

Nineteenth-Century British Novel

Engl 153B (Spring 2006)

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PRESENTATIONS

I. Research Presentation

Each of the seven novels in this course is rich with creative and textual production, dissemination and reception. For this reason, and because we will focus on the cultural significance of the novel, this presentation requires that each student conduct research on primary sources and report it to the class on the first day that this novel is scheduled. Most of you will not have read (or even heard of) these novels, which could make picking an interesting one difficult. Attached you will find a synopsis of each novel as well as a timeline which will help you with your decision on this presentation and the character analysis presentations/essays. Also, the topics on the Course Schedule will help you discover why we're reading this novel. We'll sign up for presentations at the second class meeting; no more than two Research Presentations per novel. See grading standards at the end of this handout.

Doing the Research

Research on primary sources involves looking at materials which were published during the same period (and even around the same time) as the novel. For instance, if you choose *Alice in Wonderland*, you might look at Lewis Carroll's original handwritten notebooks written to a little girl (available online at the British Library's Turning the Pages project) or you might find the original illustrations to Haggard's *She* published in a late nineteenth-century periodical. Though we don't have access to these materials in King Library, we do have access to many, many documents through the Internet. Some of the novels may require you to be a literary detective and figure out where you can access the documents. (For instance, if you find specific pages in the New York Public Library CRL's materials, they will often scan and send digital copies to you.) If you're looking for original reviews of the novels to note reception by a mass audience, there are online versions of many nineteenth-century British and American periodicals. See our Online Resource web page for much more information and resources. For this presentation, we're not interested in hearing what other scholars and critics have written about the novel. Nor are we interested in hearing what the introductory materials to each novel tell us. Tell us what you found out about this novel. Excite us with your presentation.

The Presentation (15 min.)

During this 15 minute presentation, it's your job to decide what is most important to show/tell the class. Therefore be discerning about the information and dynamic about the presentation. Since you will introduce the novel on the first day that it's scheduled, the presentation needs to inspire students to read, discuss and generally find out more about that novel. In the past students have used maps, film clips, songs, historical games, PowerPoint demonstrations and even websites to demonstrate and enhance their presentations and their grades. *If you need any audio/visual equipment, please ask me at least a week in advance.*

Reflective Writing (300 words)

A brief piece of writing (300 words) will be submitted to mark your presentation. The writing is due on the day you are scheduled to present. This brief piece should not regurgitate the elements of your presentation. Instead this piece of writing is a moment for you to reflect on what most interested you about the research process, the primary materials and the novel. Submit the writing typed and double spaced in 12pt font. In addition, submit a Bibliography of all of your research materials. This will provide a map of your research efforts.

II. Character Analysis Presentations & Essays (x3)

On assigned days, each student will present a character analysis for three different novels (5 mins each) as well as submit a written Character Analysis Essay (600-1000 words). Your task is to develop a thesis or argument that analyzes the function or purpose of your chosen character within the narrative. Questions to consider include: Why did the author develop and describe the character the way that he/she did? What would the novel be like without this character? What function does this character serve in terms of moving along the plot or in terms of his/her interaction with other characters, especially the main character? What is significant/important about this character? These questions are intended to guide your analysis; you may certainly go beyond them. Sign up for presentation slots at our second class meeting (only two presenters per class meeting).

The Presentation (5 min.)

On a pre-selected date for that novel, you will give a very brief presentation on the character you have chosen. You must choose three novels to work from, which means that you will give three presentations and write three character analysis essays. These presentations are really a moment to summarize your essay's main argument and provide a few supporting points. To create a dynamic presentation, keep your audience members engaged by referring to specific quotes from the text, even asking everyone to read along with you from the text (or ask one of them to read it for you). You could dissect a single passage which is most important to your character and your argument or you could give an overview of your main point. But, you must stick to the five minute time limit. Please time yourself. This presentation should not be a reading of your essay. Instead, prepare an outline, notecards or 2-3 words to remind you of your points. Over-reliance on notes never makes for a good presentation.

The Character Analysis Essay (600-1000 words)

On the day of your presentation, you will also turn in a 600-1000 word essay with formal writing and in MLA style. (See below for format.) A character analysis involves a thorough, detailed examination of all aspects of a literary character. Choose any one character from three different novels on our syllabus. You should develop a careful analysis that is well supported with evidence from the text. Be aware, however, that a paper that comprises long quotes strung together is not acceptable. This assignment is not a research paper but seeks to test your close-reading and interpreting skills; therefore, you should not use outside secondary criticism. Since this writing is so brief, you will not be able to put everything into it. Be discerning; avoid summarizing. The following are suggestions for structuring your essay:

- **Focus your analysis.** That means stick to your character and tell everything about that character. Do not retell the story.
- **Write a thesis statement.** A thesis statement is a sentence; it will be the controlling idea of your essay. As you work, you may change this statement. Example: Tante is the embodiment of the ideas held by black women in the mid-1940s.
- **Gather support.** List all the **evidence** from the text that explains or supports your thesis statement. The text is your primary source. You **must** have specific lines cited from the text to support your ideas. **Cite specific lines** from the text that support your main ideas; then, paraphrase, or state in your own words, what they say.
 - ▶ Example: Tante Lou says, "You going with us up the quarter. You going up there with us, Grant, or you don't sleep in this house tonight" (14).
 - ▶ Paraphrase or comment: Tante Lou has great power over Grant even though he is a grown man who is educated and has a good job.
 - ▶ **Notice that you must cite accurately from the text, citing page numbers and using quotation marks.**
- **Structure your analysis.** Traditionally, you should have:
 1. An **introduction** that states your thesis, or main idea. The thesis will be a specific interpretation of the chosen character. It should give an overall impression (your interpretations) of the character. Here, you must also cite the title and author of your text. You might make a statement or two about the text, but do not tell the whole plot in tedious detail. You are writing an analysis, not a summary. Please note that there should be **NO** first-person analysis in this paper.

2. A **body** that contains the most persuasive details you can find to support your thesis. Develop 3-4 characteristics to prove your thesis. This is where you will cite lines to prove your points.
 3. A **conclusion** that sums up your main point. The conclusion will be a simple summary of your interpretations followed by some insight into the story or the character, such as how the character relates to other elements of the story. It can even involve your opinion of the character (without resorting to “I”).
- One hint to keep your paper focused is to read the introduction and the conclusion without the body and see if they fit together. **PROOFREAD.** Always read your paper aloud and this will be helpful to you.

These websites provide questions and tips to help you more thoroughly analyze your character:

- <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Theater/9175/neo/character.html>
- <http://www2.fe.psu.edu/~fca1/charsket.doc>

Turning in the Character Analysis Essay

Each essay needs to assess and analyze rather than simply summarize or describe. Using formal language, discuss your ideas and provide evidence through citation. Remember to look at the details: a character, image, scene, etc. Your critical voice is important here. Format requirements are below:

- 600-1000 words, typed and double-spaced in 12pt font with one inch margins
- Works Cited page (outside of the word-limit) in MLA format
- In-text citations in MLA style (parenthetical citation)
- Name, date, course and section number typed at the top left corner of the first page
- Name and page number typed in upper right corner of every page following the first page
- Staple the pages together (DO NOT FOLD OR PAPERCLIP YOUR PAGES)
- Proofread everything before you turn it in; there should be no spelling or typographical errors
- Submit to Turnitin.com for verification

Grading

Your Research Presentation will be assessed based on its effectiveness (preparation, comprehension, depth). The Reflective Essay must be submitted in order to receive a grade for this assignment. Your Character Analysis Essay will be assessed based on your ability to communicate your ideas in a formal piece of writing (see the “Departmental Grading Policy” on the Greensheet). Each Character Analysis Presentation must be completed in order to receive a grade for this assignment.