

IB Literature HL Summer 2017 Assignment

First Assignment

Finish reading and annotating all remaining chapters of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster.

Second Assignment

Read and annotate *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* by Mark Haddon. (ISBN 978-1-4000-3271-6)

As you read, attempt to do so through a “Foster lens.” In other words, what observations and connections can you make between what you learned about literature in Foster’s book and what you see in Haddon’s novel?

Third Assignment

Write an analytical essay about *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* that makes a literary argument about the novel that was inspired by what you’ve learned from Foster. Your essay should be at least five paragraphs long (introduction, three or more body paragraphs, and a conclusion). It must be typed and double-spaced. You will need to support your claim(s) with plenty of embedded and cited quotes from the text.

Do not consult outside sources for this essay. Your essay will be submitted onto turnitin.com and will be checked for plagiarism and/or the consultation of outside sources.

Your essay is due the first day of class.
Be prepared for an assessment the first day of class.

Requirements

- Five typed, double-spaced paragraphs (intro, 3 body paragraphs, and conclusion)
- A clear thesis that poses a literary argument about the novel and employs a Foster lens
- MLA Formatting
- Textual evidence from the novel (embedded and cited with page numbers)
- Submission onto turnitin.com for a plagiarism scan

Grading:

I will be using a practice IB rubric to score your essays. It is a rubric that combines all of the key points from the five IB Lit rubrics. We will consistently use this rubric for any and all of our practice essays and assessments.

This assignment will count as a major grade.

Samples:

To give you an idea of what I mean by a literary argument inspired by Foster, here are some examples of possible literary arguments that employ Foster's teachings and relate to our 10th grade texts this year:

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury:

- Montag is a Christ figure.
- Montag, Faber, and Clarisse represent the Holy Trinity who are struggling to defeat the Devil, represented by Beatty.
- The motif of birds is heavily employed in the novel to symbolize the freedom that knowledge has to offer.
- *Fahrenheit 451* is reminiscent of the Biblical story about Noah and the Great Flood.
- Mildred and Beatty are literary vampires who are feeding off of society in very different but equally sinister ways.
- The novel strongly suggests that technology is an agent of the devil.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou:

- Maya's rape is a pivotal moment in her development.
- Baptism in the form of renaming is a prevalent and significant motif in the novel.
- In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya's low self-esteem is her metaphorical cage.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain:

- Twain utilizes meals as symbols of the communion and camaraderie between certain characters, especially Jim and Huck.
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is really about Huck's subconscious quest to find a family.
- One of Twain's primary reasons for writing *Huck Finn* was to satirize other pieces of literature.

Oedipus Rex by Sophocles:

- There is no better or more fitting fate than for Oedipus to blind himself. From a literary standpoint, his death would have defeated the thematic purposes of the play.
- Oedipus is indeed marked for greatness - great success and great failure.
- The choice to set *Oedipus Rex* outside the palace of Thebes is more than just logistical; it is itself symbolic of Oedipus's hubris.

Hamlet by William Shakespeare:

- The play *Hamlet* employs elements of the Oedipal Complex.
- *Hamlet* is ultimately about man's fear of his own mortality.
- In order for *Hamlet* to be a true tragedy, Ophelia and all of her family have to die.
- That Gertrude cannot see King Hamlet's ghost is symbolic evidence of her guilt in his murder.
- *The Lion King* is Disney's version of *Hamlet*, but their heroes' developments are purposefully different for thematic purposes.

Remember that you will be formulating your own argument about *Curious Incident*. This will require you to be clever and insightful as you apply Foster's teachings to the novel and decide on your interpretation of the work, but it will also require you to be a close reader who takes the time to return to the text to check your interpretation and find substantial and insightful passages and devices to support it.

You may contact me over the summer via Schoology or e-mail if you would like to run your ideas, thesis, or outline by me. Do not contact me the day before your deadline.

A Sample Summer Reading Essay:

The Four Horsemen in Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*

English author Nevil Shute's novel *On the Beach*, published in 1957, is a well-known treatment of nuclear annihilation of the human race and how ordinary people are affected by such a catastrophe. This is to be expected of an apocalyptic novel of the Cold War era. The book is laden with subtle Biblical allusions to Christ and the Book of Revelations. In particular, the major events preceding and during the novel correspond to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in Christian eschatology (the study of the apocalypse).

The first horsemen is described by John of Patmos, author of the Book of Revelations, as riding on a white horse. It is stated John saw in his apocalyptic vision that "a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer" (Revelation 6:1-2, NASB). This first horseman is therefore called Conquest by scholars. In the futurist school of thought (which sees the prophetic visions described in Revelation as symbolic of future world events), Conquest is believed to herald one or more nations reaching out to take control of the world. In the novel *On the Beach*, such an event is described when it is stated in a conversation between John Osborne and Dwight Towers that the Albanians dropped a hydrogen bomb on Naples, Italy because they "thought that it could defeat the major countries in a surprise attack" using nuclear weapons (85-86). Presumably, the motive behind the attack was so Albania could gain more power using their nuclear stockpile. Also, the same conversation states that Russia attacked China using cobalt bombs with the aim of eventually taking control of Shanghai because it was "handy for their Siberian

industries"- in other words, another attack motivated by money and power (82-83). The other bomb mentioned as a catalyst for the nuclear holocaust depicted in the book is the one dropped on Tel Aviv, though "nobody knows who dropped that one," according to Osbourne (84). Despite this lack of information, American and British forces performed an aerial demonstration over Egypt, presumably to show their power so as to keep the Egyptians under control. Ostensibly, this led to the Egyptian bombing of Washington, which pulled America into the war. This is yet another instance of countries exerting some form of force over one another setting off the war that ended the world (Shute 85). All of these examples correspond to Conquest, who essentially paves the way for the second horseman.

John of Patmos describes the second horseman as riding a red horse. He is given a great sword, and that "it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another" (Revelation 6:3-4, NASB). This horseman is named War by scholars. In the futurist interpretation of the Book of Revelations, War symbolizes a cataclysmic nuclear conflict, not unlike what is described in Shute's *On the Beach*. There is abundant evidence of such a conflict within the novel. Namely, John Osborne states that seismic records show that about 4,700 nuclear bombs were dropped in the course of the conflict between the developed nations, while noting that "some of the records were pretty weak, so there were probably more than that" (81). This would be indicative of a conflict of epic proportions. Shute's novel contains numerous other references to the same war and its consequences- "we'd bombed Leningrad and Odessa and the nuclear establishments" (85), "after that the war was on" (86), "China came in there with her rockets and her radiological

warfare" (87), "It never was like this before the war" (71), "It was much worse than this just after the war" (68), and so on. In particular, the latter two quotes speak of how, in the futurist interpretation, War causes the events heralded by the penultimate third horseman.

The third horsemen rides a black horse and holds a pair of scales. He is given the instructions, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not damage the oil and the wine." A denarius at the time the Book of Revelations was a full day's wages for the average worker. That the third horseman would cause grains to sustain three people at most to cost so much money would mean that workers would struggle to feed their families. However, he does not harm the prices of olive oil and wine, but only the wealthy benefit from this since those items were then considered luxuries. Therefore, scholars name this horseman Famine. Futurists interpret Famine as symbolic of the economic and agricultural collapse that will follow the war, by which the upper class is virtually unaffected. In the context of *On the Beach*, these scenarios are exemplified in several ways. Economic collapse is evident when Peter and Mary make their trip to Melbourne. Everyone has stopped working, the shops are closing down, and the streets are empty and unkempt, showing that commerce- not only for food, but for everything- has virtually died off (262-263). As far as agriculture is concerned, this is most clearly shown when Mr. Davidson confides in Towers that his cows will be left untended after his death, which would essentially leave them helpless (265-266). In both cases, though no one lives to be hurt by the events, the collapse preceding a crisis and famine occur. Meanwhile, John Osborne's Uncle Douglas states that the

Pastoral Club has "over three thousand bottles of vintage port still left in the cellars... and only about six months left to go," which is an abundance of wine to be sure (97). Even when the radiation has reached Melbourne, Douglas states that they still have fifty bottles left (295). As for oil, a different sort than olive oil is addressed early in the novel: petroleum. In a conversation with a farmer, Peter states that petroleum is distilled from brown coal at two pounds per gallon, which the farmer comments makes it unavailable to the average citizen on account of its price (6-7). In other words, though petrol oil remains to be used for essential heavy machinery, it is essentially a luxury product otherwise. In this way, Famine does not damage the oil or wine in the novel. After Famine, the final horseman arrives.

John of Patmos says the last horseman "had the name Death, and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth." Death is believed by futurists to symbolize the forces that will wipe out the last remnants of the human population who have survived the previous three events. Death's presence in the novel is explained quite simply: everyone dies. It is already known that the war killed most of the human population (those who died by "the sword"). Toward the end of the book, radiation sickness fills the role of pestilence. On page 287, John receives a report stating that half the people in Melbourne are showing signs of infection, in addition to seven cases in Tasmania and three in New Zealand. Other towns had by that point already been destroyed by radiation: Montevideo (253), Edmonds (185), Cairns (130), and numerous others. Otherwise, though no mention is made of beasts or starvation, most characters die by taking

cyanide- John Osbourne's mother (288), John himself (298), the Holmes family (304-305), and Moira Davidson (312) are shown directly in the book. Dwight Towers also dies by sinking his ship (309). In short, each and every person is claimed by Death.

Overall, the apocalyptic theme of *On the Beach* is quite evident. When one applies a religious perspective to the novel, it is easy to see the events within as divine judgment. However, there is also an even deeper meaning to those events. The apocalypse that takes place in the novel is, at its heart, little more than a shared death. Rather than everyone dying in their own time and continuing the cycle of life, everyone dies at once. As Peter explains to his wife Mary, "it's what we've always had to face... There's nothing much new about it" (265). Similarly, Dwight says in a conversation with a grazier that, "We've all got to die one day, some sooner and some later. The trouble has always been that you're never ready, because you don't know when it's coming. Well, now we do know, and there's nothing to be done about it" (133). This speaks to a larger theme: that death is inevitable, and the best anyone can do is to live as well as he/she can until it comes. This is further evidenced by Moira, who states that "we're none of us going to have time to do all that we planned to do, but we can keep on doing it as long as we can" (203). Indeed, there are even some Christians in the world today who believe that the Book of Revelation was written simply to encourage people to live life as best they could live it before it came to an end. This allegory- apocalypse as a surrogate for death- essentially permeates the entirety of Shute's novel.