



HONORS US LITERATURE - Q3 STUDY GUIDE The American “Tale”

Neither the life of the individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.

-C. Wright Mills

You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive.

-James Baldwin

A short story must have a single mood and every sentence must build towards it.

-Edgar Allan Poe

essential understandings

The short story (or “tale”) has been a very convenient form in which American authors have painted snapshots of American individuals and their relationship to society. As the above cited quote from Poe states, a short story centers around a single “mood” and everything in the story is there for a reason. We will explore this genre in connection to larger questions about some key values of American society--individualism, freedom, equality, economic opportunity--and the breakdown of, or conflicts over, these values in particular time periods due to particular social forces.

overview

An author uses literary techniques to **show** (and not tell) a story. **Close reading** of a text, with a specific focus on **literary techniques** (how the story is told), can help us uncover an author’s purpose for writing a text. Authors may have many hopes for their writing: to foster

empathy and understanding, to teach readers specific lessons, to express some experience (personal or communal), or to propel social change. Thus **close reading** a text reveals layers of the world we might not see in our everyday reality such as hidden relationships, difficult conflicts, beauty that is unique or uncommon, and new ways of thinking about the world and acting in it. Using **close reading** will help us analyze how art can affect society, and how society influences art.

guiding question I: How does literature comment on social issues?

guiding question II: How do short stories grab the reader's attention and create a "single" mood?

guiding question III: How does literature elicit empathy? Why does this emotional "knowledge" matter?

readings (in chronological order)

SHORT STORIES:

["Indian Camp" by Ernest Hemingway \(1924\)](#)

["Sweat" by Zora Neale Hurston \(1926\)](#)

["The Pomegranate Trees" by William Saroyan \(1938\)](#)

["Good Country People" by Flannery O'Connor \(1955\)](#)

["Sonny's Blues" by James Baldwin \(1957\)](#)

["The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" by Ursula LeGuinn \(1973\)](#)

NOVEL:

The Great Gatsby (1925), F. Scott Fitzgerald

lessons

LITERATURE

- * The "Sociological" Imagination
- * Science Fiction & Social "Necessity" (Le Guinn)
- * Modernism & Realism (Hemingway, Hurston)
- * The American "Pastoral" & "Gothic" (Saroyan, O'Connor)
- * Jazz & the "American Dream" (Baldwin)

WRITING / MECHANICS

- * Grammar/Style mini-lessons
- * Apprentice sentence practicum

- * Paragraphs: Transitions, pointing words, & Flow (“Putting it Together”)
- * Plagiarism Reboot

group work

Short Story Project (due 3/28 or 3/29): See google classroom for project choices

individual work

Creative Short Story Rewrite (due 3/18 or 3/19): write an alternate ending, diary entry from the perspective of a character, choose your own adventure

Apprentice Sentences (3)

In-Class Response Papers (3)

Vocabulary (in class notebook & writing assessments)

assessment

Socratic Seminars (2-3 throughout the quarter): Graded on use of evidence/quotes from short stories to support opinions and ideas

****Analytical Essay** on *The Great Gatsby* (due 4/4 or 4/5)

****Sociological Interpretation**: Choose a social issue addressed in one or more of our stories and write a study of that issue in the texts and the present day (due 3/18 or 19)

extensions

Extensions will **only** be given to students who fill out and turn in an Extension Request Form **one class prior to an assignment’s due date**. Any late work without a prior request will be marked down a half grade (A to A-, A- to B+) per each day late.

links - additional texts

The Individual and History

[“Rip Van Winkle” by Washington Irving \(1819\)](#)

[“Bartleby, the Scrivener” by Herman Melville \(1856\)](#)

Gothic & Crime Fiction

[“The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe \(1839\)](#)

[“The Cask of Amontillado” by Edgar Allan Poe \(1846\)](#)

[“The Heroine” by Patricia Highsmith \(1945\)](#)

Naturalism & Modernism

[“The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman \(1892\)](#)

[“To Build a Fire” by Jack London \(1902\)](#)

[Thank You, Ma'am by Langston Hughes \(1958\)](#)

Sci-Fi and Society

["The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson \(1948\)](#)

["All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury \(1954\)](#)

["Speech Sounds" by Octavia Butler \(1984\)](#)