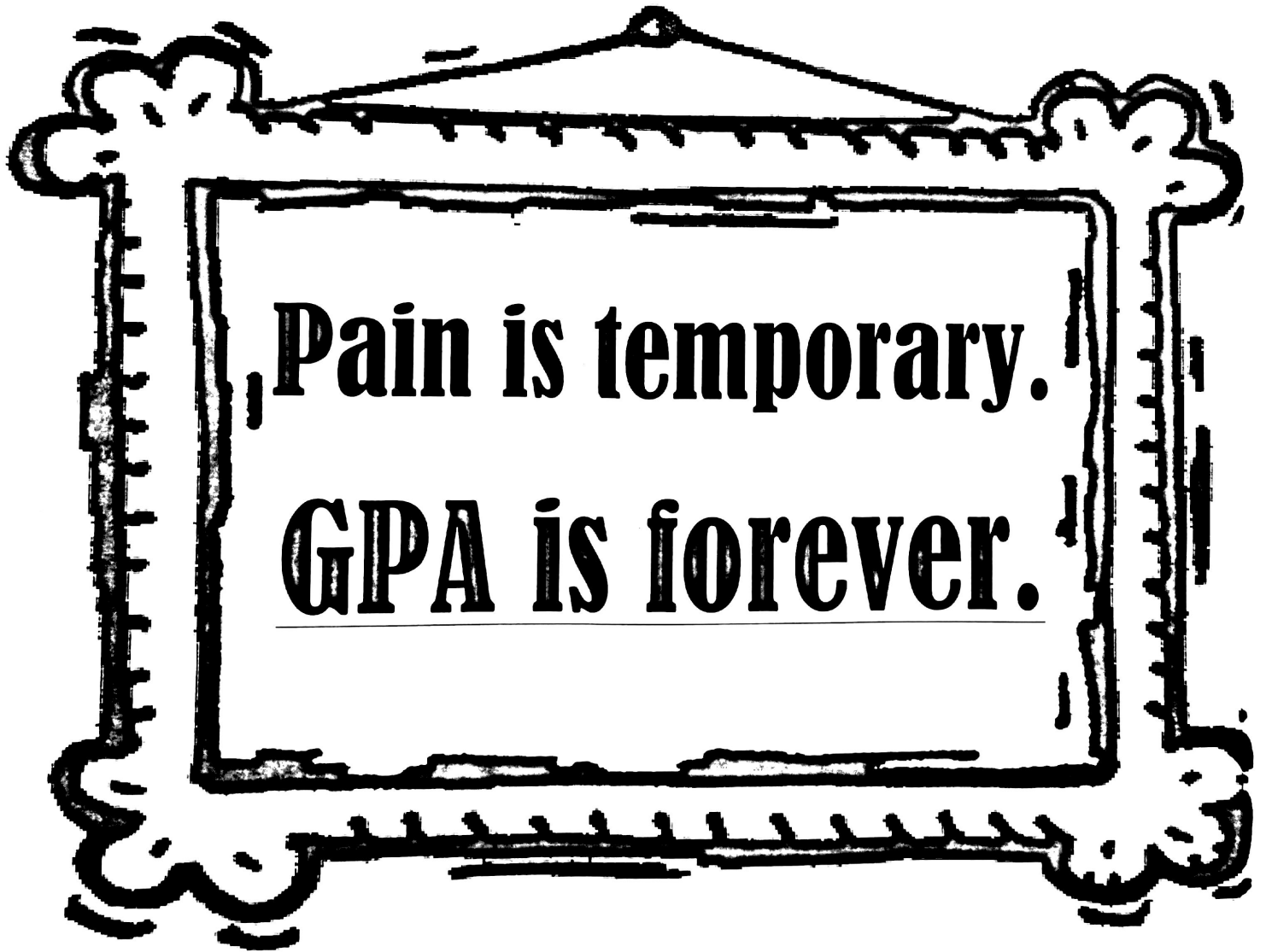
This act opens with Robert's arrival. It includes the somewhat awkward before-dinner conversation, the devouring of dinner, and the marijuana smoking after dinner. Drinks are served and consumed throughout the act. The curtains close on the woman falling asleep on the couch between her husband and Robert.

Act III

This act is all about cathedrals. The narrator tries to describe a cathedral to Robert but fails. Robert suggests a nonverbal approach. With Robert's hand on his, the narrator begins drawing a cathedral. Soon, Robert asks the narrator to close his eyes. The curtains close on the finished drawing, and on the narrator's closed eyes.

Prompt:

How does the act of communion change the narrator's perspective from act to act? Plot the change and include textual evidence to support your analysis. There will be summary, but it must serve to show the narrator's transformation.



Pain is temporary.

GPA is forever.