

AMERICAN LITERATURE

SYLLABUS

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- To copy another student's work and submit the work as if it were the product of my own labor.

IMPORTANT: Most of your reading texts are on your IOHS class page as a pdf file. When available, online text links are also provided as well as video support.

PRIMARY READINGS:

American Short Stories

READ: THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTONS
(pdf with your downloads)

ASSIGNMENT: Support your answers

1. Does "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" have a moral, or attempt to teach its readers a lesson of sorts? Explain and support your response with text.
2. What is the effect of the first-person narration, and why does the narrator reveal himself so minimally? Explain and support your response with text.
3. Is "Benjamin Button" funny, tragic, or both? Explain and support your response with text.
4. How sympathetic are you to Benjamin's character? As a reader, can you relate to him at all, despite the peculiarity of his circumstance? Explain and support your response with text.
5. What does "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" teach us about the nature of age? Explain and support your response with text.
6. Well-executed short stories usually cover a short period of time. How is it that "Benjamin Button" functions well as a short piece yet covers the course of 70 years? Explain and support your response with text.
7. Why do you think Fitzgerald breaks his story into two parts? What effect does this structuring have on the story? Explain and support your response with text.

ADD RESPONSE/S/ HERE

W.W. Jacobs

Read The Monkey's Paw

<http://www.americanliterature.com/Jacobs/SS/TheMonkeysPaw.html>

Be detailed with your responses and give textual support.

1. The question you've been waiting for all your life: If you were given three wishes, what would you wish for? Why doesn't anybody ever wish for unlimited wishes? Are there any ways that wish could backfire?
2. Do you think Mr. White's second wish came true? We never see an undead version of Herbert in the story, we only hear someone knocking on the White's door. Can you think of any other explanation for the sound?
3. If you were in Mr. and Mrs. White's position, would you wish for Herbert to come back to life? Why or why not?
4. Is Morris an untrustworthy guy? Is he trying to make Mr. White want the cursed paw?
5. This story helped horror-master Stephen King develop some of the plot elements and major themes that would win him a worldwide audience. Does the story inspire you to write a story of your own? What would you change? In what time period would you set it? What might your main character wish for?

ADD RESPONSE/S/ HERE

Shirley Jackson

Read the American short story "The Lottery" (a pdf download)

Movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQQoMCAuz5Y>

Be detailed with your responses and give textual support.

1. Were you surprised by the ending of the story? If not, at what point did you know what was going to happen? How does Jackson foreshadow the ending? Conversely, how does Jackson lull us into thinking that this is just an ordinary story with an ordinary town?
2. In what way does the setting affect the story? Does it make you more or less likely to anticipate the ending?
3. In what ways are the characters differentiated from one another? Looking back at the story, can you see why Tessie Hutchinson is singled out as a "winner"?
4. What is the ritual of the scapegoat? In what way might Tessie be considered a scapegoat?
5. Jackson gives interesting names to a number of her characters. Explain the possible allusions or symbolism of EACH of these?
Delacroix
Graves
Summers
Bentham
Hutchinson
Warner
Martin
6. This is a different sort of story when you read it for the second time. What elements (such as Mrs. Hutchinson's attempt to have her daughter, Eva, draw with the family) take on a different meaning the second time through?
7. This story was published in 1948. Are there any cultural or historical events that Jackson might be commenting on here? Is this JUST a story about this particular time and place, or is she trying to say something important about human nature?

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

Nathaniel Hawthorne's

Read, "The Minister's Black Veil"

<http://www.americanliterature.com/Hawthorne/SS/TheMinistersBlackVeil.html>

Be detailed with your responses and give textual support.

Questions

- 1) How do we know this is allegory and a parable?

- 2) How do secrets play a role in this story? How is it similar to real life?
- 3) Does this town like the “change” in its minister? Would people have reacted the same if a non-authority figure wore the veil?
- 4) What is the significance of the topic of the first sermon Mr. Hooper gives with the veil on?
- 5) What is the definition of "black"/"white"? How does Hawthorne use these colors to add to the “Romantic” touch?
- 6) What is with Mr. Hooper’s “sad” or “melancholy” smile? Hawthorne mentions this many times. Why is he smiling like this and so frequently?
- 7) What do Father Hooper's final words disclose about his possible reasoning for wearing the veil?
- 8.) What is the “message” of this parable?

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

Hawthorne’s

“Young Goodman Brown”

<http://www.americanliterature.com/Hawthorne/SS/YoungGoodmanBrown.html>

“Young Goodman Brown” is a moral allegory. Essentially, an allegory is an extended metaphor – using one thing to represent another – a story with dual meanings. Therefore, there is a surface or literal meaning as well as a secondary meaning. In other words, Hawthorne uses this moral allegory to reveal a moral lesson or lessons.

Be detailed with your responses and give textual support.

QUESTIONS

- 1.) In detail, discuss each moral lesson you discover in the story.
- 2.) Young Goodman Brown’s wife was named Faith, whom he had left behind to go into the forest. In taking the word “faith” in its literal meaning –to trust, did Goodman leave his faith behind when he went into the forest? Also, if this was a dream, why did he not recover to live a happy and blessed life?
- 3.) SYMBOLISM: What do the pink ribbons symbolize?
- 4.) What choices would you have made if you were Goodman?

ADD RESPONSE/S/ HERE

Alice Walker

Download and Read the short story, "Everyday Use" PDF

Movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HA1GJypq7gQ>

Be detailed with your responses and give textual support.

1. When looking through the perspectives of Dee, Maggie and Mama, what is the focus of each woman's life? Compare and contrast the three different impressions.
2. Why does Dee want the dasher and other implements made by her family?
3. Describe the 'Lone Star' and 'Walk Around the Mountain' patterns containing scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had worn over 50 years ago, pieces of Grandpa Jattell's paisley shirts, Great Grandpa Ezra's Civil War uniform.
4. Dee (Wangero) had been offered a quilt when she went away to college but turned it down because it was old-fashioned. Why is she saying now that they're "priceless?"
5. Dee wanted to hang the quilts whereas Maggie would put them to everyday use. In your opinion, examine each point of view, whose purpose for the quilts is right?
6. Maggie said, "She can have them, Mama ... I can 'member Grandma Dee without the quilts." What is the reasoning behind Mama's decision to give the quilts to Maggie?
7. What message does this story give about the way an individual understands his or her present life in relation to his or her culture, traditions, and heritage?
8. How do the quilts reflect the family's history?

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI by O. Henry

Original Movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEYKIV0vklI>

Read and use for the assignment below

ASSIGNMENT: Review these questions. Take time to create your responses.

1. What are instance of irony in the short story?
2. Several events happen in 3's – give 5 examples of this pattern and explain what you think is the significance of using 3's in the story.
3. Several passages in the story give subtle clues about Jim. Identify at least three passages that reveal aspects of Jim's character and explain their significance.

4. Why does the author make reference to the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon?

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

John Steinbeck

Read your download, "The Pearl" PDF

Watch the movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUSf9M0PZ8g>

Be detailed with your responses and give textual support.

Literary Techniques

1. How do the various animals, merchants and songs add to the imagery of the novel: the ants, the scorpion, the hissing snakes, the schools of fish and pearl buyers? What does the pearl symbolize at the beginning of the story?
2. How does Steinbeck characterize the doctor? How does he let the reader know that the white powder which the doctor administers to Coyotito, is actually a poison which would kill the baby if the doctor did not return?
3. How does the priest function as a travesty of religion?
4. Why are the pearl buyers referred to as "fatherly" and "benevolent"? How does this contradict their real purposes? Are they also victimized?
5. Why are the "dark ones" and the "trackers" never identified? What is gained by Steinbeck's not identifying them?
6. A symbol can change its meaning during the course of a novel. How does the pearl change its meaning during the course of this novel?
7. Kino believes that it would be better to kill a person than to kill a canoe because a canoe has no relatives to revenge it. What types of values are operative in such a statement?
8. Kino and Juana function more or less on a primitive level in their lives and in their religion, yet they both want a church wedding and a christening for Coyotito. How are these values consistent with their lives? How are they contradictory?
9. Analyze the character of the doctor, the priest, and the pearl merchants. How are they victims of greediness? How do their actions show their greediness? Explain how they treat Kino and Juana before and after the discovery of the pearl. What judgments can be concluded regarding the fields of medicine, religion

and business?

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

Conflict

The Pearl has each of the following types of conflict. **Identify the parts of the story that are an example of each type of conflict.**

10. **Person-against-self** - an internal conflict of feelings.
11. **Person-against-person** - the typical protagonist vs. antagonist scenario.
12. **Person-against-society** - the protagonist battles against the larger organizations of society (or a system of beliefs held by society).
13. **Person-against-nature** - the protagonist is threatened by a component of nature.
14. **Person-against-deity**-the protagonist is in a spiritual battle with evil v God
15. Of the five types of conflict, which one would you say is the primary type of conflict? Support your response.

The Book's Ending

16. What do you think happens to Kino and Juana after they return to their village and throw the pearl into the ocean? Why do you think that?
17. Rewrite the ending to the story **(1 full page)**

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

THE SCARLET LETTER by Nathaniel Hawthorne (A Novel)

With your pdf files

Original movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZJFnr14T4>

ASSIGNMENT: SUBMIT the following from..."Scarlet Letter Study Guide"

"RESPONDING The Scarlet Letter Chapters 1 – 8" Personal Response and Analyzing Literature #1 thru 5

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

"RESPONDING The Scarlet Letter Chapters 9 – 15" Personal Response and Analyzing Literature #1

thru 5

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

“RESPONDING The Scarlet Letter Chapters 16 – 24” Analyzing Literature #1 thru 5 and “News Report”

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

YOUR FEELINGS - RESPONSE: With which characters did you sympathize most while you read? With which did you sympathize the least? Explain.

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

Writing About the Novel: Some readers of The Scarlet Letter feel that Hester Prynne was successfully repressed, or restricted, by her Puritan society. Others feel that, in spite of her public disgrace and punishment, she was able to express herself in meaningful ways. What is your opinion? Cite evidence from the novel to support your thoughts as you write a persuasive argument on a separate sheet of paper.

ADD RESPONSE/S HERE

END OF AMERICAN LITERATURE