28 THE LITERATURE ESSAY

The literature essay is a distinct subgenre of writing with unique elements and conventions. Just as you come to a poem, play, or short story with a specific set of expectations, so will readers approach your essay *about* a poem, play or story. They will be looking for particular elements, anticipating that the work will unfold in a certain way. This chapter explains and explores those elements so as to give you a clear sense of what an effective essay about literature looks like and how it works, along with concrete advice about how to craft your own.

A literature essay has particular elements and a particular form because it serves a specific purpose. Like any essay, it is a relatively short written composition that articulates, supports, and develops one major idea or claim. Like any work of expository prose, it aims to explain something complex—in this case at least one literary work—so that a reader may gain a new and deeper understanding. Explaining in this case entails both *analysis* (breaking the work down into its constituent parts and showing how they work together to form a meaningful whole) and *argument* (working to convince someone that the analysis is valid). Your essay needs to show your readers a particular way to understand the work, to interpret or read it. That interpretation or reading starts with your own personal response. But your essay also needs to persuade its readers that your interpretation is reasonable and enlightening—that though it is distinctive and new, it is more than merely idiosyncratic or subjective.

28.1 ELEMENTS OF THE LITERATURE ESSAY

To achieve its purpose, a literature essay must incorporate five elements: an effective *tone*; a compelling *thesis* and *motive*; ample, appropriate *evidence*; and a coherent *structure*. Though these five elements are essential to essays of any kind, each needs to take a specific shape in literature essays. The goal of this section is to give you a clear sense of that shape.

28.1.1 Tone (and Audience)

Although your reader or audience isn't an element *in* your essay, tone is. And tone and audience are closely interrelated. In everyday life, the tone we adopt has everything to do with whom we're talking to and what situation we're in. We talk very differently to our parents than to our best friends. And in different situations we talk to the same person in different ways, depending in part on what response we want to elicit. What tone do you adopt with your best friend when you need a favor? when you want advice? when you want him to take your advice? In each situa-

tion, you act on your knowledge of who your audience is, what information they already have, and what their response is likely to be. But you also try to adopt a tone that will encourage your listener to respond in a specific way. In writing, as in life, your sense of audience shapes your tone, even as you use tone to shape your audience's response.

So who is your audience? When you write an essay for class, the obvious answer is your instructor. But in an important sense, that's the wrong answer. Although your instructor could literally be the only person besides you who will ever read your essay, you write about literature to learn how to write for a general audience of peers—people a lot like you who are sensible and educated and who will appreciate having a literary work explained so that they can understand it more fully. Picture your readers as people with at least the same educational background. Assume they have some experience in reading literature and some familiarity with the basic literary terminology outlined in this book. (You should not feel the need to explain what a stanza is or to define the term *in medias res*.) But assume, too, that your readers have read the specific literary work(s) only once, have not yet closely analyzed the work(s), and have not been privy to class discussions.

Above all, don't think of yourself as writing for only one reader and especially one reader who already sees the text as you do. Remember that the purpose of your essay is to *persuade* multiple readers with differing outlooks and opinions to see the text your way. That process begins with persuading those readers that you deserve their time, their attention, and their respect. The tone of your paper should be serious and straightforward, respectful toward your readers and the literary work. But its approach and vocabulary, while formal enough for academic writing, should be lively enough to capture and hold the interest of busy, distracted readers. Demonstrate *in* your essay the stance you want readers to take *toward* your essay: Earn careful attention and respect by demonstrating care, attentiveness, and respect; encourage your readers to keep an open mind by doing the same; engage your readers by demonstrating genuine engagement with the text, the topic, and the very enterprise of writing.

WAYS OF SETTING THE RIGHT TONE

- *Write about literature in the present tense.*
  Convincing your readers that you are a knowledgeable student of literature whose ideas they should respect requires not only correctly using—without feeling the need to explain—basic literary terms such as *stanza* and *in medias res* but also following other long-established conventions. Writing in present tense is one such convention, and it has two very practical advantages. One, it helps you avoid confusing tense shifts. Simply put, you can more clearly indicate *when* in a text something happens by simply specifying, "When X first visits Y" or "In the first stanza," and so on than you can by switching tenses. Two, present tense actually makes logical sense if you think about it: Though each time you pick up a story, poem, or play, your interpretation of the work might be different, the work itself isn't. Similarly, though in reading we experience a text as unfolding in time, it actually doesn't: Everything in the text simply, always *is*. Thus, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Shakespeare's Ophelia goes mad, "A & P" asks what it means to grow up, John Donne (the implied author) depicts our relationship with God as a lifelong struggle, **and so on.**

That said, things do get a bit tricky when you write about contexts as well as texts or about *actual* versus *implied authors*. Notice, for example, how the following sentence moves from past to present tense as it moves from a statement about the actual author to one about the text: "In perhaps the same year, Dickinson wrote 'The Bible is an antique Volume,' which shows a mix of skepticism and optimism." Again, this switch (from past to present tense) makes logical sense: The actual author Emily Dickinson *wrote* this poem in the historical past, even as the poem *shows* now what it always has and always will (if we accept this writer's interpretation of it). By the same logic, the same tenses would be appropriate if we revised the sentence so as to make Emily Dickinson, the implied author, rather than her poem the subject of its second half: "In per-haps the same year, Dickinson wrote 'The Bible is an antique Volume,' a poem in which she expresses a mix of skepticism and optimism." (On implied versus actual authors, see ch. 2.)

- *Use the word* "I" *carefully.*
  On the one hand, many instructors have no problem with your using "I" when context makes that appropriate and effective; and used well, the first person can create a real sense of engagement and of "presence," of a distinctive mind at work. On the other hand, however, you should be aware that many instruc-tors strongly object to any use of the word "I" simply because inexperienced writers so often use it inappropriately and ineffectively. Since the job of a liter-ature essay is to use evidence to persuade readers to accept an interpretation of the work that is generally and objectively, not just personally or subjectively, valid and meaningful, resorting to "I feel" or "I think" can defeat that purpose. Sometimes such phrases can even be a sign that you've gotten way off track, perhaps substituting expressions of feeling for actual argument or dwelling more on your thoughts about an issue the text explores than on your thoughts about the text and the thoughts *it* communicates about that issue (as in the last example in 28.1.2 below). Generally speaking, if everything that follows a phrase like "I feel" or "I think" makes sense and has merit and relevance on its own, cut to the chase by cutting the phrase.

28.1.2 Thesis

A thesis is to an essay what a **theme** is to a short story, play, or poem: the govern-ing idea or claim. Yet where a literary work implies at least one theme and often more, any essay about a literary work needs to have only one thesis that is explicitly stated in about one to three sentences somewhere in the introduction, usually at or near its end. Like a theme, as we have defined that term in earlier chapters, your thesis must be debatable—a claim that all readers won't automatically accept. It's a proposition you *can* prove with evidence from the literary text, yet it's one you *have* to prove, that isn't obviously true or merely factual.

Though it's unlikely that any of that is news to you, even experienced writers sometimes find themselves flummoxed when it comes to figuring out just what makes for a debatable claim or thesis about literature. To clarify, we juxtapose below two sets of sentences. On the left are inarguable statements—ones that are merely factual or descriptive and thus might easily find a home in a paraphrase, summary, or description (see ch. 27). On the right are debatable claims about the same topic or fact of the type that might work very well as the thesis of a literature essay.

FACTUAL STATEMENT	THESIS
"The Story of an Hour" explores the topic of marriage.	"The Story of an Hour" poses a troubling question: Does marriage inevitably encourage people to "impose [their] private will upon a fellow-creature" (par. 14)?
"Cathedral" features a character with a physical handicap.	By depicting an able-bodied protagonist who discovers his own emotional and spiritual shortcomings through an encounter with a physically handi-capped person, "Cathedral" invites us to question traditional definitions of "disability."
"London" has three discrete stanzas that each end with a period; two-thirds of the lines are end-stopped.	In "London," William Blake uses various formal devices to suggest the unnatural rigidity of modern urban life.
Creon and Antigone are both similar and different.	Antigone and Creon share the same fatal flaw: Each recognizes only one set of obligations. In the end, however, the play presents Antigone as more admirable.

All of the thesis statements above are arguable because each implicitly answers a compelling interpretive question to which multiple, equally reasonable answers seem possible—for instance, *What is the key similarity between Antigone and Creon? Which character's actions and values does the play as a whole ultimately champion?* or, *What exactly does Blake demonstrate about modern urban life?* But they share other traits as well. All are clear and emphatic. All use *active verbs* to capture what the text and/or its implied author does (*poses, invites, uses, presents* versus *has, is, tries to*). And each entices us to read further by implying further interpretive questions—*What "set of obligations" do Antigone and Creon each "recognize"? Given how alike they are, what makes Antigone more admirable than Creon?* or, *According to Blake, what specifically is "unnatural" and "rigid" about modern urban life?* (Note, by the way, that the arguable claim in the Blake example *isn't* that he "uses various formal devices to suggest" something: *All* authors do that. Instead, the arguable claim has to do with *what* he suggests through formal devices.)

An effective thesis enables the reader to enter the essay with a clear sense that its writer has something to prove and what that is, and it inspires readers with the desire to see the writer prove it. We want to understand how the writer arrived at this view, to test whether it's valid, and to see how the writer will answer the other questions the thesis has generated in our minds. A good thesis captures readers' interest and shapes their expectations. In so doing, it also makes specific promises to readers that the rest of the essay must fulfill.

At the same time, an arguable claim about literature is not one-sided or narrow-minded. A thesis needs to stake out a position, but a position can and should admit complexity. Literature, after all, tends to focus more on exploring problems, conflicts, and questions than on offering easy solutions, resolutions, and answers. Its goal is to complicate and enrich, not to simplify, our way of looking at the world. The best essays about literature and the theses that drive them often do the

same. As some of the sample thesis statements above demonstrate, for example, a good thesis can be a claim about just what the key question or conflict explored in a text is rather than about how that question is answered or that conflict resolved. Though an essay with this sort of thesis wouldn't be complete unless it ultimately considered possible answers and resolutions, it doesn't have to *start* there.

INTERPRETATION VERSUS EVALUATION (OR WHY IS A LITERATURE ESSAY *NOT* A REVIEW)

All the sample theses above involve *interpretive* claims—claims about how a literary text works, what it says, how one should understand it. Unless your instructor suggests otherwise, this is the kind of claim you need for a thesis in a literature essay.

Yet it's useful to remember that in reading and writing about literature we often make (and debate) a different type of claim—the *evaluative*. Evaluation entails assessment, and evaluative claims about literature tend to be of two kinds. The first involves aesthetic assessment and/or personal preference—whether a text (or a part or element thereof) succeeds, or seems to you "good," in artistic terms or whether you personally "like" it. This kind of claim features prominently in movie and book reviews, but literature essays are not reviews. Where the thesis of a review of Raymond Carver's CATHEDRAL, for example, might be that "Carver's story fails as a story because of its lack of action and unlikeable narrator" or that "'Cathedral' does a great job of characterizing its narrator-protagonist," a better thesis for a literature essay might be something like that of Bethany Qualls's "A Narrator's Blindness in Raymond Carver's 'Cathedral'" (see "Fiction: Reading, Responding, Writing"): "Through his words even more than his actions the narrator unwittingly shows us why nothing much happens to him by continually demonstrating his utter inability to connect with others or to understand himself." In other words, where reviewers are mainly concerned with answering the question of *whether* a text "works," literary critics focus primarily on showing *how* it does so and with what effects. Likewise, though personal preferences may well influence your choice of which texts to write about, such preferences shouldn't be the primary focus of your essay—who, after all, can really argue with your personal preferences?

The second kind of evaluative claim involves moral, philosophical, social, or political judgment—whether an idea or action is wise or good, valid or admirable, something you "agree with." Both interpretive and evaluative claims involve informed opinion (which is why they are debatable). But whereas interpretive claims of the kind literary critics tend to privilege aim to elucidate the opinions and values expressed or enacted *in* and *by* a text or its characters, evaluative claims of this second type instead assess the validity *of* those opinions and values, often by comparison with one's own. Our sample thesis statement about ANTIGONE, for example, is a claim about which character *the play presents* as more admirable, not about which character the essay writer herself admires more.

The latter kind of claim is far from irrelevant or unimportant. One major reason why we read and write about literature is because it encourages us to grapple with real moral, social, and political issues of the kind we *should* develop informed opinions about. The question is simply one of emphasis: In a literature essay, the literature itself must be your primary focus, not your personal experience with or opinions about the issues it raises or the situations it explores.

Your main job in a literature essay is to thoughtfully explore *what* the work communicates and *how* it does so. Making an interpretive claim your thesis ensures that you keep your priorities straight. Once you have done that job thoroughly and well in the body of your essay, *then* you can consider evaluative questions in your conclusion (see "End: The Conclusion," in 28.1.5).

> The poem "Ulysses" demonstrates that traveling and meeting new people are important parts of life. The speaker argues that staying in one place for too long is equivalent to substituting the simple act of breathing for truly living. I very much agree with the speaker's argument because I also believe that travel is one of life's most valuable experiences. Traveling allows you to experience different cultures, different political systems, and different points of view. It may change your way of thinking or make you realize that people all over the world are more similar than they are different.

> This paragraph might be the kernel of a good conclusion to an essay that develops the thesis that "'Ulysses' demonstrates that traveling and meeting new people are important parts of life." Unfortunately, however, this paragraph actually appeared at the beginning of a student paper so full of similar paragraphs that it simply never managed to be *about* ULYSSES at all. Unfortunately, too, then, this paragraph demonstrates one of the reasons why some instructors forbid you to use the word "I" at all in literature essays (see 28.1.1).

28.1.3 Motive ("Although . . . I Think . . .")

One reason inexperienced writers might be tempted to emphasize evaluation over interpretation is that evaluative claims sometimes *seem* more debatable. It isn't always apparent, in other words, why there is anything useful or revelatory, even arguable or debatable, about a claim like *"Antigone* presents Antigone's form of over-simplification as more admirable than Creon's" or "Emily Dickinson questions traditional Christian doctrines." If you read the critical excerpts scattered throughout this book, however, you may notice something important: In the work of professional literary critics, such claims seem compelling because they are never presented in a vacuum but rather as what they truly are—a response to other actual or potential claims about the text. Such a presentation provides a *motive* for the reader of such an essay just as it does its writer.

Boil any good literature essay down to its essence, in other words, and you'll end up with a sentence that goes something like this (even though such a sentence never appears in the essay):

> Although they say / I used to think / someone might reasonably think
> _____ about this text, I say / now think _____
> because _____.

An effective essay doesn't just state a thesis ("I say/now think . . .") and prove it by providing reasons and evidence ("because . . ."); it also interests us in that thesis by framing it as a response to some other actual or potential thesis—something that "they" actually "say" about a text; that you "used to think" about it, perhaps on a first, casual reading; or that some reader *might* reasonably think or say.[1] In a literature research essay, "they" may well be published literary critics. But you don't have to read any published work on a literary text to discover alternative

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1. For a more extensive discussion of this approach to writing, see Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *"They Say/I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, 3rd ed., W. W. Norton, 2014.

readings to which to respond: If you have discussed a text in class, you have heard plenty of statements made and questions raised about it, all of which are fodder for response. If you've read and re-read a work carefully, your view of it has almost certainly evolved, ensuring that you yourself have a "naive reading" to compare to your more enlightened one. Finally, to write effectively about a text you inevitably have to imagine other possible interpretations, and, again, those *potential* readings are also ones you can "take on" in your essay.

Below, an introduction to one student writer's essay on Emily Dickinson appears first; below that are two different ways of paraphrasing the "Although . . . , I think" statement that introduction implies.

> When cataloguing Christian poets, it might be tempting to place Emily Dickinson between Dante and John Donne. She built many poems around biblical quotations, locations, and characters. She meditated often on the afterlife, prayer, and trust in God. Yet Dickinson was also intensely doubtful of the strand of Christianity that she inherited. In fact, she never became a Christian by the standards of her community in nineteenth-century Amherst, Massachusetts. Rather, like many of her contemporaries in Boston, Dickinson recognized the tension between traditional religious teaching and modern ideas. And these tensions between hope and doubt, between tradition and modernity animate her poetry. In "Some keep the Sabbath going to church—," "The Brain—is wider than the Sky—," "Because I could not stop for Death—," and "The Bible is an antique Volume," the poet uses traditional religious terms and biblical allusions. But she does so in order both to criticize traditional doctrines and practices and to articulate her own unorthodox beliefs.

1. *Although someone might reasonably think* of Emily Dickinson as a conventionally religious poet, *I think* she only uses traditional religious terms and biblical allusions to criticize traditional doctrines and practices and to articulate her own unorthodox beliefs.

2. *Although someone might reasonably think* of Emily Dickinson as either a conventionally religious poet or as an intensely doubtful one, *I think* she is both: Her poetry enacts a tension between traditional religious teaching and the hope it inspires and modern doubt.

The introduction above is an especially useful example because it demonstrates three things you need to keep in mind in articulating motive:

1. *Crafting a strong motive requires giving real substance to the argument you respond to*, taking it seriously enough that your readers do, too. Notice how the introduction above does that by actually listing a few good reasons why it might be entirely reasonable for a reader to think of Emily Dickinson either as a religious poet or as a skeptical one before making the claim that she is both. Simply put, you lose credibility from the get-go rather than generating interest in your thesis if you seem to be building a "straw man" just so you can knock him down.

2. *"Responding" to another point of view doesn't have to mean disagreeing with it*. Instead, you might

   • agree with, but complicate or qualify, the original claim

   > Although my classmates might be right to suggest that Miss Emily is heroic, I think she needs to be seen specifically as a tragic heroine.

- present your thesis as a middle way between two extreme alternatives (as in the sample introduction above); or

- as in any conversation, change the subject by turning attention to something previously or easily ignored

   Though our class discussion about "A Rose for Emily" focused exclusively on Miss Emily, we shouldn't ignore her father, since he makes Miss Emily what she is.

3. *"Although . . . I think . . . because . . ." is a useful sentence to use as you plan or summarize an argument, not a sentence that should actually appear in an essay*, in part because it creates problems with tone (see 28.1.1).

28.1.4 Evidence

Showing readers that your interpretation and argument are valid requires ample, appropriate evidence. And the appropriateness and quality of your evidence will depend on how you prepare and present it. Simply speaking, the term *evidence* refers to facts. But a fact by itself isn't really evidence for anything, or rather—as lawyers well know—any one fact can be evidence for many things. Like lawyers, literary critics turn a fact into evidence by interpreting it, drawing an inference from it, giving the reader a vivid sense of why and how the fact demonstrates a specific claim. You need, then, both to present concrete facts and to actively interpret them. *Show* readers why and how each fact matters.

KINDS OF LITERARY EVIDENCE: QUOTATION, PARAPHRASE, SUMMARY, DESCRIPTION

Quotations are an especially important form of evidence in literature essays. Any essay about literature that contains no quotations is likely to be weak. Readers of such an essay may doubt whether its writer has a thorough knowledge of the literary work or has paid adequate attention to details. And certain kinds of claims—about a character's motivations, a speaker's **tone**, a narrator's attitude toward a character, and so on—just can't be truly substantiated or developed *without* recourse to quotations.

   At the same time, inexperienced writers sometimes make the mistake of thinking quotations are the *only* form of evidence in literature essays. They aren't. In fact, because a quotation will lead your reader to expect commentary on, and interpretation of, its language, you should quote directly from the text only when the actual wording is significant. Otherwise, keep attention on the facts that really matter by simply paraphrasing, describing, or summarizing. (For a discussion and examples of paraphrase, summary, and description, see ch. 27.)

In this paragraph, note how the student writer simply summarizes and paraphrases (in bold) when the key facts are what happens (who does what

At this point in the novel, Tess is so conflicted about what to do that she can't decide or do anything at all. **Only after asking her to marry him several times and repeatedly wondering aloud why Tess is hesitating does Angel finally get her to say yes or no. Even after agreeing to be his bride, Tess refuses to set a date, and it is Angel who finally, weeks later, suggests December 31.** Once Tess agrees, *the narrator describes this*

more as a matter of totally letting go than of finally taking charge: "carried along upon the wings of the hours, without the sense of a will," she simply "drifted into . . . passive responsiveness to all things her lover suggested" (221; ch. 32). *Tess has given up agency and responsibility, letting events take whatever course they will rather than exerting her will,* even though—or maybe because—she is so terrified about the direction they will take.

Through its form, the poem demonstrates that division can increase instead of lessen meaning, as well as love. On the one hand, just as the poem's content stresses the power of the love among *three people,* so the poem's form also stresses "threeness" as well as "twoness." **It is** after all **divided into *three* distinctly numbered stanzas, and each stanza consists of *three* sentences.** On the other hand, **every *sentence* is "divided equally twixt two" *lines,*** just as the speaker's "passion" is divided equally between two men. Formally, then, the poem mirrors the kinds of division it describes. Sound and especially rhyme reinforce this pattern since **the two lines that make up one sentence usually rhyme with each other to form a couplet. The only lines that don't conform to this pattern come at the beginning of the second stanza where we instead have alternating rhyme—*is* (line 7) rhymes with *miss* (9), *mourn* (8) rhymes with *scorn* (10).** But here, again, form reinforces content since these lines describe how the speaker "miss[es]" one man when the other is "by," a sensation she arguably reproduces in us as we read by ensuring we twice "miss" the rhyme that the rest of the poem leads us to expect.

to whom when) and what the "gist" of a character's remarks are, but she quotes when the specific wording is the key evidence. Notice, too, how the writer turns quotations into evidence by both introducing and following each with interpretive commentary (in italics) to create what some writing experts call a "quotation sandwich." (For more on effective quotation, see ch. 31.)

Description (in bold) provides the evidence in this paragraph from the essay on Aphra Behn's ON HER LOVING TWO EQUALLY that appears earlier in this book ("Poetry: Reading, Responding, Writing").

28.1.5 Structure

Like an effective short story, poem, or play, your essay needs to have a beginning (or introduction), a middle (or body), and an ending (or conclusion). Each of these parts plays its own unique and vital role in creating a coherent, persuasive, and satisfying whole.

BEGINNING: THE INTRODUCTION

Your essay's beginning, or introduction, needs to draw readers in and prepare them for what's to come by not only articulating your thesis and your motive but also providing any basic information—about the author, the topic, the text, or its contexts—readers will need to understand and appreciate your argument. At the very least, you need to specify the title of the work you're writing about and the

author's full name. Very short (one-sentence) plot summaries or descriptions of the text can also be useful, but they should be "slanted" so as to emphasize the aspects of the text you'll be most concerned with. (On summary and description, see ch. 27.)

Below are the first few sentences of two different essays on HAMLET. Notice how each uses plot summary to establish motive and build up to a thesis. Though we don't yet know exactly what each thesis will be, each summary is slanted to give readers a pretty clear sense of the essay's general topic and of the kind of thesis it's heading toward.

1. It would be easy to read William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a play dealing with exclusively personal issues and questions—"to be or not to be," am I really crazy?, did Mommy really love Daddy?, do I love Mommy too much? What such a reading ignores is the play's political dimension: Hamlet isn't just any person; he's the Prince of Denmark. The crime he investigates isn't just any old murder or even simple fratricide: by killing his brother, who is also Hamlet's father and Denmark's rightful king, Claudius commits regicide only in order to usurp the throne—a throne Hamlet is supposed to inherit. Thanks to their actions, the tragedy ends not only with the decimation of Denmark's entire royal family, including the prince himself, but also with a successful foreign invasion that we—and all of the characters—have been warned about from the beginning.

2. As everyone knows, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* depicts a young man's efforts to figure out both whether his uncle murdered his father and what to do about it. What everyone may not have thought about is this: does it matter that the young man is a prince? that his uncle is now king? or even that the action takes place in ancient Denmark rather than in modern America? Ultimately, it does not. Though the play's setting and its characters' political roles and responsibilities might add an extra layer of interest, they shouldn't distract us from the universal and deeply personal questions the play explores.

Like the sentences in these partial introductions, each and every sentence in your introduction should *directly* contribute to your effort to spark readers' interest, articulate your thesis and motive, or provide necessary background information. Avoid sentences that are only "filler," especially vapid (hence boring and uninformative) generalizations or "truisms" about literature or life such as "Throughout human history, people have struggled with the question . . ."; "Literature often portrays conflicts"; "This story deals with many relevant issues"; or "In life, joy and sorrow often go together." To offer up one more truism worth keeping in mind in crafting introductions, "you only get one chance to make a first impression," and generalizations, truisms, and clichés seldom make a good one.

MIDDLE: THE BODY

As in any essay, the middle, or body, of your literature essay is where you do the essential work of supporting and developing your thesis by presenting and analyzing evidence. Each body paragraph needs to articulate, support, and develop *one* specific claim—a debatable idea directly related to the thesis, but smaller and more specific. This claim should be stated fairly early in the paragraph in a *topic sentence*. (If your paragraphs open with factual statements, you may have a problem.) And every sentence in the paragraph should help prove and elaborate on that claim. Indeed, each paragraph ideally should build from an initial, general statement of the claim

to the more complex form of it that you develop by presenting and analyzing evidence. In this way, each paragraph functions a bit like a miniature essay with its own thesis, body, and conclusion.

Your essay as a whole should develop logically, just as each paragraph does. To ensure that happens, you need to do the following:

- Order your paragraphs so that each builds on the last, with one idea following another in a *logical* sequence. The goal is to lay out a clear path for the reader. Like any path, it should go somewhere. Don't just prove your point; develop it.
- Present each idea/paragraph so that the logic behind the order is clear. Try to start each paragraph with a sentence that functions as a bridge, transporting the reader from one claim to the next. The reader shouldn't have to leap.

The specific sorts of topic and transition sentences you need will depend in part on the kind of literature essay you're writing. Later in this and other chapters, we'll demonstrate what they tend to look like in comparative essays, for example. But your thesis should always be your main guide.

Below are the thesis and topic sentences from the student essay on Raymond Carver's "Cathedral" that appears earlier in this book ("Fiction: Reading, Responding, Writing"). Notice that just as the thesis is a claim about the narrator, so, too, are all the topic sentences and that the writer begins with what she acknowledges to be the most "evident" or obvious claim.

> Thesis: Through his words even more than his actions the narrator unwittingly demonstrates his utter inability to connect with others or to understand himself.

> Topic Sentences:

> 1. The narrator's isolation is most evident in the distanced way he introduces his own story and the people in it.

> 2. At least three times the narrator himself notices that this habit of not naming or really acknowledging people is significant.

> 3. Also reinforcing the narrator's isolation and dissatisfaction with it are the awkward euphemisms and clichés he uses, which emphasize how disconnected he is from his own feelings and how uncomfortable he is with other people's.

> 4. Once the visit actually begins, the narrator's interactions and conversations with the other characters are even more awkward.

> 5. Despite Robert's best attempt to make a connection with the narrator, the narrator resorts to labels again.

> 6. There is hope for the narrator at the end as he gains some empathy and forges a bond with Robert over the drawing of a cathedral.

> 7. However, even at the very end it isn't clear just whether or how the narrator has really changed.

END: THE CONCLUSION

In terms of their purpose (not their content), conclusions are introductions in reverse. Whereas introductions draw readers away from their world and into your essay, conclusions send them back. Introductions work to convince readers that they should read the essay; conclusions work to show them why and how the experience was worthwhile. You should approach conclusions, then, by thinking about what specific sort of lasting impression you want to create. What can you give readers to take with them as they journey back into the "real world"?

In literature essays, effective conclusions often consider at least one of the following three things:

1. *Implications*—What picture of your author's work or worldview does your argument imply? Alternatively, what might your argument suggest about some real-world issue or situation? Implications don't have to be earth-shattering. It's unlikely that your reading of August Wilson's FENCES will rock your readers' world. But your argument about this play should in some small but worthwhile way change how readers see Wilson's work or provide some new insight into some topic that work explores—how racism works, or how difficult it is for people to adjust to changes in the world around us, or how a parent or spouse might go wrong, and so on. If your essay has not, to this point, dealt with theme, now is a good time to do so. If you have not mentioned the author's name since the introduction, do so now; often, making the implied or actual author the subject of at least some of your sentences is one way to ensure that you are moving from argument to implications.

2. *Evaluation*—Though, as we've stressed, literature essays need to focus primarily on interpretation, conclusions are a good place to move from interpretation to evaluation. In a sense, careful interpretation earns you the right to do some thoughtful evaluation. What might your specific interpretation of the text reveal about its literary quality or effectiveness? Alternatively, to what extent and how exactly do you agree or disagree with the author's conclusions about a particular issue? How, for example, might your own view of how racism works compare to the view implied in *Fences*? (For more on evaluative and/versus interpretive claims, see 28.1.2.)

3. *Areas of ambiguity or unresolved questions*—Are there any remaining puzzles or questions that your argument or the text itself doesn't resolve or answer? Or might your argument suggest a new question or puzzle worth investigating?

Above all, don't merely repeat what you've already said. If your essay has done its job to this point, and especially if your essay is relatively short, your readers may well feel bored or even insulted if they get a mere summary. You should certainly clarify anything that needs clarifying, but you should also go further. The best essays are rounded wholes in which conclusions do, in a sense, circle back to the place where they started. But the best essays remind readers of where they began only in order to give them a more palpable sense of how far they've come and why it matters. Your conclusion is your chance to ensure that readers *don't* leave your essay wondering, "Okay. So what?"

It's possible that not feeling "inside anything" (par. 135) could be a feeling of freedom from his own habits of guardedness and insensitivity, his emotional "blindness." But even with this final hope for connection, for the majority of the story the narrator is a closed, judgmental man who isolates himself and cannot connect with others. The narrator's view of the world is one filled with misconceptions that the visit from Robert starts to slowly change, yet it is not clear what those changes are, how far they will go, or whether they will last. **Living with such a narrator for the length even of a short story and the one night it describes can be a frustrating experience. But in the end that might be Raymond Carver's goal: by making us temporarily see the world through the eyes of its judgmental narrator, "Cathedral" forces us to do what the narrator himself has a hard time doing. The question is, will that change us?**

In its original state, this conclusion to Bethany Qualls's essay on Raymond Carver's "Cathedral" might beg the "So what?" question. Yet notice what happens when we add just three more sentences that try to answer that question. (Qualls's essay appears at the end of "Fiction: Reading, Responding, Writing.")

28.2 COMMON ESSAY TYPES

All literature essays have the same basic purpose and the same five elements. Yet they come in almost infinite varieties, each of which handles those elements somewhat differently and thus also poses somewhat different writing challenges. In the next chapter, for example, we discuss a few literature essay topics so common that they virtually define distinct types or subgenres of the literature essay (29.1.3). The rest of this chapter, however, concentrates exclusively on two especially common and in some ways especially challenging essay types—the comparative essay and the in-class exam essay.

28.2.1 The Comparative Essay

As we have emphasized throughout this book, comparison is a fundamental part of all reading: We develop our expectations about how a poem, play, or story will unfold in part by consciously or unconsciously comparing it to other poems, plays, and stories we've read; we get a sense of just who a character is by comparing her to other characters in the same story or play; and so on. Not surprisingly, then, one of the most common types of essays assigned in literature classes is one that considers similarities and differences within a work, between two works, or among several. One might, for example, write an essay comparing different characters' interpretations of Georgianna's birthmark in Nathaniel Hawthorne's THE BIRTH-MARK or one comparing the use of symbolism in this Hawthorne story to that in Edwidge Danticat's A WALL OF FIRE RISING.

   The key challenges involved in writing effective comparison essays are achieving the right balance between comparison and contrast, crafting an appropriate thesis, and effectively structuring the body of the essay.

COMPARISON AND/VERSUS CONTRAST

"Comparison-contrast" is a label commonly applied to comparison essays, but it's a somewhat misleading one: Though some comparative essays give greater stress to similarities, others to differences (or contrast), *all* comparison has to pay at least some attention to both. Contrast is thus *always* part of comparison.

Where the emphasis falls in your essay will depend partly on your assignment, so be sure that you scrutinize it carefully and understand what it requires of you. An assignment that asks you to "explain how and why children feature prominently in Romantic literature" by "analyzing the work of at least two Romantic poets," for example, encourages you to pay more attention to similarities so as to demonstrate understanding of a single "Romantic" outlook. Conversely, an assignment asking you to "contrast Wordsworth and Coleridge" and describe "the major differences in their poetry" obviously emphasizes contrast. Again, however, even an assignment that stresses differences requires you first to establish some similarities as a ground for contrast, even as an assignment that stresses similarities requires you to acknowledge the differences that make the similarities meaningful.

If the assignment gives you leeway, your particular topic and thesis will determine the relative emphasis you give to similarities and differences. In "Out-Sonneting Shakespeare: An Examination of Edna St. Vincent Millay's Use of the Sonnet Form" (ch. 19), for example, student writer Melissa Makolin makes her case for the distinctiveness and even radicalism of Millay's sonnets both by contrasting them to those of Shakespeare and by demonstrating the similarities between two sonnets by Shakespeare, on the one hand, and by Millay, on the other. But one could easily imagine an essay that instead demonstrated Millay's range by emphasizing the differences between her two sonnets, perhaps by building a thesis out of Makolin's claim that one poem is about "impermanent lust," the other "eternal love."

THE COMPARATIVE ESSAY THESIS

Like any essay, a comparative essay needs a thesis—*one* argumentative idea that embraces all the things (texts, characters, etc.) being compared. If you're like most of us, you may well be tempted to fall back on a statement along the lines of "These things are similar but different." Sadly, that won't cut it as a thesis. It isn't arguable (what two or more things *aren't* both similar and different?), nor is it specific enough to give your comparison direction and purpose: What such a thesis promises is less a coherent argument than a series of seemingly random, only loosely related observations about similarities and differences, desperately in search of a point.

At the end of the introduction to his comparative essay, student writer Charles Collins first articulates his main claim about each of the two short stories he will compare and then offers *one* overarching thesis statement.

> In "The Birth-Mark," the main character, Aylmer, views his wife's birthmark as a flaw in her beauty, as well as a symbol of human imperfection, and tries to remove it. In "the Thing in the Forest," the protagonists, Penny and Primrose, react to the Thing both as a real thing and as a symbol. The characters' interpretation of these things is what creates conflict, and the stories are both shaped by the symbolic meanings that the characters ascribe to those things.

(You can find the entire essay at the end of ch. 5.)

COMPARATIVE ESSAY STRUCTURES

In structuring the body of a comparative essay, you have two basic options, though it's also possible to combine these two approaches. Make sure to choose the option that best suits your particular texts, topics, and thesis rather than simply fall back on whichever structure feels most familiar or easy to you. Your structure and your thesis should work together to create a coherent essay that illuminates something about the works that can only be seen through comparison.

The Block Method

The first option tends to work best both for shorter essays and for essays, of any length, in which you want to stress differences at least as much as similarities. As its common label, "the block method," implies, this approach entails dividing your essay into "blocks" or sections that each lay out your entire argument about one of the things you're comparing. Charles Collins's essay comparing two stories, for example, is divided roughly in half: His first three body paragraphs analyze one story (THE BIRTH-MARK), the last four body paragraphs another story (THE THING IN THE FOREST). To knit the two halves of the essay together into one whole, however, Collins begins the second "block" with a paragraph that discusses both stories. Such transitions are crucial to making the "block" method work.

This paragraph (par. 6) of Collins's essay serves as a transition between the two halves or "blocks" of his essay, the first on "The Birth-Mark," the second on "The Thing in the Forest."

> The symbolism in "The Birth-Mark" is fairly straightforward. The characters openly acknowledge the power of the symbol, and the narrator of the story clearly states what meaning Aylmer finds in it. In "The Thing in the Forest" what the thing represents is not as clear. Penny and Primrose, the story's main characters, do not view the Thing as symbolic, as Aylmer does the birthmark. Neither the narrator nor the characters directly say why the Thing is important to Penny and Primrose or even whether the Thing they see in the forest is the monster, the Loathly Worm, that they later read about in the book at the mansion. . . .

In addition to strong, meaty transition paragraphs, effective use of the block method also requires that you

- *make each block or section of your essay match the others* in terms of the issues it takes up or the questions it answers, so as to maintain clear points of comparison. In Collins's symbolism essay (ch. 5), for example, each "block" answers the same questions with regard to each of the two stories and main characters being compared: whether or not the characters in a story see something as a symbol, what it ultimately comes to symbolize to them or to the reader, and how the characters' response to the symbol shapes their behavior.
- *order and present the blocks so that each builds on the last*: Though your blocks should match, their order shouldn't be random; rather, each block should *build* on the one that came before, just as should paragraphs/topic sentences in any essay. In Collins's essay, for example, the discussion of "The Birth-Mark" comes first because his argument is that symbolism here is more "straightforward" or simple than it is in "The Thing in the Forest,"

and the transition homes in on that difference. As in many essays, then, the movement here is from the most to the least obvious and simple points.

The Point-by-Point or Side-by-Side Method

The second method of structuring a comparative essay requires you to integrate your discussions of the things—texts or characters, for example—that you are comparing. Each section of your essay (which might be one paragraph or two) should begin with a topic sentence that refers to all the things you're comparing rather than exclusively to one.

Below is a paragraph from a student essay comparing Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Frost at Midnight and Matthew Arnold's Dover Beach using the "point-by-point method." Like every other body paragraph in this essay, this one discusses both poems and their speakers.

> Differently but equally disturbed by the thoughts and emotions stirred by the natural scene before them, both speakers turn to the past, without finding much consolation in it. In Coleridge's poem, that past is specific and personal: What the speaker remembers are his schooldays, a time when he was just as bored and lonely and just as trapped inside his own head as he is now. Then, as now, he "gazed upon the" fire and "watch[ed] that fluttering" ash (lines 25–26), feeling no more connection then to his "stern precepto[r]" than he does now to his sleeping baby (37). In Arnold's poem, the past the speaker thinks of is more distant and historical. What he remembers are lines by Sophocles written thousands of years ago and thousands of miles away. But in his case, too, the past just seems to offer more of the same rather than any sort of comfort or relief. Just as he now—standing by a "distant northern sea" (20)—hears in the waves "[t]he eternal note of sadness" (14), so "Sophocles long ago"—"on the Aegean"—"[h]eard" in them "the turbid ebb and flow / Of human misery" (15–16, 18).

Below are the thesis and outline for another point-by-point comparison essay, this one analyzing two short stories—Franz Kafka's A Hunger Artist and Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge." In the essay itself, each numbered section consists of two paragraphs, the first (a) discussing O'Connor's protagonist, the second (b) Kafka's.

> Thesis: "A Hunger Artist" and "Everything That Rises Must Converge" depict changing worlds in which the refusal to adapt amounts to a death sentence.
>
> Outline:
>
> 1. Both Julian's mother and the hunger artist live in rapidly changing worlds in which they don't enjoy the status they once did.
>
>   a) Julian's mother's world: the civil rights movement and economic change > loss of status
>   b) hunger artist's world: declining "interest in professional fasting" > loss of status
>
> 2. Rather than embracing such changes, both the artist and the mother resist them.

   a) Julian's mother: verbally expressed nostalgia, refusal to even *see* that
      things are changing
   b) the hunger artist: nostalgia expressed through behavior, does see that
      things are changing

3. Both characters take pride in forms of self-sacrifice that they see as
   essential to upholding "old-world" standards.

   a) Julian's mother: sacrifices for him, upholding family position and honor
   b) hunger artist: sacrifices for himself, upholding traditions of his art

4. Both characters nonetheless die as a result of their unwillingness to adapt.

   a) Julian's mother
   b) hunger artist

5. The endings of both stories create uncertainty about how we are to judge
   these characters and their attitudes.

   a) Julian's mother: Julian's last words and the story's create more sympathy
      for the mother
   b) hunger artist: his last words and description of the panther that replaces
      him make him less sympathetic

28.2.2 The Essay Test

Essays you are required to write for in-class exams do not fundamentally differ
from those you write outside of class. Obviously, however, having to generate an
essay on the spot presents peculiar challenges. Below, we offer some general tips
before discussing the two basic types of in-class essay exams.

GENERAL TIPS

- *Carefully review instructions.*
  Though instructors rarely provide actual exam questions in advance, they
  usually do give you some indication of how many questions you'll have to
  answer, what kind of questions they will be, and how much they will each
  count. Whether you get such instructions before or during the exam, take the
  time to consider them carefully before you start writing. Make sure you under-
  stand exactly what is expected of you, and ask your instructor about anything
  that seems the least confusing or ambiguous. You don't want to produce a great
  essay on a Shakespeare sonnet only to discover that your essay was supposed
  to compare two Shakespeare sonnets. Nor do you want to spend 75 percent of
  your time on the question worth 25 points and 25 percent on the question
  worth 75 points.

- *Glean all the information you can from sample questions.*
  In lieu of or in addition to instructions, instructors will sometimes provide sam-
  ple questions in advance of an exam. Read rightly, such questions can give you a
  lot of information about what you need to be able to do on the exam. If presented
  with the sample question "What are three characteristic features of short stories
  by Flannery O'Connor, and what is their combined effect?," for example, you
  should come to the exam prepared not only to write an essay addressing this spe-

cific question but also or alternatively an essay addressing either a different question about the assigned O'Connor stories (i.e., same texts, different topic) or a similar question about other authors that you read multiple works by (i.e., same topic, different texts).

- *Anticipate questions or topics and strategize about how to use what you know.*
  Whether or not an instructor actually gives you sample questions, exam questions rarely, if ever, come entirely out of the blue. Instead they typically emerge directly out of class lectures and discussions. As important, even questions that do ask you to approach a text in what seems like a new way can still be answered effectively by drawing upon the facts and ideas discussed in class. Keeping good notes and reviewing them as you prepare for the exam should thus help you both to anticipate the sorts of topics you'll be asked to address and to master the information and ideas well enough so that you can use what you know in responding even to unanticipated questions.

- *Review and brainstorm with classmates.*
  Just as discussing a work in class can broaden and deepen your understanding of it, so reviewing with classmates can help you see different ways of understanding and organizing the material and the information and ideas discussed in class. Compare notes, certainly, but also discuss and brainstorm. What sorts of questions might your classmates anticipate?

- *Read questions carefully and make sure you answer them.*
  Once you have the actual exam questions, read them carefully before you start writing. Make sure you understand exactly what the question asks you to do, and—again—ask your instructor to clarify anything confusing or ambiguous.

  Don't ignore any part of a question, but do put your emphasis where the question itself does. Let's suppose your question is, "What does Dickinson seem to mean by 'Telling all the truth but telling it slant'? How might she do just that in her poetry? How might Dickinson's personal experience or historical milieu have encouraged her to approach things this way?" An essay in answer to this question that didn't say anything at all about biographical or historical context or speculate at all about how one or the other shaped Dickinson's notion of truth telling would be less than complete. Yet the question allows you to consider only *one* of these two contexts rather than both. More important, it asks you to devote most of your essay to analyzing *at least two poems* ("poetry") rather than discussing context. A good strategy might thus be to consider context only in your introduction and/or conclusion.

- *Be specific.*
  One key difference between good exam essays and so-so or poor ones is the level and kind of detail they provide: One thing an exam is testing is whether you have actually read and really know the material; another is how well you can draw on facts to make an argument rather than simply regurgitating general ideas expressed in class. In response to the question above, for example, noodling on in a general way about Dickinson's use of dashes or metaphor will only take you so far—and not nearly far enough to score well. In answering this question, you should mention the titles of at least two specific poems and carefully explain precisely how each of them tells the truth slantwise or helps us understand what Dickinson means by slantwise truth. For example: "In the poem that actually begins 'Tell all the truth but tell it slant,' Dickinson suggests

that to successfully convey the truth, you have to do it in a roundabout way. People need to be eased into the truth; if it comes all at once, it's too much. She even compares that kind of direct truth-telling to being struck by lightning." (**See below for further discussion of specificity and how to achieve it in closed- versus open-book exams.**)

- *Allow time to review and reconsider your essays.*
  Though you're obviously pressed for time in an exam, leave yourself at least a few minutes to read over your essay before you have to hand it in. In addition to correcting actual mistakes, look for places where you could use more concrete evidence or make tighter, clearer connections between one point or claim and another.

CLOSED- VERSUS OPEN-BOOK EXAMS

How you prepare for exam essays and how those essays will be judged will depend, in part, on whether your exam is "open-book" or "closed-book"—whether, in other words, you are allowed to consult the literary texts and perhaps even your notes about them during the exam itself.

At first glance, open-book exams seem much easier, and in some ways they are. Having the literary text(s) in front of you ensures that you don't have to rely entirely on memory to conjure up factual evidence: You can double-check characters' names, see what a poem's rhyme scheme is, actually quote the text, and so on. The fact that you *can* do all that also means, however, that you need to: Instructors rightly expect more concrete and specific evidence, including quotations, in open-book exam essays. The bar, in short, is higher.

At the same time, there's a danger of spending so much time during the exam looking back through the text that you don't have adequate time to craft your argument about it. Here, good preparation can help. If you know which texts you're likely to be asked about on the exam, make sure that you mark them up in advance, highlighting especially telling passages (including those discussed in class), making notations about **rhyme scheme** and **meter**, and so on, so that you can marshal your evidence faster during the exam. Just make sure that you consult with your instructor in advance about what, if any, notes you are allowed to write in the book you bring with you to the exam.

If the exam is closed-book, your instructor won't be looking for quite the same level of detail when it comes to evidence, but that doesn't mean you don't need any. To prepare for a closed-book exam, you will need to do some memorizing: Knowing a text word-for-word is rarely required or helpful, but it is essential that you master the basic facts about it such as **genre**, title, author, characters' names; have a general sense of its **plot**, structure, and form; and can recall any facts about context that were stressed in class. In your essay, you will need to make good use of paraphrase, summary, and description (see ch. 27).

Below are two versions of a paragraph from an essay written for a closed-book exam. Without consulting the texts, the essayist cannot actually quote them. What the essayist can do is paraphrase an important piece of dialogue and summarize key episodes. What makes the second version better than the first is its much greater specificity about action, timing, characters, and dialogue—who says and does what to whom, when, and in what story.

> 1. O'Connor's stories often involve moments of extreme violence, like what happens to the old ladies in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and "A

Good Man Is Hard to Find." A character even says it would be a good thing if we were threatened with violence all the time.

2. O'Connor's stories often end with moments of extreme violence. At the end of "Everything That Rises Must Converge," after Julian's mother's gives a little boy a penny, his mother reacts to what she sees as condescension by whacking Julian's mother in the head with her purse. "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" ends with the Misfit shooting the grandmother point-blank after she has had to watch and listen as each of her family members is dragged off into the woods and shot. Afterward, the Misfit even suggests that the grandmother would have been a better person if she'd been threatened with that kind of violence all the time.

29 THE WRITING PROCESS

Doing anything well requires both knowing what you're trying to achieve and having some strategies for how to go about it. Where "The Literature Essay" chapter (ch. 28) focuses mainly on the *what*, this chapter focuses more on the *how*. In practice, of course, the writing process will vary from writer to writer and from assignment to assignment. No one can give you a recipe. What we instead do here is present you with a menu of strategies to try out and adapt to your particular tendencies as a writer and to the requirements of specific writing occasions and assignments.

As you do so, keep in mind that writing needn't be a solitary enterprise. Ultimately, your essay must be your own work. That is absolutely essential; anything else is plagiarism. But most writers—working in every genre and discipline, at every level—get inspiration, guidance, and feedback from others throughout the writing process, and so can you. Use class discussions to generate and test out topics and theses. Ask your instructor to clarify assignments or to discuss your ideas. Have classmates, friends, or roommates critique your drafts. In writing about literature, as in reading it, we get a much better sense of what our own ideas are and how best to convey them by considering others' impressions.

29.1 GETTING STARTED

29.1.1 Scrutinizing the Assignment

For student essayists, as for most professional ones, the writing process usually begins with an assignment. Though assignments vary, all impose restrictions. These are designed not to hinder your creativity but to direct it into productive channels, ensuring you hone particular skills, try out different approaches, and avoid common pitfalls.

Your first task as a writer is thus to scrutinize your assignment. Make sure that you fully understand what you are being asked to do (and not do), and ask questions about anything unclear or puzzling.

Almost all assignments restrict the length of an essay by imposing word or page limits. Keep those limits in mind as you consider potential topics, making sure to choose a topic you can handle in the space allowed. In three pages, you cannot thoroughly analyze all the characters in August Wilson's Fences. But you might within that limit say something significant about some specific aspect of a character or of characterization—perhaps how Troy Maxson's approach to parenting relates to the way he was parented or how Wilson's inclusion of the final scene, set after Troy's death, affects our interpretation of his character.

Many assignments impose further restrictions, often indicating the texts and/or topics your essay should explore. As a result, any assignment will shape whether and how you tackle later steps such as "Choosing a Text" or "Identifying Topics."

Below are several representative essay assignments, each of which imposes a particular set of restrictions.

Choose any story in this anthology and write an essay analyzing how and why its protagonist changes.	This assignment dictates your topic and main question. It also provides you with the kernel of a thesis: *In [story title], [protagonist's name] goes from being a _____ to a _____.* OR *By the end of [story title], [protagonist's name] has learned that _____.* Though the assignment lets you choose your story, it limits you to those in which the protagonist changes or learns a lesson of some kind.
Write an essay analyzing one of the following sonnets: "Nuns Fret Not," "In an Artist's Studio," or "In the Park." Be sure to consider how the poem's form contributes to its meaning.	This assignment limits your choice of texts to three. It also requires that your essay address the effects of the poet's choice to use the sonnet form. Notice, though, that the assignment doesn't require that this be the main topic of your essay, but instead leaves you free to pursue any topic related to the poem's meaning.
Write an essay exploring the significance of references to eyes and vision in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. What, through them, does the play suggest about the power and the limitations of human vision?	This assignment is more restrictive, indicating both text and topic. At the same time, it requires you to narrow the topic and formulate a specific thesis.
Write an essay comparing at least two poems by any one author in your anthology.	This assignment specifies the type of essay you must write (a comparison essay) and limits your choice of texts. Yet it leaves you the choice of which author to focus on, how many and which poems to analyze, what topic to explore, and what relative weight to give to similarities and differences.
Explain how and why children feature prominently in Romantic literature by analyzing the work of at least two Romantic poets.	This assignment is more restrictive, specifying the type of essay (comparison), the topic (depictions of children), and the kinds of texts (Romantic poems), while also encouraging you to focus mainly on similarities so as to define a single Romantic outlook on children and childhood.

29.1.2 Choosing a Text

If your assignment allows you to choose which text to write about, try letting your initial impressions or "gut reactions" guide you. Do that, and your first impulse may

be to choose a text that you immediately like or "get." Perhaps its language resembles your own; it depicts speakers, characters, or situations you easily relate to; or it explores issues you care deeply about. Following that first impulse can be a good strategy. Writing an engaging essay requires *being* engaged, and we all find it easier to engage with texts, authors, characters, and so on that we "like" immediately.

Paradoxically, however, writers often discover that they have little interesting or new to say about such a text. Perhaps they're too emotionally invested to analyze it closely or to imagine alternative ways to read it, or maybe its meaning seems so obvious that there's no puzzle or problem to drive an argument. Often, then, it can actually be more productive to choose a work that provokes the opposite reaction— that initially puzzles or even frustrates or angers you, one whose characters seem alien or whom you don't "like," one that investigates an issue you haven't thought much about, or one that articulates a theme you don't agree with. Sometimes such negative first reactions can have surprisingly positive results when it comes to writing. When you have to dig deeper, you sometimes discover more. And your own initial response might also provide you with the kernel of a good motive (see 28.1.3).

So, too, might the responses of your classmates. If you are writing about a text you've discussed in class, in other words, you might also or instead start with your "gut responses" to that discussion. Were you surprised by anything your classmates claimed about the text? Or did you strongly agree or disagree with any of your classmate's interpretations? Especially in hindsight, was anything *not* said or discussed in class that you think should have been?

29.1.3 Generating Topics

When an assignment allows you to create your own topic, you are more likely to build a lively and engaging essay from a particular insight or question that captures your attention and makes you want to say something, solve a problem, or stake out a position. The best essays originate in an individual response to a text and focus on a genuine question about it. Even when an instructor assigns you a topic, your essay's effectiveness will largely depend on whether you have made the topic your own, turning it into a real question to which you discover your own answer.

Often we refer to "finding" a topic, as if there are a bevy of topics "out there" just waiting to be plucked like ripe fruit off the topic tree. In at least two ways, that's true. For one thing, as we read a literary work, certain topics often do jump out and say, "Hey, look at me! I'm a topic!" A title alone may have that effect: *What "lesson" seems to be learned in "The Lesson"? Why is Keats so fixated on that darn nightingale; what does it symbolize for him? Or what the heck is an "ode" anyway, and how might it matter that Keats's poem is an "Ode to a Nightingale"?*

For another thing, certain general topics can be adapted to fit many different literary works. In fact, that's just another way of saying that there are certain common types (even subgenres) of literary essays, just as there are of short stories, plays, and poems. Here are a few especially common topics:

- the significance of a seemingly insignificant aspect or element of a work—a word or group of related words, an image or image-cluster, a minor character, a seemingly small incident or action, and so on. (This topic is appealing in part because it practically comes with a built-in motive: "Although a casual reader would likely ignore X . . .")

- the outlook or worldview of a single character or **speaker** (or of a group of characters) and its consequences
- the changes a major character or speaker undergoes over the course of a literary work (What is the change? When, how, and why does it occur?)
- the precise nature and wider significance of an internal or external **conflict** and its ultimate resolution

Especially when you're utterly befuddled about where to begin, it can be very useful to keep in mind such generic topics or essay types and to use them as starting points. But remember that they are just starting points. You always have to adapt and narrow a generic topic such as "imagery" or "character change" in order to produce an effective essay. In practice, then, no writer simply "finds" a topic; she *makes* one.

Here are some other techniques that might help you generate topics. (And generating *topics*, giving yourself a choice, is often a good idea.)

- *Analyze your initial response.*
  If you've chosen a text you feel strongly about, start with those responses. Try to describe your feelings and trace them to their source. Be as specific as possible. What moments, aspects, or elements of the text most affected you? How and why exactly? Try to articulate the question behind your feelings. Often, strong responses result when a work either challenges or affirms an expectation, assumption, or conviction that you bring *to* it. Think about whether and how that's true in your case. Define the specific expectation, assumption, or conviction. How, where, and why does the text challenge it? fulfill or affirm it? Which of your responses and expectations are objectively valid, likely to be shared by other readers?

- *Think through the elements.*
  Start with a list of elements and work your way through them, identifying anything that might be especially unique, interesting, or puzzling about the text in terms of each element. What stands out about the **tone**, the speaker, the **situation**, and so on? Come up with a statement about each. Look for patterns among your statements. Also, think about the questions your statements imply or ignore.

- *Pose motive questions.*
  In articulating a motive in your essay's introduction, your concern is primarily with your readers, your goal to give *them* a substantive reason to find your thesis new and interesting and your essay thus worth reading. But you can also work your way toward a topic and even, eventually, a thesis, by considering motive-related questions. Keep in mind the basic *"Although they say/I used to think/someone might reasonably think . . . , I say/now think . . ."* statement and turn it into questions:
  —What element(s) or aspect(s) of this work might a casual reader misinterpret? Or which might you have misinterpreted on a first reading? Or which did your classmates seem to misinterpret?
  —What potentially significant element(s) or aspect(s) of this work were ignored entirely in class discussion? Or which might you have ignored on a first reading? Or which might any reasonable person ignore?
  —What aspect(s) or element(s) of this work have your classmates disagreed among themselves about or maybe even taken extreme positions on? Or

which have you seen in very different ways as you've read and thought
about the work?

—What interesting paradox(es), contradiction(s), or tension(s) do you see
in the work?

29.1.4 Formulating a Question and a Thesis

Before you begin writing an essay on any topic, you need to come up with a the-
sis or hypothesis—an arguable statement about the topic. Quite often, topic and
thesis occur to you simultaneously: You might well decide to write about a topic
precisely because you've got something specific to say about it. At other times,
that's not the case: The topic comes much more easily than the thesis. In this
event, it helps to formulate a specific question about the topic and to develop a
specific answer. That answer will be your thesis.

Again, remember that your question and thesis should focus on something spe-
cific, yet they need to be generally valid, involving more than your personal feel-
ings. One way to move from an initial, subjective response to an arguable thesis is
to freewrite, as in the example below. Don't worry what form your writing takes or
how good it is: Just write.

> I really admire Bartleby. But why? What in the story encourages me to admire
> him? Well, he sticks to his guns and insists on doing only what he "prefers" to
> do. He doesn't just follow orders. That makes him really different from all the
> other characters in the story, especially the narrator. And also from a lot of
> people I know, even me. He's a nonconformist. Do I think other readers should
> feel the same way? Maybe, but maybe not. After all, his refusal to conform
> does cause problems for everyone around him. And it doesn't do him a lot of
> good either. Plus, he would be really annoying in real life. I wouldn't want to
> work in the same office. And even if you admire him, you can't really care
> about him because he doesn't seem to care much about anybody else. Or
> even about himself? Maybe that's the point. Through Bartleby, Melville
> explores both how rare and important and how dangerous nonconformity
> can be.

However you arrive at your thesis or however strongly you believe in it, you
should still think of it for now as a working hypothesis—a claim that's provisional,
still open to rethinking and revision.

29.2 PLANNING

Once you've formulated a tentative thesis and, ideally, a motive ("Although . . . , I
think . . ."), you need to work on the ". . . because" part of the equation, which
means both (1) figuring out how to structure your argument, articulating and
ordering your claims or sub-ideas; and (2) identifying the evidence you need to
prove and develop each of those claims.

Start by looking closely at your thesis. As in almost every phase of writing, it
helps to temporarily fill your readers' shoes: Try to see your thesis and the promises
it makes from their point of view. What will they need to be shown, and in what

order? If a good thesis shapes readers' expectations, it can also guide you, as a writer.

A good thesis usually implies not only what the essay's claims should be but also how they should be ordered. For instance, a thesis that focuses on the development of a character implies that the first body paragraphs will explain what that character is initially like and that later paragraphs will explore when, how, and why that character changes.

Working wholly from the thesis and this rough sense of structure, generate an outline, either listing each claim (to create a *sentence outline*) or each topic to be covered (to create a *topic outline*). Though a sentence outline is far more helpful, you may find that at this stage you can only identify topics.

Take, for example, the Bartleby thesis developed in the last section (29.1.4)—Through Bartleby, Melville explores both how rare and important, and how dangerous, nonconformity can be. From it, we can generate the following outline, which begins with two clear claims/sentences and then simply describes two other topics that will need to be covered:

1. <u>Claim</u>: Bartleby is a nonconformist.
2. <u>Claim</u>: Bartleby's nonconformity makes him very different from every other character in the story, especially the narrator.
3. <u>Topic</u>: positive aspects or consequences of Bartleby's nonconformity.
4. <u>Topic</u>: negative aspects or consequences of Bartleby's nonconformity—how it's dangerous.

At this stage, in other words, it's clear that our Bartleby essay needs first to show *that* and *how* Bartleby refuses to conform (1) and then to show *that* and *how* such nonconformity differentiates him from other characters (2). Not only are these the most obvious and least debatable claims, but they also lay the essential groundwork for the rest: Questions about why or how Bartleby's nonconformity might be negative or positive (3–4) only make sense once you establish that there is nonconformity and show what it looks like. To further refine the first half of the outline or to draft the first half of the essay, all its hypothetical writer needs to do is review the story and her notes about it to identify appropriate evidence. Her discoveries will also determine whether she can fully develop each of these claims in just one paragraph or whether she might need two.

The shape of the second half of the essay is less clear and will demand more work. In reviewing the story and her notes, the writer would need to come up with claims about what the positive and negative aspects or consequences of Bartleby's nonconformity are. Ultimately she might even need to rethink the order in which she discusses these topics. Since whatever comes last in an essay should usually be not only the most complicated and debatable point but also the one that gets most emphasis as we build toward a conclusion, this writer would need to figure out where she thinks the story puts the most emphasis—the value of nonconformity (3) or its dangers (4).

As this example demonstrates, just as your thesis can guide you to an outline, so an outline can show you exactly what you need to figure out and what evidence you need to look for as you move toward a draft. The more detailed your outline, the easier drafting tends to be. But the truth is that sometimes we can only figure out what our actual claims or ideas are by trying to write them out, which might mean moving straight from a rough outline to a draft rather than further refining the outline before drafting.

As you begin to gather evidence, however, it is important that you let the evidence guide you, as well as your outline. As you look back at the text, you may well discover facts that are relevant to the thesis but that don't seem to relate directly to any of the claims or topics you've articulated. In that case, you may need to insert a new topic into the outline. Additionally, you may find (and should in fact actively look for) facts that challenge your argument. Test and reassess your claims against those facts and adjust them accordingly. Don't ignore inconvenient truths.

29.3 DRAFTING

If you've put time and care into getting started and planning, you may already be quite close to a first draft. If you've instead jumped straight into writing, you may have to move back and forth between composing and some of the steps described in earlier sections of this chapter.

Either way, remember that first drafts are called *rough drafts* for a reason. Think of yourself as a painter "roughing out" a sketch in preparation for the more detailed painting to come. At this stage, try not to worry about grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. Concentrate on the argument—articulating your ideas and proving them.

Sometimes the best way to start is simply to copy your thesis and outline into a new document. Forget about introducing your thesis, and just go right to work on your first body paragraph. Sometimes, however, you'll find that starting with the introduction helps: Having to draw readers in and set up your thesis and motive can give you a clearer sense of where you're going and why.

However you start, you will almost certainly feel frustrated at times. Stick to it. If you become truly stuck, try explaining your point to another person or getting out an actual piece of paper and a pen and *writing* for a few minutes before returning to your computer and your draft. If all else fails, make a note about what needs to go in the spot you can't get through. Then move on and come back to that spot once you've written the next paragraph. Whatever it takes, stay with your draft until you've at least got a middle, or body, that you're relatively satisfied with. Then take a break.

Later or—better yet, tomorrow—come back, look at the draft with a fresh eye, and take another shot, attaching a conclusion and (if necessary) an introduction, filling in any gaps, crafting smooth(er) transitions within and between paragraphs, deleting anything that now seems irrelevant (or, better yet, copying it into a separate "outtakes" document just in case you figure out later how to make it relevant). Do your utmost to create a relatively satisfying whole. Now pat yourself on the back and take another break.

29.4 REVISING

Revision is one of the most important and difficult tasks for any writer. It's a crucial stage in the writing process, yet one that is all too easy to ignore or mismanage. The difference between a so-so essay and a good one, between a good essay and a great one, often depends entirely on effective revision. Give yourself time to revise more than once. As you do so, develop revision strategies that work for you. The investment in time and effort will pay rich dividends on this essay and on future ones.

The essential thing is not to confuse *revising* with *editing and proofreading*. We've devoted separate sections of this chapter to each of these steps because they *are*

entirely different processes. Where editing and proofreading focus mainly on sentence-level matters (grammar, punctuation, spelling, and so on), revision is about the whole essay, "the big picture." Revision entails assessing and improving both (1) the essay's working parts or elements and (2) your overall argument. Doing these two things well requires *not* getting distracted by small grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and so on.

Before considering in depth what it means to assess the elements and enrich the argument, here are a few general tips about how to approach revision:

- *Think like readers.* Effective revision requires you to temporarily play the role of reader, as well as writer, of your essay. Take a step back from your draft, doing your utmost to see it from a more objective, even skeptical standpoint. Revision demands *re-vision*—looking again, seeing anew.
- *Get input from real readers.* This is an especially good time to involve other people in your writing process. Copy the "Assessing the Elements" checklist below and have a friend or classmate use it to critique your draft.
- *Think strengths and weaknesses, not right and wrong.* In critiquing your own draft or someone else's, it helps to think less in absolute terms (right and wrong, good and bad) than in terms of strengths and weaknesses—specific elements and aspects that work well and those that need some work.
- *Work with a hard copy.* Computers are a godsend when it comes to making revisions. But because they only allow us to look at one or two pages of an essay at a time, they actually make it harder to see the essay as a whole and to assess the effects of the changes they make it so easy for us to make. During the revision process, then, move away from the computer sometimes. Print out hard copies so that you can see your essay as a whole and mark it up, identifying problems that you can return to the computer to fix.

29.4.1 Assessing the Elements

The first step in revision is to make sure that all the working parts of your essay are, indeed, working. To help with that process, run through the following checklist to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your draft—or ask someone else to do so. Try to answer each question with ruthless honesty.

Whenever you can't justify a check, remember that you and/or your readers need to identify the specific problems in order to solve them—If information is missing from the introduction, *what information?* If every sentence in the introduction isn't serving a clear purpose, *which sentence* is the problem? And so on.

Thesis and Motive
- ☐ Is there *one* claim that effectively controls the essay?
- ☐ Is the claim debatable?
- ☐ Does the claim demonstrate real thought? Does it truly illuminate the text and topic?
- ☐ Does the writer *show* us that (and why) the thesis is new and worthwhile by suggesting an actual or potential alternative view?

Structure

BEGINNING/INTRODUCTION
- ☐ Does the introduction provide readers all—and only—the information they need about the author, text, context, and topic?

☐ Does the introduction imply a clear, substantive, debatable but plausible thesis? Is it clear which claim is the thesis?

☐ Does every sentence either help to articulate the thesis and motive or to provide essential information?

MIDDLE/BODY

☐ Does each paragraph clearly state one debatable claim? Does everything in the paragraph directly relate to, and help support and develop, that claim?

☐ Is each of those claims clearly related to (but different from) the thesis?

☐ Are the claims logically ordered?

☐ Is that logic clear? Is each claim clearly linked to those that come before and after? Are there any logical "leaps" that readers might have trouble following?

☐ Does each claim/paragraph clearly build on the last one? Does the argument move forward, or does it seem more like a list or a tour through a museum of interesting but unrelated observations?

☐ Do any key claims or logical steps in the argument seem to be missing?

ENDING/CONCLUSION

☐ Does the conclusion give readers the sense that they've gotten somewhere and that the journey has been worthwhile?

☐ Does it indicate the implications of the argument, consider relevant evaluative questions, or discuss questions that remain unanswered?

Evidence

☐ Is there ample, appropriate evidence for each claim?

☐ Are the appropriateness and significance of each fact—its relevance to the claim—perfectly clear?

☐ Are there any weak examples or inferences that aren't reasonable? Are there moments when readers might reasonably ask, "But couldn't that fact instead mean this?"

☐ Are all the relevant facts considered? What about facts that might complicate or contradict any of the claims? Are there moments when readers might reasonably think, "But what about X?"

☐ Is each piece of evidence clearly presented? Do readers have all the contextual information they need to understand a quotation, for example?

☐ Is each piece of evidence gracefully presented? Are quotations varied by length and presentation? Are they ever too long? Are there any unnecessary block quotations, or block quotations that require additional analysis? (On responsible and effective quotation, see 31.1–2.)

☐ Are there any unnecessary quotations—instances when the writer should instead simply paraphrase, summarize, or describe?

Tone

☐ Does the writer establish and maintain an effective tone—do any moments in, or aspects of, the essay make its writer seem anything other than serious, credible, engaged, and engaging? respectful toward the text(s) and a range of readers?

☐ Does the writer correctly and consistently use literary terminology?

☐ Does the writer ever assume too much or too little readerly knowledge or interest?

COMMON PROBLEMS AND TIPS

Though you want to pay attention to everything on this "assessing the elements" checklist, certain types of problems are common in early drafts. Here are three:

- *mismatch between thesis or argument or between introduction and body*
  Sometimes an early draft ends up being a way to discover what you really want to say. As a result, you may find that the thesis of your draft—or even your entire introduction—no longer truly fits or introduces the argument you've ended up making. If so, you will need to rework the thesis and introduction. Then work your way back through the essay, making sure that each claim or topic sentence fits the new thesis.

- *the list or "museum tour" structure*
  In a draft, writers sometimes present each claim as if it were just an item on a list (*First*, *second*, and so on) or as a stop on a tour of potentially interesting but unrelated topics (*And this is also important* . . .). But presenting your material in this way fails to help you and your readers make logical connections between ideas. It may also prevent your argument from developing. Sometimes it can even be a sign that you've ceased arguing entirely, falling into mere plot summary or description rather than articulating real *ideas* at all. Check to see if number-like words or phrases appear prominently at the beginning of your paragraphs or if your paragraphs could be put into a different order without fundamentally changing what you're saying. Sometimes solving this problem will require wholesale rethinking and reorganizing—a process that should probably start with crafting a meatier, more specific thesis. But sometimes all that's required is adding or reworking topic sentences. Again, make sure that there is a clearly stated, *debatable* claim at the beginning of each paragraph; that each claim relates to the thesis but does not simply restate it; and that each claim *builds* logically on the one before.

- *missing sub-ideas*
  When you take a step back from your draft, you may discover that you've skipped a logical step in your argument—that the claim you make in, say, body paragraph 3 actually depends on, or makes sense only in light of, a more basic claim that you took for granted. In the second half of an essay about how a character changes, for example, you might suggest that there is something significant about the character being decisive, but decisiveness only counts as change—and thus your point about decisiveness relates to your thesis—if the first part of your essay has demonstrated that the character is initially *indecisive*. Whatever the missing idea is, you'll need to create and insert a new paragraph that articulates, supports, and develops it.

29.4.2 Enriching the Argument

The first step of the revision process is all about ensuring that your essay does the best possible job of making your argument. But revision is also an opportunity to go further—to think about ways in which your overall argument might be made more thorough and complex. In drafting an essay our attention is often and rightly focused on emphatically staking out a particular position and proving its validity. This is the fundamental task of any essay, and you certainly don't want to do anything at this stage to compromise that. At the same time, you do want to make sure

that you haven't purchased clarity at the cost of oversimplification by, for example, ignoring facts that might undermine or complicate your claims, alternative interpretations of the evidence you do present, or alternative claims or points of view. Remember, you have a better chance of persuading readers to accept your argument if you show them that it's based on a thorough, open-minded exploration of the text and topic. Don't invent unreasonable or irrelevant complications or counterarguments. Do try to assess your argument objectively and honestly, perhaps testing it against the text one more time. Think like a skeptical reader rather than a writer: Are there moments where such a reader might reasonably disagree with your argument? Are there places where *two* interpretations might be equally plausible? Have you ignored or glossed over any questions that a reasonable reader might expect an essay on this topic to address?

Such questions are ones you should *always* ask in revision. But they are especially crucial if you finish your draft only to discover that it is significantly shorter than the assignment requires. Inexperienced writers of literature essays often run out of things to say too quickly because they simply don't keep asking relevant questions (*How*? *Why*?) or make enough allowance for alternative answers.

29.5 EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Once you've gotten the overall argument in good shape, *then* it's time focus on the small but crucial stuff—words and sentences. Your prose should not only convey your ideas to your readers but also demonstrate how much you care about your essay. Flawless prose can't disguise or make up for a vapid or illogical argument. But faulty, flabby, boring prose can destroy a potentially persuasive and thoughtful one. Don't sabotage all your hard work by failing to correct misspelled words, grammatical problems, misquotations, incorrect citations, and typographical errors. Little oversights make all the difference when it comes to clarity and credibility. Readers care more about careful work. Especially when you are writing about literature, the art of language, *your* language matters.

When it comes to words and sentences, each writer has particular strengths and weaknesses. Likewise every writer tends to be overly fond of certain phrases and sentence structures, which become monotonous and ineffective if overused. With practice, you will learn to watch out for the kinds of mistakes and repetitions to which you are most prone. Then you can develop your own personalized editing checklist. But below is one to start with.

Sentences
- ☐ Does each one read clearly and crisply?
- ☐ Are they varied in length, structure, and syntax?
- ☐ Is the phrasing direct rather than roundabout?
- ☐ Are tenses appropriate and consistent?

Tips
- Try using the Find function to search for every preposition (especially *of* and *in*) and every *to be* verb. Since these can lead to confusing or roundabout phrasing, weed out as many as you can.
- Try reading your paper aloud or having a friend read it aloud to you. Mark places where you or your friend stumble, and listen for sentences that are hard to get through or understand.

Words
- ☐ Have you used any words whose meaning you're not sure of?
- ☐ Is terminology correct and consistent?
- ☐ Is a "fancy" word or phrase ever used where a simpler one might do?
- ☐ Are there unnecessary words or phrases?
- ☐ Do metaphors and other figures of speech make literal sense?
- ☐ Are verbs active and precise?
- ☐ Are pronoun references always clear and correct?
- ☐ Do subjects and verbs always agree?

Punctuation and Mechanics
- ☐ Are all words spelled correctly? (Double-check your auto-correct and spell-check: these can create new errors in the process of correcting others.)
- ☐ Are all titles formatted correctly? (See the section following this checklist.)
- ☐ Is every quotation accurate and punctuated correctly (See ch. 31.)?

Citation and Documentation (See ch. 31.)
- ☐ Is the source of each quotation, as well as any fact or idea drawn from sources, clearly indicated through parenthetical citation?
- ☐ Do parenthetical citations correctly coordinate with the list of works cited?
- ☐ Are both all parenthetical citations and all entries in the list of works cited formatted correctly?

Titles

Formatting titles correctly in both the body of your essay and your list of works cited is essential to your clarity, as well as to your self-presentation as a knowledgeable and careful writer: Bartleby the Scrivener is a character; "Bartleby, the Scrivener" is a short story. "Interpreter of Maladies" is also a short story, but *Interpreter of Maladies* is a book. To make sure you get this right, here is a quick review:

- *Italicize* the titles of all books and other "stand-alone" works, including
  —novels and novellas (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Heart of Darkness*)
  —collections and anthologies of short stories, essays, or poems (*Interpreter of Maladies*, *The Norton Introduction to Literature*)
  —long poems that could be or have been published as books (*The Odyssey*, *Paradise Lost*, *Goblin Market*)
  —plays (*Hamlet*, *A Raisin in the Sun*)
  —periodicals, including newspapers, magazines, and scholarly journals (*USA Today*, *People*, *College English*)
  —Web sites, blogs, and databases (*Google Books*, *Gawker*, *JSTOR*)
  —movies and television programs or series (*The Fault in Our Stars*, *Orange Is the New Black*)

- Put quotation marks around the titles of works that are part of such "stand-alone" works, including
  —short stories ("Interpreter of Maladies," "A Rose for Emily")
  —poems ("Daddy," "Ode to a Nightingale")
  —essays and articles in periodicals ("A Narrator's Blindness in Raymond Carver's 'Cathedral'"; "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision"; "Chicago Fiddles While Trumbull Park Burns")

—parts of Web sites (e.g., Web pages, blog posts)
—episodes of a television series

29.6 FINISHING UP

29.6.1 Crafting a Title

Your essay isn't truly complete until you give it a title. A good title both informs and interests. Inform readers by telling them both the work(s) you will analyze ("The Road Not Taken" or "two poems by Robert Frost") and something about your topic ("Symbolism," "Nonconformity"). To interest them, try using one of the following:

- an especially vivid and relevant word or a short phrase from the literary work ("'They Have Eaten Me Alive': Motherhood in 'In the Park' and 'Daystar'")
- a bit of wordplay ("Wordsworth and the Art of Artlessness")
- a bit of both ("'Untrodden Ways': Wordsworth and the Art of Artlessness").

Do not put your own title in quotation marks, but do correctly format any titles that appear in your title.

29.6.2 Formatting Your Essay

Unless your instructor provides specific instructions on how to format your essay, follow these guidelines, adapted from *The MLA Style Center: Writing Resources from the Modern Language Association* (style.mla.org/formatting-papers) and demonstrated in the sample research essay in chapter 32.

- Choose a readable 11- or 12-point font; set your page margins at 1 inch; and double-space throughout. Do not add extra lines between paragraphs or before or after block quotations. Indent the first line of each paragraph ½ inch. An entire block quotation should be indented ½ inch. (For more on formatting quotations, see 31.1.)
- Do not include a title page. Instead, in the top left corner of the first page, type your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date, each on a separate line. Then center your title on the next line. (Do not put your own title in quotation marks.)
- Number every page consecutively, and put your last name and the page number in the upper right corner ½ inch below the top of the page and aligned with the right margin. (Do not put any punctuation between your name and the page number.)
- Begin your list of works cited on a new page, *after* the last page of your essay. Center the words *Works Cited* at the top of the page. (Do not put quotation marks around or italicize these words.) Indent the second and subsequent lines of each works cited entry ½ inch. (For more on formatting the list of works cited, see 31.3.2.)

30 THE LITERATURE RESEARCH ESSAY

Whenever we read, discuss, and write about literature, our primary concern is always the text. But literature speaks to and about the real world even when it depicts an entirely unreal one. Both texts and our readings of them are inevitably shaped by, and intervene in, particular contexts. Literary research is simply a way to learn more about those contexts. In a literature research essay we bring what we learn to bear to illuminate the work in a new way.

On the one hand, writing a research essay may at first seem like a daunting task. Research adds a few more steps to the writing process, so you will need to give yourself more time. And those steps require you to draw on and develop skills somewhat different from those involved in crafting essays that focus exclusively on the literary text. Were this not the case, no one would ask you to write a research essay.

On the other hand, however, a literature research essay is still a literature essay. Its core elements are the same, as is its basic purpose—to articulate and develop a debatable, interpretive claim about at least one literary work. As a result, this kind of essay requires many of the same skills and strategies you've already begun to develop. And though you will need to add a few new steps, the process of writing a literature research essay still involves getting started, planning, drafting, revising, editing, and finishing up—exactly the same dance whose rhythms you've already begun to master.

The only distinctive thing about a research essay is that it requires you to draw on sources in addition to the literary text itself. Though that adds to your burden in some ways, it can actually lighten it in others. Think of such sources not as another ball you have to juggle but as another tool you get to add to your tool belt: You're still being asked to build a cabinet, but now you get to use a hammer *and* an electric drill. This chapter will help you make the best use of these powerful tools.

One thing to keep in mind from the beginning is that this anthology includes excerpts from numerous scholarly articles about literature—each one is a published literature research essay. Some of these excerpts may be appropriate sources for your essay. But even if they aren't, they can still be very helpful to you as examples of how professional literary critics go about doing precisely the same things you need to do in your research essay. What do their theses look like? their motives? What kinds of sources do they use, and how do they go about using them? How do they nonetheless manage to stay focused on *their* arguments about the literary text? In this chapter, we'll draw on examples from these and other published essays to show you what we mean.

30.1 TYPES OF ESSAYS AND SOURCES

The three most common types of literature research essay are those suggested by the "Contexts" chapters in this anthology. But though we treat these types separately here for clarity's sake, many literature research essays are in fact hybrids of one sort or another. An essay on Emily Dickinson by student writer Richard Gibson is a case in point: It analyzes three poems by Emily Dickinson by drawing on literary criticism, biographical materials, and studies of Dickinson's historical and cultural context. Should your assignment allow, your essay, too, could combine two or more of these approaches. Either way, it's useful to remember that your secondary sources probably will.

30.1.1 Critical Contexts

Whenever we write a literature essay, we engage in conversation with other readers about the meaning and significance of a literary work. Effective argumentation always depends on anticipating how other readers are likely to respond to, and interpret, that work. As the "Critical Contexts" chapters in this anthology demonstrate, almost all texts and authors are also the subject of actual public conversations, often extending over many years and involving all the numerous scholarly readers who have published their readings of the work. A "critical contexts" research essay is an opportunity both to investigate this conversation and to contribute to it.

   For this kind of essay, your secondary sources will be work by literary scholars on the specific text you're writing about; on an author's body of work; or on a relevant genre or body of literature (e.g., *The Development of the Sonnet: An Introduction* or *"Reading the Wind": The Literature of the Vietnam War*). The latter, more general sorts of sources may be especially crucial if you are researching a relatively recent work about which little literary criticism has yet been published. In that case, too, you may want to consult book reviews; just remember that it's reviewers' *interpretive* claims you're most interested in, not their evaluation of the work. (On interpretation versus evaluation, see 28.1.2. For examples of critical context essays by student writers, see ch. 1 and 26. For examples by professional critics, see the excerpts in ch. 9, 22, and 26.)

30.1.2 Biographical Contexts

If literature *only* reflected, and gave us insight into, its author's psyche, it ultimately wouldn't be that interesting: Good poets, fiction writers, and playwrights write about and for others, not just themselves. Nonetheless, authors are real people whose unique experience and outlook shape both what they write and how. A "biographical contexts" research essay is a chance to learn more about an author's life, work, and ideas and to explore how these might have shaped or be reflected in the text. Sources for this sort of project will likely include biographies (secondary sources) and essays, letters, and other nonfiction prose by the author (primary sources). (For examples of biographical context essays, see the excerpts from Eileen Pollack's Flannery O'Connor and the New Criticism [ch. 7] and from Steven Gould Axelrod's Sylvia Plath: The Wound and the Cure of Words [ch. 22].)

30.1.3 Historical and Cultural Contexts

Every literary work is both shaped by and speaks to the circumstances, events, and debates peculiar to its historical and cultural context, though some literary works speak of their times by depicting other times. The purpose of a "cultural and historical contexts" essay is to explore the interconnections between a text and the context it was either written in or depicts. Sources useful for this sort of essay might include studies of a relevant historical period or literary movement (secondary sources) or documents dating from that period or written by others involved in that movement (primary sources). (For an example of an historical and cultural context essay by a student writer, see ch. 21. For examples by professional critics, see the excerpts from Steven Kaplan's THE UNDYING UNCERTAINTY OF THE NARRATOR IN TIM O'BRIEN'S *THE THINGS THEY CARRIED* [ch. 9], Steven Gould Axelrod's SYLVIA PLATH: THE WOUND AND THE CURE OF WORDS [ch. 22], and Philip Holt's *POLIS AND TRAGEDY IN THE ANTIGONE* [ch. 26].)

30.2 WHAT SOURCES DO

Unless your instructor indicates otherwise, *your* argument about the literary text should be the focus of your essay, and sources should function simply as tools that you use to deepen and enrich your argument about the literary text. They shouldn't substitute for it. Your essay should never simply repeat or report on what other people have already said.

Sources, in other words, are *not* the source of your ideas. Instead, to paraphrase writing expert Gordon Harvey's *Writing with Sources* (Hackett, 1998), they are the source of

- *argument* or *debatable claim*—other readers' views and interpretations of a text, author, topic, literary movement, period, and so on, which "you support, criticize, or develop";
- *information*—facts about an author's life; about the work's composition, publication, or reception; about the era during, or about which, the author wrote; about movements in which the author participated; and so on.
- *concept*—general terms or theoretical frameworks that you borrow and apply to your author or text. (In an essay excerpted in ch. 22, for example, Stephen Gould Axelrod uses concepts drawn from Sigmund Freud's theories of psychological development to interpret Sylvia Plath's poem DADDY; in an essay on Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* excerpted in ch. 9, Steven Kaplan applies those of literary theorist Wolfgang Iser.)

Any one source will in fact likely offer you more than one of these things. In the Axelrod excerpt mentioned above, for example, you will find *argument* about the poem DADDY, as well as potentially useful *information* about its author's life and about the status of the domestic poem in the 1950s. Nonetheless, the distinction between argument or debatable claim, on the one hand, and information or factual statement, on the other, is crucial. As you read a source, you must discriminate between the two.

When drawing on sources in your essay, remember, too, that an argument about the text, no matter how well informed, isn't the same as evidence. Only facts can serve that function. Suppose, for example, you are writing an essay on "Daddy." You

claim that the speaker adopts two voices, that of her child self and that of her adult self—a claim Axelrod also makes in his essay. You cannot prove this claim to be true merely by saying that Axelrod makes the same claim. Like any debatable claim, this one must be backed up with evidence from the primary text.

In this situation, however, you must indicate that a source has made the same claim that you do in order to accomplish three things:

- give the source credit for having this idea before you did (to avoid even the appearance of plagiarism; see 30.4.1);
- encourage readers to see you as a knowledgeable, trustworthy writer who has done your research and taken the time to explore, digest, and fairly represent others' views;
- demonstrate that your opinion isn't merely idiosyncratic because another informed, even "expert," reader agrees with you.

Were you to disagree with the source's claim, it would be just as important and helpful to your argument to acknowledge that disagreement in order to demonstrate the originality of your own interpretation, while also, again, encouraging readers to see you as a knowledgeable, careful writer.

You will need to cite sources throughout your essay whenever you make a claim that resembles, complements, or contradicts the claim of another source; rely on information or concepts from a source; or paraphrase, quote, or summarize anything in a source. Especially in a critical contexts essay, you should also at least consider using sources to establish motive (see below).

30.2.1 Source-Related Motives

Not all research essays use sources to articulate motive. However, doing so is one way both to ensure and to demonstrate that your own ideas are the focus of your essay and that your essay contributes to a literary critical conversation rather than just reporting on it or repeating what others have already said. In these essays, in other words, your "Although . . ." statement (as outlined in 28.1.3) may refer to sources—actual "theys" and what they "say." Indeed, whether you ultimately use sources to articulate a motive or not, keeping motive-related questions in mind as you read sources is nonetheless a very good idea, for reasons we'll detail in the next section of this chapter. Here are the three most common source-related motives:

1. Sources offer different opinions about a particular issue in the text, thus suggesting that there is still a problem or puzzle worth investigating. (Your argument might agree with one side or the other or offer a "third way.")

   Almost all interpreters of [*Antigone*] have agreed that the play shows Creon to be morally defective [. . .]. The situation of Antigone is more controversial. Hegel assimilated her defect to Creon's; some more recent

   In these sentences from THE FRAGILITY OF GOODNESS (ch. 26), Martha C. Nussbaum summarizes an ongoing debate about *Antigone* and then positions her argument as contributing to that debate by

writers uncritically hold her up as a blameless heroine. Without entering into an exhaustive study of her role in the tragedy, I should like to claim (with the support of an increasing number of recent critics) that there is at least some justification for the Hegelian assimilation—though the criticism needs to be focused more clearly and specifically than it is in Hegel's brief remarks.

supporting and developing one of the two usual positions.

2. **A source or sources make(s) a faulty claim that needs to be wholly or partly challenged or clarified.**

Modern critics who do not share Sophocles' conviction about the paramount duty of burying the dead and who attach more importance than he did to the claims of political authority have tended to underestimate the way in which he justifies Antigone against Creon.

In this sentence from the introduction to SOPHOCLEAN TRAGEDY (ch. 26), Maurice Bowra makes a generalization about the stance taken by "[m]odern critics" that his essay will challenge. (Subsequent sentences provide more details about that stance.)

While I find Smith's article thoughtful and intriguing, and while I agree with much feminist criticism of Vietnam War literature, this essay proposes that the work of Tim O'Brien, particularly *The Things They Carried*, stands apart from the genre as a whole. O'Brien is much more self-consciously aware of gender issues and critical of traditional gender dichotomies than are the bulk of U.S. writers about the Vietnam War.

In TIM O'BRIEN AND GENDER: A DEFENSE OF THE THINGS THEY CARRIED (ch. 9), Susan Farrell does the opposite of what Bowra does. Having first summarized the arguments of one specific critic (Smith), she now (in this sentence) articulates her contrary view.

3. **Sources neglect a significant aspect or element of the text, or a source or sources make(s) a claim that needs to be further developed or applied in a new way (perhaps to a text other than the one the sources actually discuss).**

Tim O'Brien's 1990 book of interlocked stories, *The Things They Carried*, garnered one rave review after another, reinforcing O'Brien's already established position as one of the most important veteran writers of the Vietnam War. The Penguin paperback edition serves up six pages of superlative blurbs like "consummate artistry," "classic," "the best American writer of his generation," "unique," and "master

Here, in THE THINGS MEN DO: THE GENDERED SUBTEXT IN TIM O'BRIEN'S *ESQUIRE* STORIES (ch. 9), Lorrie Smith suggests not that others' claims are wrong but that they simply miss something that her essay will investigate.

> work." [. . .] Yet, O'Brien—and his
> reviewers—seem curiously
> unself-conscious about this book's
> obsession with an ambivalence
> about representations of masculinity
> and femininity, particularly in the
> five stories originally published
> during the 1980s in *Esquire*.

(In ch. 22, you'll find a research essay on Alice Munro's Boys and Girls that combines versions of the first and third kinds of source-related motives described above.)

30.3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

30.3.1 Finding Authoritative Secondary Sources

Regardless of your author, text, or topic, you will almost certainly find a wealth of sources to consult. The conversation about literature and its contexts occurs online and in print, in periodicals and in books. Your instructor may well give you specific guidance about which sorts of sources you need to use. If not, it's usually best to consult at least some print sources or sources that appear in both print and digital form (e.g., the scholarly journals housed in databases such as *JSTOR* or *Academic Search Premier*). Citing only one kind of source—books but not articles, online but not print—may cast doubt on the thoroughness of your research; you want your reader to know that you sought out the *best* sources, not just the most easily available ones.

Whatever their form, it is crucial that your secondary sources be authoritative ones, since the credibility and persuasiveness of your research essay will depend on that of your sources: At the very least, you do not want to look like someone who doesn't know the difference or care enough to figure it out. Learning how to identify authoritative sources is one of the rationales for research essay assignments. "Evaluating sources" thus initially means evaluating their credibility and importance. At this stage, concentrate on whether the opinions expressed and information provided in a source are worthy of serious consideration, not on whether you agree with them. Save that question for later.

As a general rule and with the exception of a general dictionary, *you should not rely on or cite any source that is not attributed to a named author*. This includes (but is not limited to) *Wikipedia* and Web sites such as *Schmoop* and *SparkNotes*. Because these will likely be the first things a general *Google* search turns up and because they are almost certainly familiar to you, it's tempting to rely on them. Avoid the temptation. Though much of the information on such sites is correct and useful, much of it isn't. As important, the very virtue of such sites—the fact that they are designed for, and mainly written by, nonexperts—makes them inappropriate as sources for a research essay, since the goal of such an essay is to familiarize yourself with and to enter a conversation among acknowledged experts.

In these terms, the most valuable sources tend to be books published by academic and university presses and articles published in scholarly or professional journals (rather than magazines or newspapers). This isn't mere snobbishness or narcissism: Such work appears in print or online only after a rigorous peer-review process. As a result, you and your readers can trust that these publications have been judged worthwhile by more than one acknowledged expert.

Rather than heading straight to *Google* and searching the entire web, then, try starting instead with your library's Web site. In addition to the catalog, you will here find a wealth of specialized reference works, bibliographies, and databases. Which of these are available to you will depend on your library. But here are two especially common and helpful resources to start with:

- *Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature* and *Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature:* Both include signed entries by recognized experts on major authors, texts, and topics. Each entry ends with a short annotated bibliography. In addition to being a source, such an entry will thus lead you to other sources that one expert regards as the most important on the subject. In a sense, this person has already done some of your research for you.
- *MLA International Bibliography*, the "go-to" source for identifying all scholarly work—books, articles, and book chapters—on any author, work, or topic. The virtue and (for your purposes) potential limitation of this bibliography is its inclusiveness: You can generally trust that sources included in the bibliography are, indeed, scholarly, published mainly by academic presses or in scholarly journals. MLA does not, however, discriminate among those sources in terms of quality, importance, and so on.

Once you have identified potentially useful articles and books, you may be able to access some of them online. Many full-text scholarly articles are accessible via subscription databases such as *JSTOR*, *Project Muse*, and *Academic Search Premier*. Your library may have "e-book" versions of some of the books you are interested in, while other, especially older books can be found on the Web: In addition to *Google Books*, try *Hathi Trust* and *Internet Archive*. Again, however, do not neglect any important source simply because you actually have to go to the library to look at it; this includes books only *partly* viewable on *Google*.

Look for the most up-to-date sources but don't automatically discount older ones. You should consult recent sources in order to get the most up-to-date information on your topic and a sense of what scholars today consider the most significant, debatable interpretive questions and claims. But be aware that in literary studies (and the humanities generally), newer work doesn't always entirely supersede older work, as it tends to do in the sciences. As the literary criticism excerpted in chapter 26 demonstrates, twenty-first-century scholars, for example, still cite and debate the arguments about Antigone made well over a hundred years ago by German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831).

Once you find an especially good source, its bibliography will lead you to others. Test sources against one another: If multiple reliable sources agree about a given fact, you can probably assume it's accurate; if they all cite a particular article or book, you know it's a key contribution to the conversation.

30.3.2 Reading and Taking Notes

Once you've acquired or accessed your sources, it's a good idea to skim each one. (In the case of a book, concentrate on the introduction and on the chapter that seems most relevant.) Focus at this point on assessing the relevance of each source to your topic. Or, if you're working your way toward a topic, look for things that spark your interest. Either way, try to get a rough sense of the overall conversation—of the issues and topics that come up again and again across the various sources.

Once you've identified the most pertinent sources, it's time to begin reading more carefully and taking notes. For each source, make sure that you note down all the bibliographical information that you will ultimately need to cite the source correctly. (For details, see the guide to citation in ch. 31.) Your notes for each source will likely include four things: summary, paraphrase, quotation, and your own comments and thoughts. To avoid confusion (even plagiarism), it's crucial that you develop your own system for clearly differentiating each of these from the other. Whenever you write down, type out, or paste in two or more consecutive words from a source, you should place these words in quotation marks so that you will later recognize them as direct quotations; make sure to quote with absolute accuracy; and record the page where the quotation is found (if the source is paginated). Keep such quotations to a minimum. In lieu of extensive quotations, try to summarize and paraphrase as much as possible. You can't decide how to use the source or whether you agree with its argument unless you've first understood it, and you can usually best understand and test your understanding through summary and paraphrase. You might, for example, either start or conclude your notes with a one- or two-sentence summary of the author's overall argument, perhaps using the "Although . . . I think . . . because" rubric. Paraphrase especially important points, making sure to note the page on which each appears. (For more on paraphrase, summary, and description, see ch. 27 and 30.4.2 below.)

30.3.3 Synthesizing

It can be very useful to complete the note-taking process by writing a summary that synthesizes all of your secondary sources. Your goal is to show how all the arguments fit together to form one coherent conversation. (Like any conversation, however, a scholarly one usually considers multiple topics.) Doing so will require that you both define the main questions at issue in the conversation and indicate what stance each source takes on each question—where and how their opinions coincide and differ. If you tend to be a visual learner, you might also try diagraming the conversation somehow.

One might say, for example, that the main questions about Antigone that pre-occupy all the various scholars represented in chapter 26 are (1) *What is the exact nature of the conflict between Antigone and Creon, or what two conflicting world-views do they represent?* and (2) *How is that conflict resolved? Which, if either, of the two characters and worldviews does the play ultimately endorse?* A synthetic summary of these sources (i.e., one that combines or "synthesizes" them) would explain how each critic answers each of these questions.

This kind of summary can be especially helpful when you haven't yet identified a specific essay topic or crafted a thesis because it may help you to see gaps in the conversation, places where you can enter and contribute. If you have identified a topic or thesis, a synthetic summary is still useful to identifying points of agreement and disagreement and to articulating motive (30.2). Indeed, students required to write synthetic summaries by their instructors often end up using it as the kernel of their introduction.

30.4 WRITING WITH SOURCES

30.4.1 Using Sources Responsibly and Avoiding Plagiarism

Both the clarity and the credibility of any research essay depend on responsible use of sources. And using sources responsibly entails accurately representing them, clearly discriminating between their ideas and words and your own, giving credit where credit is due. Since ideas, words, information, and concepts not directly and clearly attributed to a source will be taken as your own, any lack of clarity on that score amounts to *plagiarism*. Representing anyone else's ideas or data as your own, even if you state them in your own words, is plagiarism—whether you do so intentionally or unintentionally; whether the ideas or data comes from a published book or article, another student's paper, the Internet, or any other source. Plagiarism is among the most serious of offenses within academe because it amounts both to taking credit for someone else's hard labor and to stealing ideas—the resource most precious to this community and its members. That's why the punishments for plagiarism are severe—including failure, suspension, and expulsion, for students; the loss of a job, for teachers who are also researchers.

   To avoid both the offense and its consequences, you must always

- *put quotation marks around any quotation from a source* (a quotation being any two or more consecutive words or any one especially distinctive word, label, or concept) *or indent it to create a "block quotation"*;

- *credit a source whenever you take from it any of the following*:
   —*a quotation* (as described above);
   —*a nonfactual or debatable claim* (an idea, opinion, interpretation, evaluation, or conclusion) stated in your own words;
   —*a distinctive concept or term*;
   —*a fact or piece of data that isn't common knowledge*; or
   —*a distinctive way of organizing factual information*.

To clarify, a fact counts as "common knowledge"—and therefore doesn't need to be credited to a source—whenever you can find it in multiple reputable sources, none of which seriously question its validity. It is common knowledge, for instance, that Sherman Alexie is Native American, that he was born in 1966, and that he published a collection of short stories titled *Ten Little Indians*. No source can "own" or get credit for these facts. However, a source can still "own" a particular way of arranging or presenting such facts. If you begin your essay by stating—in your own words—a series of facts about Alexie's life in exactly the same order they appear in a specific source, then you would need to acknowledge that source. When in doubt, cite. (For guidance about *how* to do so, see both 30.4.2 below and ch. 31.)

30.4.2 Integrating Secondary Source Material into Your Essay

The responsible use of sources depends as much on how you integrate ideas, facts, and words from sources into your essay as on how effectively you use a citation and documentation system like that outlined in chapter 31. Indeed, in this (the MLA) system, where a citation belongs and what it looks like depend entirely on what information you provide about the source in your text.

   Research essays can refer to secondary sources in a number of ways. You may

- *briefly allude to them:*

  Many critics, including Maurice Bowra and Bernard Knox, see Creon as morally inferior to Antigone.

- *summarize or paraphrase their contents:*

  According to Maurice Bowra, Creon's arrogance is his downfall. However prideful Antigone may occasionally seem, Bowra insists that Creon is genuinely, deeply, and consistently so (1586).

- *quote them directly:*

  Maurice Bowra reads Creon as the prototypical "proud man"; where Antigone's arrogance is only "apparent," says Bowra, Creon's is all too "real" (1586).

Choose whichever strategy suits your purpose in a particular context. But keep the number and length of quotations from secondary sources to a minimum. This is *your* essay. Your ideas about the text are its primary focus. And you should use your own words whenever possible, even when you are describing or articulating what you must clearly acknowledge to be someone else's ideas or facts.

USING SIGNAL PHRASES

Whether you are quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing a source, always introduce source material with a "signal phrase." Usually, this should include the author's name. You might also include the author's title or any information about the author or source that affects its credibility or clarifies the relationship between the source's argument and your own. Titles can be especially helpful when you cite more than one source by the same author.

Oyin Ogunba, himself a scholar of Yoruban descent, suggests that many of Wole Soyinka's plays attempt to capture the mood and rhythm of traditional Yoruban festivals (8).	Since most of the authors cited in a literature research essay should be scholars, calling them that is usually redundant and unhelpful. Here, however, the phrase "scholar of Yoruban descent" implies that the author is doubly authoritative, since he writes about a culture he knows through experience and study.
As historian R. K. Webb observes, "Britain is a country in miniature" (1).	In a literature research essay, most scholars you cite will be literary critics. If they aren't and it matters, identify their discipline.
In his study of the Frankenstein myth, Chris Baldick claims that "[m]ost myths, in literate societies at least, prolong their lives not by being retold at great length, but by being alluded to" (3)—a claim that definitely applies to the Hamlet myth.	Notice how crucial this signal phrase is to making clear that its author is applying a source's claim about one thing (myths in general and the Frankenstein myth in particular) to another, entirely different thing (the Hamlet myth). Such clarity is key both to accurately representing the source and to establishing the author's own originality.

If your summary goes on for more than a sentence or two, keep using signal phrases to remind readers that you're still summarizing others' ideas rather than stating your own.

The ways of interpreting Emily's decision to murder Homer are numerous. [. . .] For simple clarification, they can be summarized along two lines. One group finds the murder growing out of Emily's demented attempt to forestall the inevitable passage of time—toward her abandonment by Homer, toward her own death, and toward the steady encroachment of the North and the New South on something loosely defined as the "tradition" of the Old South. Another view sees the murder in more psychological terms. It grows out of Emily's complex relationship to her father, who, by elevating her above all of the eligible men of Jefferson, insured that to yield what one commentator called the "normal emotions" associated with desire, his daughter had to "retreat into a marginal world, into fantasy" (O'Connor 416).

In this paragraph from his essay "'We All Said, "She Will Kill Herself"': The Narrator/Detective in William Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily,'" Lawrence R. Rodgers heads into a general summary of other critics' arguments by announcing that it's coming (*"For simple clarification, they can be summarized . . ."*). Then, as he begins summarizing each view, he reminds us that it is a "view," that he's still articulating others' ideas, not his own. Notice that he only quotes "one commentator" among the many to whom he refers; the others are indicated in a footnote.

For the sake of interest and clarity, vary the content and placement of signal phrases, and always choose the most accurate verb. (*Says*, for example, implies that words are spoken, not written.) Here is a list of verbs you might find useful to describe what sources do.

acknowledges	considers	explains	investigates	sees
affirms	contends	explores	maintains	shows
argues	demonstrates	finds	notes	speculates
asks	describes	identifies	observes	states
asserts	discusses	illustrates	points out	stresses
claims	draws attention	implies	remarks	suggests
comments	to	indicates	reminds us	surmises
concludes	emphasizes	insists	reports	writes

31 QUOTATION, CITATION, AND DOCUMENTATION

The bulk of any literature essay you write should consist of your own ideas expressed in your own words. Yet you can develop your ideas and persuade readers to accept them only if you present and analyze evidence. In literature essays of every kind, quotations are an especially privileged kind of evidence, though paraphrase, summary, and description play key roles (see ch. 27 and 28.1.4). Likewise, a literature research essay, which must make use of other primary and secondary sources, typically quotes selectively from these as well (see 30.4.2). In all literature essays, then, your clarity, credibility, and persuasiveness greatly depend on two things: (1) how responsibly, effectively, and gracefully you present, differentiate, and move between others' words and ideas and your own; and (2) how careful you are to let readers know exactly where they can find each quotation and each fact or idea that you paraphrase from a source. This chapter addresses the question of *how* to quote, cite, and document sources of all kinds. (For a discussion of *when* to do so, see 28.1.4 and 30.4.1.)

Rules for quoting, citing, and documenting sources can seem daunting and even, at times, arcane or trivial. Why the heck should it matter whether you put a word in brackets or parentheses, or where in a sentence your parentheses appears? By demonstrating mastery of such conventions, you assert your credibility as a member of the scholarly community. But such conventions also serve an eminently practical purpose: They provide you a system for conveying a wealth of important information clearly, concisely, and unobtrusively, with the least distraction to you and your reader.

As you probably know, there are many such systems. And different disciplines, publications, and even individual instructors prefer or require different ones. In English and other humanities disciplines, however, the preferred system is that developed by the Modern Language Association (MLA) and laid out in the *MLA Handbook* (8th ed., 2016) and *The MLA Style Center: Writing Resources from the Modern Language Association* (style.mla.org). All the rules presented in this chapter accord with, and draw heavily upon, these sources, which we encourage you to consult for more extensive and detailed guidance than we can provide here.

31.1 THE RULES OF RESPONSIBLE QUOTING

When it comes to quoting, there are certain rules that you must follow in order to be responsible both to your sources and to the integrity of your own prose. Additionally, there are certain strategies that, though not required, will do much to make your argument more clear, engaging, and persuasive. The next section of this chapter (31.2) discusses strategies; this one concentrates on the rules, starting with the cardinal principles of responsible quotation before turning first to those rules spe-

cific to the genres of prose, poetry, and drama and then to those rules that aren't genre-specific.

31.1.1 Cardinal Principles

Three requirements so crucial to your credibility that you should regard them as cardinal principles rather than simple rules are these:

1. *A quotation means any two or more consecutive words or any one especially distinctive word or label that appears in a source.*

   Representation as O'Brien practices it in this book is not a mimetic act but a "game," as Iser also calls it in a more recent essay, "The Play of the Text," a process of acting things out. . . .

   In this sentence from THE UNDYING UNCERTAINTY OF THE NARRATOR IN TIM O'BRIEN'S *THE THINGS THEY CARRIED* (ch. 9) Steven Kaplan puts the word *game* in quotation marks because it is a key concept defined in distinctive ways in his source.

2. *Except in the very few cases and specific ways outlined in the rest of this section, you must reproduce each quotation exactly as it appears in a source,* including every word and preserving original spelling, punctuation, capitalization, italics, spacing, and so on.

ORIGINAL SOURCE	INCORRECT VS. CORRECT QUOTATION
[MRS. PETERS *sits down. The two women sit there not looking at one another, but as if peering into something and at the same time holding back. When they talk now it is in the manner of feeling their way over strange ground, as if afraid of what they are saying, but as if they cannot help saying it.*]	**Incorrect:** After they discover the dead bird and the men leave the room, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale simply "sit there not looking at each other," compelled to speak but also "afraid of what they are saying." **Correct:** After they discover the dead bird and the men leave the room, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale simply "*sit there not looking at one another,*" compelled to speak but also "*afraid of what they are saying.*"

3. *No change to a quotation, however much it accords with the rules outlined below, is acceptable if it in any way distorts the original meaning of the quoted passage.*

31.1.2 Genre-Specific Rules

Because prose, poetry, and drama each work somewhat differently, there are special rules governing how to quote texts in each of these genres. This section spells out the rules specific to prose (both fiction and nonfiction), poetry, and drama; the next section covers rules applicable to all genres.

PROSE (FICTION OR NONFICTION)

◦ When a quotation from a single paragraph of a prose source takes up no more than four lines of your essay, put it in quotation marks.

> Georgiana's birthmark becomes "a frightful object" only because "Aylmer's somber imagination" turns it into one, "selecting it as the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death."

◦ When a prose quotation takes up more than four lines of your essay or includes a paragraph break, indent it ½ inch from the left margin to create a *block quotation*. Do not enclose the quotation in quotation marks, since these are implied by the formatting. On the rare occasions you quote more than one paragraph reproduce any paragraph break that occurs within the quotation by indenting the first line an additional ¼ inch.

> Georgiana's birthmark becomes "a frightful object" only because "Aylmer's somber imagination" turns it into a "symbol" of
>
>> the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain. The crimson hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to dust.

POETRY

◦ When quoting three or fewer lines of poetry, put the quotation in quotation marks, and use a slash mark (/) with a space on either side to indicate any line break that occurs in the quotation, and a double slash mark (//) to indicate a stanza break.

> Before Milton's speaker can question his "Maker" for allowing him to go blind, "Patience" intervenes "to prevent / That murmur."

◦ When quoting more than three lines, indent the quotation ½ inch from the left margin to create a *block quotation*. Do not enclose the quotation in quotation marks, since these are implied by the formatting, but do reproduce original line and stanza breaks and the spatial arrangement of the original lines, including indentation.

> Midway through the poem, the speaker suddenly shifts to second-person, for the first time addressing the drowned girl directly and almost affectionately as he also begins to imagine her as a living person rather than a dead corpse:
>
>> Little adulteress,
>> before they punished you
>>
>> you were flaxen-haired,
>> undernourished, and your
>> tar-black face was beautiful.

◦ When a block quotation begins in the middle of a line of verse, indent the partial line as much as you need to in order to approximate its original positioning.

> The speaker first demonstrates both his knowledge of persimmons and his understanding of precision by telling us exactly what ripe fruits look and smell like and then, step by careful step,

                How to eat:
     put the knife away, lay down newspaper.
     Peel the skin tenderly, not to tear the meat.
     Chew the skin, suck it,
     and swallow. Now, eat
     the meat of the fruit

◦ **If you omit one or more lines in the middle of a block quotation, indicate the omission with a line of spaced periods approximately the same length as a complete line of the quoted poem.**

About another image on the urn, the speaker has more questions than answers:
     Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
       To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
     Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
       And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?
     What little town by river or sea shore,
     . . . .
       Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?

DRAMA

◦ **With one exception (covered in the next rule), a quotation from a play is governed by the same rules as outlined above under "Prose," if the quotation is in prose; under "Poetry," if in verse.**
◦ **Regardless of its length, if a quotation from a play includes dialogue between two or more characters, indent it ½ inch from the left margin to create a *block quotation*. Begin each character's speech with the character's name in capital letters followed by a period; indent the second and subsequent lines an additional ¼ inch. If a speech is in verse, you must also follow the applicable rules outlined in the "Poetry" section above, by, for example, reproducing original line breaks (as in the second example below).**

1. As soon as the men exit, the women start talking about the men and undoing what the men just did:
     MRS. HALE. I'd hate to have men coming into my kitchen, snooping around and criticizing. [*She arranges the pans under the sink which the* LAWYER *had shoved out of place.*]
     MRS. PETERS. Of course it's no more than their duty.

2. Antigone and Ismene's initial exchange climaxes with Antigone declaring her sister an "enemy," even as Ismene declares herself one of Antigone's loving "friends":
     ANTIGONE. If you will talk like this I will loathe you,
       and you will be adjudged an enemy—
       justly—by the dead's decision. Let me alone
       and my folly with me, to endure this terror.
       No suffering of mine will be enough
       to make me die ignobly.
     ISMENE. Well, if you will, go on.
       Know this; that though you are wrong to go, your friends
       are right to love you.

31.1.3 General Rules and Strategies

Unlike the rules covered in the last section, the ones laid out here apply regardless of whether you are quoting prose, poetry, or drama.

GRAMMAR, SYNTAX, TENSE, AND THE USE OF BRACKETS

- Quotations need not be complete sentences and may go anywhere in your sentence.

  1. The narrator says of Mr. Kapasi, "In his youth he'd been a devoted scholar of foreign languages" who "dreamed of being an interpreter for diplomats and dignitaries."
  2. "In his youth a devoted scholar of foreign languages," says the narrator, Mr. Kapasi once "dreamed of being an interpreter for diplomats and dignitaries."

- Every sentence that includes a quotation and every quotation you present as if it is a sentence must—like every other sentence in your essay—observe all the usual rules of grammar, syntax, and consistency of tense. (In terms of these rules, words inside quotation marks don't operate any differently than do words outside of quotation marks.)

  1. The woman in all the portraits is idealized. "Not as she is, but as she fills his dream."

  2. The woman in all the portraits is idealized: "Not as she is, but as she fills his dream."

  3. The woman in all the paintings is idealized, portrayed by the artist "[n]ot as she is, but as she fills his dream."

  Sentence 1 includes a quotation that is treated as a sentence but isn't one. Sentence 2 corrects that problem by using a colon to make the quoted fragment part of the preceding sentence. Yet the fragment still contains a pronoun (*his*) that lacks any clear referent in the sentence, making sentence 3 a better fix.

  4. As Joy waits for Manley's arrival, "She looked up and down the empty highway and had the furious feeling that she had been tricked, that he had only meant to make her walk to the gate after the idea of him" rather than the reality.

  5. As Joy waits for Manley's arrival, she becomes "furious," convinced that he has "tricked" her and only "meant to make her walk to the gate after the idea of him" rather than the reality.

  The fact that fiction typically uses past tense, while we write about it in present tense, often creates confusing tense shifts like that in sentence 4. Usually, partial paraphrase is a good solution: As in sentence 5, quote only the most essential words from the passage, remembering that what those words are will depend on the point you want to make.

- When necessary to the grammar of your sentence or the intelligibility of your quotation, you may add words to the latter or make minor changes to words within it, but you must enclose your alterations in brackets ([]) to let readers know that they *are* alterations. (In example 3 above, for example, the first letter of the word "not" appears in brackets because a capital "N" has been changed to a lower-case "n.")

As Joy waits for Manley's arrival, "She look[s] up and down the empty highway and ha[s] the furious feeling that she ha[s] been tricked, that he had only meant to make her walk to the gate after the idea of him."	This sentence demonstrates how changing verb endings and putting the new ones in brackets can be an easy way to solve tense shift problems of the kind found in example 4 above.
The woman in all the portraits is idealized, represented "[n]ot as she is, but as she fills his [the painter's] dream."	If a pronoun reference in a quotation is unclear, one fix is to put the noun to which the pronoun refers in brackets after the pronoun, as in this sentence. For an alternative fix, see example 3 above.
As Mays explains, a writer "can assume that their reader will recognize the traditional meanings of these ["traditional"] symbols," but "invented symbols" work differently.	In this sentence, the phrase "these symbols" refers to something outside the quoted sentence. The added and thus bracketed word *traditional* appears in quotation marks because it, too, comes directly from the same source.

> **TIP:** Though such alterations are permissible, they are often so much less effective than other techniques that some of them (including changes to verb endings) are not actually mentioned in the *MLA Handbook*. Used too often, this technique can become very distracting and put you at risk of appearing as if you're "fiddling" with sources. As a result, look for other fixes whenever possible.

OMISSIONS AND ELLIPSES

○ A quotation that is obviously a sentence fragment need not be preceded or followed by an ellipsis (. . .). But you must use an ellipsis whenever
  —your quotation appears to be a complete sentence but actually isn't one in the source (as in the first and last sentences in the example below),
  —you omit words from the middle of a quoted sentence (as in the second sentence in the example below), or
  —you omit one or more sentences between quoted sentences (as between the second and third sentences in the example below).

When the ellipsis coincides with the end of your sentence, add a period followed by an ellipsis with a space before and between each ellipsis dot. A space follows the final ellipsis dot only if a new sentence follows (as in the first sentence below).

The narrator says of Mr. Kapasi,

> In his youth he'd been a devoted scholar of foreign languages. . . . He had dreamed of being an interpreter for diplomats and dignitaries, . . . settling disputes of which he alone could understand both sides. . . . Now only a handful of European phrases remained in his memory, scattered words for things like saucers and chairs. . . . Sometimes he feared that his children knew better English than he did, just from watching television.

> **NOTE:** If you omit the end of a sentence *and* one or more of the sentences that immediately follow it, the four dots are sufficient; you do not need two ellipses.

○ If the quoted source uses an ellipsis, put your ellipsis in brackets to distinguish between the two. [NOTE: Throughout this book, we have instead put *every* added ellipsis in brackets.]

As an excited Ruth explains, the prospect of receiving a check is "a whole lot different from having it come and being able to hold it in your hands . . . a piece of paper worth ten thousand dollars." "[. . .] I wish Walter Lee was here!," she exclaims.

The first (unbracketed) ellipsis here occurs in the original source; the second (bracketed) ellipsis doesn't.

OTHER ACCEPTABLE CHANGES TO QUOTATIONS:
SIC AND *EMPHASIS ADDED*

◦ If a quotation includes what is or might seem to your reader an error of fact or of grammar, spelling, and so on, you may signal to the reader that you haven't introduced the error yourself through misquotation by putting the word *sic* (Latin for "thus" or "so") next to the error. Put parentheses around *sic* if it comes *after* the quotation (as in the first example below), brackets if it appears *within* the quotation (as in the second example). Do not use *sic* if context makes it obvious that the error isn't yours or isn't truly an error, as in the case of texts featuring archaic spelling, dialect, and so on.

1. Shaw admitted, "Nothing can extinguish my interest in Shake-spear" (sic).
2. In the preface to *Shakes Versus Shav: A Puppet Play* (1949), Shaw avows, "Nothing can extinguish my interest in Shakespear [sic]. It began when I was a small boy. . . ."

In sentence 1 (from the *MLA Handbook*) parentheses work because nothing has been added *into* the quotation; the second, slightly modified version requires brackets. Either way, the word *sic* appears next to the misspelled word and is not italicized.

3. Charley gets to the heart of the matter when he asks Willy, "when're you gonna realize that them things don't mean anything?"

Sic would be inappropriate here, since it's clear this quotation accurately reproduces the character's speech patterns.

4. The Misfit firmly rejects the idea that he should pray, insisting, "I don't want no hep" (sic), "I'm doing all right by myself."

In this case, though use of the word *hep* **(for** *help***) is entirely characteristic of the character's speech, it could so easily look like a typo, that the word sic seems helpful.**

◦ **On the relatively rare occasions when you need to emphasize a specific word or phrase within a quotation, you may put it in italics and indicate this change by putting the words** *emphasis added* **in parentheses after the quotation, ideally at the end of the clause or sentence.**

Avowing that men "must help them [women] to stay in that beautiful world of their own, *lest ours get worse*" (emphasis added), Marlow acknowledges that men have a selfish interest in preserving women's innocence and idealism.

PUNCTUATING QUOTATIONS

◦ **Though you must always reproduce original punctuation *within* a quotation, you may *end it* with whatever punctuation your sentence requires, and this is the one change you do not need to indicate with brackets.**

Whether portrayed as "queen," "saint," or "angel," the same "nameless girl" appears in "all his canvases."	In the poem quoted here, no commas appear after the words *queen* and *angel*, but the syntax of the sentence requires they be added. Similarly, the comma that appears after the word ***canvases*** in the poem is here replaced by a period.
The narrator tells us that Mr. Kapasi's "job was a sign of his failings," for "[i]n his youth he'd been a devoted scholar of foreign languages" who "dreamed of being an interpreter for diplomats and dignitaries."	Here, a comma replaces the original period after *failings*, and a period replaces the original comma after *dignitaries*.

◦ **Commas and periods belong *inside* the closing quotation mark (as in the above examples). All other punctuation marks belongs *outside* the closing quotation mark if they are your additions, inside if they are not.**

1. Wordsworth calls nature a "homely Nurse"; she has "something of a Mother's Mind."
2. What exactly does Lili mean when she tells Guy, "You are here to protect me if anything happens"?
3. Bobby Lee speaks volumes about the grandmother when he says, "She was a talker, wasn't she?"

◦ **When your indented, block quotation includes a quotation, put the latter in double quotation marks ("").**

Written just four years after *A Raisin in the Sun*'s debut, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" stresses the urgency of the situation of African Americans like himself and the Youngers by comparing it to those of Africans like Joseph Asagai and white Americans like Karl Lindner:

> We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of . . . Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait."

◦ **When a shorter (non-block) quotation includes a quotation, put the latter in single quotation marks (' ').**

1. As Martin Luther King, Jr., insisted in 1963, "it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation" or the "degenerating sense of 'nobodiness'" it instills, "to say, 'Wait,'" be patient, your time will come.
2. In a poem less about Hard Rock himself than about the way he is perceived by his fellow inmates, it makes sense that many words and lines take the form of unattributed quotations, as in the unforgettable opening, "Hard Rock was 'known not to take no shit / From nobody.'"

○ When your quotation consists *entirely* of words that appear within quotation marks in the source, use double quotation marks, while making sure that you introduce the quotation in a way that makes the special status of these words and their provenance clear.

1. "[K]nown not to take no shit / From nobody," as his fellow inmates put it, Hard Rock initially appears almost superhuman.
2. The Misfit's response is as shocking as it is simple: "I don't want no hep," "I'm doing all right by myself."
3. In an introductory note quoted by Alvarez, Plath describes the poem's speaker as "a girl with an Electra complex" whose "father died while she thought he was God."

31.2 STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE QUOTING

○ Though it is not a rule that all of your quotations must appear inside one of your sentences, your clarity will be enormously enhanced if you treat it like one, making the connection between quotation and inference as seamless as possible.

1. Smith is highly critical of O'Brien's portrayal of Martha. "Like other women in the book, she represents all those back home who will never understand the warrior's trauma."

2. Smith is highly critical of O'Brien's portrayal of Martha: "Like other women in the book, she represents all those back home who will never understand the warrior's trauma."

3. Smith is highly critical of O'Brien's portrayal of Martha, claiming that, "[l]ike other women in the book," Martha "represents all those back home who will never understand the warrior's trauma."

Example 1 includes a quotation that isn't part of any sentence. Example 2 corrects that problem with a colon, but the reader still has to pause to figure out that it's Smith who's being quoted here and that the quotation refers to Martha. Sentence 3 thus offers a better solution.

○ Avoid drawing attention to your evidence as evidence with "filler" phrases such as *This statement is proof that . . . ; This phrase is significant because . . . ; This idea is illustrated by . . . ; There is good evidence for this. . . .* Show *why* facts are meaningful or interesting rather than first or only saying *that* they are.

INEFFECTIVE QUOTATION	EFFECTIVE QUOTATION
Wordsworth calls nature a "homely Nurse" and says that she has "something of a Mother's mind" (lines 81, 79). This diction supports the idea that he sees nature as a healing, maternal force. He is saying that nature heals and cares for us.	Personifying nature as a "homely Nurse" with "something of a Mother's Mind," Wordsworth depicts nature as healing and nurturing the humans it also resembles. OR A "homely Nurse" with "something of a Mother's Mind," nature, implies Wordsworth, both heals and nurtures the humans it also resembles.
Tennyson advocates decisive action, even as he highlights the forces that often prohibited his contemporaries from taking it. This is suggested by the lines "Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will, / To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" (lines 69–70).	Tennyson advocates forceful action, encouraging his contemporaries "To strive, to seek to find, and not to yield" (line 70). Yet he recognizes that his generation is more tempted to "yield" than earlier ones because they have been "Made weak by time and fate" (69).

○ **On the one hand, make sure that you provide readers the information they need to understand the quotation and to appreciate its relevance to your argument. Quite often, contextual information—for instance, about who's speaking to whom and in what situation—is crucial to a quotation's meaning. On the other hand, keep such contextual information to a minimum and put the emphasis on the words that really matter and on your inferences about why and how they matter.**

1. Strong as Mama is, she and Walter share a similar, traditional vision of gender roles: "I'm telling you to be the head of this family . . . like you supposed to be"; "the colored woman" should be "building their men up and making 'em feel like they somebody."

2. Strong as Mama is, she shares Walter's traditional vision of gender roles. When she urges him "to be the head of this family from now on like you supposed to be," she affirms that her son is the family's rightful leader—not her daughter, not her daughter-in-law, not even herself, despite her seniority in terms of age. Implicitly, she's also doing what Walter elsewhere says "the colored woman" should do—"building their men up and making 'em feel like they somebody."

Example 2 is more effective because it offers crucial information about who is speaking to whom ("*When Lena tells Walter*," "*Walter elsewhere says*") and includes inferences ("*she affirms that her son is the family's rightful leader . . .*"; "*Implicitly, she's also doing*"). Purely contextual information is, however, stated briefly and early, in subordinate clauses.

(continued)

3. Julian expresses disgust for the class distinctions so precious to his mother: "Rolling his eyes upward, he put his tie back on. 'Restored to my class,' he muttered."

4. Julian professes disgust for the class distinctions so precious to his mother. At her request, he puts back on his tie, but he can't do so without "[r]olling his eyes" and making fun (at least under his breath) of the idea that he is thereby "[r]estored to [his] class."

Again, example 4 improves on example 3 by providing missing information ("*At her request*") and yet paraphrasing and subordinating what is only information ("*he puts back on his tie*").

○ Lead your readers into long, especially block, quotations with a clear sense of just what in the quotation they should be paying attention to and why. Follow it up with at least a sentence or more of analysis/inferences, perhaps repeating especially key words and phrases from the long quotation.

Whereas the second stanza individualizes the dead martyrs, the third considers the characteristics they shared with each other and with all those who dedicate themselves utterly to any one cause:

> Hearts with one purpose alone
> Through summer and winter seem
> Enchanted to a stone
> To trouble the living stream. (lines 41–44)

Whereas all other "living" people and things are caught up in the "stream" of change represented by the shift of seasons, those who fill their "hearts with one purpose alone" become as hard, unchanging, and immoveable as stone.

○ Be aware that even though long, especially block quotations can be effective, they should be used sparingly and strategically. All too easily, they can create information overload or confusion for readers, making it hard to see what is most significant and why. When you quote only individual words or short phrases, weaving them into your sentences in the ways demonstrated earlier in this section, you and your readers can more easily stay focused on what's significant and on *why* and *how* it is.

○ Vary the length of quotations and the way you present them, using a variety of strategies. It can be very tempting to fall into a pattern—always, for example, choosing quotations that are at least a sentence long and attaching them to your sentence with a colon. But overusing *any* one technique can easily render your essay monotonous and might even prompt readers to focus more on the (repetitive) way you present evidence than on the evidence and argument themselves. To demonstrate, here are two sets of sentences that present the very same material in varying ways.

1. According to Wordsworth, nature is a "homely Nurse" with "something of a Mother's Mind"; it heals and nurtures the humans it also resembles.

2. A "homely Nurse" with "something of a Mother's Mind," nature, suggests Wordsworth, both heals and nurtures the humans it also resembles.

3. Personifying nature as a "homely Nurse" with "something of a Mother's Mind," Wordsworth depicts nature as healing and nurturing the humans it also resembles.

4. Healing and nurturing the humans it also resembles, Wordsworth's nature is a "homely Nurse" with "something of a Mother's Mind."

1. Howe insists that the poem's "personal-confessional element . . . is simply too obtrusive," "strident and undisciplined," to allow a reader to interpret "Daddy" "as a dramatic presentation, a monologue spoken by a disturbed girl not necessarily to be identified with Sylvia Plath," especially given the resemblances between "events" described in the poem and those that actually occurred in Plath's life.

2. "Daddy," argues Howe, cannot be read "as a dramatic presentation, a monologue spoken by a disturbed girl not necessarily to be identified with Sylvia Plath"; its "personal-confessional element . . . is simply too obtrusive," too "strident and undisciplined," he reasons, while the "events of the poem" too closely correspond to "the events of her life."

31.3 CITATION AND DOCUMENTATION

In addition to indicating which words, facts, and ideas in your essay derive from someone else's work, you need to let your readers know where each can be found. You want to enable readers not only to "check up" on you but also to follow in your footsteps and build on your work. After all, you hope that your analysis of a text will entice readers to re-read certain passages from the text in a different way or to consult sources that you've made sound interesting. This is another way your essay contributes to keeping the conversation about literature going. And this is where citation and documentation come into play.

In the MLA system, parenthetical citations embedded in your essay are keyed to an alphabetized list of works cited that follows your essay. By virtue of both their content and placement, parenthetical citations help you to quickly and unobtrusively indicate *what* you have derived from *which* source and *where* in that source your readers can find that material. The list of works cited communicates the information about the source that your readers need both to find it themselves and, in the meantime, to begin evaluating for themselves its relevance, credibility, currency, and so on *without* having to find it.

To demonstrate how this works, here is a typical sentence with parenthetical citation, followed by the coordinating works-cited entry:

In-Text Citation

In one critic's view, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" explores "what great art means" not to the ordinary person, but "to those who create it" (Bowra 148).

Placed at the end of the sentence and beginning with the word *Bowra* (sans quotation marks or italics) and the number 148, this parenthetical citation tells us that the last name of the "critic" the sentence mentions and quotes is *Bowra*, that the source of the quotations is something he authored, and that the quotations come from page 148 of that source. To find out more, we have to turn to the list of works cited and look for an entry, like the following, that begins with the name *Bowra*.

Works Cited Entry

Bowra, C. M. *The Romantic Imagination.* Oxford UP, 1950.	This coordinating works-cited entry gives us Bowra's complete name as it appears in the source and indicates its title, publisher, and date of publication.

That our explanations of this sample parenthetical citation and works-cited entry take up much more space than the citation and entry themselves demonstrates the value of the MLA system. What it also demonstrates is the importance of both the placement and content of each citation and entry: Where the parenthetical citation falls in a sentence is key to clearly indicating what is being "sourced"; what the parenthetical citation and works cited include and in what order are all key to ensuring that the citation leads us seamlessly to *one* source in the works cited and tells us where precisely to look in that source.

The exact content and placement of each parenthetical citation and works-cited entry will thus depend on a host of factors. The next sections explain how this works.

31.3.1 Parenthetical Citation

THE STANDARD PARENTHETICAL CITATION: CONTENT AND PLACEMENT

Because lists of works cited are organized primarily by author, the standard MLA parenthetical citation looks just like, and appears in the same place as, the ones in the sample sentences above and below. It includes an author's name and a page number or numbers with nothing but a space in between. (Do not write *page* or *p.,* for example, or insert a comma.) The citation comes at the end of a sentence—*inside* the period (because it is part of the sentence in which you borrow from a source) and *outside* any quotation marks within the sentence (since it is *not* part of an actual quotation; it is not *in* the source but provides information *about* the source). In keeping with the rules for punctuating quotations laid out earlier in this chapter (31.1.3), you omit any final punctuation mark within your quotation, as in the second example below.

1. Most domestic poems of the 1950s foreground the parent-child relationship (Axelrod 1093).

2. As a character in one of the most famous works of Southern fiction memorably declares of the South, "I dont hate it" (Faulkner 378).

When citing a work from an anthology, refer to the author of the work, not the anthology editor, and make sure to create a corresponding entry in your list of works cited. Below is an example of this kind of citation, as well as the corresponding works-cited entry.

In-Text Citation

By the end of an initiation story, its protagonist may well have to confront "how hard the world" usually is (Updike 167).

Works Cited Entry

Updike, John. "A & P." *The Norton Introduction to Literature,* edited by Kelly J. Mays, shorter 12th ed., W. W. Norton, 2017, pp. 163-67.

The next two sections detail the variations on the standard MLA parenthetical citation format, starting with variations in *where* the citation goes before turning to variations in *what* it includes.

VARIATIONS IN PLACEMENT

∘ **In the case of a block quotation, the parenthetical citation should immediately *follow* (not precede) the punctuation mark that ends the quotation.**

According to the narrator,

> The job was a sign of his failings. In his youth he'd been a devoted scholar of foreign languages, the owner of an impressive collection of dictionaries. He had dreamed of being an interpreter for diplomats and dignitaries, resolving conflicts between people and nations, settling disputes of which he alone could understand both sides. (Lahiri 451)

∘ **If a sentence either incorporates material from multiple sources (as in the first example below) or refers both to something from a source and to your own idea (as in the second example), put the appropriate parenthetical citation in midsentence next to the material to which it refers. Ideally, you should insert the citation before a comma or semi-colon, since it will be less obtrusive that way. But your first priority should be clarity about which material comes from which source (see the third example below).**

1. Critics describe Caliban as a creature with an essentially "unalterable natur[e]" (Garner 458), "incapable of comprehending the good or of learning from the past" (Peterson 442), "impervious to genuine moral improvement" (Wright 451).
2. If Caliban is truly "incapable of . . . learning from the past" (Peterson 442), then how do we explain the changed attitude he seems to demonstrate at the play's end?
3. Tanner (7) and Smith (viii) have looked at works from a cultural perspective.

∘ **If, in a single paragraph, you make several *uninterrupted* references to the same source and especially to the same passage in a source, you may save the parenthetical citation until after the last such reference, as in the following example from Susan Farrell's Tɪᴍ O'Bʀɪᴇɴ ᴀɴᴅ Gᴇɴᴅᴇʀ: A Dᴇꜰᴇɴsᴇ ᴏꜰ Tʜᴇ Tʜɪɴɢs Tʜᴇʏ Cᴀʀʀɪᴇᴅ (ch. 9).**

Smith connects a 1980s backlash against the feminist movement to the misogyny she reads in Vietnam War literature, a misogyny which she describes as "very visible," as seemingly "natural and expected." In popular presentations, Smith argues, the "Vietnam War is being reconstructed as a site where white American manhood—figuratively as well as literally wounded during the war and assaulted by the women's movement for twenty years—can reassert its dominance in the social hierarchy" ("Back" 115).

VARIATIONS IN CONTENT: IDENTIFYING THE SOURCE

The standard MLA parenthetical citation may contain the author's name and the relevant page number(s). But variations are the rule when it comes to content. In this section, we deal with variations in how a citation indicates *which* source you refer to; the next section instead covers variations in how you indicate *where* in the source borrowed material can be found.

Your parenthetical citation should include something besides or in addition to one author's name whenever you do the following:

○ *Name the author(s) in your text.*
Parenthetical citations should include only information that isn't crucial to the intelligibility and credibility of your argument. Yet in nine cases out of ten, information about *whose* ideas, data, or words you are referring to is crucial. As a result, you should try whenever possible to indicate this in your text, usually via a *signal phrase* (as described in 30.4.2). When you do so, your parenthetical citation usually need only include location information such as page number(s).

1. In Maurice Bowra's view, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" explores "what great art means" not to the ordinary person, but "to those who create it" (148).
2. As Faulkner's Quentin Compson memorably declares of the South, "I dont hate it" (378).

In literature essays, parenthetical citations containing the name of the author whose work you are analyzing should be relatively rare. (Notice that there are none, for example, in any of the critical excerpts on Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* found in chapter 9.)

○ *Cite a source with multiple authors.*
If the source has two authors, and they are not named in your text, the parenthetical citation should include both last names (as in the example below). If the source has three or more authors, include the first author's name followed by the words *et al.* (abbreviated Latin for "and others").

Surprisingly, "it seems not to have been primarily the coarseness and sexuality of *Jane Eyre* which shocked Victorian reviewers" so much as its "rebellious feminism" (Gilbert and Gubar 338).

○ *Cite multiple works by the same author or an anonymous work.*
In either of these cases, you will need to indicate the title of your source. If possible, do so in your text, putting only location information in the parenthetical citation (as in the first example below). Otherwise, your parenthetical citation must include a shortened version of the title (as in the second example below). If your parenthetical citation also needs to include the author's name(s), this comes first, followed by a comma, the shortened title, and the location information (as in the third example below).

1. Like Joy, in O'Connor's "Good Country People," the protagonist of her story "Everything that Rises Must Converge" takes enormous pride in his intellect, even believing himself "too intelligent to be a success" (500).
2. Many of O'Connor's most faulty characters put enormous stock in their intellects, one even secretly believing himself "too intelligent to be a success" ("Everything" 500).
3. Intellectuals fare poorly in much Southern fiction. When we learn that the protagonist of one short story secretly believes himself "too intelligent to be a success," we can be pretty sure that he's in for a fall (O'Connor, "Everything" 500).

Be sure to format shortened titles just as you do full titles, either putting them in quotation marks or italicizing them as appropriate (see 29.5).

◦ *Cite multiple authors with the same last name.*
   In this case, you should ideally indicate the author's full name in the text so that your parenthetical citation need only include location information. Otherwise, the parenthetical citation should begin with the author's first initial followed by a period, followed by his or her last name and the location information (as in the first example below). If your authors share the same first initial, however, you will need to include a first name instead of initial (as in the second example).

   1. As one of Joyce's fellow writers points out, "To be absolutely faithful to what one sees and hears and not to speculate on what may lie behind it . . . is a creed that produces obvious limitations" (F. O'Connor 188).
   2. As one of Flannery O'Connor's fellow short story writers points out, "To be absolutely faithful to what one sees and hears and not to speculate on what may lie behind it . . . is a creed that produces obvious limitations" (Frank O'Connor 188).

◦ *Cite multiple authors simultaneously.*
   In this case, include all the citations within a single set of parentheses, separating them with semicolons.

   Many scholars attribute Caliban's bestiality to a seemingly innate inability to learn or change (Garner 438; Peterson 442; Wright 451).

◦ *Quote a source quoted in another source.*
   You should quote from an original source whenever possible. But on the rare occasions when you quote something quoted in another source, indicate the original source in your text. Then start your parenthetical citation with the abbreviation *qtd. in* followed by the name of the secondhand source's author and the location information.

   In an introductory note to "Daddy" that Plath wrote for a radio program that never aired, she describes the poem's speaker as "a girl with an Electra complex" whose "father died while she thought he was God" and whose "case is complicated by the fact that her father was also a Nazi and her mother very possibly part Jewish" (qtd. in Alvarez 1080).

VARIATIONS IN CONTENT: INDICATING A LOCATION WITHIN THE SOURCE

Though page numbers are usually the only means we use to identify where in a source a reader can find the ideas, information, or words we cite, there are exceptions. Indeed, exceptions are unusually frequent in literature essays. The most important reason for this is that literary texts tend to be available in different editions, so it's helpful to give readers the information they need to locate material in the text regardless of the edition they use.

When it comes to the question of how to do so, there is frankly a good deal of ambiguity and "wiggle room" in the MLA guidelines. Thus, as we explain below, different instructors may interpret some of these guidelines differently or simply prefer that you use one method rather than another.

Your parenthetical citation will generally need to include location information other than, or in addition to, a page number whenever you cite any of the following:

○ *Poetry*

When citing poetry, it is customary to refer to line (not page) number(s) and to indicate that you are doing so by including the word *line* or *lines,* as appropriate, in your first such parenthetical citation. Though MLA guidelines stipulate that later parenthetical citations include only the line number (as in the example below), some instructors prefer that the word *line* or *lines* appear in every poem-related parenthetical citation.

In a poem less about Hard Rock himself than about the way he is perceived by his fellow inmates, it makes sense that many words and lines take the form of unattributed quotations, as in the unforgettable opening, "Hard Rock was 'known not to take no shit / From nobody' " (lines 1-2), or "Yeah, remember when he / Smacked the captain with his dinner tray?" (17-18).

○ *Play with more than one act or scene*

At least when it comes to canonical plays, MLA guidelines call for omitting page numbers entirely and referring only to act, scene, and/or line numbers as appropriate, always using arabic numerals (*1, 2,* etc.) and separating each with a period (as in the first example below). Some instructors, however, prefer that you use roman numerals (*I, II, i, ii,* etc.) for acts and scenes (as in the second example below).

1. "I know not 'seems,' " Hamlet famously declares (1.2.76).
2. "I know not 'seems,' " Hamlet famously declares (I.ii.76).

○ *Commonly studied work of fiction or nonfiction prose*

Parenthetical citations of this kind should always include page numbers unless your instructor indicates otherwise. But you may also need or want to include additional location information. In this case, the page number comes first, followed by a semicolon and the other information. Use common abbreviations to indicate what this information is (e.g., *vol.* for *volume, bk.* for *book, sec.* for *section*), and give it in arabic numerals (*1, 2,* etc.), even if the text uses roman numerals (*I, II,* etc.). (The second example below is quoted directly from the *MLA Handbook.*)

1. "I learned," explains Frankenstein's creature, "that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow-creatures were, high and unsullied descent united with riches" (96; vol. 2, ch. 5).
2. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* Mary Wollstonecraft recollects many "women who, not led by degrees to proper studies, and not permitted to choose for themselves, have indeed been overgrown children" (185; ch. 13, sec. 2).

When you cite prose works from an anthology like this one, in which paragraphs are numbered, your instructor may allow or even require you to cite paragraph numbers, using the appropriate abbreviation (*par.*). If you include both page and paragraph number, insert a semicolon after the page number (as in the first example below). If your parenthetical citations don't include page, as well as paragraph, numbers, your instructor may also allow you to omit the abbreviation *par.* from the second and subsequent such citations (as in the second example).

1. When they meet years later in the supermarket, Roberta's "lovely and summery and rich" appearance leaves the narrator not only "dying to know" how

this transformation came about but also resentful of Roberta and people like her: "Everything is so easy for them," she thinks (245; par. 68).

2. Though "dying to know" just how Roberta came to be so "lovely and summery and rich" since they last met (par. 68), all the narrator initially asks is, "How long you been here?" (69).

○ *Sacred text*
When citing sacred texts such as the Bible or the Qur'an, indicate either in your text or in your parenthetical citation the title, editor, or translator of the edition you're using on the first occasion you cite it. Then include in your parenthetical citation(s) the book, chapter, and verse (or their equivalent), separated by periods, unless you have indicated these in your text. (Either way, do not include page numbers.) Abbreviate the names of the books of the Bible, but don't put these abbreviations in quotation marks or italicize them. (The second example below is quoted directly from the *MLA Handbook*.)

1. *The New English Bible* version of the verse reads, "In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth, the earth was without form and void, with darkness over the face of the abyss, and a mighty wind that swept over the surface of the waters" (Gen. 1.1-2).

2. In one of the most vivid prophetic visions in the Bible, Ezekiel saw "what seemed to be four living creatures," each with the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (*New Jerusalem Bible,* Ezek. 1.5-10). John of Patmos echoes this passage when describing his vision (Rev. 4.6-8).

○ *An entire source, a source without page numbers, a source that is only one page long, or an entry in a dictionary or other source organized alphabetically*
When you refer in a blanket way to an entire source rather than to something particular in it, to a source that has no pages or page numbers, to a source that is only one page long or has unnumbered pages, or to an entry in a dictionary or other work organized alphabetically, your parenthetical citation will include no page numbers. If you refer to something specific in a source lacking pages or page numbers but having other numbered divisions such as sections or paragraphs, do include these, using appropriate abbreviations (e.g., *sec., par.*), and make sure to add a comma after the author's name or, if the author is unknown, after the title of the work. Otherwise, if you clearly identify such a source (by author and/or title) in your text, you won't need a parenthetical citation at all (as in the first and second examples below). If you don't clearly identify the source in your text, your citation will include only author's name(s) and/or a shortened title (as in the third and fourth examples).

1. Many critics, including Maurice Bowra, see Creon as morally inferior to Antigone.

2. The entry for *Lord Weary's Castle* in *The Oxford Companion to American Literature,* for example, takes the "[m]ajor works" it includes to be the elegy "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket," the Jonathan Edwards-inspired "Mr. Edwards and the Spider," and the war poem "Christmas Eve Under Hooker's Statue."

3. Where some critics see the play as siding unequivocally with Antigone (Bowra), others see it as more ambivalent and/or ambiguous on this score (Nussbaum).

4. According to *The Oxford Companion to American Literature,* the elegy "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" is among the three "[m]ajor works" in Lowell's *Lord Weary's Castle* ("*Lord Weary's Castle*").

OTHER VARIATIONS IN CONTENT: *SIC* AND *EMPHASIS ADDED*

When a parenthetical citation intervenes between the end of a quotation that you need to follow up with the words *sic* or *emphasis added* (for the reasons outlined in 31.1.3), it's usually advisable to put *sic* in brackets within the quotation, next to the error to which it applies (as in the second example below), but to put *emphasis added* at the end of the parenthetical citation, preceding it with a semicolon (as in the second example).

1. Shaw admitted, "Nothing can extinguish my interest in Shakespear [sic]" (1).
2. Avowing that men "must help them [women] to stay in that beautiful world of their own, *lest ours get worse*" (1196; emphasis added), Marlow acknowledges that men have a selfish interest in preserving women's innocence and idealism.

31.3.2 The List of Works Cited

Your list of works cited must include all, and only, the sources that you cite in your essay, providing full publication information about each. This section explains both how to format and organize the list and how to put together each entry in it.

FORMATTING THE LIST

Your list of works cited should begin on a separate page after the conclusion of your essay. Center the heading *Works Cited* (without quotation marks or italics) at the top of the first page, and double space throughout.

The first line of each entry should begin at the left margin; the second and subsequent lines should be indented ½ inch.

Your list should be alphabetized, ignoring articles (such as *A, An, The*) in entries that begin with a title.

If your list includes multiple works by the same author, begin the first entry with the author's name, and each subsequent entry with three hyphens followed by a period. Alphabetize these entries by title, again ignoring articles (*A, An, The*).

<div align="center">Works Cited</div>

Broyles, William. "Why Men Love War." *Esquire,* Nov. 1984, pp. 55-65.

Clarke, Michael Tavel. " 'I Feel Close to Myself': Solipsism and U.S. Imperialism in Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried.*" *College Literature*, vol. 40, no. 2, Spring 2013, pp. 130-54. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/lit.2013.0018.

O'Brien, Tim. *Going After Cacciato.* Dell Publishing, 1978.

---. *The Things They Carried.* Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

Smith, Lorrie N. " 'The Things Men Do': The Gendered Subtext in Tim O'Brien's *Esquire* Stories." *Critique*, vol. 36, no. 1, Fall 1994, pp. 16-40. *Taylor & Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/00111619.1994.9935239.

FORMATTING INDIVIDUAL ENTRIES—GENERAL GUIDELINES

All information in a works-cited entry should come from the source itself and appear as it does in the source. Many if not most sources cited today are produced or experienced as part of larger wholes—or what MLA calls containers. If you cite a poem from this or any other anthology, for example, the poem is your source, the anthology its container. Works-cited entries may consist of as many as nine "core elements," each of which should be included when it is relevant and

available. In general, they must appear in the following order: author, title of source, title of container, other contributors, version, number, publisher, publication date, and location. Some other elements are recommended, but not required: in this book, for instance, dates of access for online sources have been omitted. For further details on required and optional elements, please consult the *MLA Handbook* (8th ed., 2016) and *The MLA Style Center* (style.mla.org).

Below we offer only a few formatting guidelines applicable to all works-cited entries, along with model entries for especially common types of sources.

◦ *Names*

Reproduce the names of authors, editors, and so on as they appear *in* the source—on a book's title page; at the beginning or end of a journal, magazine, or newspaper article; and so on. If initials are used, use them. If there are multiple authors or editors, list them in the order the source does, using the following format when they appear at the beginning of your entry:

| 2 names | Lastname, Firstname, and Firstname Lastname. |
| 3+names | Lastname, Firstname, et al. |

If the author is unknown, begin your entry with the title.

◦ *Publishers*

Shorten publishers' names by doing the following:

◦ Omit business words and abbreviations (*Company* or *Co., Inc.*): instead of *W. W. Norton & Co.*, type *W. W. Norton.*

◦ With university presses, abbreviate *University* to *U* and *Press* to *P*: shorten *University of Chicago Press* to *U of Chicago P, Harvard University Press* to *Harvard UP.*

◦ *Dates*

For a book's publication date, use the most recent year on the title or copyright page; for a Web source, use copyright date or the date of the most recent update. Abbreviate the names of all months except May, June, and July.

◦ *Page numbers*

If you cite an article from a magazine or newspaper that isn't printed on consecutive pages, include only the first page number and a plus sign (+).

FORMATTING INDIVIDUAL ENTRIES FOR
DIFFERENT TYPES OF SOURCES

This section explains how to format works-cited entries for the types of sources most frequently cited in literature essays. For other types of sources, consult the *MLA Handbook.*

1. *Book with an author or authors*

◦ *Print book*

Author's Lastname, Firstname. *Book Title.* Publisher, Year of publication.

O'Brien, Tim. *Going After Cacciato.* Dell Publishing, 1978.

◦ *Print book on the Web*

Author's Lastname, Firstname. *Book Title.* Publisher, Year of publication. *Web Site Title*, URL or DOI.

> Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick: or, The Whale.* Harper and Brothers, 1851. *Google Books*, books.google.com/books/about/Moby_Dick.html?id=J_yoAgAAQBAJ.

◦ *E-book*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. *Book Title.* E-book or Kindle ed. [if any], Publisher, Year of Publication.

> Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies.* E-book, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1999.

◦ *E-book in database*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. *Book Title.* Publisher, Year of publication. *Database Title*, URL or DOI.

> Boyle, Elizabeth, and Anne-Marie Evans, editors. *Reading America: New Perspectives on the American Novel.* Cambridge Scholars, 2008. *ProQuest Ebrary,* site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/lib/unlv/detail.action?docID=10655216&p00=reading+America.

2. ***Anthology or other book with editor(s) rather than author(s)***
Format your entry as indicated for a book (1), but after the (last) author's name or the abbreviation *et al.,* insert a comma and the word *editor* or *editors*.

> Kitchen, Judith, and Mary Paumier Jones, editors. *In Short: A Collection of Brief Creative Nonfiction.* W. W. Norton, 1996.

> Rowell, Charles Henry, editor. *Angles of Ascent: A Norton Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry.* W. W. Norton, 2013.

3. ***Book with author(s) and editor(s) or translator(s)***
If what you cite or emphasize in your essay is the book itself, format your entry as indicated for a book (1), but insert between the book title and publication information the words *edited by* or *translated by*; the first and last names of the editor(s) and/or translator(s); and a period.

> Kafka, Franz. *The Metamorphosis.* Translated by Joyce Crick, edited by Ritchie Robertson, E-book, Oxford UP, 2009.

> Keats, John. *Letters of John Keats to His Family and Friends.* Edited by Sidney Colvin, Macmillan, 1891. *Google Books,* books.google.com/books/about/Letters_of_John_Keats_to_his_family_and.html?id=ULlZnQEACAAJ.

If what you cite or emphasize in your essay is the work of the editor or translator, your entry should instead start with that person's name, followed by a comma and the word *editor* or *translator* (no capitalization), followed by the title of the book and the author.

> Colvin, Sidney, editor. *Letters of John Keats to His Family and Friends.* By John Keats, Macmillan, 1891. *Google Books,* books.google.com/books/about/Letters_of_John_Keats_to_his_family_and.html?id=ULlZnQEACAAJ.

> Crick, Joyce, translator. *The Metamorphosis.* By Franz Kafka, edited by Ritchie Robertson, E-book, Oxford UP, 2009.

4. ***Graphic narrative or book with author(s) and illustrator(s)***
If the book is written and illustrated by the same person or people, format the entry as you would for any other book (1). Otherwise, your entry will

take one of the two forms below, depending upon whether your essay most emphasizes the work of the author(s) or the illustrator(s).

> Crumb, R., illustrator. *American Spendor: Bob and Harv's Comics.* By Harvey Pekar, Four Walls Eight Windows, 1996.

> Pekar, Harvey. *American Splendor: Bob and Harv's Comics.* Illustrated by R. Crumb, Four Walls Eight Windows, 1996.

5. Sacred text
> *Text Title.* Editor's Firstname Lastname, editor [if any]. Publisher, Year of publication.

> *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha.* Oxford UP, 1971.

6. Book in an edition other than the first
Format your entry as indicated for a book (1) or anthology (2), but insert the edition information, followed by a comma, just *before* the publication information. Identify the edition in whatever way the book's title page does, but abbreviate (e.g., *3rd ed.* for *Third edition, Rev. ed.* for *Revised edition*).

> Drabble, Margaret, editor. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature.* Rev. ed., Oxford UP, 1998.

7. Book in a series
Format your entry as indicated for a book (1) or anthology (2). Then, at the end, add the series title, followed by a period.

> Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Oxford UP, 2001. Oxford World's Classics.

> Stein, Karen F. *Margaret Atwood Revisited.* Twayne Publishers, 1999. Twayne's World Authors.

8. Introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword to a book
Start your entry with the name of the author of the introduction, preface, and so on. If that author is not the same as the author of the book itself, your entry should look like this:

> Part Author's Lastname, Firstname. Introduction, Preface, or Foreword. *Book Title*, by Book Author's Firstname Lastname, Publisher, Year of publication, Page numbers.

> O'Prey, Paul. Introduction. *Heart of Darkness,* by Joseph Conrad, Penguin, 1983, pp. 7-24.

> Meynell, Viola. Introduction. *Moby-Dick or The Whale,* by Herman Melville, Oxford UP, 1921. *Hathi Trust*, catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001910361.

If the author of the part of the book you're citing is also the book's editor, and the book has no author, your entry should look like this:

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. Introduction, Preface, or Foreword. *Book Title*, edited by Editor's Lastname, Publisher, Year of publication, Page numbers.

> Rowell, Charles Henry. Preface. *Angles of Ascent: A Norton Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry*, edited by Rowell, W. W. Norton, 2013, pp. xxiii–xxvii.

If the introduction, foreword, and so on has a title, format your entry as indicated above, but insert the title (in quotation marks) between its author's name and the word *Introduction, Preface*, and so on.

> Ozick, Cynthia. "Portrait of the Essay as a Warm Body." Introduction. *The Best American Essays 1998*, edited by Ozick, Houghton Mifflin, 1998, pp. xv–xxi.

9. *Work(s) in an anthology*

If you cite only one work from an anthology, your entry should look like this:

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Work" or *Title of Work*. *Title of Anthology*, edited by Editor's Firstname Lastname, Publisher, Year of publication, Page numbers.

> Sanchez, Sonia. "A Poem for My Father." *Angles of Ascent: A Norton Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry*, edited by Charles Henry Rowell, W. W. Norton, 2013, p. 70.

If you cite multiple works from the same anthology, create an entry for the anthology itself, following the guidelines for an anthology (2). Then create shortened entries like the following for each individual work:

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Work" or *Title of Work*. Anthology Editor's Lastname, Page numbers.

> Dove, Rita. "Heroes." Rowell, pp. 215-16.

> Jackson, Major. "Some Kind of Crazy." Rowell, pp. 351-52.

> Sanchez, Sonia. "A Poem for My Father." Rowell, p. 70.

10. *Entry or article in a well-known general reference work (e.g., encyclopedia, dictionary)*

◦ *Print*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname [if any]. "Title of Article." *Title of Reference Work*, edited by Editor's Firstname Lastname [if any], Edition [if any], Year of publication, Page numbers.

> "Histrionics." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* 11th ed., 2003, p. 590.

◦ *Web*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname [if any]. "Title of Article." *Title of Reference Work*, edited by Editor's Firstname Lastname [if any], Edition [if any], Publisher, Date published or last updated, URL.

> Yoshida, Atsuhiko. "Epic." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 19 Mar. 2014, www.britannica.com/art/epic.

> "Fable, n." *OED Online,* Oxford UP, Dec. 2014, www.oed.com/view/Entry67384.

11. *Entry or article in a lesser-known or specialized reference work*

◦ *Print*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Reference Work*, edited by Editor's Firstname Lastname, Edition number [if other than first], Volume number [if more than one], Publisher, Year of publication, Page numbers.

Sullivan, Erin. "Humours." *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare,* edited by
Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells, 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 2015, p. 170.

◦ *Database*

Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Reference Work*, edited by
Editor's Firstname Lastname, Edition number [if other than first], Volume number
[if more than one], Publisher, Year of publication. *Database Title*, URL.

Carter, Steven R. "Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun.*" *The Oxford
Encyclopedia of American Literature*, edited by Jay Parini and Philip W.
Leininger, Oxford UP, 2004. *Oxford Reference,* www.oxfordreference.com
/view/10.1093/acref/9780195156539.001.0001/acref-9780195156539-e-0106.

◦ *Web*

Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Reference Work*, edited
by Editor's Firstname Lastname. Publisher or Sponsoring Institution, Date of
publication or last update, URL.

Wicks, Robert. "Friedrich Nietzsche." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,
edited by Edward N. Zalta. Metaphysics Research Lab, Center for the Study
of Language and Information, Stanford U, 29 Apr. 2011, plato.stanford.edu
/entries/nietzsche.

12. *Article in a journal*

◦ *Print journal*

Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, Volume number, Issue
number, Month or Season Year of publication, Page numbers.

Clarke, Michael Tavel. " 'I Feel Close to Myself': Solipsism and U.S. Imperialism
in Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried.*" *College Literature*, vol. 40, no. 2,
Spring 2013, pp. 130-54.

◦ *Journal in database*

Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, Volume number, Issue
number, Month or Season Year of publication, Page numbers. *Database Title*, URL
or DOI.

Clarke, Michael Tavel. " 'I Feel Close to Myself': Solipsism and U.S. Imperialism in
Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried.*" *College Literature*, vol. 40, no. 2,
Spring 2013, pp. 130-54. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/lit.2013.0018.

◦ *Web-only journal*

Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, Volume number, Issue
number, Month or Season Year of publication, Page numbers [if any], URL or DOI.

Joneson, Devan. "Mythic Mentor Figures and Liminal Sacred Spaces in *Doctor
Who* and *Battlestar Galactica.*" *Inquire: Journal of Comparative Literature*,
vol. 3, no. 1, March 2013, inquire.streetmag.org/articles/113.

13. *Article in a magazine or on a magazine Web site*
For publication date, give day, month, and year of publication if appropriate
and available; otherwise, give month and year.

∘ *Print magazine*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Magazine*, Day Month Year of publication, Page numbers.

> Alexie, Sherman. "When the Story Stolen Is Your Own." *Time,* 6 Feb. 2006, p. 72.

∘ *Magazine in database*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Magazine*, Day Month Year of Publication, Page numbers. *Database Title,* URL or DOI.

> Alexie, Sherman. "When the Story Stolen Is Your Own." *Time,* 6 Feb. 2006, p. 72. *Academic Search Premier,* connection.ebscohost.com/c/essays/19551314/when -story-stolen-your-own.

∘ *Web-only magazine or magazine Web site*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Web Site Title*, Day Month Year of publication, Page numbers [if any], URL.

> Alston, Joshua. "Puffy Combs Revives 'Raisin.' " *Newsweek*, 24 Feb. 2008, www .newsweek.com/puffy-combs-revives-raisin-93493.

> O'Rourke, Meghan. "Poetry's Lioness: Defending Sylvia Plath from Her Detractors." *Slate,* 28 Oct. 2003, www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2003/10/poetrys _lioness.html.

14. *Article in a newspaper or on a newspaper Web site*
    If the title doesn't include the city of publication, add that information in brackets after the title (as in the "Database" example below).

∘ *Print newspaper*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Newspaper*, Day Month Year of publication, Page numbers.

> Feeney, Mark. "Gabriel Garcia Marquez, 87; Nobel Winner Popularized Magical Realism." *The Boston Globe,* 18 Apr. 2014, p. B12.

∘ *Newspaper in database*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Newspaper*, Day Month Year of publication, Page numbers. *Database Title*, URL or DOI.

> Malvern, Jack. "Globe Offers Shakespeare on Demand." *The Times* [London], 4 Nov. 2014, p. 3. *EBSCOhost Newspaper Source Plus,* ezproxy.library.unlv .edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h &AN=7EH92164329&site=ehost-live.

∘ *Newspaper Web site*

> Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Newspaper*, Day Month Year of publication, URL.

> Wren, Celia. "Family Bonds, Music Play Together in Quiara Alegria Hudes's 'Water by the Spoonful.' " *The Washington Post*, 28 Feb. 2014, www.washingtonpost .com/entertainment/theater_dance/family-bonds-music-play-together-in

> -quiara-alegria-hudess-water-by-the-spoonful/2014/02/27/941f00de-9b38-11e3
> -8112-52fdf646027b_story.html.

15. *Review*

Follow the same guidelines as indicated above for an article in a journal (12), magazine (13), or newspaper (14), but between the title of the review (if any) and the title of the periodical insert the following:

> Review of *Title of Work being Reviewed*, by Work Author's Firstname Lastname.

> Bunting, Josiah. "Vietnam, Carried On: Tim O'Brien's Intense Collection of Soldiers' Memoirs." Review of *The Things They Carried,* by Tim O'Brien. *The Washington Post,* 23 Apr. 1990, p. B3. *National Newspapers Expanded,* ezproxy.library.unlv .edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/408042877?accountid=3611.

> Marks, Peter. " 'Water by the Spoonful' Dispenses Measured Fury." Review of *Water by the Spoonful,* by Quiara Alegria Hudes. *The Washington Post,* 10 Mar. 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/theater_dance/water -by-the-spoonful-dispenses-measured-fury/2014/03/10/840c1a68-a887-11e3 -8a7b-c1c684e2671f_story.html.

> Review of *The Bluest Eye,* by Toni Morrison. *Kirkus Reviews,* 1 Oct. 1970.

16. *Interview*

If the interview appears in a book or periodical, your entry will need all of the usual bibliographical information for that kind of source, but it should begin like this:

> Interviewee's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Interview [if any]." Interview by Interviewer's Firstname Lastname [if known but not indicated in title].

> Collins, Billy. "Pushing Poetry to Lighten Up—And Brighten Up." Interview. *Newsweek*, 8 July 2001, www.newsweek.com/pushing-poetry-lighten-and -brighten-154859.

> Knight, Etheridge. "A MELUS Interview: Etheridge Knight." Interview by Steven C. Tracy. *MELUS*, vol. 12, no. 2, Summer 1985, pp. 7-23. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/467427.

For broadcast (television or radio) interviews, format your entry like this:

> Interviewee's Lastname, Firstname. Interview. *Title of Program*. Network, Station, Day Month Year.

> Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. Interview. *Fresh Air*. NPR, WNYC, 9 Apr. 2002.

17. *Republished work*

Give the most recent publication information in whatever format is appropriate for that kind of source. Then insert *Originally published in* followed by the original publication information.

> Komunyakaa, Yusef. "The Body Is Our First Music: Interview with Tony Barnstone and Michael Garabedian." *Blue Notes: Essays, Interviews, and Commentaries*, edited by Radiclani Clytus, U of Michigan P, 2000, pp. 107-25. Originally published in *Poetry Flash*, no. 227, June-July 1998.

Larkin, Philip. "A Conversation with Ian Hamilton." *Further Requirements: Interviews, Broadcasts, Statements and Book Reviews*, edited by Anthony Thwaite, Faber and Faber, 2001, pp. 19-26. Originally published in *London Magazine*, Nov. 1946.

Stevenson, R. L. "A Gossip on Romance." *A Victorian Art of Fiction: Essays on the Novel in British Periodicals 1870-1900,* Garland, 1979, pp. 187-99. Originally printed in *Longman's Magazine*, Nov. 1882, pp. 69-79.

18. *Entire Web site*

If the Web site has an author, begin with his or her name. If it instead has an editor, compiler, or director, rather than an author, begin with that person's name, followed by a comma and the appropriate description.

Lastname, Firstname. *Title of Web Site*. Publisher, Date posted or last updated, URL.

Eaves, Morris, et al., editors. *The William Blake Archive.* 1996-2014, www .blakearchive.org/blake/.

19. *Work from a Web site*

Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Work." *Title of Web Site*, edited by Editor's Firstname Lastname [if any], Publisher. Date posted or last updated, URL.

Viscomi, Joseph. "Illuminated Printing." *The William Blake Archive*, edited by Morris Eaves et al., 1996-2014, www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive /biography.xq?b=illum&targ_div=d1.

20. *Film*

If your essay emphasizes the whole work, your entry should begin with the title and conclude like this:

Distributor, Date.

In between these, include the names of whatever contributors to the film are most pertinent, preceding each with the appropriate description (e.g., *directed by, performance by, produced by*). You may also or instead indicate the author of the screenplay preceded by the words *Screenplay by.* Elements should be separated by commas.

A Raisin in the Sun. Screenplay by Lorraine Hansberry, directed by Daniel Petrie, performances by Sidney Poitier, Claudia McNeil, and Ruby Dee, Columbia, 1961.

If your essay emphasizes the contribution of a particular individual (e.g., the screenwriter or director), start your entry with that person's name; a comma; his or her title; and a period.

Hansberry, Lorraine, adapter. *A Raisin in the Sun,* by Lorraine Hansberry, directed by Daniel Petrie, performances by Sidney Poitier, Claudia McNeil, and Ruby Dee, Columbia, 1961.

Petrie, Daniel, director. *A Raisin in the Sun.* Screenplay by Lorraine Hansberry, performances by Sidney Poitier, Claudia McNeil, and Ruby Dee, Columbia, 1961.

21. *Videorecording (DVD, etc.)*

Format your entry as indicated above for a film (20), but insert the film's original year of release and a period immediately after the title; end your entry with the year of release of the version consulted.

A Raisin in the Sun. 1961. Screenplay by Lorraine Hansberry, directed by Daniel Petrie, performances by Sidney Poitier, Claudia McNeil, and Ruby Dee, Columbia, 2000.

32 SAMPLE RESEARCH ESSAY

The following research essay analyzes Alice Munro's short story Boys and Girls. As you will see, the essay gives some consideration to the story's biographical and historical contexts, drawing on interviews with Munro and a sociological study of Canadian farm families. Yet the essay is primarily a critical contexts essay, as we define that term in chapter 30. In addition to considering the critical conversation about this specific short story, however, this essay examines another critical conversation, one about the initiation-story genre in general. The essay's literary critical secondary sources thus include three scholarly articles that focus exclusively on "Boys and Girls," as well as two articles that make arguments about the initiation story by instead analyzing a range of other stories. Diverse as are the sources and contexts this essay considers, however, notice that its thesis is an original, debatable interpretive claim about the literary text (Munro's story) and that the body of the essay supports and develops that claim by presenting and analyzing evidence from the text.

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English 204
15 February 2017

"Only a Girl"? Gendered Initiation in Alice Munro's
"Boys and Girls"

In 1960, an article in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* asked a question still worth asking over fifty years later, "What is an initiation story?" That article, by Mordecai Marcus, points out that literary critics frequently "used the term 'initiation' to describe a theme and a type of story" but that they didn't all use or define it exactly the same way. Marcus defines it as a story that "show[s] its young protagonist experiencing a significant change of knowledge about the world or himself, or a change of character, or of both," which "must point or lead him towards an adult world" (222). For him, the only significant difference between initiation stories has to do with their endings. He divides them into three types, depending on how far and "decisively" into that "adult world" their protagonists travel by the end (223). Published fifteen years after Marcus's essay,

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however, Elaine Ginsberg's "The Female Initiation Theme in American Fiction" (1975) suggests that it matters more what gender the story's protagonist is, at least in American fiction. According to her, "the female initiation story is rare in American literature," the first really "legitimat[e]" ones appearing only in the twentieth century (27, 31). Further, she argues those twentieth-century stories follow a pattern that is distinct in at least five ways: (1) "young girls are always introduced to a heterosexual world, in which relationships between men and women . . . are the most important," "a world in which men are always present, always important, and always more free and independent" (31, 37); (2) they "seem to see their future roles as women almost always in relation to men" (31, 36); (3) their "initiation process" involves both "sexual experience" and (4) "dropping" the attributes like boyish "clothing" or "names" that make them "androgynous creatures" at the beginning of the story; and (5) they never seem "to be aided or guided by an older" person of the same sex, as boys in initiation stories are (31). As a result, according to Ginsberg, the "sense of disillusionment, disappointment, and regret is perhaps the most significant characteristic of the female initiate in American literature" (35).

Whether Ginsberg is right about all of American literature, her argument does offer a way to think about a story she doesn't consider, Canadian Nobel Prize-winner Alice Munro's "Boys and Girls." Published in 1968, "Boys and Girls" appeared in *Dance of the Happy Shades*, Munro's first book and the event that basically initiated her career as an author. On the one hand, "Boys and Girls" is clearly a female initiation story. Its narrator is a woman remembering events that happened around the time she was eleven, and it ends with her admitting that "[m]aybe" she truly is "only a girl" (par. 65, 64). Her initiation mostly does follow the pattern Ginsberg outlines in a way that draws on Munro's personal experience and reflects that of other Canadian farm families. On the other hand, however, Munro's story does all that even better because it also depicts, as Reingard M. Nischik, Marlene Goldman, and Heliane Ventura show, another character and another initiation—that of the protagonist's younger brother, Laird. As Goldman puts it, the story "highlights the almost invisible societal forces which shape children, in this case, *the narrator and her brother Laird*, into gendered adults" (emphasis added). Rather than being either a male or female initiation story, "Boys and Girls" is both.

Roberts establishes a motive for her essay by first presenting two competing scholarly arguments about the initiation story genre, then indicating that she will be both "siding" with the second of these and expanding on it by considering a story the source does not. (Only because her essay will apply and test that source's claims does Roberts need to spell them out in such detail at the end of her opening paragraph.)

Roberts here prepares readers for the consideration of biographical and historical context later in the essay but makes the story and its critical contexts her main focus.

Here, Roberts briefly alludes to the three contributions to the second critical conversation her essay engages with—that about "Boys and Girls" specifically (rather than the initiation story generally).

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Like the heroines in the female initiation stories that Ginsberg discusses, Munro's protagonist starts out as an "androgynous creatur[e]" (31). But in Munro's story, that androgyny doesn't have anything to do with the protagonist's clothes or her name. In "Boys and Girls," clothes and names aren't very important. On the Ontario fox farm where it is set, horses and "foxes all ha[ve] names" (par. 8), but only two human characters in the story do, Laird and "the hired man," Henry Bailey (par. 2). The only pieces of clothing described are a school dress the protagonist wants and her mother makes for her (par. 17), some dresses her mother once wore and describes to her (par. 10), and the aprons both her mother and her father wear when she sees them talking together outside the barn one night (par. 12–13).

Instead of clothes or names, what really makes adult men and women different in the story is, as all the story's critics notice, the kind of work they do, where they do it, and whom they do it with. What makes the outdoor meeting between the parents so "odd" is that the mother does "not often come out of the house" or get much exercise, as the "bumpy" shape and pale color of her legs show. Her workplace is the house and especially the "hot dark kitchen," where she cans and cooks the family's food. The father instead works "out of doors" (par. 13), even if outdoors includes the barn and the fox pens he builds outside it and even if, to the mother's disgust, he has to do the "pelting . . . in the house" in winter (par. 2). Also, the mother performs her work alone and isn't paid for it, but the father gets paid enough for the furs he sells "to the Hudson's Bay Company or the Montreal Fur Traders" to hire Henry Bailey to help him (par. 1).

The narrator's androgyny, then, has to do with two things. One is the way she moves across these male and female places and activities, as Ventura observes, too (83). In the kitchen, she is "given jobs to do" like "peeling peaches . . . or cutting up onions" with her mother (par. 13). Outdoors, her "job" includes getting the foxes water and raking up the grass between their pens after her father cuts it (par. 7, 10). But in terms of her androgyny, the second and just as important thing is how close she is to her brother. The narrator and Laird are so much a unit early on in the story that the narrator slips practically automatically from "I" to "we." After she introduces Laird, Henry Bailey, and her mother in the story's second paragraph, when she says in the next one, "*We* admired him [Henry] for this performance" and "It was . . . always possible that" he "might be [laughing] at *us*," it's not exactly clear who "we" or "us" means until she starts the next paragraph by saying, "After *we* had been sent to bed"

Since Roberts's thesis is a claim about Munro's story, so, too, is the topic sentence of each body paragraph, starting with this one. At the same time, she clearly indicates how that claim relates to that of her source (Ginsberg).

Because Roberts's claim here has to do only with *which* "pieces of clothing" are "described" and *whom* they belong to, not *how* they are described, she simply summarizes rather than quotes. Yet parenthetical citations ensure that her readers can find the specific moments in the text to which she refers.

Roberts can simply refer to "the story's critics" here because her introduction has already indicated who they are.

Roberts is careful to spell out the *inference* that makes the fact (the mother's legs are "bumpy" and "pale") evidence for the claim (she "does not 'often come out of the house' or get much exercise").

Here, Roberts is careful to state her claim in her own words, while indicating that it is one also already made by one of her sources (Ventura).

Roberts doesn't need to include a parenthetical citation here only because the source is unpaginated and its author's name is mentioned in a signal phrase ("As Goldman argues").

Roberts's signal phrase indicates that two sources make the same observation, even though she only quotes one source. To specify which of the two sources she quotes, Roberts repeats its author's name in her parenthetical citation.

Roberts here specifies the basis for the source's claims (a "study of ten," Saskatchewan "farm families") and the author's key credential ("sociologist").

Rather than letting her source get the last word in her paragraph, Roberts summarizes the key point in her own words.

Roberts transitions from one paragraph/claim to another by restating the main idea of the last paragraph in the first part of this sentence and then, in the second part, stating the claim developed in this paragraph.

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(emphasis added). And this paragraph is all about the bedroom that she and her brother share, their shared fears about it, and the "rules" they both follow to make themselves feel safe (par. 4). As Goldman argues, this room is the only place in the story that isn't either clearly "male" or "female," its "unfinished state" symbolizing "the undifferentiated consciousness of the children" at this point in the story.

What's strange about this, however, is that even though they share so much, Laird is actually treated differently. He helps out when it comes to outdoor work like watering the foxes, but there's never any hint that he helps out in the house. There is a difference between boy and girl in terms of the work they do from the very beginning, even if it's not a difference the narrator or the story's critics point out. What two critics (Ventura and Nischik) do point out is another difference, that unlike the narrator, Laird gets a name, and his name is Scottish for "landowner": ". . . Laird is a potential laird, the male heir to the family" (Ventura 82).

In these ways, the story seems to accurately reflect the reality of life on Canadian family farms through the 1950s and 1960s. As Munro, who grew up on one, insists in one interview, because "what's going on" on those farms, "chiefly, is [or was] making enough to live on," "everybody has to work and be useful to the family" ("Interview" 183). Based on her study of ten farm families (in Saskatchewan instead of Ontario), sociologist June Corman describes that work as "distinctly gendered." While men had legal "title to the land" and "retained control of the agricultural income-producing work" in which "women . . . were not extensively involved," women "laboured . . . to make home made essentials instead of buying consumer goods so farm income could be used to pay down . . . debt" (70). Furthermore, she argues, "This structured gendered division of labour had implications for their . . . children": "From childhood onward girls learned" both "the skills required of farm wives" and "at least a minimal amount of skills related to grain and livestock production." But boys worked exclusively with their fathers and learned "agricultural skills but . . . not . . . domestic knowledge" (71). Farm families required equal work from all members of the family but not the same work.

At the same time that she reflects this reality about Canadian farm life, Munro's choice to focus specifically on a fox farm like the one she grew up on takes on importance in terms of how female and male worlds are characterized in the story. It's not entirely clear in the story that men are truly any more "free and independent" than women are, as Ginsberg suggests is true in a lot of female initiation stories (37), since both the mother and the father are "enslaved by the farm, harassed by [their] work" (Ventura 85). But Goldman does seem right to say that

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men's work in this story is all about controlling other wild and even dangerous creatures. "Alive, the foxes inhabited a world my father made for them," the narrator explains (par. 7). Here, they "prow[l] up and down" inside "sturdy pens" that are "surrounded by a high guard fence"with a "padlocked" gate that no one but the narrator's father is ever brave enough to go into (par. 9, 7). And, as Goldman points out, the fox pen does sort of resemble "[t]he dark, hot, stifling kitchen [that] imprisons the narrator's mother and threatens to imprison the narrator."

Maybe as a result of his power and bravery, the protagonist—as Nischik, Ventura, and Goldman all notice—clearly sees her father's work and world as superior to her mother's. She "hate[s]" the kitchen, whose "bumpy linoleum" resembles her mother's "lumpy legs," and sees housework as so "endless, dreary and peculiarly depressing" that she runs away as soon as she can (par. 13). But her father's "world," especially the pens he creates, seems to her "tidy and ingenious" (par. 7). And his work seems to her so "tirelessly inventive" (par. 7) and "ritualistically important" (par. 13) that she always helps him "willingly . . . and with a feeling of pride" (par. 10).

The adults around her reinforce that feeling. The only time her father praises her, he does it by calling her a "man" (par. 10), even specifically his "new hired man." In saying that, he compares her to Henry Bailey, which is interesting, but more important, he communicates the same message about the jobs of men and women and their unequal worth that the salesman does when he responds to the father by saying, "I thought it was only a girl." Paired with the word *only,* the word *girl,* as the narrator thinks later, becomes a label "always touched . . . with reproach and disappointment" or even "a joke on [her]" that the real hired man, Henry, especially, finds funny (par. 21). The label also gets associated with prohibitions as much as confinement. When the narrator's grandmother (the last of only three female characters total) arrives on the scene, the only thing we hear from her are commands about the things girls shouldn't do—"slam doors," sit with their knees apart, ask questions (par. 22).

The narrator *is* thus, in a way, "aided or guided by an older" person of the same sex, as boys in initiation stories are, according to Ginsberg (31). But that aid isn't positive. In fact, the girl actually sees her mother as her "enemy" because she thinks her mother is the one "plotting" to imprison her in the house and the lesser adult role it implies (par. 17). She sees that her mother is "kinder than [her] father" and "love[s] her" enough to stay up all night making the "difficult" dress she wants for school. But she still sides with her father and even likes his dismissive attitude toward her mother when they talk about her in the yard: "I was pleased by the way he stood listening [to her],

Roberts needs quotations in this paragraph because her claim is about how the narrator "sees" things, something she can only prove by showing us how the narrator describes them. Notice, though, how only the most relevant language is quoted.

Because Roberts found the quotation from one source (Hallvard Dahlie's biography of Munro) in another (Nischik's article), she puts the essential information about the original source in a signal phrase ("Munro biographer Hallvard Dahlie claims . . ."), then uses the parenthetical citation to tell us which of her sources it was quoted in ("qtd. in Nischik").

Because Roberts doesn't mention the titles of these sources in a signal phrase, she needs parenthetical citations. The latter don't include page numbers only because these sources are unpaginated.

Roberts doesn't cite a source for the fact that Munro's mother had Parkinson's, two daughters, and a son because this is common knowledge.

politely as he would to a salesman or a stranger, but with an air of wanting to get on with his real work" (par. 15), she says, "I did not expect my father to pay any attention to what she said" (par. 18).

Goldman identifies a parallel between the protagonist's attitudes to her mother and the foxes. As Goldman puts it, just as she earlier in the story "does not comprehend that the hostility she sees in the foxes' 'malevolent faces' . . . is a response to their enforced captivity," so she now interprets "her mother's behaviour . . . not as an expression of frustration and disappointment, or loneliness, but as a manifestation of innate wickedness and petty tyranny. . . ." What Goldman doesn't say is that we learn about these other possible interpretations, however, because the adult narrator *does* see them. When the narrator says, "*It did not occur to me* that she could be lonely, or jealous*" (par. 17; emphasis added), it's obvious that it *does* occur to her *now,* as an adult.

In this way, too, the story actually seems to reflect and bend reality, but in this case the reality of Munro's personal life instead of Canadian farm families'. Munro biographer Hallvard Dahlie claims that many Munro stories include "unfulfilled and despairing mothers" like Munro's real mother, a former teacher who "expended her energies during the formative years of the three Laidlaw children in the nurturing of a family under conditions of deprivation and hardship" (qtd. in Nischik). In interviews, Munro often mentions her mother in a way that implies her attitude toward her mother changed in the same way her narrator-protagonist's does. She told *The New Yorker* that her "mother . . . is still a main figure in my life because her life was so sad and unfair and she so brave, but also because she was determined to make me into the Sunday-school-recitation little girl I was, from the age of seven or so, fighting not to be" ("On 'Dear' "). She told *The Paris Review*, "The tenderness I feel now for my mother, I didn't feel for a long time" ("Alice"). At the same time, Munro leaves out of "Boys and Girls" one of the things that made her real-life mother's life particularly "sad and unfair," which was the fact that she had Parkinson's disease. By not giving her fictional mother that kind of illness or even a name, for that matter, Munro makes her more like all women, just as she makes her story about boys versus girls (period) by not giving the protagonist what she had in real life—a sister and a brother.

In the story, the protagonist's full initiation into womanhood doesn't really involve a change in her relationship to her mother. (Late in the story she does think about confiding in her, but she doesn't [par. 51].) Instead, it involves changes in the way she relates to her father, animals, and her brother. That change begins with the scene where she and Laird secretly witness their father and Henry shooting the horse, Mack. We can tell that what she sees disturbs her partly

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because her legs shake and partly because she suddenly mentions a memory of Laird that makes her feel "the sadness of unexorcized guilt" (par. 37). But the question is why, since she and her brother have watched their father killing and skinning other animals and, unlike their mother, weren't bothered by that or the gross smells it produced (par. 2)? Or, as she herself explains,

> I did not have any great feeling of horror and opposition, such as a city child might have had. I was used to seeing the death of animals as a necessity by which we lived. Yet I felt a little ashamed, and there was a new wariness, a sense of holding-off, in my attitude to my father and his work. (par. 43)

There are many possible reasons for her reaction, but one might be that even before this point the girl begins to identify with the horses in a way she never does with the foxes. It is when—in her life and in the story—she is beginning to feel most pressured about being a girl and first expresses a wish to remain "free" that she remembers to mention how the foxes were fed at all and to describe, in detail, the two particular horses, Mack and Flora, and the different ways they respond to their similarly unfree situation (par. 22). (Mack is "slow and easy to handle"; Flora rears and kicks at people and fences [par. 20, 23].) That identification might explain why she might suddenly have a new "wariness" of her father and his work after seeing one of the horses killed (par. 43).

That feeling might be compounded, too, by the way Henry behaves, especially the fact that he laughs about Mack being shot in the same ways he's already laughed at her more than once in the story (par. 2, 21). But her sense of being "ashamed" about the shooting seems to come from seeing how she in a way acted like him long ago when she endangered her little brother's life just "for excitement" (par. 43, 37). As Goldman argues,

> Bailey's laughter [when "the horse kicks its legs in the air"] is particularly unnerving because it fully exposes his delight in power based on sheer inequality.
>
> The narrator recognizes this as an abuse of power . . . as a result of her own experience. She, too, lorded power over an innocent victim. . . .

It doesn't seem surprising, then, that when the narrator has the chance to save Flora ten days later, even just temporarily, she just does it without "mak[ing] any decision" or even "understand[ing] why" (par. 48, 50). By doing that, in Ventura's words, "the girl vicariously achieves her own temporary liberation" (84), and, in Goldman's words, "she radically breaks from her male-identified position." As the narrator points out, she disobeys her father for the very first time in her

By putting the narrator's characterizations of Mack's and Flora's different reactions to their imprisonment in parentheses, Roberts substantiates her claim about the narrator's detailed descriptions, while staying focused on this paragraph's main topic—the narrator's *feelings about* the horses.

Here, as throughout the essay, Roberts never substitutes the claim of a source for the textual evidence necessary to substantiate and develop it.

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life and in a way she knows will change their relationship forever (par. 50). Rather than helping him as she's always wanted to do before, she "make[s] more work for" him by letting Flora go (par. 50). Worse, she knows that once he figures out what she's done he won't "trust me any more," but "would know that I was not entirely on his side. I was on Flora's side . . ." (par. 50). Her change of "side[s]," though, isn't complete or recognized by other people until dinner. When the truth about how she let Flora go is revealed, her father responds in a way that "absolved and dismissed [her] for good" by repeating the words the salesman used earlier, "She's only a girl" (par. 64). More important, the narrator doesn't "protest . . . , even in [her] heart" (par. 65). Like Mack and unlike the foxes and Flora, she now silently accepts her fate.

Just as important, though, is the way she separates herself from her brother. At the exact same time that the narrator permanently separates herself from her father, by letting Flora out, she also separates herself from Laird in a way that seems ironic, given that it was in a way sympathy with Laird or guilt about him that started the change in her in the first place. At any rate, when Henry and her father go off to get Flora, Laird goes with them, but the narrator doesn't. When she says, "I shut the gate after they were all gone," it seems like the first time in the story that Henry, the father, and Laird become a "they" that doesn't include her (par. 49). At least it seems like a far cry from the "we" she and Laird are early in the story. Importantly, though, it isn't really true that, as Ventura claims, the narrator "is not allowed aboard the bouncing truck" because she, unlike Laird, never actually asks to go (86). That change in her relationship to Laird is confirmed by the way, in between Flora's escape and the dinner that ends the story, the narrator mentions their bedroom one more time. In addition to decorating her part of the room, she "planned to put up some kind of barricade between [her] bed and Laird's, to keep my section separate from his" (par. 52).

As Goldman argues, though, Laird's very different initiation and behavior are significant:

> As they lift him into the truck, the little boy becomes a man: he joins the hunting party. Upon his return, he brandishes the streak of blood on his arm. . . . [T]he mark of blood and the domination of the Other continues to function as a crucial element in the rites of manhood. The boy cements his alliance with the father on the basis of their mutual triumph over nature.

In fact, that "alliance" isn't "cemented" until that night, when Laird, "look[ing] across the table at" her "proudly, distinctly" tells her secret to everyone (par. 56). In a weird way, he reverses the roles they each

To reinforce her claim about the narrator's development over the course of the story and connect the earlier parts of her essay with the later ones, Roberts briefly alludes to evidence and a point she made earlier.

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play in the memory that sparks her change—now he's the powerful one who leaves her figuratively hanging.

Here, though, is where the male and female initiations in this one story differ in a way that totally accords with Ginsberg's argument. Laird becomes a man in relationship to other men, grown-ups of his own gender, but in a way that has nothing to do with actual sex. Like the protagonists of most female initiation stories, according to Ginsberg, however, the protagonist of this one "seem[s] to see [her] future rol[e] as [a] wom[a]n . . . in relation to men" in a way that involves "sexual experience" (31). We see this in the stories she tells herself at night. Where the stories she makes up at the beginning of the story are all adventure stories in which she does things like shoot animals (just as Laird actually ends up doing by the end of this story), the stories she makes up at the end of the story are more like romances featuring boys she knows from school or one of her male teachers (par. 52).

If we go back to Marcus's question, "What is an initiation story?," then, "Boys and Girls" shows us that Ginsberg is right to say that the answer can depend most on whether the story features boys, girls, or "boys and girls." Or at least it once did, because here is where it might matter that Munro's story was published in 1968 and is set much earlier. In interviews, Munro expresses the idea that things were, in real life, changing even in her generation, which is also, as Nischik points out, her protagonist's. "If I had been a farm girl of a former generation," she says in one interview, "I wouldn't have had a chance" to go to college or be a writer, for example." Instead, her only option would have been to become a farm wife like her own mother or her protagonist's mother. "But in the generation that I was, there were scholarships. Girls were not encouraged to get them, but you could. I could imagine, from an early age, that I would be a writer" ("Interview" 183). Even if her protagonist never explicitly imagines herself some day being a writer, she is writing stories in her head every night. And that doesn't change over the course of the story, even if the kinds of stories she tells do. Even if at the end of the story the protagonist ends up accepting the idea that she is "only a girl" and not saying anything, the fact that she keeps telling herself stories and that she is, in fact, narrating her story to us as an adult suggests that the end of the story *isn't* the end of the story. Girls don't have to grow up to be "only" one thing after all. They can grow up to tell both their stories and their brothers. They can even win Nobel Prizes for it.

Roberts opens her conclusion by referring us back to the "frame" she established in the beginning— the different views of two sources (Marcus and Ginsberg).

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Critical Approaches

Few human abilities are more remarkable than the ability to read and interpret literature. A computer program or a database can't perform the complex process of reading and interpreting—not to mention writing about—a literary text, although computers can easily exceed human powers of processing codes and information. Readers follow the sequence of printed words and as if by magic recreate a scene between characters in a novel or play, or they respond to the almost inexpressible emotional effect of a poem's figurative language. Experienced readers can pick up on a multitude of literary signals all at once. With rereading and some research, readers can draw on information such as the author's life or the time period when this work and others like it were first published. Varied and complex as the approaches to literary criticism may be, they are not difficult to learn. For the most part schools of criticism and theory have developed to address questions that any reader can begin to answer.

There are essentially three participants in what could be called the literary exchange or interaction: the *text*, the *source* (the *author* and other factors that produce the text), and the *receiver* (the *reader* and other aspects of *reception*). All the varieties of literary analysis concern themselves with these aspects of the literary exchange in varying degrees and with varying emphases. Although each of these elements has a role in any form of literary analysis, systematic studies of literature and its history have defined approaches or methods that focus on the different elements and circumstances of the literary interaction. The first three sections below—"Emphasis on the Text," "Emphasis on the Source," and "Emphasis on the Receiver"—describe briefly those schools or modes of literary analysis that have concentrated on one of the three participants while de-emphasizing the others. These different emphases, plainly speaking, are habits of asking different kinds of questions. Answers or interpretations will vary according to the questions we ask of a literary work. In practice the range of questions can be—and to some extent *should* be—combined whenever we develop a literary interpretation. Such questions can always generate the thesis or argument of a critical essay.

Although some approaches to literary analysis treat the literary exchange (text, source, receiver) in isolation from the world surrounding that exchange (the world of economics, politics, religion, cultural tradition, and sexuality—in other words, the world in which we live), most contemporary modes of analysis acknowledge the importance of that world to the literary exchange. These days, even if literary scholars want to focus on the text or its source or receiver, they will often incorporate some of the observations and methods developed by theorists and critics who have turned their attention toward the changing world surrounding the formal conventions of literature, the writing process and writer's career, and the reception or response to literature. We describe the work of such theorists and critics in the fourth section below, "Historical and Ideological Criticism."

Before expanding on the kinds of critical approaches within these four categories, let's consider one example in which questions concerning the text, source, and receiver, as well as a consideration of historical and ideological questions,

would contribute to a richer interpretation of a text. To begin as usual with prelimi-
nary questions about the *text*: *What* is "First Fight. Then Fiddle."? Printed correctly
on a separate piece of paper, the text would tell us at once that it is a poem because
of its form: rhythm, repeating word sounds, lines that leave very wide margins on
the page. Because you are reading this poem in this book, you know even more
about its form (in this way, the publication *source* gives clues about the *text*). By put-
ting it in a section with other poetry, we have told you it is a poem worth reading,
rereading, and thinking about. (What other ways do you encounter poems, and
what does the medium in which a poem is presented tell you about it?)

You should pursue other questions focused on the text. What *kind* of poem is
it? Here we have helped you, especially if you are not already familiar with the
sonnet form, by grouping this poem with other sonnets (in The Sonnet: An Album).
Classifying "First Fight. Then Fiddle." as a sonnet might then prompt you to inter-
pret the ways that this poem is or is not like other sonnets. Well and good: You can
check off its fourteen lines of (basically) iambic pentameter and note its some-
what unusual rhyme scheme and meter in relation to the rules of Italian and
English sonnets. But *why* does this experiment with the sonnet form matter?

To answer questions about the purpose of form, you need to answer some basic
questions about *source*, such as *When* was this sonnet written and published?
Who wrote it? *What* do you know about Gwendolyn Brooks, about 1949, about
African American women and/or poets in the United States at that time? A short
historical and biographical essay answering such questions might help put the
"sonnetness" of "First Fight. Then Fiddle." in context. But assembling all the avail-
able information about the source and original context of the poem, even some
sort of documented testimony from Brooks about her intentions or interpretation
of it, would still leave room for other questions leading to new interpretations.

What about the *receiver* of "First Fight. Then Fiddle."? Even within the poem a
kind of audience exists. This sonnet seems to be a set of instructions addressed
to "you." (Although many sonnets are addressed by a speaker, "I," to an auditor,
"you," such address rarely sounds like a series of military commands, as it does
here.) This internal audience is not of course to be confused with real people
responding to the poem, and it is the latter who are its *receivers*. How did readers
respond to it when it was first published? Can you find any published reviews, or
any criticism of this sonnet published in studies of Gwendolyn Brooks?

Questions about the receiver, like those about the author and other sources,
readily connect with questions about historical and cultural context. Would a reader
or someone listening to this poem read aloud respond differently in the years after
World War II than in an age of global terrorism? Does it make a difference if the
audience addressed by the speaker inside the poem is imagined as a group of African
American men and women or as a group of European American male commanders?
(The latter question could be regarded as an inquiry involving the text and the
source as well as the receiver.) Does a reader need to identify with any of the par-
ticular groups the poem fictitiously addresses, or would any reader, from any back-
ground, respond to it the same way? Even the formal qualities of the text could be
examined through historical lenses: The sonnet form has been associated with pres-
tigious European literature, and with themes of love and mortality, since the Renais-
sance. It is significant that a twentieth-century African American poet chose *this*
traditional form to twist "threadwise" into a poem about conflict.

The above are only some of the worthwhile questions that might help illumi-
nate this short, intricate poem. (We will develop a few more thoughts about it in

illustrating different approaches to the text and to the source.) Similarly, the complexity of critical approaches far exceeds our four categories. While a great deal of worthwhile scholarship and criticism borrows from a range of theories and methods, below we give necessarily simplified descriptions of various critical approaches that have continuing influence. We cannot trace a history of the issues involved, or the complexity and controversies within these movements. Instead think of what follows as a road map to the terrain of literary analysis. Many available resources describe the entire landscape of literary analysis in more precise detail. If you are interested in learning more about these or any other analytical approaches, consult the works listed in the bibliography at the end of this chapter.

EMPHASIS ON THE TEXT

This broad category encompasses approaches that de-emphasize questions about the author/source or the reader/reception in order to focus on the work itself. In a sense any writing about literature presupposes recognition of form, in that it deems the object of study to *be* a literary work that belongs to a genre or subgenre of literature, as Brooks's poem belongs with sonnets. Moreover, almost all literary criticism notes some details of style or structure, some *intrinsic* features such as the relation between dialogue or narration, or the pattern of rhyme and meter. But *formalist* approaches go further by foregrounding the design of the text itself above all or most other considerations.

Some formalists, reasonably denying the division of content from form (since the form is an aspect of the content or meaning), have more controversially excluded any discussion of *extrinsic* or contextual (versus textual) matters such as the author's biography or questions of psychology, sociology, or history. This has led to accusations that formalism, in avoiding relevance to actual authors and readers or to the world of economic power or social change, also avoids political issues or commitments. Some historical or ideological critics have therefore argued that formalism supports the powers that be, since it precludes protest. Conversely, some formalists charge that any extrinsic—that is, historical, political, ideological, as well as biographical or psychological—interpretations of literature reduce the text to a set of more or less cleverly encoded messages or propaganda. A formalist might maintain that the inventive wonders of art exceed any practical function it serves. In practice, influential formalists have generated modes of *close reading* that balance attention to form, significance, and social context, with some acknowledgment of the political implications of literature. In the early twenty-first century the formalist methods of close reading remain influential, especially in classrooms. Indeed, *The Norton Introduction to Literature* adheres to these methods in its presentation of elements and interpretation of form.

New Criticism

One strain of formalism, loosely identified as the New Criticism, dominated literary studies from approximately the 1920s to the 1970s. New Critics rejected both of the approaches that prevailed then in the relatively new field of English studies: the dry analysis of the development of the English language, and the misty-eyed appreciation and evaluation of "Great Works." Generally, New Criticism minimizes consideration of both the source and the receiver, emphasizing instead the intrinsic qualities of a unified literary work. Psychological or historical information about the

author, the intentions or feelings of authors or readers, and any philosophical or socially relevant "messages" derived from the work all are out of bounds in a New Critical reading. The text in a fundamental way refers to itself: Its medium is its message. Although interested in ambiguity and irony as well as figurative language, a New Critical reader considers the organic unity of the unique work. Like an organism, the work develops in a synergetic relation of parts to whole.

A New Critic might, for example, publish an article titled "A Reading of 'First Fight. Then Fiddle.'" (The method works best with **lyric** or other short forms because it requires painstaking attention to details such as metaphors or alliteration.) Little if anything would be said of Gwendolyn Brooks or the poem's relation to Modernist poetry. The critic's task is to give credit to the poem, not the poet or the period, and if it is a good poem, then—implicitly—it can't be merely "about" World War II or civil rights. New Criticism presumes that a good literary work symbolically embodies universal human themes and may be interpreted objectively on many levels. These levels may be related more by tension and contradiction than harmony, yet that relation demonstrates the coherence of the whole.

Thus the New Critic's essay might include some of the following observations. The title—which reappears as half of the first line—consists of a pair of two-word imperative sentences, and most statements in the poem paraphrase these two sentences, especially the first of them, "First fight." Thus an alliterative two-word command, "Win war" (line 12), follows a longer version of such a command: "But first to arms, to armor" (9). Echoes of this sort of exhortation appear throughout. We, as audience, begin to feel "bewitch[ed], bewilder[ed]" (4) by a buildup of undesirable urgings, whether at the beginning of a line ("Be deaf," 11) or the end of a line ("Be remote," 7; "Carry hate," 9) or in the middle of a line ("Rise bloody," 12). It's hardly what we would want to do. Yet the speaker makes a strong case for the practical view that a society needs to take care of defense before it can "devote" itself to "silks and honey" (6–7), that is, the soft and sweet pleasures of art. But what kind of culture would place "hate / In front of . . . harmony" and try to ignore "music" and "beauty" (9–11)? What kind of people are only "remote / A while from malice and from murdering" (6–7)? A society of warlike heroes would rally to this speech. Yet on rereading, many of the words jar with the tone of heroic battle cry.

The New Critic examines not only the speaker's style and words but also the order of ideas and lines in the poem. Ironically, the poem defies the speaker's command; it fiddles first, and then fights, as the octave (first eight lines) concern art, and the sestet (last six) concern war. The New Critic might be delighted by the irony that the two segments of the poem in fact unite, in that their topics—octave on how to fiddle, sestet on how to fight—mirror each other. The beginning of the poem plays with metaphors for music and art as means of inflicting "hurting love" (line 3) or emotional conquest, that is, ways to "fight." War and art are both, as far as we know, universal in all human societies. The poem, then, is an organic whole that explores timeless concerns.

Later critics have pointed out that New Criticism, despite its avoidance of extrinsic questions, had a political context of its own. The affirmation of unity for the artwork and humanities in general should be regarded as a strategy adapted during the Cold War as a counterbalance to the politicization of art in fascist and communist regimes. New Criticism also provided a program for literary reading that is accessible to beginners regardless of their social background, which was extremely useful at a time when more women, minorities, and members of the working class

than ever before were entering college. By the 1970s these same groups had helped generate two sources of opposition to New Criticism's ostensible neutrality and transparency: critical studies that emphasized the politics of social differences (e.g., feminist criticism), and theoretical approaches, based on linguistics, philosophy, and political theory, that effectively distanced nonspecialists once more.

Structuralism

Whereas New Criticism was largely a British and American phenomenon, structuralism and its successor, poststructuralism, derive primarily from French theorists. Strains of structuralism also emerged in the Soviet Union and in Prague. Each of these movements was drawn to scientific objectivity and at the same time wary of political commitment. Politics, after all, had been the rallying cry for censorship of science, art, and inquiry throughout centuries and in recent memory.

Structuralist philosophy, however, was something rather new. Influenced by the French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), structuralists sought an objective system for studying the principles of language. Saussure distinguished between individual uses of language, such as the sentences you or I might have just spoken or written (*parole*), and the sets of rules of English or any language (*langue*). Just as a structuralist linguist would study the interrelations of signs in the *langue* rather than the variations in specific utterances in *parole*, a structuralist critic of literature or culture would study shared systems of meaning, such as genres or myths that pass from one country or period to another, rather than a certain poem in isolation (the favored subject of New Criticism).

Another structuralist principle derived from Saussure is the emphasis on the arbitrary association between a word and what it is said to signify—that is, between the *signifier* and the *signified*. The word "horse," for example, has no divine, natural, or necessary connection to that four-legged, domesticated mammal, which is named by other combinations of sounds and letters in other languages. Any language is a network of relations among such arbitrary signifiers, just as each word in the dictionary must be defined using other words in that dictionary. Structuralists largely attribute the meanings of words to rules of differentiation from other words. Such differences may be phonetic (as among the words "cat" and "bat" and "hat") or they may belong to conceptual associations (as among the words "dinky," "puny," "tiny," "small," "miniature," "petite," "compact"). Structuralist thought has particularly called attention to the way that opposites or dualisms such as "night" and "day" or "feminine" and "masculine" define each other through their differences from each other rather than in direct reference to objective reality. For example, the earth's motion around the sun produces changing exposure to sunlight daily and seasonally, but by linguistic convention we call it "night" between, let's say, 8 p.m. and 5 a.m., no matter how light it is. (We may differ in opinions about "evening" or "dawn." But our "day" at work may begin or end in the dark.) The point is that arbitrary labels divide what in fact is continuous.

Structuralism's linguistic insights have greatly influenced literary studies. Like New Criticism, structuralism shows little interest in the creative process or in authors, their intentions, or their circumstances. Similarly, structuralism discounts the idiosyncrasies of particular readings; it takes texts to represent interactions of words and ideas that stand apart from individual human identities or sociopolitical commitments. Structuralist approaches have applied less to lyric poetry than to

myths, narratives, and cultural practices, such as sports or fashion. Although structuralism tends to affirm a universal humanity just as New Critics do, its work in comparative mythology and anthropology challenged the absolute value that New Criticism tended to grant to time-honored canons of great literature.

The structuralist would regard a text not as a self-sufficient icon but as part of a network of conventions. A structuralist essay on "First Fight. Then Fiddle." might ask why the string is plied with the "feathery sorcery" (line 2) of the "bow" (7). These words suggest the art of a Native American trickster or primitive sorcerer, while at the same time the instrument is a disguised weapon: a stringed bow with feathered arrows (the term "muzzle" is a similar pun, suggesting an animal's snout and the discharging end of a gun). Or is the fiddle—a violin played in musical forms such as bluegrass—a metaphor for popular art or folk resistance to official culture? In many folk tales a hero is taught to play the fiddle by the devil or tricks the devil with a fiddle or similar instrument. Further, a structuralist reading might attach great significance to the sonnet form as a paradigm that has shaped poetic expression for centuries. The classic "turn" or reversal of thought in a sonnet may imitate the form of many narratives of departure and return, separation and reconciliation. Brooks's poem repeats in the numerous short reversing imperatives, as well as in the structure of octave versus sestet, the eternal oscillation between love and death, creation and destruction.

Poststructuralism

By emphasizing the paradoxes of dualisms and the ways that language constructs our awareness, structuralism planted the seeds of its own destruction or, rather, deconstruction. Dualisms (e.g., masculine/feminine, mind/body, culture/nature) cannot be separate-but-equal; rather, they take effect as differences of power in which one dominates the other. Yet as the German philosopher of history Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) insisted, the relations of the dominant and subordinate, of master and slave readily invert themselves. The master is dominated by his need for the slave's subordination; the possession of subordinates defines his mastery. As Brooks's poem implies, each society reflects its own identity through an opposing "they," in a dualism of civilized/barbaric. The instability of the speaker's position in this poem (is he or she among the conquerors or the conquered?) is a model of the instability of roles throughout the human world. There is no transcendent ground—except on another planet, perhaps—from which to measure the relative positions of the polar opposites on Earth. Roland Barthes (1915–80) and others, influenced by the radical movements of the 1960s and the increasing complexity of culture in an era of mass consumerism and global media, extended structuralism into more profoundly relativist perspectives.

Poststructuralism is the broad term used to designate the philosophical position that attacks the objective, universalizing claims of most fields of knowledge since the eighteenth century. Poststructuralists, distrusting the optimism of a positivist philosophy that suggests the world is knowable and explainable, ultimately doubt the possibility of certainties of any kind, since language signifies only through a chain of other words rather than through any fundamental link to reality. This argument derives from structuralism, yet it also criticizes structuralist universalism and avoidance of political issues. *Ideology* is a key conceptual ingredient in the poststructuralist argument against structuralism. Ideology is a slippery

term that can broadly be defined as a socially shared set of ideas that shape behavior; often it refers to the values that legitimate the ruling interests in a society, and in many accounts it is the hidden code that is officially denied. (We discuss kinds of "ideological" criticism later.) Poststructuralist theory has played a part in a number of critical schools introduced below, not all of them focused on the text. But in literary criticism, poststructuralism has marshaled most forces under the banner of deconstruction.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction insists on the logical impossibility of knowledge that is not influenced or biased by the words used to express it. Deconstruction also claims that language is incapable of representing any sort of reality directly. As practiced by its most famous proponent, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), deconstruction endeavors to trace the way texts imply the contradiction of their explicit meanings. The deconstructionist delights in the sense of dizziness as the grounds of conviction crumble away; *aporia*, or irresolvable doubt, is the desired, if fleeting, end of an encounter with a text. Deconstruction threatens *humanism*, or the worldview that is centered on human values and the self-sufficient individual, because it denies that there is an ultimate, solid reality on which to base truth or the identity of the self. All values and identities are constructed by the competing systems of meaning, or *discourses*. This is a remarkably influential set of ideas that you will meet again as we discuss other approaches.

The traditional concept of the author as creative origin of the text comes under fire in deconstructionist criticism, which emphasizes instead the creative power of language or the text, and the ingenious work of the critic in detecting gaps and contradictions in writing. Thus, like New Criticism, deconstruction disregards the author and concentrates on textual close reading, but unlike New Criticism, it features the role of the reader as well. Moreover, the text need not be respected as a pure and coherent icon. Deconstructionists might "read" many kinds of writing and representation in other media in much the same way that they might read Milton's *Paradise Lost*, that is, irreverently. Indeed, when deconstruction erupted in university departments of literature, traditional critics and scholars feared the breakdown of the distinctions between literature and criticism and between literature and many other kinds of texts. Many attacks on literary theory have particularly lambasted deconstructionists for apparently rejecting all the reasons to care about literature in the first place and for writing in a style so flamboyantly obscure that no one but specialists can understand. Yet in practice Derrida and others have carried harmony before them, to paraphrase Brooks; their readings can delight in the play of figurative language, thereby enhancing rather than debunking the value of literature.

A deconstructionist might read "First Fight. Then Fiddle." in a manner somewhat similar to the New Critic's, but with even more focus on puns and paradoxes and on the poem's resistance to organic unity. For instance, the two alliterative commands, "fight" and "fiddle," might be opposites, twins, or inseparable consequences of each other. The word "fiddle" is tricky. Does it suggest that art is trivial? Does it allude to a dictator who "fiddles while Rome burns," as the saying goes? Someone who "fiddles" is not performing a grand, honest, or even competent act: One fiddles with a hobby, with the books, with car keys in the dark. The artist in this poem

defies the orthodoxy of the sonnet form, instead making a kind of harlequin patch-work out of different traditions, breaking the rhythm, intermixing endearments and assaults.

To the deconstructionist the recurring broken antitheses of war and art, art and war cancel each other out. The very metaphors undermine the speaker's sum-mons to war. The command "Be deaf to music and to beauty blind," which takes the form of a *chiasmus*, or X-shaped sequence (adjective, noun; noun, adjective), is a kind of miniature version of this chiasmic poem. (We are supposed to follow a sequence, fight then fiddle, but instead reverse that by imagining ways to do vio-lence with art or to create beauty through destruction.) The poem, a lyric written but imagined as spoken or sung, puts the senses and the arts under erasure; we are somehow not to hear music (by definition audible), not to see beauty (here a visual attribute). "Maybe not too late" comes rather too late: At the end of the poem it will be too late to start over, although "having first to civilize a space / Wherein to play your violin with grace" (lines 12–14) comes across as a kind of beginning. These comforting lines form the only heroic couplet in the poem, the only two lines that run smoothly from end to end. (All the other lines have **caesuras**, **enjamb-ments**, or balanced pairs of concepts, as in "from malice and from murdering" [8].) But the violence behind "civilize," the switch to the high-art term "violin," and the use of the Christian term "grace" suggest that the pagan erotic art prom-ised at the outset, the "sorcery" of "hurting love" that can "bewitch," will be suppressed.

Like other formalisms, deconstruction can appear apolitical or conservative because of its skepticism about the referential connection between literature and the world of economics, politics, and other social forms. Yet poststructuralist lin-guistics provides a theory of *difference* that clearly pertains to the rankings of status and power in society, as in earlier examples of masculine/feminine, master/ slave. The *Other*, the negative of the norm, is always less than an equal counter-part. Deconstruction has been a tool for various poststructuralist thinkers— including the historian Michel Foucault (1926–84), the feminist theorist and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (b. 1941), and the psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan (1901–81).

Narrative Theory

Before concluding the discussion of text-centered approaches, we should mention the schools of narratology and narrative theory that have shaped study of the novel and other kinds of narrative. Criticism of fiction has been in a boom period since the 1950s, but the varieties of narrative theory per se have had more limited effect than the approaches we have discussed above. Since the 1960s different analysts of the forms and techniques of narrative, most notably the Chicago for-malists and the structuralist narratologists, have developed terminology for the various interactions of author, implied author, narrator, and characters; of plot and the treatment of time in the selection and sequence of scenes; of voice, point of view, or focus and other aspects of fiction. As formalisms, narrative theories tend to exclude the author's biography, individual reader response, and the histori-cal context of the work or its actual reception.

Narratology began by presenting itself as a structuralist science; its branches have grown from psychoanalytic theory or extended to reader-response criticism.

In recent decades studies of narrative technique and form have responded to Marxist, feminist, and other ideological criticism that insists on the political contexts of literature. One important influence on this shift has been the revival of the work of the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), which considers the novel as a *dialogic* form that pulls together the many discourses and voices of a culture and its history. Part of the appeal of Bakhtin's work has been the fusion of textual close reading with attention to material factors such as economics and class, and a sense of the open-endedness and contradictoriness of writing (in the spirit of deconstruction more than of New Criticism). Like other Marxist-trained European formalists, Bakhtin sought to place the complex literary modes of communication in the light of politics and history.

EMPHASIS ON THE SOURCE

As the examples above suggest, a great deal can be drawn from a text without any reference to its source or its author. For millennia many anonymous works were shared in oral or manuscript form, and even after printing spread in Europe few thought it necessary to know the author's name or anything about him or her. Yet criticism from its beginnings in ancient Greece has been interested in the designing intention "behind" the text. Even when no evidence remained about the author, a legendary personality has sometimes been invented to satisfy readers' curiosity. From the legend of blind Homer to the latest debates about biographical evidence and portraits of William Shakespeare, literary criticism has been accompanied by interest in the author's life.

Biographical Criticism

This approach reached its height in an era when humanism prevailed in literary studies (roughly the 1750s to the 1960s). At this time there was widely shared confidence in the ideas that art and literature were the direct expressions of the artist's or writer's genius and that criticism of great works supported veneration of the great persons who created them. The lives of some famous writers became the models that aspiring writers emulated. Criticism at times was skewed by social judgments of personalities, as when John Keats was put down as a "Cockney" poet, that is, London-bred and lower-class. Many writers have struggled to get their work taken seriously because of mistaken biographical criticism. Women or minorities have at times used pseudonyms or published anonymously to avoid having their work put down or having it read only through the expectations, negative or positive, of what a woman or person of color might write. Biographical criticism can be diminishing in this respect. Others have objected to reading literature as a reflection of the author's personality. Such critics have supported the idea that the highest literary art is pure form, untouched by gossip or personal emotion. In this spirit some early twentieth-century critics as well as Modernist writers such as T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf tried to dissociate the text from the personality or political commitments of the author. (The theories of these writers and their actual practices did not always coincide.)

In the early twentieth century, psychoanalytic interpretations placed the text in light of the author's emotional conflicts, and other interpretations relied heavily on the author's stated intentions. (Although psychoanalytic criticism entails more than

analysis of the author, we will introduce it as an approach that primarily concerns the human source[s] of literature; it usually has less to say about the form and receiver of the text.) Author-based readings can be reductive. All the accessible information about a writer's life cannot definitively explain the writings. As a young man D. H. Lawrence might have hated his father and loved his mother, but all men who hate their fathers and love their mothers do not write fiction as powerful as Lawrence's. Indeed, Lawrence himself cautioned that we should "trust the tale, not the teller."

Any kind of criticism benefits to some extent, however, from being informed by knowledge of the writer's life and career. Certain critical approaches, devoted to recognition of separate literary traditions, make sense only in light of supporting biographical evidence. Studies that concern traditions such as Irish literature, Asian American literature, or literature by Southern women require reliable information about the writers' birth and upbringing and even some judgment of the writers' intentions to write *as* members of such traditions. (We discuss feminist, African American, and other studies of distinct literatures in the "Historical and Ideological Criticism" section that follows, although such studies recognize the biographical "source" as a starting point.)

A reading of "First Fight. Then Fiddle." can become rather different when we know more about Gwendolyn Brooks. An African American, she was raised in Chicago in the 1920s. These facts begin to provide a context for her work. Some of the biographical information has more to do with her time and place than with her race and sex. Brooks began in the 1940s to associate with Harriet Monroe's magazine, *Poetry*, which had been influential in promoting Modernist poetry. Brooks early received acclaim for books of poetry that depict the everyday lives of poor, urban African Americans; in 1950 she was the first African American to win a Pulitzer Prize. In 1967 she became an outspoken advocate for the Black Arts movement, which promoted a separate tradition rather than integration into the aesthetic mainstream. But even before this political commitment, her work never sought to "pass" or to distance itself from the reality of racial difference, nor did it become any less concerned with poetic tradition and form when she published it through small, independent black presses in her "political" phase.

It is reasonable, then, to read "First Fight. Then Fiddle.," published in 1949, in relation to the role of a racial outsider mastering and adapting the forms of a dominant tradition. Perhaps Brooks's speaker addresses an African American audience in the voice of a revolutionary, calling for violence to gain the right to express African American culture. Perhaps the lines "the music that they wrote / Bewitch, bewilder. Qualify to sing / Threadwise" (lines 3–5) suggest the way that the colonized may transform the empire's music rather than the other way around. Ten years before the poem was published, a famous African American singer, Marian Anderson, had more than "qualif[ied] to sing" opera and classical concert music, but had still encountered the color barrier in the United States. Honored throughout Europe as the greatest living contralto, Anderson was barred in 1939 from performing at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., because of her race. Instead she performed at the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday to an audience of seventy-five thousand people. It was not easy to find a "space" in which to practice her art. Such a contextual reference, whether or not intended, relates biographically to Brooks's role as an African American woman wisely reweaving classical traditions "threadwise" rather than straining them into "hempen" (5) ropes. Beneath the manifest reference to the recent world war, this poem refers to the

segregation of the arts in America. (Questions of source and historical context often interrelate.)

Besides readings that derive from biographical and historical information, there are still other ways to read aspects of the *source* rather than the *text* or the *receiver*. The source of the work extends beyond the life of the person who wrote it to include not only the writer's other works but also the circumstances of contemporary publishing; contemporary literary movements; the history of the composition, editing, and publication of this particular text, with all the variations; and other contributing factors. While entire schools of literary scholarship have been devoted to each of these matters, any analyst of a particular work should bear in mind what is known about the circumstances of writers at that time, the material conditions of the work's first publication, and the means of dissemination ever since. It makes a difference in our interpretation to know that a certain sonnet circulated in manuscript in a small courtly audience or that a particular novel was serialized in a weekly journal cheap enough for the masses to read it.

Psychoanalytic Criticism

With the development of psychology and psychoanalysis toward the end of the nineteenth century, many critics were tempted to apply psychological theories to literary analysis. Symbolism, dreamlike imagery, emotional rather than rational logic, and a pleasure in language all suggested that literature profoundly evoked a mental and emotional landscape, often one of disorder or abnormality. From mad poets to patients speaking in verse, imaginative literature might be regarded as a representation of shared irrational structures within all *psyches* (i.e., souls) or selves. While psychoanalytic approaches have developed along with structuralism and poststructuralist linguistics and philosophy, they rarely focus on textual form. Rather, they attribute latent or hidden meaning to unacknowledged desires in some person, usually the author or source behind the character in a narrative or drama. A psychoanalytic critic can also focus on the response of readers and, in recent decades, usually accepts the influence of changing social history on the structures of sexual desire represented in the work. Nevertheless, psychoanalysis has typically aspired to a universal, unchanging theory of the mind and personality, and criticism that applies it has tended to emphasize the authorial source.

FREUDIAN CRITICISM

For most of the twentieth century, the dominant school of psychoanalytic critics was the Freudian, based on the work of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Many of its practitioners assert that the meaning of a literary work exists not on its surface but in the psyche (some would even claim, in the neuroses) of the author. Classic psychoanalytic criticism read works as though they were the recorded dreams of patients; interpreted the life histories of authors as keys to the works; or analyzed characters as though they, like real people, have a set of repressed childhood memories. (In fact, many novels and most plays leave out information about characters' development from infancy through adolescence, the period that psychoanalysis especially strives to reconstruct.)

A well-known Freudian reading of *Hamlet*, for example, insists that Hamlet suffers from an Oedipus complex, a Freudian term for a group of repressed desires and memories that corresponds with the Greek myth that is the basis of Sophocles's

play *Oedipus the King.* In this view Hamlet envies his uncle because the son unconsciously wants to sleep with his mother, who was the first object of his desire as a baby. The ghost of Hamlet Sr. may then be a manifestation of Hamlet's unconscious desire or of his guilt for wanting to kill his father, the person who has a right to the desired mother's body. Hamlet's madness is not just acting but the result of this frustrated desire; his cruel mistreatment of Ophelia is a deflection of his disgust at his mother's being "unfaithful" in her love for him. Some Freudian critics stress the author's psyche and so might read *Hamlet* as the expression of Shakespeare's own Oedipus complex. In another mode psychoanalytic critics, reading imaginative literature as symbolic fulfillment of unconscious wishes much as an analyst would interpret a dream, look for objects, spaces, or actions that appear to relate to sexual anatomy or activity. Much as if tracing out the extended metaphors of an erotic poem by John Donne or a blues or Motown lyric, the Freudian reads containers, empty spaces, or bodies of water as female; tools, weapons, towers or trees, trains or planes as male.

JUNGIAN AND MYTH CRITICISM

Just as a Freudian assumes that all human psyches have similar histories and structures, the Jungian critic assumes that we all share a universal or collective unconscious (just as each has a racial and an individual unconscious). According to Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) and his followers, the unconscious harbors universal patterns and forms of human experiences, or **archetypes.** We can never know these archetypes directly, but they surface in art in an imperfect, shadowy way, taking the form of archetypes—the snake with its tail in its mouth, rebirth, the mother, the double, the descent into hell. In the classic quest narrative, the hero struggles to free himself (the gender of the pronoun is significant) from the Great Mother to become a separate, self-sufficient being (combating a demonic antagonist), surviving trials to gain the reward of union with his ideal other, the feminine anima. In a related school of *archetypal criticism*, influenced by Northrop Frye (1912–91), the prevailing myth follows a seasonal cycle of death and rebirth. Frye proposed a system for literary criticism that classified all literary forms in all ages according to a cycle of genres associated with the phases of human experience from birth to death and the natural cycle of seasons (e.g., Spring/Romance).

   These approaches have been useful in the study of folklore and early literatures as well as in comparative studies of various national literatures. While most myth critics focus on the hero's quest, there have been forays into feminist archetypal criticism. These emphasize variations on the myths of Isis and Demeter, goddesses of fertility or seasonal renewal, who take different forms to restore either the sacrificed woman (Persephone's season in the underworld) or the sacrificed man (Isis's search for Osiris and her rescue of their son, Horus). Many twentieth-century poets were drawn to the heritage of archetypes and myths. Adrienne Rich's "Diving into the Wreck," for example, self-consciously rewrites a number of gendered archetypes, with a female protagonist on a quest into a submerged world.

   Most critics today, influenced by poststructuralism, have become wary of universal patterns. Like structuralists, Jungians and archetypal critics strive to compare and unite the ages and peoples of the world and to reveal fundamental truths. Rich, as a feminist poet, suggests that the "book of myths" is an eclectic anthology that needs to be revised. Claims of universality tend to obscure the detailed differences among cultures and often appeal to some idea of *biological determinism.*

Such determinism diminishes the power of individuals to design alternative life patterns and even implies that no literature can really surprise us.

LACANIAN CRITICISM

As it has absorbed the indeterminacies of poststructuralism under the influence of thinkers such as Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva, psychological criticism has become increasingly complex. Few critics today are direct Freudian analysts of authors or texts, and few maintain that universal archetypes explain the meaning of a tree or water in a text. Yet psychoanalytic theory continues to inform many varieties of criticism, and most new work in this field is affiliated with Lacanian psychoanalysis. Lacan's theory unites poststructuralist linguistics with Freudian theory. The Lacanian critic, like a deconstructionist, focuses on the text that defies conscious authorial control, foregrounding the powerful interpretation of the critic rather than the author or any other reader. Accepting the Oedipal paradigm and the unconscious as the realm of repressed desire, Lacanian theory aligns the development and structure of the individual human *subject* with the development and structure of language. To simplify a purposefully dense theory: The very young infant inhabits the Imaginary, in a preverbal, undifferentiated phase dominated by a sense of union with the Mother. Recognition of identity begins with the Mirror Stage, ironically with a disruption of a sense of oneness. For when one first looks into a mirror, one begins to recognize a split or difference between one's body and the image in the mirror. This splitting prefigures a sense that the *object* of desire is Other and distinct from the subject. With difference or the splitting of subject and object comes language and entry into the Symbolic Order, since we use words to summon the absent object of desire (as a child would cry "Mama" to bring her back). But what language signifies most is the lack of that object. The imaginary, perfectly nurturing Mother would never need to be called.

As in the biblical Genesis, the Lacanian "genesis" of the subject tells of a loss of paradise through knowledge of the difference between subject and object or Man and Woman (eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil leads to the sense of shame that teaches Adam and Eve to hide their nakedness). In Lacanian theory the Father governs language or the Symbolic Order; the Word spells the end of a child's sense of oneness with the Mother. Further, the Father's power claims omnipotence, the possession of male prerogative symbolized by the Phallus, which is not the anatomical difference between men and women but the idea or construction of that difference. Thus it is language or culture rather than nature that generates the difference and inequality between the sexes. Some feminist theorists have adopted aspects of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concept of *the gaze*. This concept notes that the masculine subject is the one who looks, whereas the feminine object is to be looked at.

Another influential concept is *abjection*. The Franco-Bulgarian psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection most simply reimagines the infant's blissful sense of union with the mother and the darker side of such possible union. To return to the mother's body would be death, as metaphorically we are buried in Mother Earth. Yet according to the theory, people both desire and dread such loss of boundaries. A sense of self or *subjectivity* and hence of independence and power depends on resisting abjection. The association of the maternal body with abjection or with the powerlessness symbolized by the female's Lack of the Phallus can help explain negative cultural images of women. Many narrative genres seem to split

the images of women between an angelic and a witchlike type. Lacanian or Kristevan theory has been well adapted to film criticism and to fantasy and other popular forms favored by structuralism or archetypal criticism.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism today—as distinct from specialized discussion of Lacanian theory, for example—treads more lightly than in the past. In James Joyce's "Araby," a young Dublin boy, orphaned and raised by an aunt and uncle, likes to haunt a back room in the house; there the "former tenant, . . . a priest, had died" (par. 2). (Disused rooms at the margins of houses resemble the unconscious, and a dead celibate "father" suggests a kind of failure of the Law, conscience, or in Freudian terms, superego.) The priest had left behind a "rusty bicycle-pump" in the "wild garden" with "a central apple tree" (these echoes of the garden of Eden suggesting the impotence of Catholic religious symbolism). The boy seems to gain consciousness of a separate self—or his subjectivity is constructed—through his gaze upon an idealized female object, Mangan's sister, whose "name was like a summons to all my foolish blood" (par. 4). Though he secretly watches and follows her, she is not so much a sexual fantasy as a beautiful art object (par. 9). He retreats to the back room to think of her in a kind of ecstasy that resembles masturbation. Yet it is not masturbation: It is preadolescent, dispersed through all orifices—the rain feels like "incessant needles . . . playing in the sodden beds"; and it is sublimated, that is, repressed and redirected into artistic or religious forms rather than directly expressed by bodily pleasure: "All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves" (par. 6).

It is not in the back room but on the street that the girl finally speaks to the hero, charging him to go on a quest to Araby. After several trials the hero carrying the talisman arrives in a darkened hall "girdled at half its height by a gallery," an underworld or maternal space that is also a deserted temple (par. 25). The story ends without his grasping the prize to carry back, the "chalice" or holy grail (symbolic of female sexuality) that he had once thought to bear "safely through a throng of foes" (par. 5).

Such a reading seems likely to raise objections that it is overreading: *You're seeing too much in it; the author didn't mean that.* This has been a popular reaction to psychoanalysis for over a hundred years, but it is only a heightened version of a response to many kinds of criticism. This sample reading pays close attention to the text, but does not really follow a formal approach because its goal is to explain the psychological implications or resonance of the story's details. We have mentioned nothing about the author, though we could have used this reading to forward a psychoanalytic reading of Joyce's biography.

EMPHASIS ON THE RECEIVER

In some sense critical schools develop in reaction to the excesses of other critical schools. By the 1970s, in a time of political upheaval that placed a high value on individual expression, a number of critics felt that the various routes toward objective criticism had proved to be dead ends. New Critics, structuralists, and psychoanalytic or myth critics had sought objective, scientific systems that disregarded changing times, political issues, or the reader's personal response. New Critics and other formalists tended to value a literary canon made up of works that were regarded as complete, unchanging objects to be interpreted according to ostensibly timeless standards.

Reader-Response Criticism

Among critics who challenge New Critical assumptions, reader-response critics regard the work not as what is printed on the page but as what is experienced temporally through each act of reading. According to such critics, the reader effectively performs the text into existence the way a musician performs music from a score. Reader-response critics ask not what a work means but what a work does to and through a reader. Literary texts especially leave gaps that experienced readers fill according to expectations or conventions. Individual readers differ, of course, and gaps in a text provide space for different readings or interpretations. Some of these lacunae are temporary—such as the withholding of the murderer's name until the end of a mystery novel—and are closed by the text sooner or later, though each reader will in the meantime fill them differently. But other lacunae are permanent and can never be filled with certainty; they result in a degree of uncertainty or indeterminacy in the text.

The reader-response critic observes the expectations aroused by a text, how they are satisfied or modified, and how the reader comprehends the work when all of it has been read, and when it is reread in whole or in part. Such criticism attends to the reading habits associated with different genres and to the shared assumptions of a cultural context that seem to furnish what is left unsaid in the text.

Beyond theoretical formulations about reading, there are other approaches to literary study that concern the receiver rather than the text or source. A critic might examine specific documents of a work's reception, from contemporary reviews to critical essays written across the generations since the work was first published. Sometimes we have available diaries or autobiographical evidence about readers' encounters with particular works. Just as there are histories of publishing and of the book, there are histories of literacy and reading practices. Poetry, fiction, and drama often directly represent the theme of reading as well as writing. Many published works over the centuries have debated the benefits and perils of reading works such as sermons or novels. Different genres and particular works construct different classes or kinds of readers in the way they address them or supply what they are supposed to want. Some scholars have found quantitative measures for reading, from sales and library lending rates to questionnaires.

Finally, the role of the reader or receiver in the literary exchange has been portrayed from a political perspective. Literature helps shape social identity, and social status shapes access to different kinds of literature. Feminist critics adapted reader-response criticism, for example, to note that girls often do not identify with many American literary classics as boys do, and thus girls do not simply accept the stereotype of women as angels, temptresses, or scolds who should be abandoned for the sake of all-male adventures. Studies of African American literature and other ethnic literatures have often featured discussion of literacy and of the obstacles for readers who cannot find their counterparts within the texts or who encounter negative stereotypes of their group. Thus, as we will discuss below, most forms of historical and ideological criticism include some consideration of the reader.

HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM

The approaches to the text, the author, and the reader outlined above may each take some note of historical contexts, including changes in formal conventions, the

writer's milieu, or audience expectations. In the nineteenth century, historical criticism took the obvious facts that a work is created in a specific historical and cultural context and that the author is a part of that context as reasons to treat literature as a reflection of society. Twentieth-century formalists rejected the *reflectivist* model of art in the old historical criticism, that is, the assumption that literature and other arts straightforwardly express the collective spirit of the society at a given time. But as we have remarked, formalist rules for isolating the work of art from social and historical context met resistance in the last decades of the twentieth century. In a revival of historical approaches, critics have replaced the reflectivist model with a *constructivist* model, whereby literature and other cultural discourses are seen to help construct social relations and roles rather than merely reflect them. In other words, art is not just the frosting on the cake but an integral part of the recipe's ingredients and instructions. A society's ideology, its system of representations (ideas, myths, images), is inscribed in literature and other cultural forms, which in turn help shape identities and social practices.

Since the 1980s, historical approaches have regained great influence in literary studies. Some critical schools have been insistently *materialist*, that is, seeking causes more in concrete conditions such as technology, production, and distribution of wealth. Such criticism usually owes an acknowledged debt to Marxism. Other historical approaches have been influenced to a degree by Marxist critics and cultural theorists, but work within the realm of ideology, textual production, and interpretation, using some of the methods and concerns of traditional literary history. Still others emerge from the civil rights movement and the struggles for recognition of women and racial, ethnic, and sexual constituencies.

Feminist studies, African American studies, gay and lesbian studies, and studies of the cultures of different immigrant and ethnic populations within and beyond the United States have each developed along similar theoretical lines. These schools, like Marxist criticism, adopt a constructivist position: Literature is not simply a reflection of prejudices and norms; it also helps define social identities, such as what it means to be an African American woman. Each of these schools has moved through stages of first claiming *equality* with the literature dominated by white Anglo American men, then affirming the *difference* of their own separate culture, and then theoretically *questioning the terms and standards* of such comparisons. At a certain point in the thought process, each group rejects *essentialism*, the notion of innate or biological bases for the differences between the sexes, races, or other groups. This rejection of essentialism is usually called the constructivist position, in a somewhat different but related sense to our definition above. Constructivism maintains that identity is socially formed rather than biologically determined. Differences of anatomical sex, skin color, first language, parental ethnicity, and eventual sexual preferences have great impact on how one is classified, brought up, and treated socially, and on one's subjectivity or conception of identity. Constructivists maintain that these differences, however, are more constructed by ideology and the resulting behaviors than by any natural programming.

Marxist Criticism

The most insistent and vigorous historical approach through the twentieth century to the present has been Marxism, based on the work of Karl Marx (1818–83). With roots in nineteenth-century historicism, Marxist criticism was initially reflectivist. Economics, the underlying cause of history, was thus the *base*, and culture,

including literature and the other arts, was the *superstructure*, an outcome or reflection of the base. Viewed from the Marxist perspective, the literary works of a period were economically determined; they would *reflect* the state of the struggle between classes in any place and time. History enacted recurrent three-step cycles, a pattern that Hegel had defined as *dialectic* (Hegel was cited above on the interdependence of master and slave). Each socioeconomic phase, or *thesis*, is counteracted by its *antithesis*, and the resulting conflict yields a *synthesis*, which becomes the ensuing *thesis*, and so on. As with early Freudian criticism, early Marxist criticism was often preoccupied with labeling and exposing illusions or deceptions. A novel might be read as a thinly disguised defense of the power of bourgeois industrial capital; its appeal on behalf of the suffering poor might be dismissed as an effort to fend off class rebellion.

As a rationale for state control of the arts, Marxism was abused in the Soviet Union and in other totalitarian states. In the hands of sophisticated critics, however, Marxism has been richly rewarding. Various schools that unite formal close reading and political analysis developed in the early twentieth century under Soviet communism and under fascism in Europe, often in covert resistance. These schools in turn have influenced critical movements in North America; New Criticism, structuralist linguistics, deconstruction, and narrative theory have each borrowed from European Marxist critics.

Most recently, a new mode of Marxist theory has developed, largely guided by the thinking of Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) and Theodor Adorno (1903–69) of the Frankfurt School in Germany, Louis Althusser (1918–90) in France, and Raymond Williams (1921–98) in Britain. This work has generally tended to modify the base/superstructure distinction and to interrelate public and private life, economics and culture. Newer Marxist interpretation assumes that the relation of a literary work to its historical context is *overdetermined*—the relation has multiple determining factors rather than a sole cause or aim. This thinking similarly acknowledges that neither the source nor the receiver of the literary interaction is a mere tool or victim of the ruling powers or state. Representation of all kinds, including literature, always has a political dimension, according to this approach; conversely, political and material conditions such as work, money, or institutions depend on representation.

Showing some influence of psychoanalytic and poststructuralist theories, recent Marxist literary studies examine the effects of ideology by focusing on the works' gaps and silences: Ideology may be conveyed in what is repressed or contradicted. In many ways Marxist criticism has adapted to the conditions of consumer rather than industrial capitalism and to global rather than national economies. The worldwide revolution that was to come when the proletariat or working classes overthrew the capitalists has never taken place; in many countries industrial labor has been swallowed up by the service sector, and workers reject the political Left that would seem their most likely ally. Increasingly, Marxist criticism has acknowledged that the audience of literature may be active rather than passive, just as the text and source may be more than straightforward instructions for toeing a given political line. Marxist criticism has been especially successful with the novel, since that genre more than drama or short fiction is capable of representing numerous people from different classes as they develop over a significant amount of time.

Feminist Criticism

Like Marxist criticism and the schools discussed below, feminist criticism derives from a critique of a history of oppression, in this case the history of women's inequality. Feminist criticism has no single founder like Freud or Marx; it has been practiced to some extent since the 1790s, when praise of women's cultural achievements went hand in hand with arguments that women were rational beings deserving equal rights and education. Contemporary feminist criticism emerged from a "second wave" of feminist activism, in the 1960s and 1970s, associated with the civil rights and antiwar movements. One of the first disciplines in which women's activism took root was literary criticism, but feminist theory and women's studies quickly became recognized methods across the disciplines.

Feminist literary studies began by denouncing the misrepresentation of women in literature and affirming the importance of women's writings, before quickly adopting the insights of poststructuralist theory; yet the early strategies continue to have their use. At first, feminist criticism in the 1970s, like early Marxist criticism, regarded literature as a reflection of patriarchal society's sexist base; the demeaning images of women in literature were symptoms of a system that had to be overthrown. Feminist literary studies soon began, however, to claim the *equal* but distinctive qualities of writings by women and men. Critics such as Elaine Showalter (b. 1941), Sandra M. Gilbert (b. 1936), and Susan Gubar (b. 1944) explored canonical works by women, relying on close reading with some aid from historical and psychoanalytic methods.

Yet by the 1980s it was widely recognized that a New Critical method would leave most of the male-dominated canon intact and most women writers still in obscurity, because many women had written in different genres and styles, on different themes, and for different audiences than had male writers. To affirm the *difference* of female literary traditions, some feminist studies claimed women's innate or universal affinity for fluidity and cycle rather than solidity and linear progress. Others concentrated on the role of the mother in human psychological development. According to this argument, girls, not having to adopt a gender role different from that of their first object of desire, the mother, grow up with less rigid boundaries of self and a relational rather than judgmental ethic.

The dangers of these intriguing generalizations soon became apparent. If the reasons for women's differences from men were biologically based or were due to universal archetypes, there was no solution to women's oppression, which many cultures worldwide had justified in terms of biological reproduction or archetypes of nature. At this point in the debate, feminist literary studies intersected with poststructuralist linguistic theory in *questioning the terms and standards* of comparison. French feminist theory, articulated most prominently by Hélène Cixous (b. 1937) and Luce Irigaray (b. 1932), deconstructed the supposed archetypes of gender written into the founding discourses of Western culture. We have seen that deconstruction helps expose the power imbalance in every dualism. Thus man is to woman as culture is to nature or mind is to body, and in each case the second term is held to be inferior or Other. The language and hence the worldview and social formations of our culture, not nature or eternal archetypes, constructed woman as Other. This insight was helpful in avoiding essentialism or biological determinism.

Having reached a theoretical criticism of the terms on which women might claim equality or difference from men in the field of literature, feminist studies

also confronted other issues in the 1980s. Deconstructionist readings of gender difference in texts by men as well as women could lose sight of the real world, in which women are paid less and are more likely to be victims of sexual violence. With this in mind, some feminist critics pursued links with Marxist or African American studies; gender roles, like those of class and race, were interdependent systems for registering the material consequences of people's differences. It no longer seemed so easy to say what the term "women" referred to, when the interests of different kinds of women had been opposed to each other. African American women asked if feminism was really their cause, when white women had so long enjoyed power over both men and women of their race. In a classic Marxist view, women allied with men of their class rather than with women of other classes. It became more difficult to make universal claims about women's literature, as the horizon of the college-educated North American feminists expanded to recognize the range of conditions of women and of literature worldwide. Feminist literary studies have continued to consider famous and obscure women writers; the way women and gender are portrayed in writings by men as well as women; feminist issues concerning the text, source, or receiver in any national literature; theoretical and historical questions about the representation of differences such as gender, race, class, and nationality, and the way these differences shape each other.

Gender Studies and Queer Theory

From the 1970s, feminists sought recognition for lesbian writers and lesbian culture, which they felt had been even less visible than male homosexual writers and gay culture. Concurrently, feminist studies abandoned the simple dualism of male/female, part of the very binary logic of patriarchy that seemed to cause the oppression of women. Thus feminists recognized a zone of inquiry, the study of gender, as distinct from historical studies of women, and increasingly they included masculinity as a subject of investigation. As gender studies turned to interpretation of the text in ideological context regardless of the sex or intention of the author, it incorporated the ideas of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1976). Foucault helped show that there was nothing natural, universal, or timeless in the constructions of sexual difference or sexual practices. Foucault also introduced a history of the concept of homosexuality, which had once been regarded in terms of taboo acts and in the later nineteenth century became defined as a disease associated with a personality type. Literary scholars began to study the history of sexuality as a key to the shifts in modern culture that had also shaped literature.

By the 1980s gender had come to be widely regarded as a discourse that imposed binary social norms on human beings' diversity. Theorists such as Donna Haraway (b. 1944) and Judith Butler (b. 1956) insisted further that sex and sexuality have no natural basis; even the anatomical differences are representations from the moment the newborn is put in a pink or blue blanket. Moreover, these theorists claimed that gender and sexuality are *performative* and malleable positions, enacted in many more than two varieties. From cross-dressing to surgical sex changes, the alternatives chosen by real people have influenced critical theory and generated both writings and literary criticism about those writings. Perhaps biographical and feminist studies face new challenges when identity seems subject to radical change and it is less easy to determine the sex of an author.

Gay and lesbian literary studies have included practices that parallel those of feminist criticism. At times critics identify oppressive or positive representations

of homosexuality in works by men or women, gay, lesbian, or straight. At other times critics seek to establish the equivalent stature of a work by a gay or lesbian writer or, because these identities tended to be hidden in the past, to reveal that a writer *was* gay or lesbian. Again stages of *equality* and *difference* have yielded to a *questioning of the terms of difference*, in this case what has been called queer theory. The field of queer theory hopes to leave everyone guessing rather than to identify gay or lesbian writers, characters, or themes. One of its founding texts, *Between Men* (1985), by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950–2009), drew on structuralist insight into desire as well as anthropological models of kinship to show that, in canonical works of English literature, male characters form "homosocial" (versus homosexual) bonds through their rivalry for and exchange of a woman. Queer theory, because it rejects the idea of a fixed identity or innate or essential gender, likes to discover resistance to heterosexuality in unexpected places. Queer theorists value gay writers such as Oscar Wilde, but they also find queer implications regardless of the author's acknowledged identity. This approach emphasizes not the surface signals of the text but the subtler meanings an audience or receiver might detect. It encompasses elaborate close reading of many varieties of literary work; characteristically, a leading queer theorist, D. A. Miller (b. 1948), has written in loving detail about both Jane Austen and Broadway musicals.

African American and Ethnic Literary Studies

Critics sought to define an African American literary tradition as early as the turn of the twentieth century. A period of literary success in the 1920s, known as the Harlem Renaissance, produced some of the first classic essays on writings by African Americans. Criticism and histories of African American literature tended to ignore and dismiss women writers, while feminist literary histories, guided by Virginia Woolf's classic *A Room of One's Own* (1929), neglected women writers of color. Only after feminist critics began to succeed in the academy and African American studies programs were established did the whiteness of feminist studies and the masculinity of African American studies become glaring; both fields have for some time corrected this narrowness of vision, in part by learning from each other. The study of African American literature followed the general pattern that we have noted, first striving to claim equality, on established aesthetic grounds, of works such as Ralph Ellison's magnificent *Invisible Man* (1952). Then in the 1960s the Black Arts or Black Aesthetic emerged. Once launched in the academy, however, African American studies has been devoted less to celebrating an essential racial difference than to tracing the historical construction of a racial Other and a subordinated literature. The field sought to recover neglected genres such as slave narratives and traced common elements in fiction or poetry to the conditions of slavery and segregation. By the 1980s, feminist and poststructuralist theory had an impact in the work of some African American critics such as Henry Louis Gates Jr. (b. 1950), Houston A. Baker Jr. (b. 1943), and Hazel V. Carby (b. 1948), while others objected that the doubts raised by "theory" stood in the way of political commitment. African Americans' cultural contributions to America have gained much more recognition than before. New histories of American culture have been written with the view that racism is not an aberration but inherent to the guiding narratives of national progress. Many critics now regard race as a discourse with only slight basis in genetics but with weighty investments in ideology. This post-

structuralist position coexists with scholarship that takes into account the race of the author or reader or that focuses on African American characters or themes.

In recent years a series of fields has arisen in recognition of the literatures of other American ethnic groups, large and small: Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Chicanos. Increasingly, such studies avoid romanticizing an original, pure culture or assuming that these literatures by their very nature undermine the values and power of the dominant culture. Instead, critics emphasize the *hybridity* of all cultures in a global economy. The contact and intermixture of cultures across geographical borders and languages (translations, "creole" speech made up of native and acquired languages, dialects) may be read as enriching literature and art, despite being caused by economic exploitation. In method and in aim these fields have much in common with African American studies, though each cultural and historical context is very different. Each field deserves the separate study that we cannot offer here.

Not so very long ago, critics might have been charged with a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of literature if they pursued matters considered the business of sociologists, matters—such as class, race, and gender—that seemed extrinsic to the text. The rise of the above-noted fields has made it standard practice that a critic will address questions about class, race, and gender to place a text, its source, and its reception in historical and ideological context. One brief example might illustrate the way Marxist, feminist, queer, and African American criticism can contribute to a literary reading.

Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* was first produced in 1947 and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948. Part of its acclaim was likely due to its fashionable blend of naturalism and symbolism: The action takes place in a shabby tenement on an otherworldly street, Elysian Fields—in an "atmosphere of decay" laced with "lyricism," as Williams's stage directions put it (1.1). After the Depression and World War II, American audiences welcomed a turn away from world politics into the psychological core of human sexuality. This turn to ostensibly individual conflict was a kind of alibi for at least two sets of issues that Williams and the middle-class theatergoers in New York and elsewhere sought to avoid. First are racial questions that relate to ones of gender and class: What is the play's attitude to race, and what is Williams's attitude? Biography seems relevant, though not the last word on what the play means. Williams's family had included slaveholding cotton growers, and he chose to spend much of his adult life in the South, which he saw as representing a beautiful but dying way of life. He was deeply attached to women in his family who might be models for the brilliant, fragile, cultivated Southern white woman, Blanche DuBois. Blanche ("white" in French), representative of a genteel, feminine past that has gambled, prostituted, dissipated itself, speaks some of the most eloquent lines in the play when she mourns the faded Delta plantation society. Neither the playwright nor his audience wished to deal with segregation in the South, a region that since the Civil War had stagnated as a kind of agricultural working class in relation to the dominant North—which had its racism, too.

The play scarcely notices race. The main characters are white. The cast includes a "Negro Woman" as servant, and a blind Mexican woman who offers artificial flowers to remember the dead, but these figures seem more like props or symbols than fully developed characters. Instead, racial difference is transposed as ethnic and class difference in the story of a working-class Pole intruding into a family clinging to French gentility. Stella warns Blanche that she lives among "heterogeneous

types" and that Stanley is "a different species" (1.1). The play thus transfigures contemporary anxieties about miscegenation, as the virile (black) man dominates the ideal white woman and rapes the spirit of the plantation South. A former soldier who works in a factory, Stanley represents as well the defeat of the old, agricultural economy by industrialization.

The second set of issues that neither the playwright nor his audience confronts directly is the disturbance of sexual and gender roles that would in later decades lead to movements for women's and gay rights. It was well known in New Orleans at least that Williams was gay. In the 1940s he lived with his lover, Pancho Rodriguez y Gonzales, in the French Quarter. Like many homosexual writers in other eras, Williams recasts homosexual desire in heterosexual costume. Blanche, performing femininity with a kind of camp excess, might be a fading queen pursuing and failing to capture younger men. Stanley, hypermasculine, might caricature the object of desire of both men and women as well as the anti-intellectual, brute force in postwar America. His conquest of women (he had "the power and pride of a richly feathered male bird among hens" [1.1]) appears to be biologically determined. By the same token it seems natural that Stanley and his buddies go out to work and that their wives become homemakers in the way now seen as typical of the 1950s. In this world, artists, homosexuals, or unmarried working women like Blanche would be both vulnerable and threatening. Blanche after all has secret pleasures—drinking and sex—that Stanley indulges in openly. Blanche is the one who is taken into custody by the medical establishment, which in this period diagnosed homosexuality as a form of insanity.

New Historicism

Three interrelated schools of historical and ideological criticism have been important innovations in the past two decades. These are part of the swing of the pendulum away from formal analysis of the text and toward historical analysis of context. New historicism has less obvious political commitments than Marxism, feminism, or queer theory, but it shares their interest in the power of discourse to shape ideology. Old historicism, in the 1850s–1950s, confidently told a story of civilization's progress from the point of view of a Western nation; a historicist critic would offer a close reading of the plays of Shakespeare and then locate them within the prevailing Elizabethan "worldview." "New Historicism," labeled in 1982 by Stephen Greenblatt (b. 1943), rejected the technique of plugging samples of a culture into a history of ideas. Influenced by poststructuralist anthropology, New Historicism tried to offer a multilayered impression or "thick description" of a culture at one moment in time, including popular as well as elite forms of representation. As a method, New Historicism belongs with those that deny the unity of the text, defy the authority of the source, and license the receiver—much like deconstructionism. Accordingly, New Historicism doubts the accessibility of the past, insisting that all we have is discourse. One model for New Historicism was the historiography of Michel Foucault, who insisted on the power of discourses, that is, not only writing but all structuring myths or ideologies that underlie social relations. The New Historicist, like Foucault, is interested in the transition from the external powers of the state and church in the feudal order to modern forms of power. The rule of the modern state and middle-class ideology is enforced insidiously by systems of surveillance and by each individual's internalization of discipline (not unlike Freud's idea of the superego).

No longer so "new," the New Historicists have had a lasting influence on a more narrative and concrete style of criticism even among those who espouse poststructuralist and Marxist theories. A New Historicist article begins with an anecdote, often a description of a public spectacle, and teases out the many contributing causes that brought disparate social elements together in that way. It usually applies techniques of close reading to forms that would not traditionally have received such attention. Although it often concentrates on events several hundred years ago, in some ways it defies historicity, flouting the idea that a complete objective impression of the entire context could ever be achieved.

Cultural Studies

Popular culture often gets major attention in the work of New Historicists. Yet today most studies of popular culture would acknowledge their debt instead to cultural studies, as filtered through the now-defunct Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, founded in 1964 by Stuart Hall (1932–2014) and others at the University of Birmingham in England. Method, style, and subject matter may be similar in New Historicism and cultural studies: Both attend to historical context, theoretical method, political commitment, and textual analysis. But whereas the American movement shares Foucault's paranoid view of state domination through discourse, the British school, influenced by Raymond Williams and his concept of "structures of feeling," emphasizes the possibility that ordinary people, the receivers of cultural forms, may resist dominant ideology. The documents examined in a cultural-studies essay may be recent, such as artifacts of tourism at Shakespeare's birthplace, rather than sixteenth-century maps. Cultural studies today influences history, sociology, communications and media, and literature departments; its studies may focus on television, film, romance novels, and advertising, or on museums and the art market, sports and stadiums, New Age religious groups, or other forms and practices.

The questions raised by cultural studies would encourage a critic to place a poem like Marge Piercy's "Barbie Doll" in the context of the history of that toy, a doll whose slender, impossibly long legs, tiptoe feet (not unlike the bound feet of Chinese women of an earlier era), small nose, and torpedo breasts epitomized a 1950s ideal for the female body. A critic influenced by cultural studies might align the poem with other works published around 1973 that express feminist protest concerning cosmetics, body image, consumption, and the objectification of women, while she or he would draw on research into the founding and marketing of Mattel toys. The poem reverses the Sleeping Beauty story: This heroine puts herself into the coffin rather than waking up. The poem omits any hero—Ken?—who would rescue her. "Barbie Doll" protests the pressure a girl feels to fit into a heterosexual plot of romance and marriage; no one will buy her if she is not the right toy or accessory.

Indeed, accessories such as "GE stoves and irons" (line 3) taught girls to plan their lives as domestic consumers, and Barbie's lifestyle is decidedly middle-class and suburban (everyone has a house, car, pool, and lots of handbags). The whiteness of the typical "girlchild" (1) goes without saying. Although Mattel produced Barbie's African American friend, Christie, in 1968, Piercy's title makes the reader imagine Barbie, not Christie. In 1997 Mattel issued Share a Smile Becky, a friend in a wheelchair, as though in answer to the humiliation of the girl in Piercy's poem, who feels so deformed, in spite of her "strong arms and back, / abundant sexual drive and manual dexterity" (8–9), that she finally cripples herself. The icon, in

short, responds to changing ideology. Perhaps responding to generations of objections like Piercy's, Barbies over the years have been given feminist career goals, yet women's lives are still plotted according to physical image.

In this manner a popular product might be "read" alongside a literary work. The approach would be influenced by Marxist, feminist, gender, and ethnic studies, but it would not be driven by a desire to destroy Barbie as sinister, misogynist propaganda. Piercy's kind of protest against indoctrination has gone out of style. Girls have found ways to respond to such messages and divert them into stories of empowerment. Such at least is the outlook of cultural studies, which usually affirms popular culture. A researcher could gather data on Barbie sales and could interview girls or videotape their play in order to establish the actual effects of the dolls. Whereas traditional anthropology examined non-European or preindustrial cultures, cultural studies may direct its "field work," or ethnographic research, inward, at home. Nevertheless, many contributions to cultural studies rely on methods of textual close reading or Marxist and Freudian literary criticism developed in the mid-twentieth century.

Postcolonial Criticism and Studies of World Literature

In the middle of the twentieth century, the remaining colonies of the European nations struggled toward independence. French-speaking Frantz Fanon (1925–61) of Martinique was one of the most compelling voices for the point of view of the colonized or exploited countries, which like the feminine Other had been objectified and denied the right to look and talk back. Edward Said (1935–2003), in *Orientalism* (1978), brought a poststructuralist analysis to bear on the history of colonization, illustrating the ways that Western culture feminized and objectified the East. Postcolonial literary studies developed into a distinct field in the 1990s in light of globalization and the replacement of direct colonial power with international corporations and "NGOs" (nongovernmental agencies such as the World Bank). In general this field cannot share the optimism of some cultural studies, given the histories of slavery and economic exploitation of colonies and the violence committed in the name of civilization's progress. Studies by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (b. 1942) and Homi K. Bhabha (b. 1949) have further mingled Marxist, feminist, and poststructuralist theory to reread both canonical Western works and the writings of marginalized peoples. Colonial or postcolonial literatures may include works set or published in countries during colonial rule or after independence, or they may feature texts produced in the context of international cultural exchange, such as a novel in English by a woman of Chinese descent writing in Malaysia.

Like feminist studies and studies of African American or other literatures, the field is inspired by recovery of neglected works, redress of a systematic denial of rights and recognition, and increasing realization that the dualisms of opposing groups reveal interdependence. In this field the stage of difference came early, with the celebrations of African heritage known as *Négritude*, but the danger of that essentialist claim was soon apparent: The Dark Continent or wild island might be romanticized and idealized as a source of innate qualities of vitality long repressed in Enlightened Europe. Currently, most critics accept that the context for literature in all countries is hybrid, with immigration and educational intermixing. Close readings of texts are always linked to the author's biography and literary influences and placed within the context of contemporary international politics as well as colonial history. Many fiction writers, from Salman Rushdie to Jhumpa

Lahiri, make the theme of cultural mixture or hybridity part of their work, whether in a pastiche of Charles Dickens or a story of an Indian family growing up in New Jersey and returning as tourists to their supposed "native" land. Poststructuralist theories of trauma, and theories of the interrelation of narrative and memory, provide explanatory frames for interpreting writings from Afghanistan to Zambia.

Studies of postcolonial culture retain a clear political mission that feminist and Marxist criticism have found difficult to sustain. Perhaps this is because the scale of the power relations is so vast, between nations rather than the sexes or classes within those nations. Imperialism can be called an absolute evil, and the destruction of local cultures a crime against humanity. Today some of the most exciting literature in English emerges from countries once under the British Empire, and all the techniques of criticism will be brought to bear on it. If history is any guide, in later decades some critical school will attempt to read the diverse literatures of the early twenty-first century in pure isolation from authorship and national origin, as self-enclosed form. The themes of hybridity, indeterminacy, trauma, and memory will be praised as universal. It is even possible that readers' continuing desire to revere authors as creative geniuses in control of their meanings will regain respectability among specialists. The elements of the literary exchange—text, source, and receiver—are always there to provoke questions that generate criticism, which in turn produces articulations of the methods of that criticism. It is an ongoing discussion well worth participating in.

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