

The Artios Home Companion Series

Introduction to Language Arts Curriculum For Parents

Language Arts Units

This Artios Academies curriculum takes an integrated approach to teaching language arts. All literature selections and writing assignments are designed to integrate directly with the history topics that are being studied in order to maximize both your students' understanding of the time period and their retention of information. While it is written with the student as the audience, it is intended to be used with parental input, feedback, and supervision.

Notebook

It is highly recommended that your student keep a notebook for their language arts work throughout the year. They should probably organize this notebook with dividers, and include sections for Author Profiles, Writing Projects, Literary Analyses, and any other areas that they may desire or that you assign. Your students may enjoy decorating covers for their notebooks.

Literature Selections

The literature selections in this curriculum have been carefully selected and ordered to align with the historical topics that your students are studying simultaneously. It is highly recommended that parents also take time to study the literary works so you can better assess your students' comprehension and understanding of the stories. Make time for discussion of some of the themes and ideas that are woven throughout the text. Make sure to ask some questions that have simple, concise answers as well as ones that require some thought. This also makes

for a great opportunity to discuss the worldviews represented within each work and to help your students evaluate the truths and fallacies they encounter in different belief systems.

This curriculum does not have vocabulary assignments; however, vocabulary selections may be included in the textbook. A diligent study of vocabulary can improve test scores and writing skills. Encourage your student to become diligent and organized in the study of vocabulary.

The literary works you will need for this curriculum are as follows (listed in order of use):

- *The City of God* by Augustine of Hippo
- *Beowulf* by unknown author (translation by Seamus Heaney)
- *Inferno* by Dante Alighieri
- *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer
- *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare

Writing Assignments

The writing assignments provided in this curriculum are designed to meet high school preparatory program standards. They are designed to prepare your students for more rigorous college-level assignments. Our goals are to help students grow in their ease and skill in writing and expose them to a wide variety of writing experiences.

Grading rubrics are also included for assignments to assist parents in evaluating their students' writing. Giving these grading rubrics to students prior to beginning a writing exercise can help them understand what is expected in the assignment; however, it is not necessary that they be used. Other guidelines may be used to help them feel confident in working through an assignment.

Additional literature projects may be provided in the online resources. These cross-curricular projects allow students to express themselves creatively in a variety of ways. While it is not necessary to use every

assignment listed in the curriculum, it is very helpful to supplement with projects that fit their schedule and interests.

Website Content

Website resources are provided along with this curriculum for your convenience at your **HCS Haiku Class pages**. Within the **Language Arts** section, you will find:

- **Language Arts Resources** which will provide you with extra material you might desire to print and use. These may include such items as: Author Profile Forms, Editing Checklists, Examples, Graphic Organizers, Rubrics, and Templates, which provide examples of types and styles of the writing assignments being explored. Resources that are related to a specific literary work may be found in the Units dealing with that book.
- A variety of resources can be found for most books or topics in the Units dealing with the literary work/topic, which will help you to extend and enrich your students' understanding.

Note: Throughout this Language Arts Curriculum, rather than referring you to “the **Language Arts** section of your **HCS Class pages**” it has been simplified to use “**the website**” instead.

While every attempt has been made to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of any Internet links provided, please use caution and oversight when allowing your students to access online information. This content will be monitored regularly and updated as necessary. If a web page won't open by clicking the link, try typing the URL into your web browser.

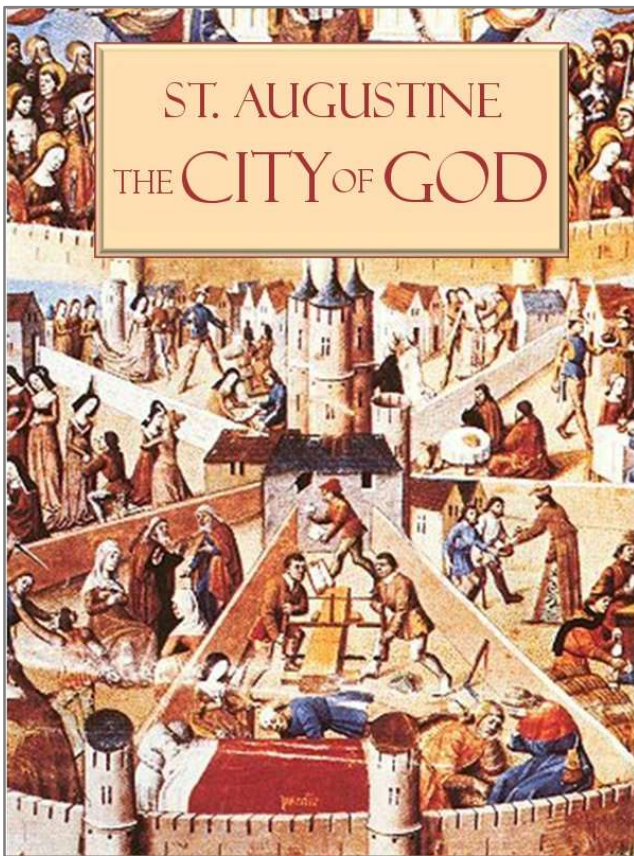
The City of God

by Augustine of Hippo

Literature for Units 1 – 4

http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/45304?msg=welcome_stranger

Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!
– Psalm 87:3 (NKJV)



Alaric and his Gothic army invaded Rome in 410 A.D. Although this was not the first time Rome was attacked, it was the first time anyone succeeded in taking the city. This successful attack left many pagans claiming that Christianity had weakened the empire. St. Augustine responded to this by writing *The City of God*, which was released section by section over a thirteen-year period. The novel contains Augustine's defense of the Christian religion and describes the difference between a city of God and a city of man.

In Augustine's own words, he explains his design in writing *The City of God*:

"The glorious city of God is my theme in this work, which you, my dearest son Marcellinus, suggested, and which is due to you by my promise. I have undertaken its defense against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of this city, a city surpassingly glorious, whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it shall dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat, which it now with patience waits for, expecting until 'righteousness shall return unto judgment,' and it obtain, by virtue of its excellence, final victory and perfect peace. A great work this, and an arduous one; but God is my helper. For I am aware what ability is requisite to persuade the proud how great is the virtue of humility, which raises us, not by a quite human arrogance, but by a divine grace, above all earthly dignities that totter on this shifting scene. For the King and Founder of this city of which we speak, has in Scripture uttered to His people a dictum of the divine law in these words: 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.' But this, which is God's prerogative, the inflated ambition of a proud spirit also affects, and dearly loves that this be numbered among its attributes, to show pity to the humbled soul, and crush the sons of pride.

"And therefore, as the plan of this work we have undertaken requires, and as occasion offers, we must speak also of the earthly city, which, though it be mistress of the nations, is itself ruled by its lust of rule."

(Preface to *The City of God*)

The City of God is considered to be Augustine’s most influential work, even more so than his better-known *Confessions*. It is believed to be the first clearly written explanation of Christian philosophy, and it has helped shaped the doctrines of some of our greatest Christian writers and historical figures. Francis Bacon is quoted as saying, “If but one book might be had for the edification of the mind, the encouragement of the heart, and the satisfaction of the soul, *The City of God* would of necessity be it.” Martin Luther believed this book to have “set the very course of Western civilization.”

This novel is composed of twenty-two books (chapters) written over thirteen years. Notice the repetition that occurs in the novel due to the length of time it took to complete. This repetition helps to enhance the ideas Augustine presents in the novel.

Author Spotlight

Augustine was born in North Africa on November 13, 354. His father, Patricius, was a professing pagan until he experienced a “deathbed conversion.” His mother, however, was a devout Christian who made sure Augustine was educated in the Church. When he went to Carthage in 370, she was very upset that he still had not been baptized. In Carthage, he did not live a Christian life.

He struggled to find his faith until he was 33 years old, his conversion coming after he spent time under the Christian teachings of Ambrose of Milan. He was baptized a year later. He returned to the Church to study and answer the philosophical questions that had plagued his faith, and he was ordained in 391.

Augustine became the Bishop of Hippo as the Roman Empire was disintegrating. He continued to rule the diocese until his death in 439, and became known as one of the four “Doctors of the Church,” along with Ambrose, Gregory the Great, and Jerome.

Many of his writings deal with the conflicts between Christianity and “the world.” Even today, his many works are considered the foundation of Christian philosophy. *The City of God* was probably the last of his writings.

Adapted from <http://www.online-literature.com/saint-augustine/>

Unit 1 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below. In this and all readings, look up or derive from context the definitions of any unfamiliar words or terms you encounter.
- Begin reading Book XI of *The City of God*. Read through Book XIII. Please note that each Book is comprised of up to 30 short chapters, so plan your reading time accordingly.

Activity While Reading: Keep a reading journal. Refer to the **Resources** section of **the website** for notes on keeping a reading journal.

When writing in your journal, consider the descriptions of each city and find the similar elements in them: their origins, progressions, inhabitants, etc., and make notes on these throughout your reading.

- Be sure to take careful notes in preparation for a five-paragraph essay that you will begin writing in Unit 3. You may choose to write either a narrative essay or a descriptive essay.

Unit 1 – Assignment Background

The first ten books present Augustine’s arguments against the pagans’ belief that the Christians brought about the Fall of Rome. The first five cover the belief of the pagans that they should worship the old gods in order to gain material wealth. Book I directly attacks the pagans’ belief that the Christians caused the Fall of Rome because the Christian religion weakened it by arguing that misfortune happens to everyone. In Book II,

Augustine presents the idea that Rome had suffered even when worshiping the old gods. Worshiping these gods kept the Romans weak, because they were subject to moral and spiritual corruption. Augustine discusses other tragedies in Book III in order to further prove that Christians did not cause the fall, asking why the old gods did not defend Rome in the past.

Book IV presents an alternate view—that Rome

endured for centuries because that was the will of the one, true God. Augustine then addresses the pagan notion of fate in Book V. He argues that rather than fate being the viable force that held the Roman Empire together, God in fact was rewarding the Romans for their virtue, even though they did not worship Him. In Book VI, Augustine shifts his focus and devotes the remaining five books to refuting the idea that people must worship the old gods to gain eternal life. Augustine uses pagan authors to destroy

this notion by saying the gods were never held in high regard, so the old ways, old myths, and old laws were useless in ensuring eternal happiness. Augustine continues to refute pagan theology through Book X.

We will begin our reading in Book XI, in which Augustine begins his descriptions of the doctrine of the two cities, one earthly and one heavenly. He begins by describing how these books came about, based on his Biblical knowledge.

Unit 2 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Continue reading *The City of God*. Read through Book XVI. Remember that each book is comprised of up to 30 short chapters, so plan accordingly.

Activity While Reading: Continue keeping a reading journal, noting any unfamiliar vocabulary and interesting revelations from the novel.

- Research the Visigoth attack of Rome. Write a one-page essay summarizing the events of this attack, as well as the aftermath. This website gives some information as it applies to St. Augustine:
<https://quatr.us/romans/visigoths-sack-rome-fall-of-rome.htm>

Unit 2 – Assignment Background

Arianism and Neoplatonism

Aside from Christianity, there were two other views of God held by people during Augustine's time. One of these is *Arianism*, which was based on the beliefs and teachings of Arius, a Libyan Presbyter in the fourth century. A second view was *Neoplatonism*. Plato's "Theory of Ideas" or "Theory of Forms" was the basis for this view.

Read a brief introduction and history of Arianism which can be found at either of these sites:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arianism>

<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ac61>

Neoplatonism can be explained as follows below, which is taken from here:

<http://www.earlychurch.org.uk/plato.php>

Plato was a student of Socrates (c.470-399 B.C.), and is primarily remembered for his Theory of Ideas. Just as it was possible to perfectly define a triangle, Plato reasoned that abstract virtues, such as love, truth, and beauty could also be defined. More than that, whatever we see of these virtues in this world is but a shadow of the original that exists in the unseen world of forms. The ability to recognize that something in this world resembles its eternal ideal is innate: acquired before the soul is clothed in its physical body. Plato's aim was to educate those who had the ability to comprehend them to concentrate on the realities rather than the images that they perceived with their flawed natural senses. The

importance of this theory to our discussion becomes clear in any discussion of the early Church fathers.

In a work written in dialogue form entitled *The Timaeus*, Plato gave his account of the origin of the visible world. This work had a tremendous influence on Christian thought from the time of the second century Apologists to the Renaissance. Even today there is considerable disagreement among scholars about its dating and how it is to be reconciled with his other works, which is not surprising, as even his younger contemporaries could not agree on its meaning.

Plato calls the maker of the heavenly bodies the Demiourgos (or Demiurge), or more frequently

“God” (as opposed to the “gods”), but also Father and begetter. However, Plato’s Demiourgos is only a symbol of Soul, and so Plato is not using the word God (*Theos*) in the Judeo-Christian sense. In fact, the Timaeus is no more than a cosmological myth, demonstrating that the universe is more than just matter. It is a living entity. This Craftsman or Technician acting out of his own goodness brought order to eternal, formless matter.

For God desired that so far as possible, all things should be good and nothing evil; wherefore, when he took over all that was visible, seeing that it was not in a state of rest but in a state of discordant and disorderly motion, he brought it into order out of disorder, deeming the former state in all ways better than the latter.

The Demiourgos is not, like Yahweh, omnipotent, for he “must bend to his will a material that is to some extent recalcitrant. Otherwise, being wholly good himself, he would have made a perfect world.” Nor did he form the universe alone, for he calls subordinate gods into existence to help him build according to a predetermined pattern or Form. From the above it is easy to see why Philo of Alexandria and the Christian Platonists mistakenly saw in Plato’s work a description of the Creation and used it to bridge the gap between what they believed and intellectual paganism.

Two developments of Plato’s ideas are relevant to our present study. The first is Middle Platonism (sometimes known as pre-Neo-Platonism), which became fully developed in the 1st century A.D. and contained a distinctly religious element. Many Middle Platonists postulated a supreme “Divine Mind,” and Jewish and Christian writers interpreted Plato’s ideas of forms as “thoughts within the divine mind.” The amalgam produced emphasized God’s transcendence but also accepted God’s immanence in the physical world. It also fostered a dualistic view

of soul and body (the spiritual being seen as superior). Christians viewed this as a triumph because it meant that much of contemporary thought could be accepted without denying either the bodily resurrection of Christ or the goodness of the physical creation.

It was Middle Platonism that provided Philo and the Christian writers, such as Justin Martyr, Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen with what they considered to be the best available instrument for understanding and defending the teachings of Scripture and Church tradition. Like Philo, they did not believe that truth could conflict with truth and were confident that all that was rationally certain in Platonic speculation would prove to be in perfect accordance with the Christian revelation. Their unhistorical approach and unscholarly methods of exegesis of texts, both pagan and Christian, facilitated this confidence.

Middle Platonism retained its pre-eminence in the minds of Christian writers beyond the end of the 4th century, even after the rise of its successor, Neo-Platonism. Neo-Platonism is sometimes described as “the final form of Greek philosophy” and by others a last-ditch attempt “to revive and restate classical philosophy as a viable alternative to the Christian faith.” It was formulated by the pagan philosopher Plotinus (A.D. 205-270) and represents a selective systematization of the works of Plato, plus elements from Aristotle and Stoicism. Neo-Platonists did not see themselves as following a new philosophy: they believed that they had re-discovered the true meaning of Plato’s teachings. It was Neo-Platonism that had the greatest influence upon Christian theology from the fourth century until it was displaced by Aristotelianism in the Middle Ages.

– Rob Bradshaw, Webmaster,
earlychurch.org.uk/plato.php

Unit 3 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Continue reading *The City of God* through Book XIX.

Activity While Reading: Continue keeping a reading journal, noting any unfamiliar vocabulary and interesting revelations from the novel.

- Using the notes from your reading journal and the novel itself, begin drafting a five-paragraph essay on one of the following topics:

Option One:

Write a narrative about living in one of the cities.

- Write from the point of view of an occupant in the city and give descriptions about the way you live, how you interact with your neighbors, and what a typical day might look like.
- Be sure to stay in character throughout the essay and write as if you were making a well-written, grammatically correct diary entry or speaking to a friend.
- For information on writing a narrative essay, please see:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/essay_writing/narrative_essays.html

Option Two:

Choose one of the two cities, and write what that city might look like today.

- This can be a descriptive essay describing the challenges that face modern man living in the city of God or the city of Man.
- Your essay should include similar information to what St. Augustine included in his text but reveal new ideas that are specific to our time.
- If you need to use quotes from *The City of God*, be sure to use quotation marks and note the page number from the book.
- For information on writing a descriptive essay, please see:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/essay_writing/descriptive_essays.html

Unit 3 – Assignment Background

The First English Printing of *The City of God*

“I know well what strong arguments are required to make the proud know the virtue of humility, by which (not being enhanced by human glory, but endowed with divine grace) it surmounts all earthly loftiness. . . . For the King, the builder of this City, whereof we are now to discourse, hath opened his mind to his people, in the divine law, thus: God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

Chapter 1, *The City of God*

For a brief history and a look at the title page of the first English printing of *The City of God*, visit:

<http://augnet.org/en/works-of-augustine/writings-of-augustine/city-of-god/2132-city-of-god-in-english/>

Augustine and Politics

Read the information found at this website on Augustine and politics to learn how Augustine’s *The City of God* influenced the development of “Western political thought”:

<http://augnet.org/en/works-of-augustine/his-impact/2408-politics/>

Unit 4 – Assignments

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Finish reading *The City of God* and writing notes in your reading journal.
- Use your notes and any new information and quotes to edit the rough draft of your essay.
- Make sure that your thesis or narrative is clear to the reader and that your essay is well-organized and free of mechanical errors.
- Use the evaluation rubric in the **Resources** section of **the website** to check your work.

Unit 4 – Assignment Background

A Synopsis of the Christian Teaching in *The City of God*

Visit this site, which gives an overview of Augustine’s Christian teachings in *The City of God*:

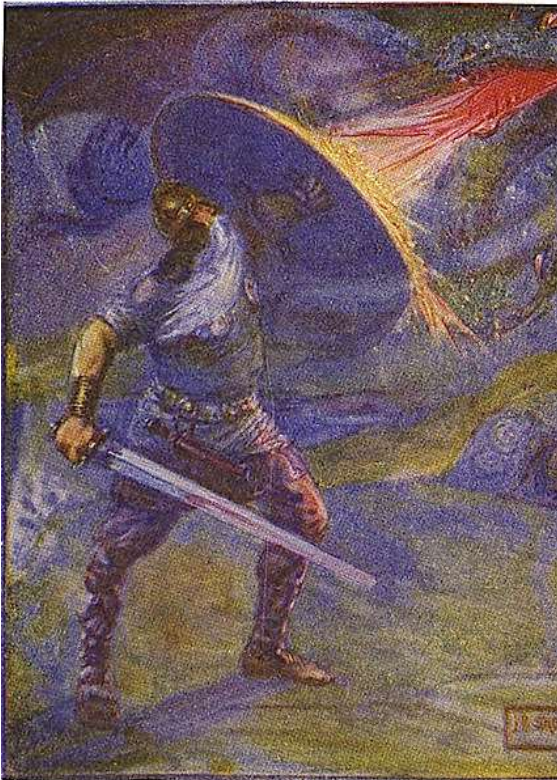
<http://augnet.org/en/works-of-augustine/his-spiritual-tradition/>.

Beowulf

Author Unknown

Literature for Units 5 – 8

Often, for undaunted courage, fate spares the man it has not already marked.
– *Beowulf*, lines 572-573



Beowulf battles his nemesis, the dragon, shown in an illustration by J.R. Skelton

Beowulf is the oldest known epic poem written in English. The origin of the poem is unknown; however, there are many scholars who believe it was composed by a Christian author for an Anglo-Saxon Christian audience. *Beowulf* remained untitled until the early 19th century, when its title was taken from the name of the epic's hero. The poem was composed and passed on in the oral tradition until it was finally written down sometime in the tenth century. It contains many allusions to the Old Testament, and the influence of Old Norse mythology can be observed in the poem's features and characteristics.

Epic poems can be defined as long, narrative poems written in elevated or lofty language, as if a king or person of noble birth were relating the tale, honoring the great feats of a legendary hero. The epic hero is often of divine birth and has superhuman skill, strength, and character. He (yes, early epic heroes were all male) is the type of leader you would want to follow into battle, and his ability to keep calm under pressure is celebrated in the poem.

If you would like to have access to some background information and discussion questions throughout our study of *Beowulf*, there is a wonderful reading guide printed by Signet Classics, which can be found at: <http://us.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/beowulf.pdf>

The following site contains a thorough list of characters. It would be helpful to print it out and keep it as a reference in the front of your reading journal: <http://csis.pace.edu/grendel/proj1b/names.html>

If you are finding it difficult to understand what is happening in *Beowulf*, this site has a side-by-side layout with the original text in one column and modern text in the other:

<http://www.sparknotes.com/nofear/lit/beowulf/chapter-1/>

Note: This link is to Chapter 1, but the website has a scroll bar to select other chapters.

A free audiobook version of the poem (translated by Francis Barton Gummere) can be found here:

<https://librivox.org/beowulf-by-unknown/>

Unit 5 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Begin reading *Beowulf*, from the Prologue through Part XVIII.

Activity While Reading: As you read *Beowulf*, choose one of the poem’s literary devices to track as you read. Write several examples of the literary device as you discover them during your reading. *Beowulf* is quite long, so be sure to plan your reading accordingly.

Note: During Units 7 and 8, you will be doing a writing project based on the poem. You may wish to look ahead and begin planning.

Unit 5 – Assignment Background

Literary Devices

Adapted from various resources on poetry and prosody

Numerous literary devices are employed by the authors of epic poetry to build fascination and add drama to recitals of the poems. Some of the devices found in *Beowulf* include the following:

Alliteration, used frequently in Old English and Anglo-Saxon writing, is the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of syllables in adjacent or closely occurring words. As you read *Beowulf*, you will find many examples of alliteration. One example from the Introduction is “Dragging the dead men home to his den.”

Kenning is found frequently in Anglo-Saxon poetry and is the equivalent of the Homeric *epithet*. It is a metaphor made up of either a compound or modifying word or phrase to substitute for an object, such as “sidewalk surfboard” for “skateboard.” Many of the old Norse and Anglo-Saxon kennings have lost their meaning to contemporary audiences; however, with study, students should be able to locate and define kennings. An example of kenning from *Beowulf* is “light of battle,” meaning “sword.”

When neither element of the compound phrase is the real name of the object, it is a *true kenning*. When one element is real, it is called a *half kenning*.

Caesura is a pause, often written as a blank space, in the middle of a verse in an Anglo-Saxon poem. The *caesurae* in each line divide it into two parts, which are called *hemistiches*. Usually, caesurae are marked with some form of punctuation, whether a comma or a period. As you read *Beowulf*, try to locate the caesurae in the poem. If you are having trouble, listen to an audio recording of the poem, as you follow with text, to locate them.

Synecdoche is a literary term in which part is used for the whole or the whole is used for part. A common example is seen in the phrase “all hands on

deck,” where the word “hands” means “crewmembers.” In *Beowulf*, we find an example of synecdoche when the word “keel” is used in place of “ship.” Synecdoche is similar to **metonymy**, which is one term being used in the place of the name of another object. An example of metonymy in *Beowulf* is the term “iron” being used in the place of “sword.”

Litotes (*Lie-tah-tees*) is figurative language used in Anglo-Saxon literature. Litotes is an understatement in which something is described by negating its opposite, such as in the phrase “oh, it wasn’t serious at all, just a little heart attack.” An example from *Beowulf* is found in Beowulf’s description of his battle with the sea monsters: “I served them well with my noble blade, as was only fitting. Small pleasure they had in such a sword-feast . . .”

Vocabulary

In this unit, as you read the text, there may be many unfamiliar terms. It is important that you write these in your reading journal and find their definitions.

Some terms to become familiar with before reading are:

scop: an Anglo-Saxon poet and storyteller; a *scop* would be hired to sing songs celebrating the person who hired him and the people of his times; through his songs, the scop entertained and gave an historical account of the accomplishments.

wergild: “man payment” (kenning!); the price placed on a person, which indicates the amount to be paid by anyone who injures or kills them. This payment freed the offender of any vengeful punishment or obligation to the injured person’s family.

comitatus: the Anglo-Saxon code of loyalty; it

is described in Tacitus's *Germania* as “the bond existing between a Germanic warrior and his lord.”

wyrd: an Anglo-Saxon term for “fate” or “destiny”; it is the predecessor of our word *weird*.

Unit 6 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Continue reading *Beowulf*. Read from Part XIX through Part XXI. The poem is quite long, so be sure to plan your reading accordingly.

Activity While Reading: Create a bulleted list of epic poetry elements used in the poem, noting where each is used. (Be sure as well to continue tracking and noting your chosen literary device as illustrated in the poem.)

Unit 6 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Elements of Literature

- or -

An Introduction to the Study of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres

by E.A. Ansley, A.M.

Elements of Epic Poetry

The word *epopoeia*, by which the kind of poetry of which we are now to treat is called, properly means “a poetical narration,” but its meaning has been restricted, and it is now exclusively applied to the most beautiful, the most noble, in short, the greatest effort of poetical genius—the epic poem.

An epic poem must contain the portrayal of a heroic action, marvelous in its incidents and important in its consequences.

It is the narration of a great action. In this respect it differs from tragedy, which is the representation of one complete action. It is a poetical narration, adorned with fictitious incidents and machinery, and in this particular it differs from history. It is the narration of a heroic action; and in this there is something that elevates it above a romance, in which there is always something familiar and common. And finally, the character of the narration is marvelous; and it is this that, in fact, gives it the highest rank among the productions that have their origin in the conception of the human mind.

The object of an epic poem is to excite pleasure and admiration by exhibiting the triumph of virtue and heroism under the most distressing and trying

circumstances, and to elevate the heart by the display of heroic achievements and noble sentiments. Such are inspired by the spectacle of a hero who succeeds in some difficult or glorious enterprise by surmounting the obstacles placed in his way from the wickedness or vices of men, and by bringing under subjection his own passions.

Of the Qualities of the Epic Action

The action of an epic poem should be founded upon truth, and it ought to also possess the qualities of probability, unity, and integrity. The mere history of a hero or distinguished personage, such as in the “Thebaid” of Statius, the “Henriade” of Voltaire, or a simple recital of historical events, such as the “Punic War” of Silius Italicus, or Lucan’s “Pharsalia,” do not constitute epic poems, although written in verse, because they embrace many actions and exploits which are quite independent of each other, and do not tend to the consummation of one single action.

Of Episodes: The unity essentially necessary in this species of poetical composition does not, however, prohibit the introduction of *episodes*, which are secondary actions, subordinate to the main action of the poem. The object of the episode is,

in fact, a subject or action introduced to amuse the reader without diverting his mind from the progress of the principal action; such are the episodes of the meeting of Hector and Andromache in the *Iliad*, of Nisus and Euryalus, and of the Harpies, in the *Aeneid*, of the adventures of the Tancred with Erminia and Clorinda in *Jerusalem Delivered*, and of the prospect given to Adam of his descendants by the angel in *Paradise Lost*.

An episode should tend to move the general action forward, but it may be left out without injuring it. It diversifies the subject, and being introduced for the sake of variety, affords an agreeable relief to the reader by shifting the scene. It ought, however, to be connected with the main action and spring from it naturally and without effort, and as it owes its introduction into the poem to please the reader by the agreeable change of scene that it presents, it ought to be more or less short according as it more nearly or more remotely relates to the general action. And though quite different from what goes before and what follows after, its intimate connection with the main action and its dependence upon it are absolutely necessary.

As it is a professed embellishment of the poem, we must be careful to distinguish it from those portions of it that form constituent parts of the work. Thus the passion of Dido for Aeneas in the *Aeneid* is not an episode, as it forms one of the considerable obstacles that the hero encounters in the prosecution of his design, and thus enters largely into the plot of the poem. The transition from the main action to the episode, and from the episode back again to the subject, should be easy and natural.

Of the Marvelous

The epic action should be heroic in both its principle and its object. The characters of the actors should also be noble and elevated. But besides this, it not only admits the introduction of other personages, namely, the Deity, the angels, the demons, and other supernatural beings, but also seems to require their intervention. This has been called the *machinery* of the poem, a word that would seem to imply that the conduct of an epic poem cannot be carried on without it.

Of the Necessity of the Marvelous in an Epic Poem

The necessity of marvelous intervention is apparent, because:

1. An epic poem is the highest effort of inventive or

creative genius. It should, therefore, unite all that is greatest and most sublime in the other classes of literary composition. Hence, without supernatural invention, the epic poet would fall below the lyric, who, in his inspiration, introduces the deities speaking and acting; nay, even his very language is said to be inspired by the muse, and he writes merely what she dictates. But supposing even that he is not permitted to soar to the sublimity of the ode, he should surely not fall below the historian, since even he must explore the secrets of Divine Providence in order to faithfully unveil the destinies of nations and of individuals.

2. Since an epic may truly be considered the greatest and most dignified production of human intellect and genius, it ought also to surpass in interest every other type of composition. Hence without machinery, that is, without the agency of supernatural interference, so far from possessing the interest of history, which is felt, for example in the narration of the marvelous events of the Old Testament, the conversion of Constantine, the mission of Joan of Arc, etc., an epic poem could scarcely challenge the interest excited by the historical narration of the great and heroic actions of a Hannibal or a Caesar.
3. The epic action ought to be interesting in every point of view in which it may be considered. Especially, it ought to awaken the religious feelings of our nature, which are the deepest, the most powerful, that we possess.
4. The reader expects, too, that an epic poem should combine every possible charm in incident and language. The marvelous possesses the highest power of awakening our most vivid feelings. Hence, without the marvelous an epic poem would fail in its first and most essential requisite.
5. An epic poem ought to excite our admiration to the very highest point. Now how can any human action, however great or noble it may be supposed to be, carry our admiration to this point, if there is not something marvelous in it, keeping always within the bounds of possibility, at least, if not of probability, or if there is not, in fact, something in it above the ordinary reach of the human intellect to accomplish without the aid of supernatural agency? There is, besides, nothing inconsistent with this interference in the common belief of mankind; for when we hear, for example, of an exalted act of virtue, or the perpetration of an atrocious crime, nothing is more common than

for people to attribute the one to the special aid from above, and the other to the instigation of the evil spirit.

6. In order thus to awaken admiration, the epic poet has no other resource, or rather he is bound to seize everything that is available, to strike the mind, and work upon the imagination. The earth, the middle air, the sky, heaven, hell, the heart, mind, and soul of man, the Deity, good and evil spirits, are “the haunt and main region of his song.” His genius acknowledges no other bounds than the universe. Such is the theater, and such are the actors in an epic poem.
7. In conclusion, the object of an epic poem is to give the most noble and the most impressive lessons to mankind. Now how otherwise can these lessons be given than by pointing out to him the finger of Providence in the direction of human affairs? How otherwise than by making him sensible that the great, the noble actions he describes owe their origin to the direct intervention of the Divinity?
8. But it may be asked, can we not conceive a poem to be noble and sublime without the introduction of the marvelous? We certainly can, but such a poem will be as much beneath a poem founded on the marvelous as the actions of men are beneath those of the Deity. Such a poem, it cannot be denied, may be beautiful, nay, even sublime, but can have no pretensions to the epic character. Because, if the word epic is simply taken in its literal sense, if it means nothing more than a poetical portrayal of an action, then a simple fable written in verse would deserve to be called an epic poem.
9. Homer, Virgil, Tasso, and Milton have formed this conception of an epic poem. And if rules are founded upon observation and the study of the best models, it may safely be laid down as a

principle that the marvelous, that is, what is supernatural, forms the very essence of epic poetry, and is its sole characteristic; since the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, *Jerusalem Delivered*, and *Paradise Lost* have never been surpassed, and are on that account to be regarded as just about the only models of this type of composition. These great poems have not only employed the marvelous, but it constitutes the very machinery upon which the poems are founded. The divinity and supernatural agents are the principal characters, the prime movers of the events described. And is it not, in fact, to the interposition of the Divinity and his agents that we owe those imposing scenes, those sublime descriptions, the intricacies and unexpected unravelings of the plot, and above all, that nobleness and unity of plan, which excites our astonishments, which enraptures us, and which, in fact, produces the exquisite, all-absorbing interest we feel in those poems? Besides, how many things are there which cannot be explained other than by recourse to the immediate interposition of Divine Providence? For example, how can the unity of the principal action be preserved when we consider the natural accidents that intervene to thwart it? The storms, the tempests, the issue of battles, the unexpected encounters, and all those revolutions in human affairs which defeat the expectations of man, and over which he has no control? If these things are not controlled and directed by the agency of supernatural beings, if they are not subordinate to designs which human agency alone could not effect, they are the mere sport of chance, and must, then, be most frequently without aim or object.

Unit 7 – Assignments

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Finish reading *Beowulf*.

Activity While Reading: Create a bulleted list of character elements, using the elements of the epic hero and other characters discussed in the Assignment Background below. Write examples of how each of these elements is illustrated in the poem. (Be sure as well to continue tracking and noting your chosen literary device.) *Beowulf* is quite long, so be sure to plan your reading accordingly.

Composition

- Choose ONE of the following writing projects and begin a *rough draft* this week. Your project should be at least 750 words.
 - Using your knowledge of the literary terms and examples you have been gathering from the poem, write a literary analysis on the author's use of your chosen literary device and how its use highlights certain events or affects the overall meaning of the poem. For information on writing a literary analysis, please visit:
<https://www.sierracollege.edu/files/resources/student-services/academic-support/writing-center/documents/LitCrit.pdf>
 - *Beowulf* is the oldest surviving epic poem written in English. Based on the information about epic poems and epic heroes you've gathered during this unit, rewrite a scene from *Beowulf* in a modern setting with a modern hero. Include one of these three major events in your poem: (1) the fight with Grendel, (2) the fight with Grendel's mother, or (3) the fight with the dragon. Your finished poem should be in verse form and contain at least 750 words. *Beowulf* contains the pagan concepts of fate, fame, and vengeance; use your poem to reflect the Christian ideals of humility, free will, and God's will.

Unit 7 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Elements of Literature

- or -

An Introduction to the Study of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres

by E.A. Ansley, A.M.

Elements of Epic Poetry

On the Mode of Employing the Marvelous

It must be allowed that the introduction of the machinery of the heathen deities into a poem in our age, living as we do in a Christian land, far from exciting interest or awakening admiration, would only provoke laughter and derision. What then is the legitimate field of the marvelous in our times? God, the angels, and the evil spirits. Does not God control all human events, the most trivial as well as the greatest and most stupendous, whether he does so *immediately* or *mediately* through the ministrations of angels and inspired men, or by permitting the devil to use his infernal power, and act, either by himself in his own person, or through his imps, the agents of his power, magicians for example? Shall poetry have a less extensive field than history, when the latter recounts to us the miraculous history of a Moses, a Joshua, a David, a Joan of Arc? And may not the Christian poet suppose that a heavenly genius has revealed to him the secret springs of divine power?

We should, however, be careful to guard against confusing what is marvelous with what is

miraculous. A *miracle* is a welcome derangement of the natural order of things. The *marvelous* consists in revealing the traces of the intervention of the Divinity, and in discovering the means He employs in the direction of terrestrial affairs, yet without deranging the natural order of things.

How then should the poet employ the intervention of the Deity, since the action of an epic poem is considered to be carried on solely by the agency of superior beings? It must be borne in mind that they only give, so to speak, the first impulse, which directing with certainty the secondary cause to the object which is marked out for it, indicates the supreme power of the prime agent. Thus superior beings, although the great actors in an epic poem, appear only occasionally, and at long intervals; while men, who are the *subaltern* (lower ranking) actors, almost always occupy the scene; and this should be so, since the spectacle is made for men.

Now these supernatural agents act sometimes by dreams or visions; sometimes by assuming the figure or at least the voice of a man, and then we are either immediately conscious of their presence, or they do not reveal themselves till the moment of their

disappearance; or it may be that they entirely veil their divinity from the sight of those who are the object of their intervention. But they should never appear in the full effulgence of their glory and power.

Sometimes they act unknown to men, and without mingling with them; and this kind of interposition is the most noble and the most worthy of the deity. Thus in Homer, Jupiter never acts but through the agency of the inferior gods; he never communicates directly with men. It is the same with Juno in the *Aeneid*.

The marvelous ought, besides, to be probable; that is to say, the interposition of the divinity and of supernatural beings ought to be conformable to the notions men entertain of their nature and attributes. Thus the interposition of God, of the angels, and evil spirits will differ essentially from the action of the heathen deities in the darkness of paganism. Hence Homer cannot be blamed for painting his gods as he has done; because he took them as he found them according to the popular belief of those among whom he wrote, and in his machinery there is nothing improbable or inconsistent with the religious belief of the Greeks.

We must be very careful not to confound the marvelous, that is, superior beings considered as actors in an epic poem, with those allegorical personages which the poets occasionally introduce into their works by way of ornament. These kinds of deities are nothing more than personifications, sometimes of meta-physical existences, such as the virtues, the vices, the passions, war, discourse, fury, etc.; at other times of natural objects, such as the earth, the heavens, etc., are personified. These may even find a place in a Christian poem, when they are introduced merely as poetical fictions for the purpose of embellishment, but they never should be permitted to take any part in the action of the poem.

Of the Quality of the Actors (Quality of the Epic Hero)

With respect to the secondary or subordinate characters in an epic poem, that is the personages by whose aid or instrumentality the action is accomplished, it is sufficient to say that they should be well marked, well sustained, appropriate, and diversified.

The principal or more conspicuous personages should secure an interest in the reader by their noble or distinguished qualities; and the hero of the poem should especially claim our love and admiration by his exalted virtues and eminent qualities; since the desire we feel of seeing him triumph, and the fear of which we are conscious at the sight of the dangers to which he is exposed, and the vivid pleasure that transports us when we see his heroism finally triumphant over all the obstacles that opposed the accomplishment of his enterprise—all depend upon the interest the skill of the poet makes us feel in him.

Conclusion

In a word, an epic poem, to deserve the name, by way of excellence, ought to charm and captivate all the faculties of the mind, and, so to speak, all the bodily senses. It ought to please the ear by the grandeur, sweetness, and diversified harmony of its numbers. It ought to delight the imagination by the vividness and coloring of its pictures, which are sometimes pleasing, sometimes terrible, sometimes simple, and at others the heart by the nobleness and dignity of the characters, by the contrast of virtues, the shock of opposite passions, and by its touching and dramatic scenes. And lastly, it ought to captivate the mind by the probability, the unity, and greatness of the action, by the skillful disposition and unraveling of the plots, by an uninterrupted and always diversified succession of scenes and incidents. These, always enhancing each other and hurrying the reader from one striking or beautiful passage to another, give him the anticipation of something still more charming in the perspective, and which keeps his curiosity constantly alive and draws him on, in spite of himself, to the conclusion of the poem.

Hence, and we repeat it once more, the epic poet should avail himself of whatever is most beautiful, most terrible, most imposing, most noble, and most perfect that the heavens, earth, hell, men, celestial and infernal spirits can offer. His limits are nothing less than the universe, and all that it contains is required to contribute in the formation of a poem which is the masterpiece of human genius.

The models in this species of composition are Homer, Virgil, Tasso, and Milton.

Unit 8 – Assignments

- Using the link provided in the Assignment Background below, read the article “Christianity in *Beowulf*.”
- Spend some time reviewing *Beowulf*, and finish taking notes in your reading journal.
- Complete the final draft of your literary analysis or poem. You should refer to the **Rubric** in the **Resources** section of **the website** and the checklist from the literary analysis link for completeness.
- Review your work; making sure it is free of grammatical and mechanical errors.

Unit 8 – Assignment Background

Christianity in *Beowulf*

There are many pagan concepts presented in *Beowulf*. It is important to note that although the author was apparently a Christian and was writing for a Christian audience, many of the pagan superstitions of their ancestors were still held fast. This article gives a wonderful overview of the author’s ability to present these pagan concepts blended with Christian beliefs: http://www.shadowedrealm.com/articles/exclusive/christianity_in_beowulf



Approximate central regions of tribes mentioned in *Beowulf*, with the location of the Angles in Angeln

The Artios Home Companion Series

Literature and Composition

Units 9 – 11: Essay Writing

Now that you have written a few commentaries and followed a suggested outline, we are going to take a few units to build on your essay-writing skills. There is no piece of literature accompanying Units 9-11. We will focus on the parts of an essay and the different types of essays. The notes and projects from this unit will be used as a resource for the remainder of the year.

Unit 9 – Assignments

- Read the two articles in the Assignment Background below on essays and technical rules.
- Using a sheet of paper or a resource journal, create a **Resource Document** for writing by listing each of the Technical Rules in your own words.
- Be sure to leave space under each rule for examples.
- Using *The City of God* or another piece of literature, find good examples of the technical rules and write them underneath each rule, as a guide.
- You will refer to this **Resource Document** as you write essays. Please see the **Resources** section of **the website** for a sample document, including examples from *The City of God*.

Unit 9 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Writing Essays For Schools

by Leslie Cope Cornford

Introduction

First of all, what is an Essay? An Essay is the setting forth, the making clear, the illustration of a particular fact, idea, truth, or emotion, or of a particular group of facts, ideas, truths, or emotions in a short written composition.

For instance, the dictionary definition of the word *essay* is itself a little essay on the word, an explanation of it. “A composition on some special subject, commonly briefer and less complete and formal than a treatise,” says the dictionary; also, “an endeavor to do something; attempt or effort made; also, sometimes, a trial or test, an experiment:” and the dictionary goes on to tell us that the word is derived through the Old French *assay*, from the Latin *exigo* (prove), *ex* (out), and *ago* (drive); and that the original word *assay*, which at first meant “an endeavor to do something; attempt or effort made;”

is now only used in the sense of a “a trial or test, and experiment”; as applied to the “the chemical analysis or testing of an alloy or ore, to ascertain the ingredients and their proportion.” Consider, then the word *essay*, its origins and history, as set forth, made clear, and illustrated in the dictionary, we find that the nature, the root-idea, of the word is *the endeavor to find out and to make clear the nature of a thing, what that thing really is, by proving, testing, or examining it; by (as the Latin verb exigo suggests) the driving—or separating—out the different things of which it is composed* (called its “ingredients”). Thus, when you are endeavoring to find out and to make clear the nature of a subject, what it is, you are *essaying* to do so; and when you have done all you can, you have made an *essay*.

Here, the question naturally arises: What is the

object of writing essays at all? Why (you ask) should you, a person of humble pretensions, take the trouble to find out and to express your views upon subjects which have already been treated, many times, by the wise and famous? The reasons are simple and sufficient. *The exercise of the art of composition teaches you to think for yourself; a lesson so indescribably important that it may even be called the beginning and the end of all education.* Furthermore, the habit of careful writing teaches you how to express yourself with ease and accuracy; and a little consideration will show you that, in certain branches of study, this ability of expression is indispensable; and that, in the general conduct of life, the advantages arising from a mastery of the English tongue are (to say the least) not to be despised.

Supposing, now, that you have reflected upon a given subject until you feel that you have done all that your powers of thought enable you to do; that you have then collected such outside information as you needed; and that you are now ready to begin writing: the question naturally presents itself, Into what form am I to shape my material? Am I to begin

anywhere, and trust to luck? Or, should I proceed on a definite plan?—Well, in beginning to write, it is better of course, to proceed on a definite plan; but, on the other hand, the great thing is to *begin*; bearing in mind that you can always attend to the arrangement—the *Disposition*, as it is called—of the different parts of the essay, afterward, when you have the whole composition written out, and under your eye. When you have acquired the habit of ordered composition, the difficulty will disappear by itself. Meanwhile, you are to remember that an essay is composed of three parts: The Beginning, called the Introduction; the Middle, called the Argument; and the End, called the Conclusion; and that a finished composition must have these divisions clearly marked.

The *Introduction*, of course, serves to introduce the subject.

The *Argument* contains the facts, ideas, and sentiments of which your treatment of the subject consists.

The *Conclusion* serves to round off the composition.

Adapted for High School from:

Writing Essays For Schools

by Leslie Cope Cornford

Technical Rules

You must employ a definite system with regard to what printers call the “style of the copy”; that is, the division of manuscript into paragraphs and sentences; the punctuation, including inverted commas and apostrophes; use of capital letters and italics; numbers, whether written in full or not; abbreviations and symbols; and spelling. You must be strict with yourself to employ the system as accurately in your rough draft, as in your fair copy; so that you may acquire the habit.

Paragraph and Sentence

Divide the composition into paragraphs. Each paragraph should contain one division of the subject. Thus the Introduction and the Conclusion will have one (sometimes more than one) paragraph; and each section of the Argument will be contained in a separate paragraph. The sentences of which the paragraph is composed should (generally speaking) contain one piece of information, with or without qualifications, and one only.

Punctuation

The **Full Stop** marks the end of the sentence.

The **Semi-colon** marks the principal divisions of the sentence: “They have no curiosity; *they cannot give themselves over to random provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake; and unless Necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still*” (R.L. Stevenson).

The **Colon** is used when the succeeding matter of the sentence is wholly employed in qualifying, explaining or amplifying the first clause: “My walking is of two kinds: *one, straight on end to a definite goal at a round pace; one, objectless, loitering, and purely vagabond*” (Dickens). It is also often used, with a dash, to precede a quotation, as the example here given.

The **Comma** is used to make the subordinate

clauses of a sentence; to mark a relative clause: “Cibber, *who had been introduced familiarly by the back-stairs*, had probably not been there above then minutes . . .” (Boswell’s *Johnson*); to mark a parenthesis, or qualifying clause, when the use of brackets would be too emphatic: “I still noticed everywhere the prevalence, *to an extraordinary degree*, of this custom. . . .” (Dickens). The test of parenthesis use is, of course, that, after its omission, the sentence should still run grammatically. The Comma is also used to separate each item of a series; in which case it is usually followed by “and” between the last item enumerated and the last but one; and sometimes after a preposition or a conjunction which begins a sentence.

The **Dash** is used to mark off a parenthesis more emphatically than would brackets: “The large room had cost—*or would, when paid for*—five hundred pounds” (Dickens); to separate more sharply and emphatically the clauses of a sentence than would semi-colons or commas: “At length these flickering sparks would die away, worn out—*the last veritable sparks of waking life trailed from some late pieman, or hot-potato man*—and London would sink to rest” (Dickens); and to designate the unexpected turn of a sentence: “And then the yearning of houseless mind would be for any sign of company, and lighted place, any movement, anything suggestive of any one being up—*nay, even so much as awake for the houseless eye looked out for lights in window*” (Dickens).

The **Bracket** is used for the insertion of a parenthesis of small importance: “They had impressed a small school (*from what neighborhood I don’t know*) to assist in the performances” (Dickens).

The **Exclamation Mark** is used after an exclamation or interjection; and, except in writing dialogue, it should be employed very, very seldom.

The **Question Mark**, of course, follows a question; and may be used, like the Colon, Semi-colon, Comma, and Dash, in the body of a sentence: “*Is not this permissible?* although, ’tis true, examples are somewhat rare.”

Inverted Commas either double or single (known to the printer as single or double ‘quotes’) are used to indicate a quotation; being placed immediately before and after it. Do not forget to

include the second Inverted Comma, or the second pair, as the case may be. If the stop at the end of the quotation belongs to that quotation, then the second Inverted Commas are placed to the right of such stop: “quotation.” But, if the stop at the end of the quotation belongs to the punctuation of your own composition, the Inverted Commas are placed to the left of such stop: “quotation”. A quotation within a quotation, as when one person speaking quotes another, is indicated by single Inverted Commas inside double: “I asked him, ‘What quotation shall I select?’ and he replied, ‘Invent one!’” In such a case, the beginning of each paragraph, and the end of the last paragraph of all, has a double inverted comma.

The **Apostrophe** represents the possessive (genitive), separating the final *s* from the noun. Plurals follow the rule applying to the singular: ‘Women’s way; men’s perplexity.’ There is no apostrophe to *its* (possessive), *ours*, *theirs*, *yours*—to caution the beginner against a common slip of the pen. The apostrophe is also used in cases of *elision* (truncation, or leaving something out); as in the words: *’tis*, *it’s*, *’twas*, *don’t*, *can’t*, *won’t*, *mustn’t*, etc.

Usage varies with regard to the **Hyphen**; it is better, therefore, when you are in doubt, to use it.

You will find it useful also, to bear in mind the old-fashioned rule for reading aloud: “Count Four for a full stop; Three for a colon; Two for a semi-colon; One for a comma.” For the written composition must always be constructed in due relation to the spoken; to test the value of a sentence, you read it aloud; and, according as your meaning is intended to strike and to penetrate the mind swiftly or slowly, so must you arrange your stops. For the stops *give the time*, as well as mark the structure, of the sentence.

Use of Capital Letters and Italics

The initial letter of all titles should be a capital. Thus, the principal words in the title of any given essay will have initial capitals; but, you need not necessarily use them, if you have occasion to refer to the title in the body of the essay. The initial letter of the first word of a sentence must, of course, be a capital.

Names of books and of ships should be written in italics (except for ship name prefixes, such as HMS or USS). In a hand-written manuscript, italics can be

indicated by a line drawn (neatly) beneath the word. All new foreign words are italicized. Italics are also used to denote emphasis; but, in essay-writing, they should be very seldom employed for this purpose.

Numbers, Written or Printed

The date of a month, the number of a volume, the year of a person's age, and generally, all numbers *except* the date of a year, and a series of statistics,

should be written in words: "On the twenty-ninth of March, Dr. Johnson wrote to Dr. Birch with reference to the famous *Dictionary*, whose second and concluding volume was then published; Johnson being in the forty-seventh year of his age." "We find that in 1898-99 the number of seamen in the Navy was 75,709, and the number of marines 17,807."

Abbreviations and symbols, such as &, etc., e.g., i.e., should never be employed in an essay.

Unit 10 – Assignments

The writing assignment is to be completed over the course of the entire unit.

- Read the following information from *A Manual of Essay-Writing*.
- On your **Resource Document**, include the information you feel is important to remember.
- The suggested steps are to read the information the first day, then refer to each section individually the remaining days.
- After you read a section, put it away for a few hours, then try to write the information in your own words through assimilation as the author suggests.
- Once this is complete, find good sources of prose or poetry and practice assimilation and writing quotes from these sources. Use the information from "The Use of Quotations" section.

Adapted for High School from:

A Manual of Essay-Writing

by John Henry Fowler

Qualities of a Good Essay

An essay ought to be good in two respects—*matter* and *style*. The things we say ought to be true and important; and we ought to say them in the right way. These two excellences—the excellence of the thing said and of the way of saying it—include all others.

To write an essay without good material is like attempting to make bricks without straw. The nature and amount of the material required varies, of course, enormously with the nature of the subject set. Books are the quarries from which most material is to be dug. But there are many subjects for which the requisite material is not to be found in the definite statements of particular books. The material is to be obtained only from our general knowledge and our power of intelligent judgement. If we ask where that knowledge and power are to come from, we shall most probably be brought back to books again. It is by reading, and thinking of what we read, that we store our mind with that knowledge and cultivate our power of judging.

Read wisely. Read good literature. Read "the

best that has been thought in the world." And in this injunction may be added a second: Converse wisely too, when the chance presents itself. There are some ways in which conversation is of even more direct help than reading. In trying to express our own ideas, we make them clearer to ourselves and more consistent. In trying to frame questions, we realize better what the difficulties are. And, finally, our questions may obtain from our friend an answer when the book that we consult returns none.

The virtues of style—the qualities that go to make the right way of saying things—are mainly these two: *clearness* and *sincerity*. Clearness implies order—the logical arrangement of the argument, a correct division into sentences and paragraphs, the words and clauses of each sentence in their right place. Sincerity implies saying what you mean and meaning what you say—using no words that you do not understand, measuring your epithets, never repeating phrases from books without due consideration, never writing a sentence for the sound rather than the sense.

For the most part, the essayist will keep on the right path if he steadily remembers that clearness and sincerity are themselves the two most essential elements of a good and beautiful style. “The style is the man,” says the French proverb. In other words, our style is not to be learnt from rules or imitated from books: it is to be *the expression of ourselves*.

The Choice of Words

Words are the material of which every essay is composed, and we cannot have a good essay without the right words. The beginner’s difficulty here is likely to be the very limited vocabulary he uses in ordinary life. If he excludes, as duty bound, the slang terms and slovenly shorts which he generally uses in conversation, he has only a very small store of words to draw upon, and he is driven to eke his essay out with words he has encountered in poetry or with the pretentious phrases of the inferior newspapers. One positive piece of advice should therefore be given at the outset: *Try to enlarge your vocabulary by reading the great prose writers*.

To this positive advice, which is the most important that can be given, the following negative cautions may be added:

- *Avoid slang of any kind*. Slang is generally produced by laziness—not taking the trouble to think of the exact word that is wanted.
- *Avoid long or difficult words* where a short or simple one would do equally well.
- *Avoid purely poetic words*. Do not call a “horse” a “steed” or a “charger” in an essay.
- *Avoid hackneyed or vulgarized expressions*. Some words that are good enough in themselves have been “soil’d by all ignoble use,” and must be avoided, or never used in a context that will suggest their baser use.
- *Do not be afraid of tautology*. The one desire of the indifferent journalist is to avoid using the same word twice. The true remedy for monotony is not a variety of words but variety of ideas.
- *Avoid elaborately fine writing*, rhetorical or journalistic phrases, or any expression whose meaning you have not fully thought out.
- Bear in mind this great principle: *Dignity must come from the thoughts, not from the words*. Let our words be the clear and natural expression of our meaning, not drapery to adorn or conceal it.

The Structure of Sentences

In the construction of sentences these three virtues of style should constantly be kept in view:

- *Clearness*. Avoid ambiguities of all kinds. If the antecedent of a relative or personal pronoun is doubtful, rewrite your sentence, and, if necessary, substitute a noun for the pronoun. If it is possible to misunderstand your sentence by taking an adverb or participle or other word as qualifying the wrong member of the sentence, a little rearrangement will generally get rid of the ambiguity.
- *Variety*. Sentences are either *long* or *short*, complex or simple. A long series of very short or very long sentences is monotonous and wearisome. A good style, though it may tend to use one sort of sentence rather than another, will combine the several kinds judiciously.
- *Right emphasis*. This depends partly on having the words in each sentence in their right order, partly on dividing the sentences at the right points. Right emphasis requires that a principal statement be given in a principal sentence; that a parenthesis should not be used very often, and that, when it is used, it should convey a statement that is strictly “by the way”; that a full stop should mark all the natural halting places in the narrative argument. The same principle of right emphasis suggests the rule that when several consecutive sentences or clauses iterate or illustrate the same idea, they should, as far as possible, be formed alike.

The Structure of Paragraphs

Every essay is, or should be, divided into three parts—a beginning, a middle, and end. The beginning and end will naturally require a separate paragraph; the middle may consist of one or more paragraphs, according to the length of the essay and nature of the subject.

Each paragraph should be, as far as possible, be a *separate whole*: in other words, it should have a central thought which gives it unity, and it should develop that thought with a certain completeness. The first sentence of a paragraph requires special care. It has a backward as well as forward connection—linking on the old subject as well as introducing the new.

Vices of Style

If the chief virtues of style are, as was said previously, *clearness* and *sincerity*, the chief vices of

style are *obscurity* and *insincerity*. Obscurity arises from one of two causes. Sometimes the failure is merely one of expression. The writer knows what he wants to say, but he has failed to bring out his meaning. This fault can be corrected by a study of the principles of orderly arrangement and the proper structure of sentences and paragraphs. But often the expression is obscure because the thought is not clear in the writer's mind. This is the worst kind of obscurity—"the lie in the soul," as Plato would call it. It can be cured only by honest thinking.

Literary *insincerity* takes innumerable forms. Only some of the most common can be mentioned here. The many varieties of fine writing are all forms of insincerity. They are all ways of dressing up the thought to make it appear grander than it really is. When the thought is obscure to the writer himself, he may sometimes, by wrapping it up in pretentious language, persuade himself that he is really giving utterance to something very profound. To do this is to cultivate "the lie in the soul," and is the worst of all literary insincerities. More often fine writing is due to a foolish notion that longer or less usual words are grander, and therefore more literary, than the short words in common use. Thus a railway porter, who has spoken of the "back part" of the train to his mate, will be careful to say "rear portions" when he addresses a first-class passenger. This is an example of the illegitimate use of picturesque expressions. When such expressions are truthful, they add to the charm and vividness of a narrative; but when they are mere exaggerations they become tasteless and offensive.

The Use of Quotations

Deliberately to take a sentence from an author and serve it up, with the phraseology slightly altered as one's own is, in plain English, stealing. It is necessary to say this emphatically, because the beginner, even the conscientious beginner, is apt to start with the notion that this is the way to use the authorities to which he is referred. To paraphrase a sentence from an author is almost invariably to substitute a bad sentence for a good one, but it does not make the sentence our own. What, then, are we to do? What is the use of reading if we are not to reproduce what we read? The answer is that if we make sure that we understand what we read and then allow sufficient time to elapse before writing our essay, what we read becomes our own by the mysterious process of *assimilation*; the author's thought passes into ours; we have not stolen

something, but learnt it, and it is ours to use freely. There will be no question now of altering phraseology; the precise words that we have read are forgotten, but the essential thought remains.

On the other hand, we shall often come across sentences in our authorities that are desirable to quote *verbatim*. This is especially the case with definitions, which need to be stated carefully and accurately. These are things to be treasured up and remembered in the precise form that a good writer has given to them. Again, a sentence may be quoted because, though not a definition, it is perfect and final in its literary form. It is the special privilege of the poet to cast his thought in molds so perfect that they seem (as was said of Virgil) to have been prepared for him from the foundation of the world. To quote such noble expressions is not merely to do homage to their perfection; it is also to adorn our own essay. One incidental use of such quotations is to invest our essay in a humble degree with the charm of literary association—the same charm which cultured readers of Virgil and Milton find in their literary epithets and allusions. Or a quotation may be of some saying from the occasion on which it was first uttered.

Sometimes a quotation is to be given, not so much for what it is in itself, but for the source from which it comes. We strengthen our case by an appeal to an authority whose verdict will be respected; and we give his exact words to prove that we are not misrepresenting his opinion.

Excessive quotation is generally due to one of three causes, against each of which a word of caution may be useful.

- *Laziness*. Be sure that you do not quote simply to save the trouble of understanding what you read and properly assimilating it.
- *Ostentation*. Never quote to display the depth or variety of your reading. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* is perhaps the most conspicuous example of this vice in English literature, but there have many less famous offenders.
- *Diffidence*. This is a more pleasing fault, but it is a fault nevertheless, in literature as well as in life. We must learn to form our own opinions, and not to trust every step to external authority.

The literary objection to excessive quotation may be put briefly thus: every quotation calls off attention from the direct progress of the argument to some extraneous consideration: it is only justified, therefore, if the value of the extraneous consideration overbalances this disadvantage.

Unit 11 – Assignments

- Read the following information from *A Manual of Essay-Writing*.
- On your **Resource Document** include the information you feel is important to remember. The suggested steps are to read the information the first day, then refer to each section individually the remaining days. After you read a section, put it away for a few hours, then try to write the information in your own words through assimilation as the author suggests.
- After you compile your notes, use the information you have discovered to practice planning for and writing a rough draft of the following subject:
 - Research the Norman Conquest and write a narrative account of one of the main players or the main issues regarding the conquest.

Adapted for High School from:

A Manual of Essay-Writing

by John Henry Fowler

Practical Hints

1. The first essential is that the essay should be on the subject that is set, and not on something else. We must be sure therefore, at starting, that we have a clear and definite idea what the subject is.
2. If the subject is a quotation, we need not hastily assume that it contains a true statement. Let us examine it dispassionately before we begin to write. If it is ambiguous, we must distinguish carefully the different meanings it may bear, and leave no doubt about the meaning which we select for the purpose of our own essay.
3. An essay has naturally three parts—beginning, middle, and end. The second is the main part of the essay; the first and third parts should, as a rule, be quite short. It may be well to marshal our ideas and arguments before we decide how to begin. The best opening is often one that suggests itself when we are not looking out for it.
4. As to the *beginning*, we have to avoid two common mistakes. We must take care (a) not to make the only important statement of our essay, or set out the only important argument, in the first sentence. If we do that, the whole of the rest of our essay becomes a superfluity; we argue in a circle, and have advanced no farther at the end than we were at starting. We must equally beware of (b) beginning too far away from our main subject. The epic poet, we are told, must plunge at once *in medias res* (in the middle of action), lest he worry his readers before he has got their attention. To some extent this counsel applies to the essayist also. He too wants to arrest his reader's attention at the start, and to fix it at once upon the subject in hand, not upon some subject two or three degrees removed from the real one. Our introduction, then, must be *brief, interesting* (if possible), *and without covering or exhausting the theme, must have close relation to it*.
5. One further hint about beginnings may be useful. There are two ways of unfolding an argument—the logical and the natural. The logical order is the more strictly correct, the more exhaustive, and the more convincing; it is also the more artificial and the less interesting. The natural order is the order of argument in conversation. In an informal discussion with a friend we begin with the first point that occurs to us, and the order in which subsequent points are taken is more or less haphazard, one point suggesting another as the discussion proceeds. There is no arrangement at all, except perhaps in a “summing-up” at the close. So in writing an essay we may imitate the chance beginning of conversation. But if our essay is conversational, it must be the dignified and orderly conversation of the “philosopher's porch” that furnishes our model.
6. *The middle*, the body of the essay, is, however, the most important part. How are we to treat that? We have, let us suppose, satisfied ourselves by

careful thought that we understand what our subject is; but it does not therefore follow that we know what to say about it. If we are without adequate knowledge, we must acquire it by reading. Reading about a subject before we have thought it over for ourselves is the surest way of producing a merely secondhand essay. If we begin by reading what an experienced writer has said on our subject we are almost certain to follow him tamely—not merely to reproduce his views but to adopt the order of his arguments. We must make it an invariable rule to *think for ourselves first*, however inadequate our knowledge, however untrained our judgment. This is the great secret of independence and originality. Ten minutes' patient thinking will probably draw out some ideas that are worth following up. The chief value of an essay, both intrinsically and as a piece of training, lies in its being *an expression of a bit of yourself*. Think first, and it will be this. Read first, and the chances are that there will be very little of yourself in the essay.

7. If our mind really is a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) with regard to the subject, and it is necessary to read before we can do anything, we should let some time elapse between the reading of our authorities and the writing of our essay. This will give us time to assimilate our reading.
8. Spread the process of thinking and reading over as long a period as possible. It is not easy without experience to realize the value of unconscious thought or the delightfulness of having part of our work done for us by the process that will go on quietly operating, if we give them a chance. "I am still a slow study," wrote R.L. Stevenson, in one of his letters from Vailima, "and sit for a long while silent on my eggs. Unconscious thought, there is the only method; macerate your subject, let it boil slow, then take the lid off and look in, and there your stuff is—good or bad." It matters comparatively little whether you devote a long or short time to the actual writing of your essay. The essential thing is that your *thought should have time to mature*.
9. Do not begin to write till you have satisfied yourself that your ideas are clear. "He who writes an essay," says Niebuhr, "let him say what he will, makes pretension to teach." It is a good plan to imagine a reader whom we wish to convince—not

a child, but an intelligent and critical reader, who has an eye for every weak place in our argument. If we are to defend our position adequately, there must be no confusion in our own mind about what that position is.

10. *Selection*. After the preparation of thinking and reading, and before the actual writing, come the processes of *selection* and *arrangement*. These may take place within the mind entirely; but in most cases it will be an advantage to jot down on paper rough notes of our material, to cancel what we do not intend to use, and to place in some sort of numerical order the points we propose to bring out in our argument.
 - a. As we review our material, we must ask of each point in turn, "Is it relevant? Is it important?" The answer will partly depend upon the length to which we intend our essay to run. An essay may be "overweighted" and confused by raising more questions than can be satisfactorily dealt with in short compass.
 - b. Having settled what points we wish to bring forward, we still have to decide upon their relative importance. Which ought to be emphasized, or fully explained and argued? Which should be mentioned only lightly or casually, dismissed in a single sentence? If we have decided—whether from considerations of space, time, knowledge or ability—to limit ourselves to one or two aspects of a large subject, it may sometimes be advisable to show that we recognize that there are other points of view from which our subject might be treated, even though we have resolved to exclude them. Perhaps the most natural place for alluding to and dismissing such points is in the opening paragraph; but no general rule can be laid down.
11. A hint about the right treatment of *the obvious or commonplace* may be useful. While the essays of most beginners unfortunately contain little that is not commonplace, the cleverer or the more conscientious student is sometimes tempted to omit an important point simply because it is obvious. Is this a valid reason for omission? Is there any principle that should guide us? Some help may be gained from bearing in mind the

definition of a *part* of a subject, as that through the omission of which the whole would fall into confusion. Nothing that is an essential part of our subject must be omitted, however obvious. Anything else we are free to omit if we like. But if we are bound to include a point, we are not bound to dwell upon it, when it is familiar; the bare mention of it will be sufficient.

12. As to the inclusion of topics that do not fall within the definition of “a part,” let us be careful how we use them. They are digressions. It is lawful to use them as *amoena deverticula*, “pleasant resting-places,” for the reader. But they should be kept very strictly within bounds, and they must never be used to the exclusion of a true “part.” In a very short essay they ought not to be introduced at all.

Arrangement

Having decided on the points we wish to bring forward in our essay, in what order are we to take them?

- There ought to appear a regular *sequence of ideas*, not a hopping backward and forward. The opening, therefore, will often of itself suggest the right order. It has been said already that two openings are generally possible—a natural or conversational one, which is more or less accidental, and a logical one, which begins at the logical beginning. The remark applies to the whole arrangement of an essay: it is open to us to take the arguments in strict scientific order or to let them gradually unfold themselves from their casual starting point. But the due sequence of ideas must be observed in both cases: some points cannot be properly understood till others have preceded, and some points are closely related to each other, and should therefore come close together.
- Remember to *take one point at a time*. Do not confuse or overburden a sentence by putting two ideas into it. If we think each point out thoroughly, we shall not want to take two in one sentence.
- Never lose sight of *the central thought* of our essay. That will help us keep each point in proper subordination to it, and to treat it in due order and at right length.
- If the subject given is a debatable one, there are two ways of proceeding. We can either enumerate all the *pros*, and then all the *cons*, or

we can give the *pros* and *cons* alternately, weighing one against the other as we go along. In both cases we shall give our “summing-up” and the verdict in the concluding paragraph of the essay. That verdict may be an open one, if we like. But it is, to say the least, desirable that, if we give the *pros* and *cons* alternately, we do not oscillate helplessly from side to side in the process. We must distinguish between facts (which never contradict each other) and mere allegations or opinions; and make clear with how much of an argument we sympathize, and how much we respect without adopting.

The Conclusion

No part of an essay usually requires more care than the third or final part. It must not consist of more than one paragraph, and it may consist of only a single sentence. But upon it depends the final impression which we leave upon the reader. However well sustained may have been the argument of the main body of the essay, we spoil all if we conduct it to “a lame conclusion.”

What makes a good conclusion can best be learnt by studying the end of a few essays by great writers, or speeches by great orators, or chapters in a great history, and asking ourselves to what they owe their undoubted impressiveness. They do not all conform to one type. One gives you a climax—the strongest and most convincing of a series of arguments reserved to the last. Another presents you with a summary—the arguments that have preceded rapidly enumerated, that the whole force of them may be brought home to you at once, and that you may be left with feeling their total value. A third is impressive without being either climax or summary: it is a point worth emphasizing for its own sake, and the language in which it is expressed is chosen with a special care: you are given at the last a saying that you like to carry away with you. A fourth seems a sort of anti-climax deliberately sought: the stress of argument is over, and the essay ends quietly, just as a sonnet is sometimes allowed to die away in soft music in its fourteenth line; there is no “peroration” (the concluding part of a speech, typically intended to inspire enthusiasm in the audience), only a gentle farewell. A fifth ending is of the nature of postscript: it adds a point that has been forgotten, or perhaps one for which no natural place could be found in the chain of arguments that occupied the main part of the essay.

All these varieties of ending may be imitated, but

the last should be seldom used; it is generally a refuge of laziness or, if deliberately cultivated, it becomes a tedious affectation.

A golden counsel is *respice finem* (look toward the end). Have your conclusion in mind from the moment when you begin to write. The precise form of it may be determined later. But your whole essay will gain in strength and unity if you keep in view some goal to which you are tending.

Note

A good example of a formal ending (not of an argument, however, but of a discursive essay) is the concluding paragraph of Leigh Hunt's essay on sleep:

"Sleep is the most graceful in an infant, soundest in one who has been tired in the open air, completest to the seaman after a hard voyage, most welcome to the mind haunted with one idea, most touching to look at in the parent that has wept, lightest in the playful child, proudest in the bride adored."

Hints for Special Subjects

Historical Essays

1. Material

- a. *Cultivate from the first the habit of reading the great historians for yourself.*
- b. *Get as near as you can to the sources of history.* To dig a fact out for oneself from a contemporary historian or chronicle or inscription is a higher joy, and a better piece of education, than reading it in a later history which is "trice removed from the truth."

2. Treatment

- a. *Avoid mere narrative* unless you are directly asked for it. The function of the historical essay, as a rule, is not to give a detailed narrative of events. The historical essay aims at giving a "colligation of facts," some general principle that explains the facts by binding them together. It cannot be written without a clear knowledge of the facts. The essay should assume that the reader as well as the writer is familiar with the facts, and only needs to be reminded of their bearing upon the general principle which is to be maintained or illustrated.
- b. *Avoid especially the retelling of historical anecdotes.* Such anecdotes are of inestimable value in their proper place, but their proper place is in biography or history, seldom in the historical essay. Yes, though we must not relate them, we may still use them. Assuming that our reader is at least familiar with them as we are, we may aptly refer to the light they throw upon the character of a nation or an individual.
- c. *Bear in mind the value of an historical parallel.* An essay is lifted into a higher class altogether if it shows knowledge that goes beyond the period actually under the discussion, and a power of appreciating the essential points of likeness and difference between two events that happened in different countries and different ages. You throw a light upon, you clear up your own idea of, two events or periods at once.
- d. In some questions a sketch-map (which should be neat without being elaborate) or a chronological table may both make the essay clearer and save time which would otherwise be occupied by descriptive writing.

Literature

1. Material—Clearly, we must read as much as we can of the best, and as little as possible of what is third-rate.
 - a. Cultivate "catholicity of taste." Try to place yourself at different points of view, to understand what has been pronounced admirable by better and more experienced judges, though it does not appeal to you at first.
 - b. Be more ready to trust a liking for, than an indifference to, a particular style.
 - c. Keep your personal feeling distinct from your literary estimate. Do not shrink from owing a personal debt to a comparatively small writer, but do not exalt all the personal debt into a literary judgment.

- d. Do not be ashamed to have personal preferences, but do not regard them as final. Remember that the preferences of a man (say) at eighteen, at thirty-six, at fifty-four are not, and ought not to be, the same. There ought to be development, and the later taste ought to be the truer.
- e. If you wholly fail to appreciate an author whom the consensus of critics has pronounced to be great, be modest enough to believe that the fault is probably in yourself. Never profess to admire what you do not, but wait quietly: appreciation may come in time.
- f. Learn to mistrust the newspaper or society verdict on contemporary productions. That verdict is almost certain to overrate their value. And your own bias is likely to be in the same direction. The writing that lies nearest to you in point of time is generally the easiest to understand, requires least effort of imagination, least experience of literature. That is why it is necessary to discount the value you will at first be inclined to set upon such books.
- g. Carry each new writer, whether in prose or verse, to the touchstone of the great writers. This principle, laid down by Matthew Arnold in his *Preface to Ward's Poets*, will be found to supply a severe but invaluable test: phrases that looked like pure gold when we first encountered them will be discovered to be tinsel when we set them by the side of a genuine ore.

2. Treatment

- a. Be concrete. Avoid vague, indefinite remarks, whether of eulogy or disparagement. Remember the value of a quotation in giving point and definiteness to your criticism. And let the quotation be of your own choice, from your own reading, if possible.
- b. Measure your adjectives. Reserve superlatives for what is really great. If we use them for what is only second-rate we have no means left of distinguishing degrees of excellence.
- c. Avoid the cant phrases of current criticism. Never use an epithet without being sure that you know what it means, and that it means what you want it to say.
- d. If you compare writers, do not unfairly disparage the one who interests you less. Even great critics are apt, from the love of antithesis, to bear false witness of writers whom they merely mention to point a contrast or heighten a eulogy.
- e. Distinguish between historical merit (the merit, for example, of a forerunner in art or literature) and the absolute merit of perfected achievement. Keep this important distinction clearly in view both when you read and when you write.
- f. As in history, remember the value of an apt parallel from another age and country. Such a parallel enlarges the horizon of an essay; and we feel greater confidence in the judgment of a writer who shows that his knowledge is not confined to his immediate subject.

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Literature and Composition

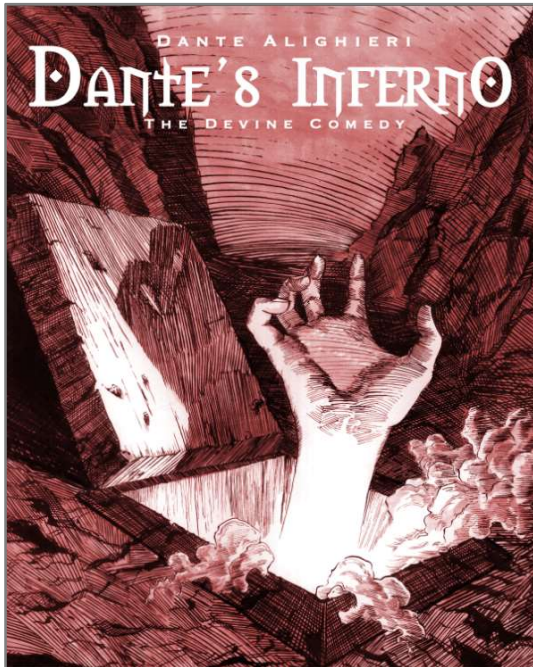
Inferno

by Dante Alighieri

Literature for Units 12 – 16

https://www.google.com/books/edition/_atRMAQAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1

Abandon hope all ye who enter here.
– Canto III, *Inferno*



Author Spotlight

Notes Adapted for High School from:

Maynard's English Classic Series, No. 147, Dante's Inferno

edited by Isabella White

As the Hebrews were called and chosen for one service in the ancient world, the Greeks for another, so in like manner were the Italians, in the fourteenth century, summoned and selected to create the mental condition under which everybody of our blood and breed is living now.

– J.A. Symonds in *New Review*, 1892

Italian literature may be said to have come into the world with Dante Alighieri (born in Florence, 1265; died in Ravenna, 1321). The Tuscan dialect at this time was rapidly pushing aside the Latin in prose as well as in poetry, and it soon became the recognized oral and written polite language of the country.

Dante's is the first great name in literature after the Dark Ages, and it has been said that he found the Italian language in its cradle and raised it to a throne. *La Vita Nuova* is still the best introduction to the study of the Tuscan tongue; the astronomy and science of the *Divine Comedy* (*Divina Commedia*) are obscure only in a translation.

Dante's life covers fifty-six years. In 1289 he fought against the Ghibellines, a political party opposed to the papacy, at Arezzo; in 1300 he was probably an ambassador from the Guelphs (the opposing party of the Ghibellines) to Pope Boniface VIII. It is believed that he took part in the measure that banished the heads of the White and Black factions (of the Guelphs) which began that year in Florence. The Neri (Blacks) became supporters of Pope Boniface, accusing the Bianchi (Dante's party, the Whites) of an understanding with the Ghibellines. To defend against these accusations, Dante went to Boniface; but in the meanwhile the latter sent Charles of Valois as a peacemaker, probably with unofficial instructions to crush the Whites. Charles fulfilled this covert mission with zeal, and Dante was one of those he sought, on the charge of illicit gains and extortion during terms when he held public office. Henceforth, Dante's life was a pilgrimage of exile from one Italian town to another, ending at Ravenna in 1321.

Dante and Beatrice

To Dante, Love appeared, now as a Lord of terrible aspect, shrouded in cloud the color of fire, now as a pilgrim lightly clad in vile raiment.

Dante had seen a girl named Beatrice in early boyhood. For years he had worshiped her, and then she was removed from his acquaintance by an early death—there was, therefore, no hard contact with reality to check his imagination, and, as her figure receded into the background of years, his fancy idealized her more and more, till she was to him as one:

*sent down to earth
To show another miracle to men*

and so clothed and crowned with humility,
that many, when she had passed, said:

*This is not a woman, rather one of the
fairest of heaven's angels.*

– A.H. Simpson in *Contemporary Review*,
1874

From *La Vita Nuova*

La Vita Nuova is Dante's tribute to Beatrice. He tells the story of how they met, how they interacted, and how he dealt with her death. Beatrice was an inspiration for Dante and is seen in *Divina Commedia*, where she sends Virgil to find Dante and aid him on his journey. Beatrice returns again at the end of Dante's journey in Purgatorio to act as his guide through Paradiso:

“In that part of the book, there is a rubric saying ‘Incipit Vita Nova.’¹ Under such rubric I find written many things, and among them the words which I purpose to copy into this little book:

Nine times already since my birth had the heaven of light returned to the selfsame point almost, as concerns its own revolution, when the first glorious Lady of my mind was made manifest to my eyes; even she who was called Beatrice by many who knew not wherefore . . . I saw her almost at the end of my ninth year. Her dress on that day was of most

noble color, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age. At that moment, I say most truly that the spirit of life, which hath its being in the secretest chamber of the heart, began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith; and in trembling it said these words, ‘*Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi . . .*’² From that time forward, Love quite governed my soul . . .”

Beatrice in Paradise

*Beyond the sphere which spreads to widest space
Now soars the sigh that my heart sends above;
A new perception born of grieving Love
Guideth it upward the untrodden ways.
When it hath reached unto the end, and stays,
It sees a lady round whom splendors move
I homage; till, by the great light thereof
Abashed, the pilgrim spirit stands at gaze.
It sees her such, that when it tells me this
Which it hath seen, I understand it not,
It hath a speech so subtile and so fine.
And yet I know its voice within my thought
Often remembereth me of Beatrice;
So that I understand it, ladies mine.*

After writing this sonnet, it was given unto me to behold a very wonderful vision; wherein I saw things which determined me that I would say nothing further of this most blessed one, until such time as I could discourse more worthily concerning her. And to this end I labor all I can, as she very well knoweth. Wherefore, if it be His pleasure through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After the which, may it seem good to Him who is the Master of Grace, that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady; to wit, of that blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on His countenance *qui est per omnia secula benedictus, Laus Deo.*”³

– Translated by D.G. Rossetti

1. Translation: A new life begins

2. Translation: Behold, God is mightier than I, who coming shall rule over me.

3. Translation: who is in all things, world without God, Praise be to God

Unit 12 – Assignments

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below. As in all readings, look up or derive from context the definitions of any unfamiliar words or terms you encounter.
- Read Cantos I – VII of *Inferno*.

Activity While Reading: Keep a journal noting the details, people (when Dante mentions someone by name, look the person up—yes, Wikipedia is allowed here—to find a bit of information on their history to better understand their sin and punishment), sins, and stories presented in each ring of hell.

Remember that *Inferno* consists of thirty-three cantos (one of the principal divisions of a long poem) with an introductory canto. We will read *Inferno* over the next five weeks. It would be fitting to read seven cantos per week, leaving six cantos for the final week. If you have trouble understanding what you are reading, a good companion book is *Introduction to Dante's Inferno* by Adolphus Thomas Ennis. Most of the Assignment Backgrounds in the units covering *Inferno* are from this book. If you want to read further, here is a link to the book: <https://books.google.com/books?id=0oT-Be7o0icC>.

Composition

- Using the information given and looking up information on Dante Alighieri, write a short biography on Dante's life and exile.
 - Your finished biography should be no longer than three paragraphs and should reveal:
 1. the influences in Dante's life
 2. how his exile affected him and his writing
 3. how his writing has influenced others, especially other authors and other pieces of literature
 - One resource for your biography is this site, which is a wonderful guide to both Dante's life and his poem: <http://www.gicas.net/inferno.html>

Unit 12 – Assignment Background

Notes Adapted for High School from:

Maynard's English Classic Series, No. 147, Dante's Inferno

edited by Isabella White

The Divine Comedy

The Divine Comedy was so called, writes the author to *Can Grande Della Scala*, his Verona patron, because it has, like comedies, a sad beginning and a cheerful ending, and because it is written in a *middle* style, treating high and low things. Dante represents himself as lost in a forest on Good Friday, 1300, when he was thirty-five years old. At first he is much alarmed, but is cheered when, at dawn, he finds himself at the foot of a hill. He wishes to climb the hill, but three wild beasts bar the way—a panther, a lion, and a she-wolf. When he flees back to the wood, Virgil appears and announces that he is sent by Beatrice, at the command of the Madonna and St.

Lucy—[and] that, to escape the she-wolf, Dante must go with him through Hell and Purgatory, after which Beatrice herself will conduct him to Paradise.

– Ripon in *Contemporary Review*

From Church's Essay on Dante

These are excerpts taken from the whole found in *Maynard's English Classics*:

Dante was a stern man, and more than stern, among his fellows. But he has left to those who never saw his face an inheritance most precious: he has left them that which, reflecting and interpreting their minds, does so, not to amuse, not to bewilder, not to warp, not to turn them in upon themselves in

distress or gloom or selfishness; not merely to hold up to a mirror to nature; but to make them true and to make them hopeful.

Dark as his words of individuals, his thoughts are not dark or one-sided about mankind; his is not cherished and perverse severity—his faith is too large, too real for such a fault. He did not write only the *Inferno*; and the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* are not an afterthought, a feebler appendix and compensation, conceived when too late, to a finished whole which had taken up into itself the poet's real mind.

He never lets go the recollection that human life, if it grovels at one end in corruption and sin, and has to pass through the sweat and dust and disfigurement of earthly toil, has throughout compensations, remedies, functions, spheres

innumerable of profitable activity, sources inexhaustible of delight and consolation—and at the other end a perfection which cannot be named.

Note About the Poem

The Divine Comedy is an allegory of man's journey toward God. In *Inferno*, we will see that the first step in a person's journey toward God is his recognition and ultimate rejection of sin.

Dante was a strong believer in the number three or any multiple of three as representing the Holy Trinity. Hence, *The Divine Comedy* is divided into three parts, each containing thirty-three cantos. When you read *Inferno* you will notice an introductory canto. Dante added this canto so that the Holy Trinity would not be associated with the unholy realm of Satan.

Adapted for High School from:

The University of Literature

Editor-in-Chief: W.H. De Puy, A.M., D.D., LL.D.

The Inferno

The Hell itself is an immense, obscure, circular cavern becoming narrower and narrower by successive degrees as it goes deeper. The form is that of an inverted cone, with its apex at the center of the Earth.

- Dante crosses the stream by supernatural means, finds himself upon the very edge of the Abyss, and is led down into Circle I, or Limbo, which contains heathen men, women, or children who lived without baptism or Christianity. Caesar is here, and Emperor with harness on, and with falcon eyes; and Saladin, apart and solitary.
- Circle II: Minos, the Infernal Judge, is stationed at the entrance, and assigns each sinner his place. Circle II is the abode of those punished for unlawful love.
- Circle III: Epicures and Gluttons
- Circle IV: Avaricious and Prodigal
- Circle V: The Wrathful, the Sullen-sour, and the Vainglorious are all in the putrid mud of Stygian Marsh. Phlegyas conveys the travelers across the Marsh, and here are first discerned the mosques of the City of Dis, or Satan.
- Circles I-V constitute the Upper Hell.
- Circles VI-IX are the Lower Hell. The tears of Sin and Misery form the rivers of Hell, and they

all flow back to Satan at the center of the Earth.

- Circle VI lies within the City, and seems to be level with Circle V. Here arch-heretics and those who deny the immortality of the soul lie buried in burning sepulchers, to be closed up after the Great Judgement. Circle VI seems to be a connecting-link between the Upper hell, in which sins of lack of self-restraint are punished, and the Lower Hell, where those who have sinned by malice or rebellion against the decrees of the Almighty have their portion.
- Circle VII: A river of blood flows around it, and it has three divisions: (1) all who have committed violence against others, (2) self-murderers, (3) those who have done violence against God, against nature, against nature and art. They suffer in a plain of burning sand, where falls a constant shower of fire.
- Circle VIII: Of solid rock, divided into ten passes or chasms, like trenches round a fortress: (1) Panderers and seducers, (2) Flatterers, (3) Simonists, (4) Diviners, augurs, sorcerers: their heads are turned, and they cannot look forward. (5) Barterers; traffickers in public offices, (6) Hypocrites, (7) Thieves, (8) Evil Counselors. (9) Lovers of scandal and schism, (10) Falsifiers in things,

deeds, words; alchemists and forgers; the impersonator of a murdered man, who dictated the will in due form; Simon and Potiphar's wife.

- Rim of Circle IX: Giants round the brink; Nimrod shouts in confused and unintelligible speech. Circle IX: Four divisions: (1) *Caina*: sinners who have done violence to their own kindred. (2) *Antenora*: traitors. (3) *Ptolomaea*:

named from Ptolomaeus, who made a great banquet for his father-in-law, the high priest, and his two sons, and, after they had drunk fully, slew them. (4) *Judecca*: named from Judas Iscariot: those who have betrayed their masters and benefactors. In the Center Satan is fixed; he, too, is punished by his own sin.

Adapted for High School from:

Notes From Introduction to Dante's *Inferno*

by Adolphus Thomas Ennis

Canto I

The meaning underlying this symbolic introduction forms one of the basic truths upon which the edifice of the Divine Comedy is raised. Man has a sufficiently clear notion of right and wrong; withal seeing what is good and approving of it, often he prefers and follows what is bad. In consequence of such ill-made choices, he condemns himself to grope his way in the darkness of the valley of sin. At certain seasons, or periods, or epochs of earnest thought, of introspection and meditation, typified by Good Friday, the realization of the awful state apprehended by the intellect rouses the will to vigorous assertion.

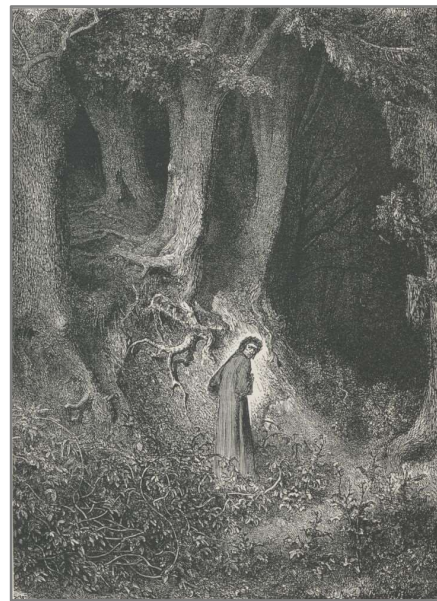
The poet of imperial Rome (Virgil), to whom the enthusiasm of the Middle Ages paid a cult of profound veneration, is chosen as the symbol of pure human reason, the incarnation of a true philosophy of ethics.

The animals disputing the pass are not to be feared, in very truth they are powerless, for whilst assailing the will, they cannot force its assent. Dante begins to introduce one, of the many, of his political ideas to which he was wedded, without in the least changing or altering the plan, and scope, and ultimate end of the poem. Passionately devoted to the principles of the White Guelphs, he already prophesies, as the fulfillment of an ardently cherished desire, the victory of this party, symbolized in the chasing back to hell of the wolf by the hound—the mysterious Veltro.

In this first canto, Dante puts on the lips of Virgil the explanation of the mystic journey through the realms of sorrow, hope, and love. The key to it is to be found in Dante's letter to Cane Scaligero where he says: "The literal subject of the whole work is the state of the soul after death, simply considered. But, if the work be taken allegorically, the subject is man

as by merit or demerit through freedom of the will, he renders himself liable to the reward or punishment of justice" (XI of the Epistolary).

Virgil states that he has been sent by Beatrice to lead him first through the regions of eternal woe, in order that, by seeing the penalty of the inflicted on sin, he may learn what a bitter and an evil thing it is to act against the dictates of reason and conscience. Going then from the abode of perpetual to that of temporary pains, he will learn and realize how man, once fallen but repentant, ere passing from time into eternity, can be purified in fire, till the deeds done in the flesh having been burned and purged away, he will be found pure enough to approach the majesty of God.



Dante finds himself lost in a gloomy wood, from Canto 1 of the Divine Comedy: *Inferno* illustrated by Paul Gustave Doré (1832-1883). The caption reads 'In the midway of this our mortal life, I found me in a gloomy wood, astray.' Canto 1 lines 1, 2.

Canto II

Dante expresses to Virgil grave doubts concerning his ability to accomplish the task. He is unworthy of imitating the example of Aeneas and St. Paul, for to them a noble mission had been assigned.

The Mantuan (Virgil) bids him to have courage; he, too, like Aeneas is chosen to spread a kingdom of righteousness, and as another Paul, to relate what he had seen in order that man may be persuaded to avoid evil and do good.

Convinced at last that the inspiration to write the apocalyptic song came from on high, realizing the impossibility of failure, and the certainty of overcoming all obstacles and difficulties, the poet flings away doubt. Nobly daring now, he says to Virgil, “Lead on.”

Canto III

*Through me you pass into the city of woe,
Through me you pass into eternal pain;
Through me among the people lost for aye.
All hope abandon ye who enter here.
Speak not of them, but look, and pass by.*

Their bodies and especially their faces are constantly stung by myriads of flies and hideous wasps. An appropriate expiation for an existence culpably sunk in sloth, moral torpor, and mental inactivity.

As the seared leaves driven by autumn’s blasts, countless souls throng the shores restlessly yearning to be rushed over to the final doom. The vision of divine justice now clearly seen and apprehended by those spirits spurs them on more willingly and irresistibly to the merited punishment than once they hurried to the forbidden pleasures of sin.

Canto IV

The poet finds himself on the other side of the Acheron in an abysmal vale dark and deep. This vale is supposed to be the Limbo, or Abraham’s bosom, where rest the great poets, philosophers, and lawgivers of antiquity together with a throng of illustrious men and women; children, too, are here. The gratuitous bliss of beatific vision of God is denied them, because they died without baptism, a condition indispensable for the fruition of a gift not due to human nature.

The author distinguishes two kinds of punishment endured in hell: the pain of sense, consisting in being confined either in extreme heat or in extreme cold, racked by additional torments;

and the pain of loss engendered by the conscious thought of being deprived of the Supreme Good. The inhabitants of the first circle are free from physical pain; only sighs wafted on the trembling air are heard.

Notable shades in this realm are Homer, Horace, Ovid and Lucanus, Aristotle, Plato and Socrates, Caesar and Cicero, Camilla and Lavinia, Hector and Aeneas. The abiding faith of Dante in the doctrines of his church is proved by the unqualified assent he gives to its teaching concerning baptism as a condition absolutely necessary for enjoying the beatific vision. The profoundest knowledge, priced by him as a jewel worthy of all the treasures of earth, and the sublimest soaring of genius cannot, as such, open the golden gates of a heaven not essentially due to man’s nature and condition.

Canto V

Virgil and Dante have entered the second circle of the out-inferno, where the thick air vexed by a storm seemed to shiver in a darkness that could be felt. The poet by stating that each lower zone, as he descends, becomes narrower than the upper one, “embracing lesser space,” expresses the salient idea of the various degrees of sin, and their corresponding punishment. The minimum of pain endured in the first division nearest to heaven and the highest intensity of suffering is reached in the lowest pit furthest removed from God, where Lucifer is in the very center of the earth.

In the second round are confined those that indulged in carnal sins, and defiled their bodies and souls with moral uncleanness. A tempestuous wind continually, without rest or respite, madly drives the sinners through the air, violently whirling them around, and furiously smiting them. In the upper world these prevaricators willfully shut their eyes to the light of the intellect; here darkness enfolds them; they whose feet were always swift on the road of self-gratification are now restless and find no peace, for the storm wind eternally rushes them on and on. The Dantesque vision is magnificently and dimly grand—the powers divine “are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to plague us.” It was written on a higher authority—“Wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished.”

At the entrance to this place, which is the real first circle of the woeful city, Minos is made to sit in judgement over the souls that have crossed the waters of Acheron. Having known the nature of the offense, manifested by an open confession, he

encircles himself with his tail as many times as will denote the degree of the circle in which he dooms the culprit to be cast. Allegorically, Minos represents conscience.

The most prominent shades in this circle are Semiramis, Dido, Helena, Paris, Achilles, and Tristan. Francesca da Rimini and Paolo engage for a moment the sympathy of the Tuscan; he seems to mourn their fate; withal the sternness of his moral code could not but consign to the place of punishment the unfortunate lovers.

Canto VI

Descending to the third circle, they found it set apart for the gluttons, who in a too refined fashion, and beyond the limits of moderation had given themselves up to the pleasures of the table, the delights of the palate, and by abusing what was meant for use had perverted the means to an end. The retribution meted out to such gross sensuality is fearful, and as usual, apposite. The gluttons are lying naked in a mass of soft and filthy mulch, whilst a continuous fall of discolored water, and sleet, and snow flagellates their bodies. The three-mouthed monster, Cerberus, the image of gluttony, assails their ears with a bark deep and hoarse far different from the soft strains of music floating in the scented air of festive halls. Feeding “upon the emptiness that substance seemed,” this infernal dog ferociously tears their limbs.

Dante recognizes his fellow citizen, Ciaccio, and they hold discourse about the many evils afflicting Florence, the jealousy, envy, pride, and avarice kindling unholy flames in the hearts of her children; the bitter strifes of party factions, the cruelty of the triumphant Neri, and the Nemesis of the Bianchi, who persecute in their turn and make the land desolate.

Man, having passed from time to eternity in a state of rebellion to God, because hopelessly and obstinately unrepentant, deserves, and merits, and brings upon himself a punishment infinite in duration and intensity.

*He hath in sooth good cause for endless grief,
Who, for the love of thing that lasteth not,
Despoils himself forever of that love.*

– Par. XV. 8.

Canto VII

In their descent into the fourth circle, a third obstacle bars the way. Pluto, the god of hell and a

symbol of avarice, fearing lest one yet in the flesh by entering and seeing his abode should be led to reform his life, calls for the help of Satan.

Here, in a far greater number than elsewhere, are committed those who hoarded wealth, or lavishly squandered it—the extreme deviations from one and the same virtue. The avaricious and the prodigal are confined in a broad circular cavern divided in the middle by a line: the prodigal from the farthest point at the right of it; and the avaricious from the left, advance rolling with breast and shoulders heavy round stones, that each opponent hurls at the other. Having reached the center, they, like the roaring waves of Scylla and Charbydis so furiously strike each other that the force of the shock turns them back to their former station, howling always, and hoarsely shouting, the prodigals, “Why holdest thou fast?,” the avaricious, “Why castest thou away?” They detest each other heartily, even when not borrowing and lending, but a prevailing passion brings them together on the dividing line of the fourth circle of hell, for mutual injury, abuse, and recrimination. The Florentine here describes the customs, manners, and ideas of his age.

Leaving the fourth, they descend to the fifth circle and walk along the banks of the Styx, the second river of hell. Heretofore Dante set forth the special punishments of sins of a sensual nature—impurity, gluttony, prodigality, avarice; here, he begins to treat of transgressions of a more spiritual nature enrooted in the will. The boiling waters of the Stygian pool are black, sluggish, and densely muddy. In that liquid mire move and live the wrathful. They blindly strike with head, hands, and feet, tearing the flesh with their teeth, vainly striving to give vent to a fury that maddens them. This impulse ever urging, and never fulfilled, is a fitting punishment for a rational being that had not the moral strength to curb the uprising of a potent passion.

Below the seething mass, are sunk the sullen, at the bottom of the Styx. These sinners had also allowed the smoldering fire of wrath to burst into a flame inwardly, but gave it no outward expression. Equally guilty of not repressing the promptings of a like animal instinct, in a sulky mood, they fostered and nourished it silently in the secret recesses of the soul. Therefore, they share the same penalty aggravated by being entirely submerged in the pool. The intensity of the pain forces sighs from their lips, which rising to the surface, part the waters in many bubbles, and out of them, as coming from gurgling throats, issue lamentable sounds of woe and sorrow.

Unit 13 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Continue reading *Inferno*, Cantos VIII – XIV.

Activity While Reading: Keep a journal noting the details, people (when Dante mentions someone by name, look the person up—yes, Wikipedia is allowed here—to find a bit of information on their history to better understand their sin and punishment), sins, and stories presented in each ring of hell.

- At the following site, do some further reading about the allegories in Dante’s *Inferno*:
<https://prezi.com/ysgqp5uni4ay/dante-allegories/>
Based on the description of the Circles of Hell, in your reading journal draw an image of what you imagine Hell to look like. As you read and take notes, refer to your drawing and make notes of the people and their punishments for each Circle. To view an interactive version of *Inferno*, visit this site created by folks from the University of Texas: <http://danteworlds.laits.utexas.edu/indexi.html>

Unit 13 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Notes from Introduction to Dante’s Inferno

by Adolphus Thomas Ennis

Canto VIII

This portion of the poem is deep in significance and obscure in language. Obstacles and impediments are represented as becoming greater and greater with the progress of the journey through the realms of the dead. Such declaration imparts a symbol ingeniously conceived to express a twofold truth: the serious difficulties of a further treatment of the subject; and the efforts made, subjectively on the part of the individual human passions, and objectively on the part of the spirit of darkness, to draw the mind from the salutary contemplation of the just retribution of sin.

Dante gives to hell the form of a colossal city sloping downward to the center of the earth, in the shape of an inverted cone. It is supposed to be partitioned off in four principal sections containing nine circles, each section protected against the trespass of mortals by frowning barriers. Those who had merely sinned through frailty and lack of self-restraint are confined in the first part, which, properly speaking, lies outside the limits of the walled city—the *Inferno Murato*. The sins herein punished being relatively less grave, the obstacles are not so great. In the third and fourth divisions, are shut up in narrower circles and a frightful pit those

prevaricators, who by refinement of fraud, having almost attained the perfection of evil, justly deserve the most cruel torments.

We are not before the second division of the city, the veritable walled hell, enclosing multitudes of various transgressors of the law. Their sins are greater than those expiated in the first part, because they are inspired by, and conceived through, malice and violence.

With the speed of an arrow, a little vessel darts in the direction of the poets. Whilst in the middle of the marsh, the shade of an arrogant Florentine, Argenti, emerging from the black water, tries to bandy words with his countryman.

Dante and Virgil find themselves outside a city which appears flamingly red from the eternal fire that burns within. Around the portals myriads of fallen angels swarm. Virgil approaches them but the malignant spirits angrily refuse to allow anyone to enter. Dante and Virgil remain thus standing powerless before the city. The mystic allusion refers to the insurmountable difficulties and incapability of human reason to properly describe the malice of sin, and the punishment due to it, without assistance of supernatural aid and divine grace.

Canto IX

Virgil recounts the story of the Thessalonian sorceress sending him to the lowest pit to bring up from the circle of Judas the spirit of a soldier named Sextus. Dante questions whether or not he, without having tasted death, could follow the lead of Virgil and see the immortality of sorrow, and having seen, return and tell his brethren. Furthermore, had not the Savior said that it was sufficient for mortals to have the law and the prophets for their guide in life?

Suddenly the three Furies, the Eumenides of the Greeks, hideous and appalling as Hellenic fiction has made them, appear. The hags shriek, threaten and employ every means to terrify Dante, alarmed lest he should be bold enough to enter and see things to frighten him and others from evil ways.

The indiscriminate use of mythological and Christian events, of legendary furies and biblical angels, is made by the author to bring out in fuller relief the importance of a leading thought and illustrate its meaning. Sin will continue to make the earth desolate as long as the mind is prevented, by internal or external influences, from meditating and reflecting on the retribution due to it.

The allegorical effect of the appearance and disappearance of Mercury transparently veils a double meaning. He was worshiped of yore as a god, principally possessing the attributes of eloquence and strength, and of these the human mind stands most in need to penetrate the regions symbolically visited by Dante. The blending of the human and the divine, of the natural and the supernatural, finds a perfect synthesis in Mercury.

Canto X

In this realm, the nature of the punishment of the Epicureans is cleverly devised. Having formerly concerned themselves exclusively with the interests, pleasures and business of the present, they denied the existence of a future state. The refrain of their song is heard yet in the world, “Let us eat and drink, for, behold, tomorrow we die.” By a fitting retribution, they are now deprived of the faculty of seizing upon the actual present, and, like unto those that have bad sight, see only dimly what happens in the distant future. The moment, however, that the future becomes present, they immediately fail to apprehend it, so that “When on futurity the portals close,” all knowledge whatsoever and all perception, save that of suffering, will be lost.

Among the felons of these fiery prisons, are Uberti, Cavalacante, Frederick II, and the grandson

of Barbarossa, and the Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, another Ghibelline, who, 'tis said, would have exchanged his soul if there were such a thing, for the triumph of his party.

Canto XI

The poet's pause in conversation behind a monument whereon the words are inscribed, “I have in charge Pope Anastasius, whom Photinus drew from the right path.” Here Dante, following a doubtful chronicle attributed to Martinus Polonus, unwittingly allowed himself to be drawn from the right way of historical truth. The Anastasius, whom the heretical teaching of Photinus concerning the divinity of Christ led astray, is the Greek emperor and not the Roman Pontiff of the same name.

The Dantesque hell has four great, principal divisions, subdivided into nine circles, set apart for the punishment of various categories of sin. The three rounds of the second division, now about to be entered, hold those malefactors who, by violence in diverse ways, wrought injury to their fellow-beings—highway robbers, bloodthirsty tyrants, and princes; destroyers of themselves, or of their goods which leads to the suicidal act; criminals against God, God's Nature, and its Art. In this canto Dante expresses the noblest conception of art with a most appropriate figure of speech.

From Plato to Michelangelo, from Aristotle to Raphael, all thinkers and artists have felt that true art must seize upon the eternal idea illuminating created things. The indescribable pleasure, the tumultuous delight with which we are filled and thrilled at the sight of a masterpiece of beauty, is due to a recognition of the perfect enshrined in the sanctuary of the soul. It partakes of the character of a recollection but dimly awakened in the echo of soft music heard in a dream.

This is mysticism; and Dante is nothing if not a mystic; and the true lovers of art are now most potently striving to find again those forms which unfolded their radiant beauty in the mystic light of the Ages of Faith.

Canto XII

The journey is resumed in the direction of the second division, in whose rounds are confined those whose perverted will did violence to others, themselves, and God. The entrance to the ravine was guarded by the fabled Minotaur of Crete. The reader must bear in mind that mythological and historical personages are put in various parts of the dolorous

city as representatives of certain sins, both as the object of punishment and the scourge of justice.

The first round of the circle is where tyrants, cruel princes, and marauders are plunged in a river of boiling blood. The dominant note of the theme runs through the grand harmony of the poem. The fulfillment of the law is blessedness; violation and the sight of misery will cause righteousness to be loved and iniquity to be hated. Dante sees suffering in the crimson river Alexander the Great, Dionysius of Syracuse, Ezzelino, the son-in-law of Frederick II, Attila, and a host of others, who had steeped their hands deep in human blood. The poetic fitness of the penalty is evident.

Canto XIII

The second round of the circle is reached: it is a sandy, pathless wood resonant with deep and heavy sighs. Two classes of sinners are punished here: those who did violence to themselves by taking their own lives; and those who by squandering their goods came to an untimely death. The moment the suicide committer has consummated the deed, his soul is hurled to this gloomy forest and is instantly transformed into a tree. The fatal tree has a life as unnatural as the act committed; the poet pushes the figment as to assert that the souls of these sinners will never again be reunited with their bodies. After the general Resurrection, they will drag them with ropes to the very spot where the trees stand, and from them they will hang forevermore.

To have a palpable proof of the reality of so astounding a punishment, Dante breaks off a branch from a gnarled trunk: at once, blood trickles from it, and the plaint issues forth, “Why pluck’st thou me?” Is the voice of Pier dell Vine, the secretary of the Emperor Frederick II.

Different is the retribution meted out to that class of sinners who by madly throwing away their wealth and goods, came to an untimely and violent death. Fast and furiously, they are doomed to run in the infernal forest closely pursued by female mastiffs, lean and hungry. When these wretches become entangled in the matted branches, the dogs bury their fangs into the quivering flesh and tear them to pieces.

An offense, to all appearances, of the same

nature is punished in the fourth circle of the first division, where, as we have seen, the prodigals are confined. The reason of the difference, in respect to the penalty, is to be found in the motive. Dante thinks that those sinned through sensuality; these, through intellectual malice.

Among the many included in the second category of the suicides are Lano of Siena, who having squandered all he had permitted himself to be killed to escape a life of penury and shame, and Giaconda of Padua guilty of the most extravagant prodigality, such as setting his magnificent house on fire in order to enjoy the sight of a fine conflagration; he, too, ended in a sudden death.

Canto XIV

Nearing the limits of the third round, the somber wood of the self-murderers encompasses a vast, dreary desert of burning sand kept constantly in a state of unbearable heat by fire, slowly and silently falling, in flakes like snow on Alpine heights. Here the blasphemers of God are lying supine on the glowing sand with naked bodies fearfully parched and scorched; the violent offenders against Nature are crouching about in groups, likewise tormented; the preventers of his Art move incessantly around—all wailing, moaning, weeping in a most piteous manner. The sight so harrows Dante’s compassionate soul that he cries out; “Vengeance of heaven! Oh! how shouldst thou be feared by all, who read what here mine beheld.” In this canto, only the prevaricators against the majesty of God are considered. Notable prevaricators include Prometheus and Capenus.

With the use of mythological personages and pagan fables, Dante is using the apparent incongruity to bring out more clearly the religious spirit permeating it. Dante felt that everything true, good, and beautiful could be enlisted in the service of religion, and made to do homage to it. This thought burned in the mind of Dante, and his genius, spurning with a Seraph’s loathing the baser matter of Olympian superstition, seized the gold to adorn an epic, embracing in its catholicity earth and heaven, hell and purgatory, time and eternity, sin and virtue, punishment and reward, repentance and purification—man, angels, and God.

Unit 14 – Assignments

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Continue reading *Inferno*, Cantos XV – XXI.

Activity While Reading: Keep a journal noting the details, people (when Dante mentions someone by name, look the person up—yes, Wikipedia is allowed here—to find a bit of information on their history to better understand their sin and punishment), sins, and stories presented in each ring of hell.

If you have trouble understanding what you are reading, a good companion book is *Introduction to Dante’s Inferno* by Adolphus Thomas Ennis. <https://books.google.com/books?id=0oT-Be7o0icC>.

Composition

- In this section, you will write a literary analysis based on one of the topics below. This 750-word essay will focus on a specific aspect of Dante’s *Inferno*. Carefully read over the two possible choices, then begin planning your essay using the tips from the article on Essay Writing in Unit 11. Your notes should include both direct quotes and assimilated quotes from your reading.
 - Consider the narrator’s journey through hell. Consider, too, how Dante has ordered the levels of sin according their circle of hell. If you were Dante, how would you order the levels of sin? Write a 750-word essay giving your order of the sins present and give present-day examples of these sins through stories illustrating them and include punishments/consequences for these sins.
- OR**
- If an allegory is defined as “a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one,” would you consider *Inferno* a good example of allegory? Write a 750-word argumentative essay that supports your answer. Remember to use quotes from the poem and from your reading journal to defend your answer.

Unit 14 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

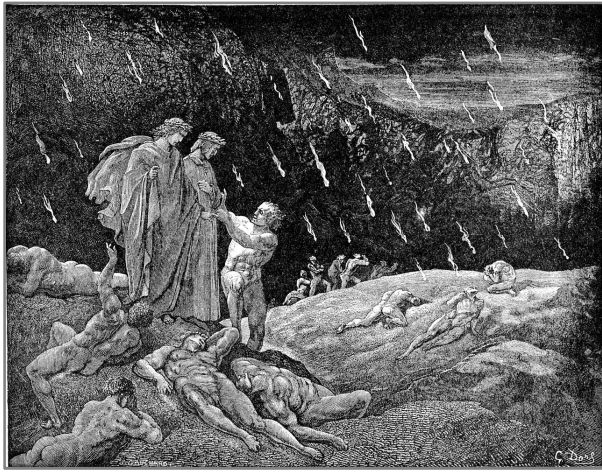
Notes from Introduction to Dante’s Inferno

by Adolphus Thomas Ennis

Canto XV

Continuing the pilgrimage, the poets meet a troop of spirits walking without pause, without rest in the burning sand, striving to shake off the fiery flakes from their bodies parched beyond recognition. These are the nefarious sinners who having imitated the Sodomites in their most unnatural crimes, done in wanton violence to Nature, bear their accursed name. Violent heat now scorches bodies once burning with the flames of lust, and of the torment there shall be no end. Dante does not hesitate to associate with that loathsome herd his former teacher, Brunetto Latini. The possession of talents had not saved the distinguished Florentine from the commission of abominable deeds.

The conversation between Dante and Brunetto gives occasion for teaching a lesson far-reaching in importance and meaning. A mind rendered flexible by study and richly stored with information does not insure immunity from temptation, nor is it a factor in overcoming it. Another faculty must be educated, and this is conscience, from whose deliberations right conduct follows. Dante’s contention was that learning is, in itself, incompetent, powerless to lead man to the attainment of his ultimate end—the perfection of his being. Right thinking and right doing are essential for the completeness of human life.



Brunetto Latini speaks with Dante in Canto XV,
an engraving by Gustave Doré

Canto XVI

Another troop of spirits, moving on under the tormenting rain of fire, draws near the poets. They are tainted with the same execrable sin of Sodom. There are some amongst them of high estate, distinguished for wisdom and prowess, Florentines all, Guerra, Aldobrandi, and Rusticucci. The latter complains that the savage temper of a wife was in great measure responsible for his being in that dreadful place.

Approaching a chasm, Virgil requests Dante to give him the cord with which he was girded. Virgil casts in it in the yawning abyss; forthwith, a most singular form looms up in the twilight swimming and creeping up to them. It is the monster Geryon (grandson of Medusa), who is to carry them to the next circle where Fraud is punished.

Canto XVIII

The prevaricators of the third round, because guilty of usury, have sinned against Nature's Art. In Dante's days, the general conviction prevailed that money in itself was not and could not be productive of any emolument. The usurer acts in direct opposition to its laws and Art. His money, as such, cannot earn the increment accruing from interest, for the simple reason that it is a physical impossibility. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare voices the sentiment of the Middle Ages on that subject. It is absolutely true that money, in itself, is unproductive, and to endeavor to make it productive is to do violence to the natural law. (Note: Usurers are those who are guilty of charging a higher rate of interest on borrowed money than was legally allowed.)

This offense is punished in the circle now visited by the pilgrim. At the extreme verge of the desert, the usurers crouch on the ground wailing under a burning rain. Frantically do they strive to ward off the falling flakes of fire with their hands, even as dogs do in summer when maddened by the bites of flies and gnats. Hanging like a shield from the neck, the wretches wear a pouch marked with the armorial signs of their families upon which their eyes are constantly riveted and yearningly fixed. The pouch of shame, eternally before the covetous glare of the vile craft, is a fit punishment for the insatiable thirst for gold, and the pleasure derived by looking at it when in the upper world. From the coats of arms, Dante recognizes among the usurers Gianfiliazzi, a Guelph of Florence, the Ghibelline Ubriaci, and others, some of them being scion of noble families.

Geryon, a mixture of the human and the animal, emerges from the yawning abyss. He had been a great king in Spain, reigning over three large provinces of that country. Because fraud had characterized the life of this ancient ruler, he is pressed into service to embody a fourth vice, "which taints the whole world." Dante represents him as having three forms or natures. The face is that of a man lit up with a smile, not glaring but subdued, mildly bringing out the traits of presumed graciousness and honest benevolence; the first attribute of Fraud concealing its hideousness under the seemings of virtue, unfelt love, sweet words, and servile fawning. The bust of Geryon, denoting him sufficiently but not entirely, is that of a serpent emblematic of those arts, which reptile-like, Fraud employs to win the good will of the guileless and over-confiding by the false glitter of hues various as "the webs laid on the loom of Arachne" and varied as Turk the Tatar ever wove on Oriental cloth. The beaming smile of that face often darkens the sunshine of God's creation, and the variegated hues of the sinuous snake leave a long train of poison on the grass of many a fragrant meadow. The lower part of this unnatural creature terminates in a scorpion's tail vibrating upwards its venomous fork. It is only after the soothing music of sweet words and the dexterous plying of subtle arts that Fraud finally strikes with its murderous sting the victim charmed into obliviousness of danger by an anesthetic distilled in the alembic of a most perverted mind. Commentators and scholars, from the fifteenth century down, have held that the monster Geryon is the synthetic presentment of Fraud as explained above.

The poets born of the shoulders of the vaulting beast are wafted in the thick air, and begin slowly and almost imperceptibly to sink in the void alongside the roaring Plegeton. The sound of cries and wailing becoming more distinct and loud made them realize that they were drawing near the fourth division of hell—the *Malebolge* (which means “Evil Pouches” or “Ditches”) where Fraud, in ten such ditches, shrieked the full gamut of a punishment most perfectly accorded with its various measures of malice. The accursed tribe was divided into ten categories of sinners—panderers and seducers, flatterers, simonists, diviners, soothsayers and magicians, barrators, hypocrites, thieves, fraudulent counselors, sowers of discord and schism, and falsifiers of all sorts.

Canto XVIII

The pilgrim and his guide take their stand on the bridge arching the first ditch. From it, they observe how are punished the panderers to the lust of others, and the seducers of women. Naked, they run without rest, those going from, and these coming to the poets. Horned devils, armed with whips and scourges, savagely track them. When the sinners halt for a moment in their eternal course, the demons lash them so fiercely that the wretches spring forward at once and again rush on without waiting for the second blow. Demons, mighty in power and filled with hatred, appear for the first time here, whilst blind elements or mythological being are chosen there as the ministers of divine wrath. Scanning the multitude of ghosts, Dante recognizes Venedico Caccianimico, who sacrificed the honor of his sister Guisolabella to the evil pleasures of the Marquis of Ferrara. Virgil points out Jason, the hero of the Argonautic expedition.

They pass on to the second ditch and see the flatterers in the gulf below. The sycophantic tribe wallows in a fetid pool of human excrement, whole exhalations cover the sides of the bank with a most loathsome mold. Plunged in that foul mire, these parasites, thriving on human infirmities and weaknesses, beat themselves desperately with their hands, scarcely able to utter a moan or relieve themselves by a sigh.

Alessio Interninei, the master flatterer of Lucca, is singled out, and also Thais, the Theban harlot, who by witching arts led men to sin.

Canto XIX

Ascending a rock that juts out over the chasm,

the poets look down upon another ditch. Its sides and bottoms are pierced here and there with circular apertures resembling cylindrical tombs or pits. Each one is tenanted by a sinner planted, as it were, therein with head downward. The limbs and feet project upward from the orifice like branches of trees, and twitch convulsively. Along the soles of the feet, from the heel to the toes, a lambent flame creeps up slowly feeding on the quivering flesh. These are ecclesiastics, who by bartering and selling the holy things of God and religion had stained their souls with the guilt of simony—the first moral error that was ever born to afflict the Church, and the last to die.

In no other canto, perhaps, of this part of the poem will the reader find a stronger profession of Dante’s Catholic principles. The simonists, as stated above, are buried with head downward in circular tombs. These churchmen who should have raised heart and mind to heaven are now turned in an inverted position to indicate the deformity, the impropriety of earthly thoughts and aspirations in a consecrated life. The fire that burns but does not consume is a type of that insatiable increase of appetite for wealth which grew once by what it fed on.

Standing by one of the many apertures, he learns that the tenant half entombed in it is Pope Nicolas III. Mistaking the voice of the poet for that of Boniface VIII, the shade wonders much that he came to hell so soon, for the appointed eight years of his pontificate had not yet elapsed. Boniface, he adds, is not to wait long for a follower, because Clement V, will, in a short time, succeed him at the post of ignominy and torments. The Florentine reproves by name three popes, but the one against whom he turns the full force of his animosity is Boniface VIII of the noble Gaetanis of Anagni. To find a possible explanation for the virulence of the attack, we must look upon the events that took place in the lifetime of the author.

Let us pass on to consider the second pope suffering in the Dantesque Hell, Giovanni Gaetano Orsini—known as Nicholas III. The poet tells us that he is “pouched up” in that awful prison because he had been too anxious and too zealous to put money into the pockets of his relatives. This sin consists of the bartering of sacred things in the commercial sense of the word.

The same criteria may be applied to the questionable doings of Clement V, the future candidate for the honors of the infernal pouch. The

head and front of his offence was the transferring of the Papal see from Italy to France, of which country he was a native. The incident of Avignon can never fail to engender feelings of resentment in the soul of every patriotic Italian; be it said to the peace of those who would use the Divine Comedy as a *shibboleth* (a test of inclusion—see Judges 12) of sacrosanct political aspirations.

Canto XX

Virgil, having taken Dante in his arms, carries him to the bridge spanning the fourth ditch. The poet sees a vast multitude of shades mournfully and silently marching with measured step in solemn procession. Their forms are most frightfully distorted as if by palsy. The upper part of each face and head is so twisted and reversed in a more or less degree of hideousness that the chin and beard make the shoulders of the sinners their breast. Unable to see before them, they are obliged to advance with a backward step; they shed copious tears. No other pain seems to torment that weeping and melancholy throng moving on and on, overwhelmed in sorrow, and not relieved even by sigh or moan. It is the fraternity of diviners, soothsayers, and magicians supposed to have been gifted with the knowledge of coming events, and other such preternatural endowments.

Such is the potent charm of the words spoken in Eden, “Ye shall be like gods,” that under the name of Theosophism, Occultism, Spiritualism, and other “isms” innumerable men who refuse to believe what God has taught will degrade themselves by accepting doctrines and tenets at once absurd and blasphemous, unworthy of intelligent beings. Aspiring to a prerogative that reason proves to be the exclusive attribute of the Deity, rash and foolish mortals would fain project themselves into forbidden realms in order to know what is hidden in the dark womb of the future. Instead of adoring the majesty of God they would usurp his throne; instead of bowing down before the dispositions of Providence and waiting for its inscrutable manifestations, they would rush into the council chamber of the Eternal.

The fitness of the punishment imagined for diviners, soothsayers, and magicians is evident. They pretended or made others believe that they were able to read the scroll of futurity. Their faces are now set backward; they move with a slow step and weep over the fatal results of a will “most incorrect to Heaven.”

In that long procession of ghosts, prominently march Amphiarus, one of the seven kings that

besieged Thebes; Tiresias, the soothsayer; Arunus, the stargazer of the Etruscan mountains; Manto, the sorceress for whom Maunta was called; Eurypylos who with Calchas gave the sign to cut the first cable at Aulis, the necromancer, Michael Scott, and the astrologer of Forli.

Canto XXI

Standing on the bridge of the fifth ditch, Dante looks down, hardly able to distinguish any object, for darkness broods over the place. At the bottom of the gulf, a pool of boiling pitch could only be discerned by the bubbles here and there breaking through its glutinous surface. In that liquid mass were steeped in torments the *barrators* (rulers and princes who had sold offices and dignities), inferior functionaries who had extorted money for the free gifts of their masters, bribe-takers, and *suborners* (those who induce others to commit unlawful acts) of every description. *Venality* (abuse of trust for dishonest gain) in the administration of distributive and commutative justice, corruption in the management of public affairs, and dishonesty in the discharge of sacred trusts had filled that dark lake with criminals guilty, as it were, of the sin of civil and political simony.

A throng of hideous demons, called Malebranche (“Evil Claws”), keep watchful guard along the gloomy shores. Fierce and cruel, these winged fiends of hell hover about armed with long prongs and hooks. Should, from time to time, any of the tribe succeed by stealth in crawling out on the banks they would incontinently tear him to pieces with their iron grapples; or, if to obtain a momentary relief, any should dare rise above the surface, they would beat him back and hold him down with prongs, as scullions do to keep meat from floating in a hissing cauldron.

The poetic invention of this punishment is in keeping with the end Dante had always in view. Black as boiling pitch is the action of the sordid knave who sells favors, breaks trusts, or sacrifices duty for the sake of gold. Adhesiveness is one of the principal qualities of pitch, and is used here as a symbol of the tenacity with which the barrator holds on to ill-gotten goods and money; whatever he touches he stains; even so does pitch. In darkness, by subterfuge and secrecy, he carries on a shameful traffic that cannot bear the light of the day; a thick integument of resinous matter hides him completely from sight. In the demons, who are the ministers of the punishment inflicted on barratry Dante symbolizes

various aspects of the same sin. Malacoda (whose name means “Evil Tail”), the chief of the infernal troop, is finally conquered. A type of the dark ways of the barrators, this devil sets himself now to deceive Virgil by stating a truth and making it the base for a lie that is to prove his and his companion’s destruction. He tells them that one thousand two hundred and sixty- six years, one day and five hours had passed away since the bridge spanning, nearby, the next ditch had been destroyed by the earthquake which shook the mundane planet at the death of Christ.

The fraudulent spirit offers to send eleven of the tribe to guide them, “where the other crag Uninterrupted traverses the dens.” The intention is to compass the ruin of the poets. Another truth veiled in transparent allegory bodying forth the wiles, the deceits, and the artifices of the power of darkness leagued and combined with human passions to obstruct in man the healthy exercise of reason, and by misleading it pave the way to error and eternal death.

Unit 15 – Assignments

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Continue reading *Inferno*, Cantos XXII – XXVIII.

Activity While Reading: Keep a journal noting the details, people (when Dante mentions someone by name, look the person up—yes, Wikipedia is allowed here—to find a bit of information on their history to better understand their sin and punishment), sins, and stories presented in each ring of hell.

Composition

- Continue to gather information for the topic you chose in Unit 14.
- You should have enough information to begin outlining your essay and writing a thesis and introduction. Also, remember to write with your ending in sight, so you will know the direction to take. (A thorough outline will help you do this.) Continue to refer to your notes from the **Writing Unit** in Unit 11 to guide your writing.

Unit 15 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Notes from Introduction to Dante’s Inferno

by Adolphus Thomas Ennis

Canto XXII

One wretch not quick enough to elude the vigilance of the fiends is set upon by one of the devils, named Graffiacane, who ferociously drags him up with his formidable prongs. The rest of the infernal crew swarms howling around the spot to wreak their hatred and fury on the too-daring ghost. It proves to be Ciampolo of Navarre who had turned his thoughts in life to the shameful transactions of barratry. Ciampolo proposes to them to call up more sinners from the bottom of the lake if they would, for a little while, leave him alone with Virgil and Dante. No sooner have the Malebranche withdrawn than the

wily Navarrese leaps back into the pitch. Rage stings the spirits duped by the vulgar barrator, and most of all Alichino, who with speedy wings, darts to exact revenge; but it is too late; the prey has already plunged past the danger of his talons. Calcabrina, exasperated by the failure of Alichino, flies after him, and the two demons engage in terrible combat which ends by both falling in the seething pitch.

Canto XXIII

Passions and the powers of darkness strive to turn the mind from the contemplation of the punishment due to sin, and to lead it astray by

devious paths that make for death. Reason, enlightened by Theology and strengthened by Grace, can overcome all impediments and avoid the pitfalls of deception; withal he fears.

In this ditch, the sixth of the iron-walled prison, innumerable shades wearily and with painful effort as if encumbered by a heavy weight, drag themselves along moaning and shedding tears. They are completely covered with long cloaks, strange in appearance and texture, for they are made of lead brightly painted and richly gilded outside, but inside dark and stained. Their faces are hidden under hoods of the same metal, similarly decorated. Divine art, according to the Florentine idea of aesthetic morality, had woven these many colored garments for “the college of the mourning hypocrites.”

The retribution of hypocrisy is appropriately imagined by Dante, who must have seen many varieties of it. This species of Fraud tries to disguise, under the glitter of gold, the true nature of baser metals, and to besmear systematic wrong doing with the seemings of virtue. The attempt to gratify secret ambition and other vulgar passions by veiling the thought and the deed with the robe of sanctimonious conduct, must be atoned in the Dantesque Hell by wearing a vesture, beautiful without but cumbersome within.

Dante, adjusting with much difficulty his gait to that of two shades, the Guelph Catalano and the Ghibelline Loderigo, learns that they had belonged to the military Order of the Knights of St. Mary, then commonly known as the Jovial Friars.

Canto XXIV

In order to reach the bridge set over the seventh gulf, the poets are obliged to climb a mound of ruins, strenuously pushing from rock to rock. The journey is continued along a rugged path till they come to a crag jutting over the chasm. This being too deep and dark to see or hear anything from above, a descent is made to the depths below.

Here, thieves are expiating their sins committed against justice, and are divided in three classes: those who, allured by occasion or opportunity, had yielded to temptation on the spur of the moment without any previous deliberation or thought; those who, by force of thieving habits, had, to a great extent, almost changed the stamp of nature; and finally, those wretches who, by carefully laid plans, had become so habituated to systematic stealing as to entirely transform the very instincts of rational beings into those of preying animals.

The prevaricators run naked in a vast ditch shrouded in darkness among swarms of venomous serpents. The hands of the sinners are tied behind their backs with loathsome snakes which twist themselves in many folds around the livid bodies. Some, bitten by them, immediately take fire and burn to ashes, from which, Phoenix-like, they rise again clothed in their former seemings—these belong to the first category. Huge reptiles, ferociously darting on others, cover them in a violent convulsive embrace; by degrees, the quivering human flesh and the form of the animal so mingle together that the monster and the man melt into one stage whole, withal, “appearing neither two nor one.” The horrors of this partial transformation add torments to a special class of law breakers whose sin is aggravated by acquired propensities. The third category of transgressors who had methodically and fraudulently devised, planned, and carried out the iniquitous trade are punished in the same manner, but with them the metamorphosis is so complete, that, having been changed into serpents, they dash hissing and sputtering around the unclean den.

The penalty inflicted on this sin is appropriately invented by Dante. He hears the culprit’s confessions of the crime. Under the impulse of the moment, Vanni Fucci had sacrilegiously filched the treasure of a church in Pistoia—the city from which all evils came to Florence.

Canto XXV

Fucci, who had been one of the *Neri* (Black Guelph) faction, insults and mocks Dante, who belongs to the *Bianchi* (the White Guelphs) and takes a malicious pleasure in prophesying the impending calamity of his party, but at the sound of a roaring voice crying out, “Where is the caitiff?” the base reviler flees in terror. A Centaur appears, rushing in close pursuit after him. Snakes are coiled around his body, and a dragon, with open wings, sits on his shoulders. Virgil tells the astonished Tuscan that it is the spirit of Cacus, who under the Aventine rock, stole the cattle of Hercules.

Two Florentines are now discovered—Brunelleschi and Sciancato; both had given themselves up to habitual thieving; three more draw near in the shape of serpents, Cianfa, Dortati, and Cavalcante. In the torments and transformations of these five shades are represented the second and third classes of offenders against the seventh commandment.

The partial metamorphosis of Brunelleschi

proves him to be of the number of those, who, by force of habit, gradually became hardened in sin. Cianfa, entirely transformed into a reptile, having sprung upon, and stung him, the wretch goes through the stages of mutation, and in that wise, slowly crawls away, “nor double now nor only one.” The graphic descriptions of the metamorphoses of this canto, more wondrous than Ovid’s mythological dreams, are presented to the reader in words truly vivid and realistic.

Canto XXVI

The sight of ungrateful citizens condemned to dwell among unclean things rouses a storm of indignation in the breast of the exile; his verse glows with fiery denunciations and reproaches, with irony and sarcasm.

Remounting the way that had led to the den of thieves, Virgil and his companion gain the bridge arching the eighth ditch, and, from thence, look down upon the punishment inflicted on another species of Fraud, achieved and consummated by perverting the noblest gifts of the mind to base and unworthy usages. The fraudulent counselors are tormented here. A distinction is made between the evil counselors who ply the dangerous trade for the combined interest of themselves and the person counseled, and those who on being asked give bad advice exclusively for the advantage of the party demanding it, no gain whatsoever accruing to them from the execution of the same. Firmly adhering to the philosophy of Aristotle that those having bright and keen intellects are mostly of a warm temperament, he envelops the perverters of natural gifts in moving fire. They are furthermore concealed in the burning shroud and rendered invisible by it because the mischievous suggestions are invariably given in absolute secrecy. The symbol of fire is used to signify that this element, by a natural tendency, leaps upwards so the desires of bad counselors constantly aim at personal elevation to be attained by the correlative depression of innocent victims.

Neither the courage of Hector, nor the wisdom of Priam, nor the heroism of a brave nation, could save Troy from the wiles of Ulysses and Diomedes. Had Guido di Montefeltro really counseled Boniface VIII, the prestige of a great name, the disposal of princely wealth, and the strength of impregnable strongholds could not have prevented the fall of the powerful Colonnas.

Canto XXVII

After the departure of the flame enfolding Ulysses and Diomedes, another arises from the gulf and comes toward the poets. In that burning shroud, Guido di Montefeltro rues in eternal pains the consequences of a fraudulent counsel he had been constrained to give to cure the fever of a pope’s ambition. Dante, who, as we have seen, had personal and political grievances against Boniface VIII, in the usual spirit of ruthless animosity, repeats in this canto a story circulated by the enemies of the Pontiff, and by few accepted as an established fact.

Canto XXVIII

Having passed to the ninth ditch, Dante sees three spectacles so harrowing and heart-rending that the accumulated carnage of all the wars, which, at various epochs defiled the fields of Apulia, pales into insignificance. A demon stands in the midst of a valley brandishing a sword with which he unremittently strikes, cuts, and maims the sinners forced in turn to stand before him. The terrible blow having been dealt, they hurry away circling the doleful road till the wounds are healed; then each shade comes back to the executioner, and the same punishment is repeated.

These are the sowers of that pernicious seed of divisions in families, in states, and in the Church of Christ. The punishment is typical of the nature of the sin engendering domestic enmities civil wars, and religious schisms. As their deeds rend asunder what God has joined together domestically, socially and religiously, so the retributive sword severs now the members of their bodies.

Dante places first and foremost in the pains of this chasm the greatest sower of religious discord then known to him, Mohammed. His son-in-law, Ali, is not far from the prophet. Fra Dolcino of the fanatical sect of the Fraticelli is soon to come thither. Curio who had urged Caesar to cross the Rubicon, Pier da Medicina, Moscaj, and Bertrand de Born, who had scattered dissensions and scandals among families and communities, all expiate the crime in atrocious torments. This canto cogently proves how strongly Dante condemned revolt against lawfully constituted authority. We see dramatized the theme of the sacred principle of authority without which church and state cannot exist.

Unit 16 – Assignments

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Complete the remaining Cantos, XXIX – XXXIII, to finish reading *Inferno*.

Activity While Reading: Keep a journal noting the details, people (when Dante mentions someone by name, look the person up—yes, Wikipedia is allowed here—to find a bit of information on their history to better understand their sin and punishment), sins, and stories presented in each ring of hell.

Composition

- By now you should have enough information to produce a rough draft from your outline. As you write your essay, note the ways it might vary from your outline. Correct your outline and complete a final draft. Review your work, making sure it is free of grammatical and mechanical errors.
 - Review the detailed instructions for the following topics. Does your essay answer the questions presented?
 - Consider the narrator’s journey to hell. Consider, too, how Dante has ordered the levels of sin according to their circle of hell. If you were Dante, how would you order the levels of sin? Write a 750-word essay giving your order of the sins present, and give present-day examples of these sins through stories illustrating them and include punishments/consequences for these sins.
- OR**
- If an allegory is defined as “a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one,” would you consider *Inferno* a good example of allegory? Write a 750-word argumentative essay that supports your answer, remembering to use quotes from the poem and from your reading journal to defend your answer.

Unit 16 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Notes from Introduction to Dante’s Inferno

by Adolphus Thomas Ennis

Canto XXIX

Virgil discourages Dante from counting the number of maimed shadows he sees. He warns him it is a hopeless task for “Two and twenty miles the valley winds its circuit.” This is the first time the speaker gives any definite measure of hell. From this and later calculations, the reader can surmise that each “round” is about half the size as the one above it, which means that the first level is about 5,622 miles around. Here at this level, the twenty-two miles suggests an enormous population. Only one division of this “city” is presented to the reader.

From this prison rises a wave of cries and lamentations from the falsifiers of things, actions, and words. They are divided into four classes—alchemists, impersonators, counterfeiters, and calumniators (those who utter maliciously false statements to injure someone’s reputation). Here the poet finds a vast number of sinners in piles of rotting

flesh. Dante believes that the torments of leprosy and dropsy and constant itching are in proportion with the corruptions they committed in life.

One such character is the famed Griffolino of Arezzo, who promised (for the right amount of money) to make a young man named Albero fly like Daedalus. He was burned at the stake for this crime, but he also had spent a great deal of time working in the “dark arts.”

Canto XXX

Two shades run past Dante, snapping and snarling like mad dogs. These are two of the sinners that have impersonated someone for their own evil purposes. These two “mad dogs” have suddenly been invaded by a kind of frenzy, which deprives them entirely of the use of reason. They are now laboring under a mental disorder, the consequence of losing their own identity. One of these spirits is Gianni

Schicci who had impersonated Buoso Donati in the making of a will that would gain him the “lady of the herd.” The other is the “unnatural” daughter of the Kind of Cyprus.

The third category is composed of counterfeiters. These are the people who tampered with coins and base metals in their thirst for gold. Here, they are consumed by the burning thirst that makes them pant and yearn for cooling water.

The last group here is made up of the falsifiers of words. These are vile calumniators who have robbed “the jewel of a good name” in order to gain something they thought would be more precious than life itself. They are punished with such a fever and intensity of a dropsical disorder that smoke issues from their bodies. Master Adams, the counterfeiter from Romena, points out the Florentine Potiphar’s wife, the accuser of Joseph, and Sinon, the oath-breaking destroyer of Troy. As Adams and Sinon begin to argue, Virgil warns Dante, “To hear such wrangling is a joy for vulgar minds.” His warning symbolizes the judgment of reason condemning right-thinking man.

Canto XXXI

Dante descends to the last division of hell, which slopes to the eighth circle. Here he finds the worst sinners clutched in the dark and icy embrace of Cocytus, the river of wailing, where they are doomed to pay for their darkest crimes.

Dantesque theory seemed to suggest two categories of sins of Fraud. Fraud could be committed by breaking that faith, which, in virtue of the common law of nature, man is bound to keep with all his fellow beings. That breach of faith is punished in graduated torments. The more heinous offspring of Fraud is that moral monster, Lucifer, the fallen star, the traitor.

A horn sounds and Dante sees something that looks like two towers. Virgil tells him these are two giants condemned for high treason, eternally bound in chains around the gaping jaws of the chasm. Their feet rest on the frozen surface of the river while they stand above the walls of the pit. The gibberish of Nimrod (who built the tower of Babel) and others can be heard in the pit.

Here Dante mixes Scripture and mythology. Most of the giants in this Canto are the airy substance of classic dreams—the Titans and the gods of Olympus and treacherous tyrants who attacked the authority and undermined the power of the popes and emperors of the age.

Here, in the music of Dante’s allegorical verse, we hear the refrain of one theme: Human reason moved by supernatural impulse speaks to the conscience of man’s urging—pleading, upbraiding and approving, condemning and praising. The will, a blind faculty of the soul, enlightened by reason, sees the right path and follows it.

The reader will notice that in proportion as progress is made toward the central part of hell, greater difficulties are encountered, and that to overcome them more powerful means must be employed. These poetic figures set forth the increasing difficulties of exploring the balance between the malice of a sin and its corresponding penalty until their study oversteps the borders of the human and reaches the perfection of evil in an angelic (spiritual) nature.

At the request of Virgil, the giant African Antaeus (who dared to fight with Hercules) stretches out his hand, binds securely the poets in a mighty grasp, and safely sets them down on the frozen waters below.



Dante speaks to the traitors in the ice, Canto XXXII, an engraving by Gustave Doré

Canto XXXII

Bleak, dismal, and oppressively silent, Cocytus is the fourth river of hell. It overflows and floods the whole breadth of the region. It is frozen so solid that even the fall of a mountain will not break the ice. Eternal, piercing cold pervades the gloomy recesses of this den of traitors. Varying degrees of treason are punished here with a progressive increase of pain.

It seems strange that Dante would create a lake of ice rather than the traditional fire of hell. The contradiction, however, serves to prove that his intellectual penetration equaled the religious devotion of his soul. Scientific experiments have fully

demonstrated that the action of extreme cold on the human body is similar to that produced by extreme heat; in fact, pain is more violently felt in intense cold than in a corresponding degree of heat.

Walking on the surface of the frozen lake, the poets see the ice-bound shades trembling in the eternal chill. Dante eventually notices two shades frozen together, one burying his teeth in the skull of the other with all the fury of maddened hunger. At Dante's prompting, the aggressor shares his tale of woe.

Goethe would call the following episode "the sublimest lyric creation known in any literature."

Canto XXXIII

The attacker wipes his mouth on the hair of the skull he has been gnawing to tell Dante he is Count Ugolino of Pisa and his companion is Archbishop Ruggiero. His narration is based on the chronicles of the thirteenth century.

The count had broken the sanctity of a truce with the enemy, leaving his political party and joining forces with the Archbishop. To remain in power, he did not give the Archbishop any say in the direction of public affairs. Eventually, Ugolino was defeated and locked in the tower of Gualandi with his two sons and two nephews. The keys were thrown into the river Arno and the family was left in the tower to die of starvation. The children perished in misery, one by one, their father watching them all go before his

own death. The Pisan died a victim of his own and his enemies' treachery.

The cry of a shadow startles the sad pilgrim. It is Brother Alberigo of the "Jovial Friars," the slayer of his guests. He implores Dante to lift up for a moment the congealed veil of tears so that he may find a moment of relief. Dante is well-acquainted with Alberigo in the upper world and knows he is still alive. The sinner explains that traitors of his kind often enjoy the privileges of being tormented in the Ptolemaea long before their body becomes tenantless. While the spirit is hurled into the depths of the infernal pit, a demon enters the body in the upper world and "quickens the mortal frame till the time arrives." This punishment is original in its design. It supposes the soul of a man to be already in hell at the same time the body is apparently alive on earth. Several scriptures support this possibility. In John 13, Scripture says, "And when he had dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the morsel, Satan entered him."

Dante seems to be proposing that prevaricators of this stamp are so hardened in crime and iniquity that, though living yet in a state of probation, they are, in reality, dead to the saving influence of grace.

We cannot possibly know what may pass at the last moment between the creature and the Creator; yet the truth of the general proposition holds good, and Dante was right; as he went beyond the limits of time, he could give an account of the unchangeable degrees of eternity.



Gustave Doré drew this illustration of Lucifer for Canto 34 of Dante's *Divine Comedy: Inferno*. The caption reads: "Lo!" he exclaimed, "lo! Dis; and lo! the place Where thou has need to arm thy heart with strength." Canto XXXIV., lines 20, 21.

The Artios Home Companion Series

Literature and Composition

The Canterbury Tales

by Geoffrey Chaucer

Literature for Units 17 – 20

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/22120/22120-h/22120-h.htm>



The Canterbury Tales mural by Ezra Winter. North Reading Room, west wall,
Library of Congress John Adams Building, Washington, D.C.

According to the inscription, this mural shows (left to right): “The Miller, in the lead, piping the band out of Southwark; the Host of Tabard Inn; the Knight, followed by his son, the young Squire, on a white palfrey; a Yeoman; the Doctor of Physic; Chaucer, riding with his back to the observer, as he talks to the Lawyer; the Clerk of Oxenford, reading his beloved classics; the Manciple; the Sailor; the Prioress; the Nun; and three priests.”

(Source: John Y. Cole, *On These Walls*, Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1995, p. 79)

Unit 17 – Assignments

Focus: Text Details

- Use a good annotated version of this text, or this unit will be very, very challenging! Librarius offers a good side-by-side version of the book, with a Middle English glossary. This is a supplement ONLY. Scroll down in the left pane to the list of side-by-side choices: www.librarius.com/canttran/gptrfs.htm
- As you read, you may find the Middle English hard to pronounce. Harvard University provides a wonderful lesson on teaching yourself Chaucer’s Middle English. It is worth a look: courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/less-0.htm

Literature

- Read the TWO Assignment Background articles below.
- Begin *The Canterbury Tales* by reading the “General Prologue.” (When journaling or taking notes in this unit, it is important that you reference both the character and tale.)
- Keep track of how Chaucer describes the Knight, the Nun’s Priest, and the Pardoner. Write down the information Chaucer provides to inform the reader of their position in society, of their outlook on people, and on their character in general.
 - Be sure to update your notes on these characters throughout your reading.
 - Between now and Unit 20, you will be studying the prologue, tale, and epilogue from each of these characters. As you look over the Composition instructions, you will want to pace your reading to correspond with writing deadlines.
- Visit this site for information on the tales: <https://www.canterbury-tales.net/>.
- In this and all readings, look up or derive from context the definitions of any unfamiliar words or terms you encounter.

Composition

- Write a three-paragraph biography on Chaucer. For information on Chaucer and his life, visit these sites:
www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/
www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/chaucer_geoffrey.shtml
- Between now and Unit 20, you will write a 750-word essay on one of the following topics:
 - Explain how one of the tales reflect or contrast the storyteller, his or her actions, and the actions of other pilgrims. What effect does this have on the reader and the story?
 - **OR**
 - The travelers are on a religious pilgrimage. What do the tales reveal about the pilgrims' views on Christianity and Christians in general? What do they reveal about Chaucer's views?
- For this unit, begin taking notes for your composition.

Unit 17 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

The Prologue From Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

(The Riverside Literature Series #135)

by Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., Ph.D.

The Plan of The Canterbury Tales

At some time later than 1385, and probably in the year 1387, Chaucer began writing and compiling *The Canterbury Tales*. The plan was an ambitious one. Thirty pilgrims, including Chaucer, bound for the shrine of St. Thomas á Becket, while staying at the "Tabard" in Southwark, agree at their host's—Harry Bailey's—suggestion for each pilgrim to tell two tales going and two coming. This would make in all one hundred and twenty tales, or with those of a chance addition to the party, the Canon's Yeoman, one hundred and twenty-four. These tales would have been linked together by appropriate talk of the pilgrims, some description of the roads, and presumably some account of their stay at Canterbury. The journey, though a scant sixty miles, would have taken about three days and a half either way. Such was Chaucer's original plan as set forth in the "General Prologue."

But it appears that he very soon altered this plan. *The Canterbury Tales*, as we have them, cover roughly the journey to Canterbury, each pilgrim telling one tale, and the host, "judge and reportour" of the storytelling, expresses his contentment as the journey draws to a close:

*Lordynges everichoon,
Now lakketh us not tales mo than oon;
Fulfilled is my sentence and my decree;
I trow that we han herd of ech degree.
Almoost fulfilled is al myn ordinaunce.*

If this were Chaucer's final plan, the "boke of the Tales of Canturbury," with twenty-three out of thirty-one storytellers represented by twenty-four tales, is more than two-thirds finished. It should be added that a number of the dialogue 'links' between tales were never written, so that the tales exist in nine detached groups (designated by the letters A-I). Of the twenty-four tales written, four remain unfinished, two (Chaucer's and the Monk's) interrupted by the host, speaking for a wearied company. Chaucer, cut off in the middle of the "Rime of Sir Thophas," avenges himself by telling the very dull prose tale of "Melibeus."

So far as possible Chaucer puts in the mouths of the Canterbury pilgrims tales he had already written. Sometimes the result is excellent; the story of Palamon and Arcite could not better have suited the Knight if it had been written for him in the first instance; while the jolly Monk with his dolorous 'tragedies' is an admirably comic figure, were not the joke unduly prolonged. Yet this use of old material occasionally produces disconcerting results: it is not a little surprising for instance to hear the "Second Nonne" speak of herself as an unworthy "sone" of Eve, while it is even stranger to find the bearded shipman including himself among womankind—an indication that the story was originally written for the Wife of Bath. The Man of Law appears to promise a prose tale, and tells in stanzas a religious legend

quite out of keeping with his character. It would be easy to multiply such cases of inconsistency, but this will suffice to show that we have in *The Canterbury Tales* only the rough draft of Chaucer's plan. On the other hand, these inconsistencies are decidedly of minor importance. Where we have stories of great interest and merit, we may well disregard their loose connection with the general plan; while occasional masterpieces of characterization, like the prologues and tales of the Wife of Bath and of the Pardoner, show us the standard Chaucer set for himself. Small wonder that he sometimes fell short of it.

The great advantage of the framework of *The Canterbury Tales* is its flexibility. On pilgrimage all classes of society, excluding only the very highest and lowest, might meet, and did meet in a common religious purpose, and on a certain equality. There was room for the knight with the glory of a score of battles, and the honest ploughman who tilled his own acre; for the Prioress, fine lady born and bred, and the Wife of Bath, jovial but frankly vulgar tradeswoman; for the pale and studious Clerk, and boisterous Somnour with his "fir-reed Cherubynnes face." All this we shall consider more at length when we treat the "General Prologue"; suffice it to say that such a company, each telling his tale after his kind, affords an infinite number of tones and treatment. There can be no monotony when the Miller follows the Knight, and the Nun's Priest's "take of a cok," the Monk's "Tragedies." *The Canterbury Tales* thus avoids the monotony of tone which even the greatest collections of tales—witness the *Decameron* or *The Earthly Paradise*—occasionally show.

This impression of variety is heightened by the

fact that the tales are told on a journey with a constantly shifting scene. Dispute, criticism, and comment break the formality of story-telling; finally the plan is admirable in that the storytellers are not brought together for the express purpose of having their say; the story-telling is merely incidental to the pleasure of their "holydaying."

The last words of the Parson's sermon are spoken, and we are about to take leave of the Canterbury pilgrims, when the author of the book detains us for a moment with these words of personal explanation: "Wherfore I biseke yow mekely, for the mercy of God, that ye preye for me that Crist have mercy on me and foryeve me my giltes, and namely of my translaciouns and enditynges of worldly vanitees the whiche I revoke in my Retracciouns; as is the book of Troylus; the book also of Fame; the book of the xxv Ladies; the book of Seint Valentynes day, of the Parlement of Briddes; *The Tales of Canterbury*, thilke that sownen unto synne; the book of the Leoun; and many another book, if they were in my remembraunce; and many a song and many a lecerous lay, that Crist, for his grete mercy, foryeve me the synne.

"But of the translacioun of *Boece De Consolacione*, and othere bookes of Legendes of Seintes, and omelies and moralitee, and devocioun, that thanke I oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and his blisful mooder and alle the Seintes of hevене," etc.

These are honest words; and, had they come out of a passing black mood, they would hardly have survived the mood itself. They are the words of a man of broken spirit, for whom resignation alone remains.

Adapted for High School from:

The Prologue From Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

(The Riverside Literature Series #135)

by Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., Ph.D.

Introductory Note—The Prologue

The opening lines of the "General Prologue" set us in the very heart of an English springtime; we know that the buds are bursting, and hear the song of birds. The "spring fret" (spring fever) is at the least as old as Chaucer. In such a season the mind looks toward pilgrimage, either over sea, or, nearer at hand, through sixty mile of Kentish field and pasture to the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury. This was already a venerable pilgrimage in Chaucer's time.

Immediately after Thomas á Becket had been slain in his own cathedral of Canterbury—the year was 1170—miracles were claimed to be wrought at his tomb; and when four years later Pope Alexander III canonized the martyr archbishop, Canterbury had already become a pilgrimage shrine. This it remained until Henry VIII and the Reformation in 1538 desecrated the shrine and scattered the ashes of the saint.

Just before this time the great scholar Erasmus visited the sanctuary and described with fine and cautious irony the mummeries he there saw. It was with no such feeling, but with perfect faith in the saint that Chaucer crossed London Bridge, and leaving the double row of shops and the great bridge tower behind turned down the Thames a few paces to the Tabard Inn. Here the poet finds twenty-nine English men and women, likewise bound for St. Thomas' shrine.

In the course of the evening Chaucer has met them all, and is ready to render an account of his fellow pilgrims to the reader. He seems to take them as they catch his eye in the guest room of the Tabard, for the recurring "there was" means "there at the inn;" but immediately his mind passes out of the inn to the pilgrims' road, and sets in motion that marvelous cavalcade which it shall be our pleasure to review. Here is no order of precedence; Chaucer expressly denies any intention of observing social distinctions. Haphazard, as chance or personal preference dictate, the pilgrims pass, and yet in such order as to lend infinite variety to their progress.

First a Knight well-mounted, but bearing the stains of battle for our faith; sage in council and brave in fight, the very prototype of the sturdy, unassuming English gentleman. His son follows caracoling after, a ladies' man, a writer of verse, a dandy in his way, but a dandy who has given and taken hard knocks in the Low Countries. You may find his like on our warships and in colonial posts. Their single attendant is close behind, a stupid, faithful, crop-headed yeoman. Bow and beautifully kept tackle show him a woodsman. Well may the King's deer thank the Knight for taking this fellow out of the greenwood.

Behind this group rides the lady Prioress, with her little retinue of a female chaplain and three priests. The Prioress has all the airs and graces of the mistress of a girls' "finishing school"; the neatness of her dress, a certain affectation of speech show that she makes a profession of fine ladyship. For all that she must be a little distressed to find herself in such mixed company, she is sincerely courteous to her companions of the road. We must believe that she rides by preference near so thoroughly respectable a person as the Knight, while she surely looks askance at the ribald Friar who rides close behind her.

It would be useless to call the roll of the Canterbury pilgrimage. Cast rather a glance along the line and rest content with what that glance tells. A Franklin, white-bearded, florid, and in holiday

attire, radiates an atmosphere of good wine and good cheer. A little group of London tradesmen wear their handsome guild livery rather consciously. They stick close together and talk shop even on pilgrimage. A bearded Shipman with a half-piratical air jolts past uneasily on a cart-horse. The plump and merry Wife of Bath, experienced pilgrim that she is, rides astride in a capacious pair of leggings, and, as she rides, jokes and quarrels loudly with the whole company.

Note well the pair that follows. That quiet, sad-faced man bears the sins and sorrows of a whole countryside, and bears them patiently and gladly for his Lord's sake. The man riding at his side resembles him, but his face lacks the finer lines of thought, and his back is bent with toil in the fields, toil as often rendered to his neighbor as to himself. So we interpret his rugged, kindly face.

That our procession might not lack contrast, a precious pack of rascals follows these godly men. A Miller, hirsute, squat, muscular, and misshapen, the terror of his region, and yet, if you are not too nice (particular) in your taste, a right merry comrade. If you couldn't see him, you might hear him, for the reed of a bagpipe sticks in his red spade-beard, and his left arm squeezes the bellows against his white and floury coat. Next, two thin, sly figures, a Manciple, the tricky caterer of an Inn of Court; and the Reeve, steward of a large landed estate. The latter longest holds our attention. All bones and wrinkles, the furtive look in his eye curiously belied by the flash that tells of a temper badly controlled, you feel that he is dangerous as he is shifty, and you know not whether to pity most the young lord he fleeces, or the fellow-knaves he terrorizes. He rides last of all, that he may see and not be seen, while the only pleasant touch in his portrait is the background, a tidy farm house shadowed with "grene trees."

The Somnour who rides in this group is hideous to the eye as to the mind. Under a flower garland, his face shines roughly with all manner of repulsive humors; he swings drunkenly on his horse, and balances a great cake bucklerwise. His deep voice silences in a moment all other talk. Children shrink from his path. Truly this is a figure worthy of his trade. Informer and prosecutor for ecclesiastical courts, his business requires that he should know how Tom stands with Kate, that he should learn and report what evil Diccon has said of his priest. He lives by blackmail; the evil men do is his bread of life, and yet the neighborhood drinks with him and fearfully votes him a good fellow. The Pardoner, on the contrary, is smooth and plausible, a cheerful rascal,

who knows his own rascality and enjoys it. His relics are “naught” (counterfeit), but they serve as well as if they were true. A fine actor, an eloquent preacher withal, people pay gladly for his pardons wherever he goes; and, if certain faithful parish priests see their work of years undone, their authority discredited, and their tithes pouring into the Pardoner’s bag, why, a man must live, and the stupid must go to the wall. Such is the Pardoner’s philosophy, as he simpers and smiles at his fellows and smooths his yellow locks.

With the Pardoner, Chaucer takes leave of his pilgrims on the road and returns to the Tabard Inn. The host makes his proposition for the journey and the telling of the tales, and the guests, readily assenting, sleep soundly in preparation for a long and tiresome ride. In the pilgrimage itself we shall come to know the host better, and recognize his almost ideal capacity for his calling. He shows already a certain tact in selecting the Knight, Prioress, and Clerk to begin the story-telling; for they are, two of them, the highest-born, and the third the most learned, of the company, and he feels confident that any one of them will tell a “noble storie,” and thus inaugurate worthily *The Canterbury Tales*. Later we shall find that it is he who has a sharp word, an oath if necessary, for the ribald or quarrelsome;

and effective note of protest for the lengthy and tedious; finally, the most exquisite courtesy and deference for “the gentles.”

So, in a few lines, Chaucer has introduced us to our comrades of the Canterbury pilgrimage. We have actually seen them all; we know what manner of men and women they are, and our curiosity is whetted for the varied entertainment they are to furnish.

There is nothing just like the “General Prologue” in literature. There are no other seven hundred lines that offer so many pictures, so vivid and so true. Nor should we let the ease, almost the carelessness, of Chaucer’s manner mislead us as to the difficulty of his task and the greatness of his achievement. Place yourself as nearly as you may in his position, endeavor to make another see and understand the score of people who were your railway companions yesterday, and you will find through failure that these apparently random touches of color, these mere hints at character in which the Prologue abounds, require the finest observation and the supremest selective art. No one, not excepting Shakespeare, has shown us so clearly the faces of men, enabling us, at a single penetrating glance, to detect the self that these faces at once mask and reveal.

Unit 18 – Assignments

*He cast his eyen upon Emelya,
And therewithal he bleynte and cried, ah!
As that he stongen were unto the herte.
– The Canterbury Tales, “The Knight’s Tale”*

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Read “The Knight’s Tale.”
- Write in your journal the idea or moral the Knight is hoping to pass on to his audience. It would be helpful to do some research on this tale and gather information about how this tale illustrates or contradicts the Knight’s character.
- Continue taking notes for your composition, described in Unit 17.
- Visit this site for information on the tales: <https://www.canterbury-tales.net/>.

Unit 18 – Assignment Background

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The Prologue From Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

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by Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., Ph.D.

“The Knight’s Tale”

It was Boccaccio who first told the story of the rival cousins and brothers-in-arms in his epic poem *Teseida*. It appears that he invented the main plot, the fatal rivalry of Palamon and Arcite, but used as historical setting for his epic the story of Theseus, founder of Athens, and the sanguinary tale of the fall of the Theban dynasty. In this latter he naturally borrowed freely from Statius's picturesque, if overwrought, *Thebaid*. Boccaccio's poem achieved an immediate success. Its obvious defects were scarcely felt by a fourteenth-century audience, while its copious eloquence and abounding color gave it readers and publishers as late as Ariosto and the full Renaissance.

When Chaucer first went to Italy in 1372, *La Teseida* had been read for more than a score of years, yet it appears that Chaucer did not know the book until his second Italian journey of 1378. We have already seen

that the story was not written in the first instance for the Knight.

Chaucer, after the completion of *Troilus*, planned first to write *Anelida*, using the setting only of the *Teseida*; but, as he wrote, the work grew upon him, so that he abandoned the smaller task, and set about rendering the whole plot of Boccaccio's poem into English. *Palamon and Arcite*, as Chaucer himself called his new poem, is essentially an abstract of Boccaccio's epic, but it is far from being merely that. The nature of the condensation and the character of the changes are so instructive, as to the English poet's methods of composition, that we shall delay a few moments in their study.

In this running analysis of *La Teseida*, the general relations of the two poems are presented at a glance. The right-hand column contains brief notes on Chaucer's use of the Italian material, displaying as well the original matter introduced by him.

<i>LA TESEIDA</i>	<i>“THE KNIGHT’S TALE”</i>
<p><i>The poem opens with an invocation to the Muses, Mars, and Venus.</i></p> <p>I. Teseo learns of the cruelty of the Amazons toward their men, leads a great army to Scythia, conquers their queen Ippolita, and ends the siege and the war by leading her back to Athens as his queen, with her fair sister Emilia.</p>	<p>All this is related briefly in one-ninth of the space, in Lines 1-174.</p>
<p>II. As Teseo rides in triumph toward Athens, certain Theban women, bereft of husbands and lovers through the cruelty of the tyrant Creon, beseech the conqueror for vengeance and relief. Teseo takes up their cause and slays Creon, routing his army. Among the Theban captives are Palemon and Arcita.</p>	<p>The story of the Theban women of the battle occupies in brief resume, 35-174.</p>
<p>III. The two cousins languish in prison, till one morning when Emilia gathers roses and sings beneath their window. Arcita, hearing her, looks out and</p>	<p>Chaucer here departs frequently from his original, adopting a more abrupt treatment. Emily appears but once to the two cousins. From that moment they are</p>

<p>believes he sees Venus herself. He calls Palemon, who is smitten by the same passion, and together the two captives vie with each other in the praise of their common lady. Emilia, perceiving that she is observed, runs away. She returns, however, other mornings; and as the two cousins fall more deeply in love with her an unexpressed jealousy arises between them.</p> <p>One day Peritoo, and old friend of Arcita, visits Teseo, and begs for the release of his comrade. This Teseo grants upon condition that Arcita shall forever leave the country. The two cousins part in tears, each envying the other's lot; and Arcita rides sadly out of Athens followed by a pitying glance from Emilia.</p>	<p>avowed rivals. The story thus loses something in delicacy of analysis, but gains in naturalness.</p> <p>Chaucer makes Palamon see Emily first. The change is of slight importance, but significant in that it gives the successful lover a certain prior claim to her in the mind of the reader.</p> <p>There is but little translation in this portion of the "Knight's Tale." The description of Emily walking in the garden comes quite directly from Boccaccio, and certain features of the dispute of Palamon and Arcite are transferred to this place from the fifth book of <i>La Teseida</i>.</p>
<p>IV. Arcita, after seeing the ruin of Thebes, passes some time forlornly among old friends, returns disguised to Athens, and enters Teseo's service under the name of Penteo. Here at least he may see Emilia, while he unburdens his love-laden heart in solitary walks through field and wood. There is one day he is overheard and recognized by Panfilo, Palemon's squire, who carries the word to his master in prison.</p>	<p>All this is condensed into about a hundred lines, 497-603. Arcite returns under the name of Philostrate. The part of the Squire is entirely lacking.</p>
<p>V. Palemon is distressed at hearing of the return of Arcite. He manages to escape from prison by changing clothes with his doctor, and surprises Arcita in the woods. The cousins greet one another affectionately and present their respective claims to the hand of Emilia. Unable to decide the matter thus, they arrange reluctantly to fight it out in mortal combat.</p> <p>Arcita returns to fetch arms for both; and they are fighting desperately as the hunt of Teseo draws by. The King separates them. First Arcita confesses his real name; then Palemon. Teseo, marveling at the power of love, and remembering his own youthful follies, pardons them their offense against his law, and decrees that they shall return at the end of a year, each with a hundred knights, to settle their quarrel by mortal combat.</p>	<p>Palemon escapes by drugging his jailer, and, overhearing Arcite talk aloud of his love for Emily, defies him. The challenge is accepted without debate. They fight silently.</p> <p>Thus the meeting of the rivals in the woods becomes merely casual, but gains immensely in dramatic effect, while by the omission of all parleying between the cousins the narrative gains swiftness and realism.</p> <p>The very natural touch where Palamon confesses to Theseus that he deserves death, but, as a jealous man, insists that Arcite suffer with him, is Chaucer's own.</p>
<p>VI. For a year the two rivals live together in harmony amid all manner of feasting and revelry. Toward the appointed time their champions gather from all quarter, and the poet names no less than twoscore of them, often describing them elaborately and enumerating their possessions. Teseo, the Queen, and Emilia receive them courteously, and the time passes to the tournament in solace and in mirth.</p>	<p>Chaucer describes here the building of a noble theater—in <i>La Teseida</i> no special theatre is built for the occasion—taking the descriptions of the temples of Mars and Venus from Book vii, where they are not, properly speaking, in the poem, but are merely seen by the personified prayers of the rival kinsmen. The oratory of Diana is either invented by Chaucer, or its details are drawn from some other unknown source.</p> <p>Instead of describing the whole train, Chaucer portrays a single champion from either side.</p>

<p>VII. Before the battle Teseo changes his decree, ordaining that the tournament be fought without loss of life. The contestants are solemnly counted in the theatre, and all is ready for the great day.</p> <p>Arcita prays for his victory in the temple of Mars. His prayer speeds away to find Mars in his grim northern temple. The god sends a sign of victory to Arcita kneeling. The warrior spends the night in the temple, assured that his prayer has been granted.</p> <p>In like manner Palemon prays to Venus, not for victory but to possess Emilia. His prayer flies to the temple of Venus, who receives it graciously. Strife arises in heaven between Venus and Mars, until the gods find a means of granting both petitions.</p> <p>Emilia, too, prays in the temple of Diana that she may remain a maiden, or if the gods decree otherwise, that she may marry him who best loves her, without peril to the vanquished lover. The fires on Diana's altar indicate darkly that Arcita is to conquer, but that Palemon is to have Emilia.</p> <p>Teseo with all his court comes to the great theatre. Palemon and Arcita, addressing their vows silently to Emilia, exhort their followers to fight valiantly. All await tremulously the third and final signal for the charge.</p>	<p>Here Chaucer rejects the personification of the prayers, but otherwise follows his origins closely, translating the greater part of the three prayers.</p>
<p>VIII. The battle is fiercely fought; the advantage now with one side, now with the other; and the poet describes minutely the single combats. Emilia regrets bitterly the blood shed for her sake.</p> <p>As they slacken for sheer exhaustion, Mars descends under the form of Teseo, and urges Arcita with bitter words to the attack. In the <i>melée</i> Palemon is desperately wounded in the arm by a man-eating stallion, and, thus disabled, dragged out of the fight and disarmed. Emilia's smile rewards the victor as he makes the circuit of the lists.</p>	<p>The brilliant description of the battle owes practically nothing to Boccaccio. The Italian poet endeavors to describe the exact order of events; Chaucer, much more vividly, describes only the general confusion of the <i>melée</i>.</p> <p>Palamon is merely overcome by the force of numbers and dragged "unto the stake."</p>
<p>IX. As Arcita rides in triumph, a hideous fury sent by Venus from Pluto's realm enters the arena bearing terror with her. The horse of the victor starts, and, as it falls, crushes its master cruelly against the pommel of the saddle. Arcita recovers sufficiently to take part in a splendid triumph, and, thus wounded, surrounded by his warriors and followed by his captives, the triumphal car bears him back to Athens.</p> <p>Teseo awards praise impartially to victors and vanquished, and celebrates splendidly the espousals of Arcita and Emilia. Even Palemon accepts his evil fortune with the finest knightly courtesy.</p>	<p>The manuscripts differ between a "fury" and merely a flash of "fire", and the incident is much condensed.</p> <p>Chaucer omits the triumph, it seems to me with good reason; for it presents the dying victor in no very magnanimous light. Nor is there any mention of the wedding of Arcite and Emily—a skillful suppression; for no one wishes to feel that she passes to Palamon as Arcite's widow. This condensation carries us swiftly to the bedside of Arcite. It is there that we would be, and Boccaccio's triumphs and feasts only detain us annoyingly.</p>

<p>X. The bodies of those slain in the tournament are burned. Of the wounded, all but Arcita recover. Feeling his injuries are mortal, he calls Teseo to his bedside, and, reviewing the whole history of his love, renounces in Palemon's favor all claim to Emilia. Likewise he calls Palemon and charges him to win and marry Emilia; while upon her he lays as his dying request the duty of loving Palemon. So, with bitter weeping of his new-won bride, with the praises of all in his ears, Arcita dies.</p>	<p>All this is more simply treated by Chaucer, and more affectingly. Arcite sends directly for Emily and Palamon, and with no parade of generosity, no embarrassing insistence, only suggests to Emily “. . . if that ever ye shal been a wyf Forget nat Palamon, the gentil man.”</p> <p>I know of no instance where Chaucer's fineness of nature appears more clearly than it does in this passage.</p>
<p>XI. The soul of Arcita mounts up to the eighth heaven, whence it looks down with pity upon the weeping made for him below. Wise words but half-heard of old Egeu comfort a little the mourners. A noble pyre arises for Arcita, and his body is burned with all the rites of a classic funeral.</p> <p>On the following day there is racing of horses, boxing, and discus-throwing, for splendid prizes. Above the ashes of pyre Palemon builds a temple to Juno, in which the ashes of Arcita should be eternally honored. This temple bears in its decoration the whole story of Arcita, practically a recapitulation of the entire poem.</p>	<p>The apotheosis of Arcite is rejected by Chaucer. The description of the funeral is much abridged, and the tedious and quite purposeless recapitulation is omitted.</p>
<p>XII. After several days Teseo and the assembly of the Greeks decree that mourning shall cease with the wedding of Palemon and Emilia. With some difficulty their scruples are overcome, and the wedding feast is celebrated joyously. All render honor to Venus for bringing the two lovers together at last.</p> <p>The author invokes the Muses and bids farewell to his poem.</p>	<p>“Certeyn yeres” elapse before the marriage of Palamon and Emily. The speech of Theseus is greatly expanded, chiefly through the insertion of passages from Boethius. Other tedious descriptive passages, such as an inventory of Emily's charms, and a long account of the wedding feast are omitted; and the knight hastens on to his “God save alle this faire compaignye.”</p>

This somewhat minute comparison of texts will serve only to emphasize Chaucer's independence and originality.

One criticism will occur to the reader—the actions and the passions of the poem are much more clearly felt than the persons who act and feel. Emily is scarcely more to us than a radiant vision against a background of rose bushes—such a gracious picture as the old painters used to call “The Virgin in a Rose-garden.” She is lovable we know; but why? We could scarcely tell. Palamon is less headstrong than the impulsive Arcite, yet either of the lovers is very much less a person than, for instance, our friend Chauntecleer the cock. It is this lack of reality in the characters that leads one of Chaucer's best critics, M. Jusserand, to say of “The Knight's Tale”: “In

opposition to his usual custom, he contents himself here with leading a little life to illuminations of manuscripts;” and the observation is, in the main, just. Yet he would better have said “sufficient” life, for the illusion is complete. No reader will stop to inquire if Emily and her lovers are more or less real than the Wife of Bath and the Miller. Granted that the actors and the scenery might suffer in the cold light of day, it is Geoffrey Chaucer who is stage manager, and he will see to it that a kind light attend the representation. No reader, as he draws his sigh of satisfaction and rises to go, will but applaud in the words of the scribe, “*Explicit fabula Militis, valde bona,*” or “Here ends the ‘Knight's Tale,’ and a very good one it is.”

Unit 19 – Assignments

*As Chauntecleer among his wyves alle
Sat on his perche, that was in the halle
And next hym sat this faire Pertelote.*

– *The Canterbury Tales*, “The Nonne Prestes’ Tale”

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Read the Nun’s Priest’s prologue, tale, and epilogue, and write in your journal the idea or moral the story illustrates to the reader.
- Read “The Pardoner’s Tale” and write in your journal the idea or moral the story illustrates to the reader.
- Research and gather information about how these two tales reflect or contradict the storyteller. Visit this site for information on the tales: <https://www.canterbury-tales.net/>

Composition

- This week, you should write a rough draft on one of the topics described in Unit 17. Your essay should be at least 750 words. Your essay should either:
 - Explain how one of the tales reflect or contrast the storyteller, his or her actions, and the actions of other pilgrims. What effect does this have on the reader and the story?
- OR**
- Discuss what the tales reveal about the pilgrims’ views on Christianity and Christians in general. What do they reveal about Chaucer’s views?

Unit 19 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

The Prologue From Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales

(The Riverside Literature Series #135)

by Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., Ph.D.

“The Nun’s Priest’s Tale”

Like most of *The Canterbury Tales*, the plot of the story of Chauntecleer and Pertelote is borrowed. The second branch of the French *Roman de Renart* fable cycle supplied all the elements of the story. The widow’s barnyard and cottage, the cock’s dream, the trick by which Daun Russel catches him, and the counter-stratagem by which the ruffled Chauntecleer finally escapes—all this is told entertainingly in some five hundred and fifty lines of the French version. The superiority of Chaucer’s version lies in its realism and humor. To dwell upon special features of this merriest and finest of tales may put one a little in the position of one who spoils a joke by explaining it. Still it may be useful to define certain masterly qualities of the story, which, before, we have felt but vaguely.

We need not insist upon the realism of certain

passages. The widow’s cottage is absolutely perfect as a picture; while for the like of a mad barnyard rout at the end, we must see the Rubens paintings of the Kermesse. These two scenes, one a dusky interior, the other a wild chase under clear skies, were merely suggested in the original story. They come to Chaucer as mere subjects; the painting is his.

But the real interest of the tale lies in the character. Even Chaucer has rarely created any so clearly individual as Chauntecleer and Pertelote. The cock is no less of a personality than a Pandarus; while the hen is far more real than an Emily, and only less interesting than a Wife of Bath or a Criseyde (Pandarus and Criseyde are characters from Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*). The cock fills the barnyard as completely as Achilles the plain of Scamander; and Chauntecleer’s dreams become no

less portentous than the hero's wrath. The burlesque is doubly delicious, because of absence of exaggeration and truth of description. Chauntecleer is indeed a glorious creature, if you take the pains to mark the sun on his "burned gold."

In character he is a thorough egotist, a barnyard tyrant, yet with the saving grace of humor; capable then of laughing at himself, though with ridicule largely economized for his obedient harem. Though an egotist, he feels deeply his duties to society, and pays tribute to himself of assiduous, nay, chivalrous, courtesy rendered to Dame Pertelote. His tastes are fine, and his reading in obscure fields profound. He fairly overwhelms his wife, who has ill-advisedly turned one of his own authors against him in the argument, with a torrent of classical citations for the credibility of dreams. Yet even here he ends his tirade with a compliment which hovers between sincerity and irony. You cannot but love Chauntecleer; there is a zest in his pompousness and a humor in his pedantry that would admit him to the gallery whose chef d'oeuvre is the Egoist. Were it not for the anachronism, the "Nun's Priest's Tale" should be called Meredithian (i.e., similar to the biting satirical style of English novelist and poet George Meredith)—a two-edged compliment.

Vanity is, of course, Chauntecleer's foible. He has breathed the air of flattery and acquired its habit. His stupidity lies on this side only. And if he swallows the fox's bait guilelessly, it is but the failure of the moment—"This chauntecleer stood hye upon his toos, Strecchyng his nekke and heeld his eyen cloos, And gan to crowe loude for the nones."

For this blessed moment he is ridiculous, but not for long. Shrewdness returns with adversity, and the fox lets go his half-secured prey, that he may boast him whole caught. The cock flies back to his tree, scornful, with honor, if not neck, unruffled; for is not that ruffled neck heroic already—in the eyes of seven hens?

Dame Pertelote, that far less complex character, need not long detain us. Prudence, decorum, and the housewifely virtues are her qualities. Admiring the learning and genius of Chauntecleer, even to citing his authors, she hesitates not to recall him to his better self as occasion requires. Her pleasure is in giving advice, and her forte in household remedies, for both of which Chauntecleer evinces a disregard born of long practice. She makes fun of his dream, explaining it with considerable learning on

rationalistic grounds. For this reason Kate Oelzen Petersen, in her *On the Sources of the Nonne Prestes Tale*, will have us believe that she is a skeptical woman, the humorous counterpart of Criseyde: "It is possible that Chaucer felt some special interest in the character of a woman who is by temperament skeptical. At all events, such a woman is the heroine of both *Troilus and Criseyde* and of 'The Nun's Priest's Tale.'" The observation is at once just and subtle for Criseyde; but is not Miss Petersen led astray by mere similarity of substance and phrase when she calls Dame Pertelote "another free-thinking woman"? This is to take the matronly hen seriously indeed. For me, the fun of the situation lies, not in the fact that she possesses a general disbelief in dreams, but that she distrusts profoundly this particular dream of Chauntecleer, and stakes her everyday wisdom against this vagary of a talented husband. The utmost admiration for a helpmeet's genius is not incompatible with a pretty constant suspicion of his judgment in particular instances. This under-criticism is my view of Dame Pertelote's "skepticism."

For the rest, she is Chauntecleer's worthy mate most appreciative of his strutting, if doubtful of his good sense, while he enjoys her company and conversation with an affection only heightened by the genial irony her innocence keeps ever alert.

The fox is kept in the background as the vague and sinister element of terror in this barnyard epic. His single encounter with the cock proves him a worthy foe, and his only fault appears to be overconfidence. We hardly feel him as a person in the drama.

We have shown that this tale of Chauntecleer shows no small study of the married state; we refuse absolutely to draw the "moralitee" to which the Nun's Priest chose to leave to private interpretation. It is interesting, however, to note that this essentially mock heroic tale retains much of the apparatus of a Medieval sermon. This makes it particularly appropriate to its teller.

We have found a number of reasons for liking this story—its realism, its genial humor, its frank burlesque; we shall, I think, esteem most highly that quality which Chaucer shares with the good La Fontaine and the more emphatic writer of *The Jungle Book*—the power of making "birddes and beestes" seem more human than most men.

Unit 20 – Assignments

*That shewe I first, my body to warente,
That no man be so boold, ne preest, ne clerk,
Me to distourbe of Cristes hooly werk.*

– *The Canterbury Tales*, “The Pardoner’s Tale”

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- It is thought that Chaucer was influenced by Dante. To learn more about this, visit:
www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/special/authors/dante/.

Composition

- This week, you should complete your final draft on one of the following topics. Your essay should be at least 750 words.
 - Explain how one of the tales reflect or contrast the storyteller, his or her actions, and the actions of other pilgrims. What effect does this have on the reader and the story?
 - **OR**
 - The pilgrims are on a religious pilgrimage. What do the tales reveal about the pilgrims’ views on Christianity and Christians in general? What do they reveal about Chaucer’s views?
- Edit your final draft, making sure that your thesis is clear to the reader and that your essay is well-organized and free of mechanical errors.
- Use the **Evaluation Rubric** in the **Formats and Models** section of **the website** to check your work.

Unit 20 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

A Critical Edition of Some of Chaucer’s ‘Minor Poems’

by John Koch

“The Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale”

The Sources of “The Pardoner’s Tale”

The original from which Chaucer took the subject of his story of “The Robbers and The Treasure-Trove” is not known, but it may have been an old French *fabliau* now lost. Still, there are a number of traditions resembling more or less Chaucer’s tale still extant in various Asiatic and European languages. Among these the form most approaching that of our poet is contained in the Italian collection entitled “Cento Novelle Antiche.”

But this is by no means the earliest shape of this story handed down to us; it was Rev. Dr. R. Morris who first, in 1881, discovered its oldest version, in one the Buddhist Birth-Stories, entitled “Vedabbha Jataka,” and after him (in 1883) Mr. H.H. Francis and Professor Tawney, each independently, pointed out the same text as the original of Chaucer’s tale. For particulars see Mr. W.A. Clouston’s valuable Essay in the continuation of the “Originals and Analogues.”

The contents of this story are shortly the

following: A Brahman, Vedabbha by name, knew a powerful spell by which he could make a rain of precious things fall from heaven. Once, wandering with Gautama as his pupil (who tells the story), he was taken captive by five hundred thieves. Whilst they sent away the pupil to fetch wealth, they kept the Brahman for their security. But when the latter had been waiting for some time to be released, he repeated the spell, in spite of Gautama’s warning that, by doing so, he would cause his death and that of many other men, and made a rain of wealth descend from heaven. The thieves collected their treasure, but soon afterward were made prisoners by another five hundred thieves, who cut down the Brahman, because he was now unable to work the same miracle for them, pursued the other thieves, and slew them all. Then they began to fight amongst themselves for the treasure that had now fallen into their hands, until only two men remained alive. While one of them is guarding their wealth, the other

goes to a village to have some rice cooked, in which he puts poison in order to get rid of the other man, and to have the whole treasure for himself. On his return he is slain by his comrade, who then eats of the poisoned rice and dies at once. Soon after Gautama returns with the wealth he had been sent for, and finding these men dead, he sets forth the moral lesson contained in a stanza, beginning, 'He who desires advantage unseasonably, he is afflicted.'

Then Mr. Clouston gives the text of a Persian version, three Arabian ones, a Kashmiri and a Tibetan version, all later than the "Vedabbha Jataka," and shortly relates the contents of an Italian miracle play, some German reproductions (one by Hans Sachs), a French, and a Portuguese one, more or less differing in some minor details from the foregoing tale. In conclusion Mr. Clouston remarks that one feature of the original, the warning to the Brahman, is retained only by the first mentioned Italian version, by H. Sachs, and by Chaucer.

The Pardoner

That Chaucer's description of his Pardoner is by no means exaggerated has been shown by Dr. J.J. Jusserand in a short treatise entitled "Chaucer's Pardoner and the Pope's Pardoners," written in 1880, and published in "Essays on Chaucer, his Words, and Works." He quotes several circulars and decrees of popes (e.g., one of Boniface IX—Boniface VIII was seen in *Inferno*—of the year 1390) and bishops, from which we learn that, besides the authorized pardoners, there were numerous others 'who dispensed with the ecclesiastical licence, and wandered like pedlars from one district to another, trafficking in pardons.'

They pretended to come from the court of Rome and showed the people patents and bulls, the seals of which were mostly forged. They took the liberty of preaching in churches though they were only laymen, and kept all the money gained by selling Indulgences for themselves. Some even formed private associations to abuse the confidence of the public, whilst others were employed by Hospitallers to sell absolutions, etc. for the benefit of this Order, and for their own as well.

To this latter class Chaucer's Pardoner seems to have belonged, as the hospital at Rouncivale in London was one of those establishments. So I am not quite of the opinion of Dr. Jusserand, who thinks that the signatures of his Documents were also forged, which our poet does not exactly state. Certain it is, however, that his Pardoner made a good profit

by his sale, as his private gains were a hundred marks a year, and that he led the same profligate life with which his fellows were frequently reproached. The abominable way in which he utilized churches for his most worldly purposes and his other tricks to impose upon his hearers are well exposed in the "General Prologue." But for the description of his counterfeited relics, the two passages do not entirely agree with each other.

In the "General Prologue," Chaucer says: "And in a glass he hadde pigges bones," whilst in "The Pardoner's Tale," he speaks of several "longe cristal stones" in which there are not only "bones," but also "cloutes." In the former place the Pardoner has "a croys of latoun ful of stones," whilst the latter he has "in latoun a sholder boon" of wonderful capacities. "Oure lady veyl" made of "pilwebeer" (pillow case) and the "gobet" of St. Peter's sail mentioned in the Prologue are not alluded to again in the Tale, whilst in the latter a miraculous "Miteyn" is produced which is not found in the "General Prologue." So it appears that Chaucer wrote "The Pardoner's Prologue" sometime after he had composed the General Prologue, when the tenor of his former description was not quite present to his memory. At any rate, he did not trouble himself to make a later drawn picture exactly agree with an earlier cast of it.

A few words may be added about the external appearance of this worthy Pardoner as sketched by the poet in the "General Prologue." His hair was yellow as wax; it hung on his shoulders like a "strike of fles," where it lay thin "by colpous" (bundles, shreds). He had "no beard, his fas was as smooth as if it had been lately shaved." His eyes were as glaring as those of a hare. He wore no hood, as the other travelers did, in order to appear more fashionable (of the "newe jet"), but only a cap on which was sown a "vernycle" as a token of his having come from a pilgrimage. His voice was as treble as a goat's, but he was fond of singing a love song, in which his friend, the "Somonour," would accompany him with his bass. But best he sang an offertory, after which he used to preach a sermon like the one described in "The Pardoner's Prologue."

If, toward the end of his tale, the host makes fun of the Pardoner and his doubtful relics, by which he provokes the laughter of all other fellow pilgrims, we must not conclude that Chaucer meant to ridicule the regular institutions of the Church, but only to the gross abuses introduced at his time, the same as Langland had done in the "Vision of Piers the Plowman."

The Artios Home Companion Series

Literature and Composition

Renaissance Poetry

Literature for Units 21 – 24

About the Poets

Since we will be studying many poets at once here, it is worth your time to read a biography of each poet. Luminarium has pages of information on each of the poets and Renaissance Literature in general: www.luminarium.org/

Selected Poems For Units 21-24

“Whoso List to Hunt”	Sir Thomas Wyatt
Sonnets 30 and 75	Edmund Spenser
“The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”	Christopher Marlowe
“The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd”	Sir Walter Raleigh
“A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”	John Donne
“To His Coy Mistress”	Andrew Marvell
Introduction to “Paradise Lost”	John Milton

- In these units, you will write either an explication or an essay about one of the poems studied each week. If you are studying this text in a classroom setting, it is a good idea to study the reading material before the class discussion, preparing to analyze the poem as a group.
- Bookmark this as you will use the information found here to write your explications:
<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/poetry-explications/>

Unit 21 – Authors & Their Poems

Noli me tangere.

– Sir Thomas Wyatt

Sir Thomas Wyatt: <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/wyatt.htm>

“Whoso List to Hunt”

Sir Thomas Wyatt

Edmund Spenser: <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/spenser.htm>

Sonnets 30 and 75

Edmund Spenser

Unit 21 – Assignments

Literature

- Using the links above or other sources, find information on the poets and write a three-paragraph author profile on each of the two poets highlighted this week: **Sir Thomas Wyatt** and **Edmund Spenser**.
- Read the THREE Assignment Background articles below. For each poem, follow these instructions:
 - First, read the poem silently. Be sure to identify unfamiliar words and learn their meanings.
 - Next, read the poem aloud.
 - After that, think about the poem as a story where the speaker is addressing an audience or another character. (Do not assume that the poet is the speaker.) Write in your notebook a description of the speaker’s voice, the noted conflict or ideas presented in the poem, and the style of language the poet uses to express these conflicts or ideas.
 - Write the details about the poem:

Rhyme Scheme: Note the rhyme scheme of the poem by assigning letters to rhyming words.

Form: In what form is the poem written (sonnet, ballad, free verse)? Does it vary from the traditional form? What does it add to the poem? What tone does it create?

Rhetoric: How does the speaker reveal his ideas?

Visit this site for more information on rhyme scheme, form, and rhetoric:

<https://msu.edu/course/eng/310a/snapshot.afs/tavrmina/SS97/310h6.htm>

- If it is a sonnet, what does the rhyming couplet signify? What message does the poet want the reader to hear?

Composition

Write an explication for one of the poems studied. Use the information found at this website: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/poetry-explications/>

Be sure to include:

- the idea presented in the octave
- the conclusion presented in the sextet
- the final thought in the couplet

Unit 21 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

An Introduction to Poetry

by Jay B. Hubbell, Ph.D. and John O. Beaty, Ph.D.

Sonnets

The most famous of all the fixed forms is the sonnet, great examples of which are found in Italian, French, German, and other modern languages as well as English. The sonnet was a product of the early Italian Renaissance—a period when the crafts of the goldsmith, the painter, and the poet were plied with equal care and skill. It was introduced into England in the sixteenth century by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and at once attained remarkable vogue. Shakespeare, Spenser, and Sidney, as well as a number of minor Elizabethan poets, wrote sonnet sequences.

In poetry written in English there are, in order of importance, three main types of the sonnet: the *Italian*, the *Shakespearean*, and the *Spenserian*. The Italian, or Petrarchan, receives its name from the fact that it was used by Petrarch and other Italian poets. Each of the other two types takes its name from the most illustrious English poets who early made an extended use of it.

The Italian sonnet consists of fourteen iambic pentameter lines. The first eight lines form the *octave*, which rhymes *abbaabba*; the remaining six lines, rhyming *cdecde*, constitute the *sextet*. The two parts of the Italian sonnet have more than a stanzaic (an arrangement of a certain number of lines forming a division of a poem) significance. The thought is always cast in a certain form. The octave presents a thought,

question, or problem, which the sextet completes appropriately.

The point of division is not always coincidental with the passing from octave to sextet. The thought of the octave frequently, in fact, runs over into the first half of the next line. In poorly constructed sonnets the distinction between sextet and octave is not strictly maintained. In all regular sonnets of the Italian type the rhyme scheme of the octave is *abbaabba*; in the sextet, however, great latitude in rhyme is allowed, sometimes following the *cdecde* rhyme scheme.

Although Italian is regarded as the standard sonnet, the other types, particularly the Shakespearean, are vehicles for some superb poems. The Shakespearean sonnet does not afford the symphonic effect of the Italian, but its heroic quatrains produce a sweeping movement, and the concluding heroic couplet often gives to the thought an effective epigrammatic turn. The rhyme scheme of the three quatrains and the couplet is *abab cdcd efef gg*. Shakespeare's one hundred and fifty-four sonnets constitute a sequence unparalleled for sustained power and beauty.

The Spenserian sonnet differs from the Shakespearean only in that the quatrains are interlocked by rhyme, the scheme being *abab bcbc cdcd ee*.

The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. 3

edited by A.W. Ward, Litt.D. and A.R. Waller, M.A.

Notes

Sir Thomas Wyatt's chief instrument was the sonnet, a form which he was the first English writer to use. Of all forms, the sonnet is that in which it is most difficult to be obscure, turgid, or irregular. Its small size and precise structure force on the writer compression, point, and intensity, for a feeble sonnet proclaims itself feeble at a glance. His model—in thought, and, up to a certain point, in form—was the sonnet of Petrarch, of whom he was a close student.

Wyatt's sonnets number about thirty: ten of them are translations of Petrarch, and two others owe a debt to the same author. But either he did not apprehend, or he deliberately decided not to imitate, the strict Petrarchian form; and the great majority of the English sonneteers before Milton followed his example. The main difference is this: that, whereas the sextet of the strict Petrarchian sonnet never ends with a couplet, the sonnets of Sir Thomas Wyatt, and Elizabethan sonnets in general, nearly always do. The effect produced, that of a forcible ending, is opposed to the strict principles of the sonnet, which should rise

to its fullest height at the conclusion of the octave, to sink to rest gradually in the sextet. But the final couplet has been used so freely and to such noble ends by English writers that objection is out of place.

Of Wyatt's sonnets, two or three do actually, by their sense, fall into two divisions of seven lines; but it is plain that this was not the principle on which he constructed his sonnets. For the most part, the separation of octave and sextet is clearly marked, and the rhymes of the former are arranged in Petrarchian fashion, *abbaabba*, with occasional variations, of which *abbaacca* is not uncommon form.

Following Petrarch, Wyatt sang, in his love-poetry, almost exclusively of his own sufferings at the cruelty, much more rarely of his own joy in the kindness of his mistress. To say that many of the sonnets are translations and, therefore, cannot represent the actual feelings of the translator, is to question the sincerity of almost every Elizabethan sonneteer.

The Lover Despairing to Attain

("Whoso List to Hunt," by Sir Thomas Wyatt)

Whoso list to hunt? I know where is an hind!
But as for me, alas! I may no more,
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore;
I am of them that furtherest com behind.
Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
Draw from the deer; but as she fleeth afore
Fainting I follow; I leave off therefore,
Since in a net I seek to hold the wind.

Who list to hunt, I put him out of doubt
As well as I, may spend his time in vain!
And graven with diamonds in letters plain
There is written her fair neck round about;
"Noli me tanger!"; for Caesar's I am,
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame."

1. "Touch me not," the Latin translation of the warning spoken, according to John 20:17, by Jesus to Mary Magdalene when she recognized him after His resurrection. It is generally used as a prohibition against interference.

Adapted for High School from:

The Elements of English Versification

by James Wilson Bright, Ph.D., Litt.D. and Raymond Durbin Miller, Ph.D.

The Spenserian Sonnet

The sonnet employed by Spenser in his *Amoretti*² embodies some of the characteristics of both Italian and English forms. As in the Italian sonnet, the first two quatrains are linked together by a common rhyme; as in the English sonnet, the

concluding six verses are divided into a quatrain and a couplet; but since the third quatrain is linked by a common rhyme to the preceding two, there is not distinct division into octave and sextet.

Sonnets 30 and 75, by Edmund Spenser

My Love is Like to Ice

My love is like to ice, and I to fire:
How comes it then that this her cold so great
Is not dissolved through my so hot desire,
But harder grows the more I her entreat?
Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
Is not allayed by her heart—frozen cold,
But that I burn much more in boiling sweat,
And feel my flames augmented manifold?
What more miraculous thing may be told,
That fire, which all things melts,
Should harden ice,
And ice, which is congeal'd
With senseless cold,
Should kindle fire by wonderful device?
Such is the power of love in gentle mind,
That it can alter all the course of kind.

Sonnet 75

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washed it away:
Agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tyde,
And made my paynes his pray.
“Vayne man,” sayd she,
“That doest in vaine assay.
A mortall thing so to immortalize,
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
And eek my name bee wyped out lykewize.”
“Not so,” quod I, “let baser things devize,
To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens wryte your glorious name.
Where whenas death
Shall all the world subdew,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.”

Did you struggle to make sense of all the older English spelling in Sonnet 75? If so, read it here:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45189>

2. The *Amoretti* (meaning little love poems) is a sequence of 89 sonnets written in the tradition of the Petrarchan sonnets, a popular form for poets of the Renaissance period. (LibriVox.org)

Unit 22 – Authors & Their Poems

*A cap of flower, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle*
– Christopher Marlowe

Christopher Marlowe: <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/marlowe.htm>

“The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” Christopher Marlowe

Sir Walter Raleigh: <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/raleigh.htm>

“The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” Sir Walter Raleigh

Unit 22 – Assignments

Literature

- Using the links above or other sources, find information on the poets and write a three-paragraph author profile on each of the two poets highlighted this week: **Christopher Marlowe** and **Sir Walter Raleigh**.
- Read the Assignment Background below. For each poem, follow these instructions:
 - First, read the poem silently. Be sure to identify unfamiliar words and learn their meanings.
 - Read the poem aloud.
 - Next, think about the poem as a story where the speaker is addressing an audience or another character. (Do not assume that the poet is the speaker.) Write in your notebook a description of the speaker’s voice, the noted conflict or ideas of the poem, and the language the poet uses to express these conflicts or ideas.
 - Write the details about the poem:
 - Rhyme Scheme:** note the rhyme scheme of the poem by assigning letters to rhyming words.
 - Form:** In what form is the poem written (sonnet, ballad, free verse)? Does it vary from the traditional form? What does it add to the poem? (What tone does it create?)
 - Rhetoric:** How does the speaker reveal his ideas?

Visit this site for more information on rhyme scheme, form, and rhetoric:

<https://msu.edu/course/eng/310a/snapshot.afs/tavrmina/SS97/310h6.htm>

Composition

- Write an explication for one of the poems studied. Use the information found at this website: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/poetry-explications/>
Be sure to include:
 - the overall idea presented by the poem
 - the characteristics of the type the poem illustrates

Unit 22 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama

by Walter Wilson Greg

Pastoral Lyrics

The great charm of pastoral poetry arises from the view which it exhibits of the tranquility and happiness of a rural life. This pleasing allusion,

therefore, the poet must carefully maintain. Let him paint its simplicity and innocence to the full; but cover its rudeness and misery. But let him take care

that in embellishing nature, he does not altogether disguise her; or pretend to join with rural simplicity and happiness such improvements as are unnatural and foreign to it. If it not be real life which he presents to us, it must, however, somewhat resemble it. In order to examine it more particularly, let us consider, first, the scenery; next, the characters; and lastly, the subjects and actions, which this sort of composition should exhibit.

As to the scene, it is clear, that it must always to be laid in the country, and much of the poet's merit depends on describing it beautifully. Every pastoral—a scene or rural prospect—should be distinctly drawn and set before us. It is not enough that we have those unmeaning groups of violets and roses, of birds, and brooks, and breezes, which our common pastoral-mongers throw together. A good poet ought to give us such a landscape, as a painter could copy after. A single object, happily introduced, will sometimes distinguish and characterize a whole scene. He must diversify his face of nature by presenting to us new images. It is also incumbent on him to suit the scenery to the subject of the pastoral; and, according as it is a pleasant or melancholy kind, to exhibit nature under such forms as may correspond with the emotions or sentiments which he describes.

With regard to the characters or persons which are proper to be introduced into pastorals, it is not enough that they be persons residing in the country. The adventures or discourses of courtiers, or citizens, in the country, are not what we look for in such writings; we expect to be entertained by shepherds, or persons wholly engaged in rural occupations; whose innocence and freedom from the cares of the world may, in our imagination, form an agreeable contrast with the manners and characters of those who are engaged in the bustle of life.

One of the principal difficulties which here occurs has been already hinted; that of keeping the exact medium between too much rusticity on the one hand, and too much refinement on the other. The shepherd, assuredly, must be plain and unaffected in his manner of thinking, on all subjects. An amiable simplicity must be the groundwork of his character.

At the same time, there is no necessity for his being dull and insipid. Rural personages are supposed to speak the language of plain sense, and natural feelings.

Supposing the poet to have formed correct ideas concerning his pastoral characters and personages, the next inquiry is about how he is to employ them. For it is not enough that he gives us shepherds discoursing together. Every good poem, of every kind, ought to have a subject which should, in some way, interest us. The active scenes of country life either are, or to most describers appear to be, too barren of incidents. From the first lines, we can generally guess at all that is to follow. It is either a shepherd who sits down solitary by a brook to lament the absence or cruelty of his mistress, and to tell us how the trees wither and the flowers droop now that she is gone; or we have two shepherds who challenge one another to sing, rehearsing alternate verses, which have little meaning or subject, till the judge rewards one with a studded crook, and another with a beechen bowl.

The modern writers of pastoral have, generally, contented themselves with copying or imitating the descriptions and sentiments of the ancient poets. The ancient poets were the writers of the Greek idylls, from which the Renaissance pastorals were fashioned.

The Poems

In 1599, Christophe Marlowe wrote his pastoral, titled “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.” His poem contains the conventions of pastoral poetry: the scene descriptions of nature showing the pleasures and joys of nature, hiding the difficulties found in life; the character—a shepherd, carefree, describing an easy life if his love would join him; etc.

In response to this poem and idyllic setting, Sir Walter Raleigh wrote an almost line-by-line response from the mistress' point of view in “the Nymph's Reply.” In this poem, Raleigh refutes the claims of the shepherd. Using those same conventions of pastoral poetry, Raleigh exposes the failure of pastorals to describe the hardships and the realities of life.

**The Passionate Shepherd
to His Love**

by Christopher Marlowe

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields
Woods or steepy mountain yields

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flower, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs;
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my love.

The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning;
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

**The Nymph's Reply
to the Shepherd**

by Sir Walter Raleigh

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Time drives the flocks from field to fold,
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold;
And Philomel becometh dumb;
The rest complain of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward winter reckoning yields;
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy bed of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten,
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,
All these in me no means can move
To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last and love still breed,
Had joys no date nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Unit 23 – Authors & Their Poems

*So let us melt, and make no move,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move*

– John Donne

John Donne: <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/>

“A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” John Donne

Andrew Marvell: <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/marvell/>

“To His Coy Mistress” Andrew Marvell

Unit 23 – Assignments

Literature

- Using the links above or other sources, find information on the poets and write a three-paragraph author profile on each of the two poets highlighted this week: **John Donne** and **Andrew Marvell**.
 - Read the poems by Donne and Marvell in the Assignment Background below. For each poem, follow these instructions:
 - First, read the poem silently. Be sure to identify unfamiliar words and learn their meanings.
 - Read the poem aloud.
 - Next, think about the poem as a story where the speaker is addressing an audience or another character. (Do not assume that the poet is the speaker.) Write in your notebook a description of the speaker's voice, the noted conflict or ideas of the poem, and the language the poet uses to express these conflicts or ideas.
 - Write the details about the poem:
 - Rhyme Scheme:** note the rhyme scheme of the poem by assigning letters to rhyming words.
 - Form:** In what form is the poem written (sonnet, ballad, free verse)? Does it vary from the traditional form? What does it add to the poem? (What tone does it create?)
 - Rhetoric:** How does the speaker reveal his ideas?
- Visit this site for more information on rhyme scheme, form, and rhetoric:
<https://msu.edu/course/eng/310a/snapshot.afs/tavrmina/SS97/310h6.htm>
- Using your knowledge of poems from the lesson, give the overall idea presented by the poem.
 - Use the information found at this website to write an explication on one of the sonnets studied this week:
<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/poetry-explications/>

Composition

- For this unit, you will end with writing an explication for one of the poems studied. For information about writing an explication, see the **Resources** section of **the website** and visit this site (you will notice similar information): <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/poetry-explications/>.
Be sure to include:
 - the concrete (tangible) images that make the poem “metaphysical”
 - the speaker's view of love (For example: Is it true and giving? Or is it lustful and selfish?)

Unit 23 – Assignment Background

Excerpt Adapted for High School from:

“The Metaphysical Poets”

by T.S. Elliot, published in *Times Literary Supplement*.

Metaphysical Poetry

In the case of ‘metaphysical poetry,’ the phrase has long done duty as a term of abuse, or as the label of a quaint and pleasant taste. The question is to what extent the so-called metaphysicals formed a school (in our own time we should say a ‘movement’), and how far this so-called school or movement is a digression from the main current. Not only is it extremely difficult to define metaphysical poetry, but difficult to decide which poets practice it

and in which of their verses. The poetry of Donne (to whom Marvell and Bishop King are sometimes nearer than any of the other authors) is late Elizabethan, its feeling often very close to that of Chapman.

It is difficult to find any precise use of metaphor, simile, or other conceit which is common to all the poets and at the same time important enough as an element of style to isolate these poets as a group.

Donne, and often Cowley, employ a device which is sometimes considered characteristically ‘metaphysical’; the elaboration (contrasted with the condensation) of a figure of speech to the furthest stage to which ingenuity can carry it. Thus Cowley develops the commonplace comparison of the world to a chess-board through long stanzas in “To Destiny,” and Donne, with more grace, in “A Valediction,” the comparison of two lovers to a pair of compasses. But elsewhere we find, instead of the mere explication of the content of a comparison, a development by rapid association of thought which requires considerable agility on the part of the reader.

On a round ball
A workeman that hath Copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afrique, and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing,
All,
So cloth each teare,
Which thee cloth weare,
A globe, yea world by that Impression grow,
Till thy tears mixt with mine Doe overflow
This world, by waters sent From thee, my
heaven Dissolved so.
 (“A Valediction of Weeping,” Donne)

Here we find at least two connections which are not implicit in the first figure, but are forced upon it by the poet: from the geographer’s globe to the tear, and the tear to the deluge. On the other hand, some of Donne’s most successful and characteristic effects are secured by brief words and sudden contrasts:

A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,
 (“The Relic,” Donne)

In this case the most powerful effect is produced by the sudden contrast of associations of ‘bright hair’ and of ‘bone’. This telescoping of images and multiplied associations is characteristic of the phrasing of some of the dramatists of the period which Donne knew: not to mention Shakespeare, it is frequent in Middleton, Webster, and Tourneur, and is one of the sources of the vitality of their language.

We doubt whether, in the eighteenth century, could be found two poems in nominally the same meter, so dissimilar as Marvell’s “Coy Mistress” and Crashaw’s “Saint Teresa”; the one producing an effect of great speed by the use of short syllables, and

the other an ecclesiastical solemnity by the use of long ones:

Love thou art
Absolute sole lord
Of life and death.

It is worthwhile to inquire whether we may not have more success by assuming that the poets of the seventeenth century (up to the Revolution) were the direct and normal development of the precedent age; and, without prejudicing their case by the adjective ‘metaphysical’, consider whether their virtue was not something permanently valuable, which subsequently disappeared, but ought not to have disappeared.

The difference is not a simple difference of degree between poets. It is something which had happened to the mind of England between the time of Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning; it is the difference between the intellectual poet and the reflective poet. Tennyson and Browning are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odor of a rose. A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet’s mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man’s experience is chaotic, irregular, and fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.

We may express the difference by the following theory: The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience. They are simple, artificial, difficult, or fantastic, as their predecessors were; no less nor more than Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, Guinicelli, or Cino. In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated by the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden.

Each of these men performed certain poetic functions so magnificently well that the magnitude of the effect concealed the absence of others. The language went on and in some respects improved; the best verse of Collins, Gray, Johnson, and even Goldsmith satisfies some of our fastidious demands

better than that of Donne or Marvell or King. But while the language became more refined, the feeling became more crude. The feeling, the sensibility, expressed in the “Country Churchyard” (to say nothing of Tennyson and Browning) is cruder than that in the “Coy Mistress.” The second effect of the influence of Milton and Dryden followed from the first, and was therefore slow in manifestation. The sentimental age began early in the eighteenth century, and continued. The poets revolted against the process of logical reasoning, the descriptive; they thought and felt by fits, unbalanced; they reflected.

Those who object to the ‘artificiality’ of Milton or Dryden sometimes tell us to ‘look into our hearts and

write’. But that is not looking deep enough; Racine or Donne looked into a good deal more than the heart. One must look into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts. May we not conclude, then, that Donne, Crashaw, Vaughan, Herbert and Lord Herbert, Marvell, King, and Cowley at his best, are in the direct current of English poetry, and that their faults should be reprimanded by this standard rather than coddled by antiquarian affection? They have been enough praised in terms which are implicit limitations because they are ‘metaphysical’ or ‘witty’, ‘quaint’ or ‘obscure’, though at their best they have not these attributes more than other serious poets.

A Valediction Forbidding Mourning,

by John Donne

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
“The breath goes now,” and some say, “No,”

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
’Twere profanation of our joys
O tell the laity our love.

Moving of the earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers’ love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we, by a love so much refined
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two:
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do;

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like the other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.

To His Coy Mistress,
by Andrew Marvell

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime.
We would sit down and think which way
To walk and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast;
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart;
For, Lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie

Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song: then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapt power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life;
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

Unit 24 – Authors & Their Poems

*Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Horeb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of Chaos: or if Sion Hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd
Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.*

– John Milton

John Milton: <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/milton/>

Introduction to *Paradise Lost* John Milton

Unit 24 – Assignments

Literature

- Using the link above or other sources, find information on the poet and write a three-paragraph author profile on the poet highlighted this week: **John Milton**.
- Read Book I of *Paradise Lost*. First, read silently, then read it aloud.

Composition

The Assignment Background essay below emphasizes Milton’s in-depth knowledge of classic literature and Scripture. Using examples from Book I of *Paradise Lost*, respond to the following statement from the essay:

We must indeed recognize in Milton’s style the impress of four great influences—these being the Bible, the classics, the Italian poets, and English literature. Of the Bible he possessed a knowledge such as few have had. There are hundreds of allusions to it: the words of Scripture underlie some part of the text of every page of Paradise Lost; and apart from verbal reminiscences there is much of the spirit that pervades that noblest achievement of the English tongue. Scarcely less powerful was the influence of the classics. Milton’s allusiveness extends over the whole empire of classical humanity and letters, and to the scholar his work is full of the exquisite charm of endless reference to the noblest things that the ancients have thought and said. That he was deeply versed in Italian poetry the labors of his early editors have abundantly proved; and their comparative studies are confirmed by the frequent mention of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto, and others in his prose works and correspondence. In English literature I imagine that he had read everything worth reading.

- Based on the information gathered while working through our Essay units, write a short essay (500 words) defending or arguing against the statement above. Use quotes from the poem and additional research to defend your position.

Unit 24 – Assignment Background

Excerpt Adapted for High School from:

Paradise Lost

by John Milton, Wilson Verity

Information on *Paradise Lost*

<https://www.paradiselost.org/8-Search-All.html>

There has been much discussion about the “sources” of *Paradise Lost*, and writers well-nigh as countless as Vallombrosa’s autumn leaves have been thrust forth from their obscurity to claim the honor of having “inspired” the great epic. Most of these unconscious claimants were, like enough, unknown to Milton; and out of the motley, many-tongued throng, Mr. Mark Pattison thinks it worthwhile—perhaps as a concession to tradition—to mention but three.

First comes the Italian poet Giovanni-Battista Andreini Voltaire, in his *Essai sur la Poesi Epique* written in 1727, related that Milton, during his residence at Florence in 1628-9, saw “a comedy called ‘Adamo’”. The subject of the play was the Fall of Man: the actors, the Devils, the Angels, Adam,

Eve, the Serpent, Death and the Seven Mortal Sins . . . Milton pierced through the absurdity of that performance to the hidden majesty of the subject; which, being altogether unfit for stage, yet might be, for the genius of Milton, and his only, the foundation of an epic poem.” What authority he had for this legend Voltaire did not say. It is not alluded to by any of Milton’s contemporary biographers. We have only this random remark by Voltaire, unsupported by a scrap of satisfactory external evidence, and not substantiated by any striking internal resemblance between the “Adamo” and *Paradise Lost*.

The second claimant is the Dutch poet, Joost van den Vondel. He was a contemporary with Milton, and the author of a great number of works. Among them were several dramas on Scriptural subjects.

With three of them Milton is supposed by some writers to have been acquainted. These are *Lucifer* (1654), a drama on the revolt of the angels and their fall from heaven; *John the Messenger* (1662), and *Adam in Banishment* (1664). In a work published a few years since it was contended that Milton borrowed a good deal from these three poems—a view from which I beg leave to dissent. It is unsupported by a shred of external testimony, and is intrinsically unlikely. Milton had some knowledge of the Dutch language, but it will be observed that the earliest of the poems with which he is thought to have been too conversant, namely *Lucifer*, was not published till after his blindness, while by the time that the last of them, *Adam in Banishment*, appeared, *Paradise Lost* was almost completed.

There remains the so-called “Caedmon Paraphrase.” In the Bodleian is the manuscript of an Old English metrical Paraphrase of parts of the Old Testament. This work was long attributed to the Northumbrian religious writer Caedmon, of whom Bede speaks. Milton never saw the Paraphrase in print, for the same reason that he never saw Vondel’s *Lucifer*.

We must indeed recognize in Milton’s style the impress of four great influences—these being the Bible, the classics, the Italian poets, and English

literature. Of the Bible he possessed a knowledge such as few have had. There are hundreds of allusions to it: the words of Scripture underlie some part of the text of every page of *Paradise Lost*; and apart from verbal reminiscences there is much of the spirit that pervades that noblest achievement of the English tongue.

Scarcely less powerful was the influence of the classics. Milton’s allusiveness extends over the whole empire of classical humanity and letters, and to the scholar his work is full of the exquisite charm of endless reference to the noblest things that the ancients have thought and said. That he was deeply versed in Italian poetry the labors of his early editors have abundantly proved; and their comparative studies are confirmed by the frequent mention of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto, and others in his prose works and correspondence. In English literature I imagine that he had read everything worth reading. Without a doubt, he was most affected by “our admired Spenser.” He was, says Dryden, “the poetical son of Spenser. Milton has acknowledged to me that Spenser was his original.” And there was a Spenserian school of poets, mostly Cambridge men, and some of them contemporary with Milton at the University, with whose work he evidently had considerable acquaintance.



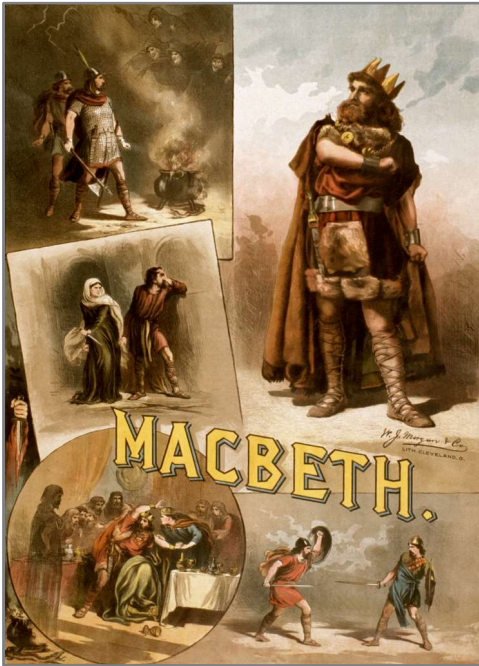
Gustave Doré, *The Heavenly Hosts*, c.1866, illustration to *Paradise Lost*.

Macbeth

by William Shakespeare

Literature for Units 25 – 28

<https://blindhypnosis.com/macbeth-pdf-william-shakespeare.html>



Introduction

Adapted for High School from:

The Tragedy of Macbeth

edited by E.K. Chambers

Source of the Plot

For the outlines of the story of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare had recourse to a book from which he had already drawn the materials for his plays on English history. This was the great folio *Chronicle of England and Scotland*, by Raphael Holinshed and others, first printed in 1577, and afterward, in the revised form which the poet used, in 1587. Shakespeare follows with some closeness the details of the reigns of Duncan and Macbeth as given in Holinshed's picturesque prose. But he has

interwoven with the continuous narrative incidents taken from other parts of the same chronicle.

The chief of these is the account of the midnight murder of Duncan. This is evidently based on that given by Holinshed of the murder of Duncan's great-grandfather, King Duffe, by Donwald, the governor of his castle, and his wife. Shakespeare has also worked in some of the striking features of the traditional witch lore. Much of this, in a time of plentiful witch trials, was no doubt a matter of common knowledge; but the poet may possibly have consulted Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), or King James the First's curious little tract of *Daemonologie* (1597).

To come back to Holinshed—the chronicle of *Macbeth* there given is derived from the Latin *Scotorum Historiae* of Hector Boyis, Boethius, or Boece (1527). This was translated into Scottish by John Bellenden, archdeacon of Moray (1536), and Holinshed may have used the translation as well as the original. Boethius in his turn had borrowed from Fordum, a chantry priest of Aberdeen, who wrote *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* in the 14th century. It need hardly be said that the narrative common to all these chroniclers is legend rather than history. The labors of recent scholars have enabled us to reconstruct, shadowily enough, the historical Macbeth.

In 1031 Malcolm II of Scotland paid homage to Canut the Great, King of England. He was accompanied on that occasion by two chieftains, under-kings, or *maormors* (the highest title of honor among the Highlanders of Scotland). One of these was Maelbaeba, the maormor of Moray. It is thus that Macbeth first comes before us. He was the grandson of King Malcolm by his daughter Doda, who married Finlaech. His own wife was Gruoch, daughter of Boete.

In 1032 Malcolm murdered the head of the

Gruoch's house, probably Boete himself, the motive being that Malcolm had only daughters and Boete had a distant claim to the throne. In 1304, Malcolm died and was succeeded by his grandson Duncan, cousin of Macbeth. Duncan at once named his son Malcolm Canmore to be his heir and Prince of Cumberland. Macbeth and Gruoch had therefore no good will toward the reigning branch of the family.

Duncan was an ineffective king; he invaded England unsuccessfully, and then entered upon a war with Thorfinn, the Norwegian Jarl of Orkney. Macbeth, who was commander of the army, took the opportunity to make common cause with Thorfinn, had Duncan murdered at Bothgouanan, "the Smith's bothy (a hut or small cottage)," and in his own right (or his wife's) assumed the crown. His reign was one of order and prosperity; his bounty to the Church became famous in Scotland, and even at Rome; the homage paid by Malcolm to England does not seem to have been renewed in his lifetime. But he had a formidable enemy and neighbor in Siward, Earl of Northumbria.

In 1054, Siward, with the consent of Edward the Confessor and the Witenagemot, invaded Scotland by land and sea. A great battle took place on July 27, in which Macbeth was defeated and Siward's son Osborn and his nephew Siward were slain. Malcolm Canmore was proclaimed king, but Macbeth kept up the war in the north for four years, until he fell at Lumfanan in Aberdeenshire, in 1058. The resistance of his son or stepson, Lulach, was soon crushed. A slightly different version of some of the facts is given in Wyntown's *Cronykill* (book vi, ch. 18). Here it is stated that Gruoch was the wife of the murdered Duncan, that Macbeth was his nephew, and that

Malcolm Canmore was illegitimate. Some scholars have thought that Shakespeare had Wyntown before him, as well as Holinshed.

In several important respects—Macbeth's relations to the Norwegians, the character of his reign, the rapidity of his downfall—the story diverges widely from the reality. The supernatural element is a characteristically Medieval addition, and it contains two bits of widespread folklore in the incidents of the birth of Macduff and the moving forest. Macduff himself, Banquo, Fleance, and their legendary connection with the Stuarts, have no sure place in history.

It is possible that Shakespeare was not the first to make a literary use of the story of Macbeth. Allusion has already been made to the interlude on the subject, played before King James in 1605. Collier quotes two references which seem to point to a still earlier version. One is from Kempe's *Nine Daies Wonder* (1600). It runs as follows: "I met a proper upright youth, only for a little stooping in the shoulders, all heart to the heel, a penny poet, whose first making was the miserable stolen story of Macdoel, or Macdabeth, or Macsometwhat, for I am sure a Mac it was, though I never had the maw to see it." The other is an entry to the Register of the Stationers' Company: "27 die Augusti 1596. Tho. Millington—Thomas Millington is likewise fined for printing of a ballad contrary to order, which he also presently paid, the ballad entitled 'The Taming of a Shrew.' Also one other ballad of Macdabeth."

I do not think we have the materials to say whether the "ballad" here mentioned was really a stage play or a ballad in the strict sense.

Unit 25 – Assignments

Stars, hide your fires!
Let not light see my black and deep desires.
– Macbeth, *Macbeth*, Act I, Scene iv

Literature

- Read the introduction above, and the Assignment Background below.
- Read Act I of *Macbeth*.
- Write an author profile on Shakespeare using the links below or other resources:
absoluteshakespeare.com/
www.bardweb.net/
- On 5 x 8 index cards, create character cards for each main character in the play. Make one card for each character by writing his or her name on the front and answering the following about each character on the back of the card. Continue to add new information to your cards as you read the play.
 - Who is the character?

- How does Shakespeare describe the character?
- What type of character is it (protagonist, antagonist, foil, etc.)?
- How does this character relate to the other characters?

Composition

Over the next four units you will create a 750-word Character Analysis on one of the characters you study in detail. Use the following link for information on how to create an outline for your essay:

<https://nerdymates.com/blog/character-analysis-essay>

Choose two or three characters of interest and begin answering more detailed questions about them in your reading journal. (This website has more information on writing a character analysis:

www.enotes.com/topics/how-write-character-analysis.)

- Pay attention to the character’s ethics. Does the character make just or unjust choices?
- Are the character’s actions wise or unwise?
- What is the character’s motivation? As you mull over the pros and cons of each character’s internal thoughts and external actions, you will want to also consider why the character is acting or thinking in a particular way. Has the author given you any clues about the character’s past?
- How does the character’s behavior affect other characters?
- Look for repeatedly used words that describe the character. Do these words give insight into a character’s psychology and motivations?
- Be aware of items associated with the character. Do they say something about their state of mind?
- Read between the lines. Often what characters do not say is as important as what they do say.
- Is the character “flat” or “round”? A character is considered flat (or static) when he does not experience change of any kind, does not grow from beginning to end. Round characters are those who do experience some sort of growth.
- Consider the historical time period of the character. Refrain from making modern judgments about the past; put the character’s actions and thoughts in context.
- Finally, what does the author think? Look for any of the author’s own judgments about the characters he or she has created. The author may be directing you toward an intended interpretation.

Unit 25 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

The Tragedy of Macbeth

edited by E.K. Chambers

Notes on Act I

Scene 1

The play opens fittingly in an atmosphere of moral and physical gloom. The first scene, as Coleridge pointed out, strikes a spiritual keynote. This is a tragedy of the triumph of evil: we are in a world of moral anarchy, symbolized by the withered beings, to whom “foul is fair.” In a drama, first impressions are lasting and Shakespeare contrives to put the spectator in the right mood at once.

Scene 2

In this scene, Shakespeare, after his manner, puts us briefly in possession of the situation between Macbeth and Duncan. Macbeth is high in favor with

the King, and, with the aid of Banquo, has repelled in one day rebels at home and foes from abroad. The best side of his character, his personal courage and resource in war, is brought out. He is “valour’s minion” and “Bellona’s bridegroom.”

The irregular meter of this scene, and the discrepancies concerning the thane of Cawdor and the mission of Ross, have led editors to believe that we possess the play only in mutilated form.

Scene 3

This is the critical scene of the First Act, the Temptation Scene. The doubtful suggestions of the witches outwardly symbolize the secret workings of

Macbeth's own heart. He is not now for the first time tempted; the "supernatural soliciting" echoes dark hopes already formed; murder has been for some time fantastical in his thoughts. He has even, at a period before the play opens, broken his enterprise to his wife.

There is a remarkable contrast between the effect which the meeting with the weird sisters has upon Macbeth and Banquo respectively. Banquo sees nothing ominous in the prophecy; after all, Macbeth is Duncan's cousin and a great warrior; he might well, by the customs of a military nation, be chosen for the throne before the boy Malcolm. But for Macbeth, it points at once to his own half-formed designs; and the partial fulfillment, which the message of Ross announces, perturbs him still more. For the present, however, he is content to wait, in hopes that chance will bring him the coveted dignity without his stir. It should be noticed that Banquo is curious as to the nature of the weird sisters; he inclines to think them bubbles of the earth, or creatures merely imaginary. Macbeth has no such doubts; the witches are in keeping with his mood; his only anxiety is to learn more from their supernatural knowledge.

Scene 4

The important point in this scene is the nomination of Malcolm as Duncan's successor. This takes away the hope that chance will crown Macbeth. He is at last brought face to face with the fact that if his ambition is to be satisfied, it must be by foul means.

The sudden resolution of the King to claim the hospitality of Inverness is the first of a series of lucky accidents. The kingly character of Duncan, his simple attitude and absolute trust, are a foil to the black treachery of his subject.

Scene 5

This scene shows us for the first time that Macbeth's destiny is complicated by his relations to another character. By himself he might not have had

the courage to yield to temptation; but Lady Macbeth's influence comes in to confirm him to the path of sin. She is strong where he is weak—in self-conquest, in singleness of will and tenacity of purpose. Superstition and the strain of expectations will make him swerve from his course, but they have no power over her. She is the nobler character of the two; her ambition is for him, not for herself; it is for him that she divests herself of conscience and, so far as may be, even of womanhood.

The profound impression made upon Macbeth's superstitious and guilty mind by the witches is shown by the immediate inquiry which he made as to their supernatural powers of knowledge. This can only have taken place during the brief interval between scenes 3 and 4; and it must have been at the same period that he sent the letter to his wife.

Scene 6

The visit of Duncan to Macbeth's castle is one of the three accidents or opportunities which help Macbeth to attain the object of his ambition. In this scene the trustful, gentle nature of Duncan is used to emphasize by contrast the horror of the upcoming murder. The touches of natural description give a similar purpose.

Scene 7

Macbeth is not yet resolved. His vivid imagination paints terribly the dangers in his path. Thus oppressed, he leaves the banquet to be alone. It is not moral scruples that torment him, nor even a dread of what lies beyond the grave. It is the thought of the earthly hereafter, the consciousness that evil deeds recoil upon the doer. To him comes Lady Macbeth; in the inevitable clash of the two nature hers proves the stronger; her dauntless will confirms his; her insight into his character enables her to meet him with the most effective arguments. He no longer hesitates, and reechoes for himself her previous counsel of dissimulation. Here the act naturally closes; the Temptation is complete.

Unit 26 – Assignments

There's daggers in men's smiles.
– Donalbain, *Macbeth* Act II, Scene iii

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Read Act II of *Macbeth*. Update your character cards with new information as you read.

Composition

- In your reading journal, continue your close study of two or three characters of interest. and begin answering more detailed questions about them in your reading journal.
- Using information found on the websites given in Unit 25, complete the outline for your 750-word essay on one of the characters.

Unit 26 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

The Tragedy of Macbeth

edited by E.K. Chambers

Aristotle's Unity of Plot in Macbeth,

Part 1

A drama, like every other work of art, if it is to affect the spectator at all, must do so by means of some unity, some singleness of impression left upon him. It must be a whole, and be felt as such—not a mere bundle of disconnected parts, however beautiful in themselves. Aristotle, analyzing the masterpieces of Sophocles, laid down that a drama should concern itself with the development of a single action, in its beginning, middle, and end. The Unity of Action, so formulated, has been held at various times as a canon of literary orthodoxy, sharply dividing classicist from romantic schools of dramatic writing. With it have universally gone two other canons—the so-called Unities of Place and Time; the one demanding an unchanged scene, the other an action continuous and complete in a period roughly equivalent to that of representation; at most, in a single day.

The Unity of Action goes, no doubt, nearly to the root of the dramatic problem; the Unities of Place and Time are less vital. They have their origin in the special limitation of the Greek stage, made rigid by the conservative element in the Greek drama, which never forgot to be a worship of Dionysus. The practice of Seneca, so influential among the scholar-poets of the Renaissance, introduced the Unities to the modern world, and it was not until after a severe struggle that they failed to impose their bonds upon the Elizabethan theater.

The best landmark of this struggle is Sidney's *Apologie For Poetrie*, written about 1583, in which

he supports the claims of the drama based on classical models against the looser romantic type, which popular poets and actor-playwrights were rapidly introducing. But Marlowe and Shakespeare were on the side of romanticism, and the three Unities vanished with the Chorus and the Messenger and the other paraphernalia of strict Senecan doctrine. With the discarding of formalism arose the danger that the true limits of stage effectiveness might be forgotten. The Unities of Time and Place were little loss, but unless Unity of Action or something equivalent was retained the result would be chaos rather than drama. A story permits of pauses, of turnings back, of the application of thought to win its secret. But in a play you are hurried on, the imagination moves rapidly from event to event, the links of unity must be transparent and obvious.

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare escaped the pitfalls of romanticism; here, not by direct imitation, but by the sympathy of genius, he approached nearly to the simplicity, the large sweep, of Aeschylus. Analysis of the play will show that a unity of impression is produced in it in no less than four ways:

In the first place, there is unity of action in the strictest sense. The whole interest is concentrated in the rise and fall of Macbeth and his wife. The episodes are few and slight, and can everywhere be shown to be necessary, by way of relief or contrast, to the emotions appealed to by the central story.

Adapted for High School from:

The Tragedy of Macbeth

edited by E.K. Chambers

Notes on Act II

Scene 1

This introductory scene falls into three divisions. In Lines 1-10, the mood of the spectator is prepared for the crime to be done. It is past midnight, black as Macbeth's heart; evil influences are abroad, disquieting even the innocent Banquo.

Scene 2

There is no real need for a change of scene. The action is continuous to the end of Scene 3.

The spiritual weakness of Macbeth, the complete unstringing of every fiber, once the deed is done; and, on the other hand, the triumphant self-control of Lady Macbeth, are both at their height in this scene. The murder is not presented, only felt, on the stage. Here again Shakespeare approaches the classical spirit.

Scene 3

The episode of the Porter is necessary for two reasons: mechanically, to give Macbeth and Lady Macbeth time to prepare for the approaching discovery; dramatically, to afford an interval of relief between two scenes of intensely strained emotion.

The change of emotional level is marked by the use of prose. But it is grim fooling, in the shadow of murder.

The entry of the lords makes Macbeth himself again, for there is something to be done. He acts consummately, touching just the right notes: the grief of the loving subject, the anger of the generous host. His happy impulse to kill the grooms, and the ill-considered flight of Malcolm and Donalbain, both help to save him from suspicion. Banquo and Duncan's two sons alone see through the deception. On the other hand, Lady Macbeth's turn to give way comes in the very crisis of action. Her fainting is not dissimulation; her nerves will bear no more.

Scene 4

Macbeth's first crime has been successful; his acting and the flight of the princes have saved him from detection. As Duncan's cousin and a great captain he succeeds naturally to the vacant throne. If Macduff or Banquo have their suspicions, the time to publish them is not yet. This scene gives relief and perspective to the action, by presenting it from an outside point of view, that of the Scottish subject.

Unit 27 – Assignments

*I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade nor more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.*

– Macbeth, *Macbeth*, Act III, Scene iv

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Read Act III of *Macbeth*. Continue to update your detailed character cards.

Composition

- Write a rough draft of your 750-word Character Analysis on one of the characters you are studying in detail.
- Using your knowledge of the characters, write an important scene in the play from that character's point of view. You may write this in dramatic or prose form. Your finished work should be cohesive, express the main events of the scene, and include other major characters. You should present the scene in a way that allows the reader to experience the actions through the eyes and emotions of your character.

Unit 27 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

The Tragedy of Macbeth

edited by E.K. Chambers

Aristotle's Unity of Plot in Macbeth, Part 2

Unity of philosophic idea is to be found in nearly every play; each is the medium of some great thought, some utterance of the poet's mind on deep questions, on love or kingship or character, or on the ultimate nature of the government of the world. In *Macbeth* the central idea or theme appears to me to be this: A noble character, noble alike in potentiality and fruition, may yet be completely overmastered by mysterious, inexplicable temptation; and if he be once subdued, a curse is forever upon him.

Temptation begets sin, and sin yet further sin, and this again punishment sure and inexorable. The illustration of this central idea is to be found in the rise and fall of Lord and Lady Macbeth. To them temptation comes in the guise of ambition, the subtlest form in which it can approach high souls. Of the supernatural setting in which it is exhibited there will be more to say hereafter; for the present, note that as soon as the murder of Duncan is committed there is never any hope of regress—sin leads to sin with remorseless fatality, until the end is utter ruin of the moral sense or even of reason itself; so that death comes almost as a relief, though it be a miserable death without hope of repentance. Such a story is a proper theme for tragedy, because it depicts strong human natures battling with destiny and being overcome; had they been weak natures, the disproportion between the forces would have been too great, and we should have pathos and not tragedy.

Starting from this central idea, the power of Shakespeare's treatment of it is most clearly manifest in the contrasted results of similar circumstances on two characters of different mold and fiber—one that of a man, the other of a woman; one realizing itself in action, the other in thought. When first Macbeth comes before us, it is as a mighty warrior—he is spoken of as “valour's minion,” “Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof”; by performing prodigies of personal valor he has saved the county in one day from a civil and an alien foe. This is the noble side of him; away from the

battlefield his greatness is gone, he sinks to the level of quite common men. Lady Macbeth herself expresses this in a passage which has been misunderstood:

*Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way.*

“The milk of human kindness”—that is clearly not “a tender nature,” of which Macbeth never shows a trace, but rather “the commonplace ordinary qualities and tendencies of humankind.” As for Lady Macbeth, it is not easy to accept the traditional stage view of her as a sheer human monster and the evil genius of her husband's soul. Hers is both a subtler and a nobler nature than his. Living a woman's solitary life, she has turned her thoughts inward; she, too, is a conqueror and has won her triumphs, not in war, but in the training of her intellect and the subjugation of her will. And withal, she is a very woman still:

*I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
and
Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done 't.*

and that despairing cry of horror, “Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him.” Macbeth addresses her in the language of love, and she too is wrapped up in him. Her immediate impulse to crime is ambition for her husband rather than for herself, and in the banquet scene she stifles agonies of remorse to save him from blunders.

Thus the antithesis between the two is that between the practical life and the intellectual, and the effects of this difference are everywhere apparent. Macbeth is bold and resolute in the moment of action; he can kill a king, and he has a curious gift of ready speech throughout, which avails

him to answer unwelcome questions. But when there is nothing actually to be done he is devoid of self-control; he cannot wait or stand still; he becomes a prey to countless terrible imaginings; he is wildly superstitious. In all this Lady Macbeth is the exact converse; she has banished all superstition from her soul; she is strong enough of will to quell her husband's cowardly fears; she can scheme and plot, but she cannot act; she must leave the actual doing of the deed to Macbeth; at the moment of discovery she faints.

The emotional effects of their crime are totally different on the pair. In Macbeth the effect is purely fear; there is no word of sorrow or sense of sin, only a base dread lest he should be found out and lose what he played for, if the fatal blow

*Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here upon this bank and shoal of time,*

he is willing to “jump the life to come.” In time this fear assumes terrible proportions; it drives him to new murders; he slaughters Banquo, he slaughters the family of McDuff; finally he becomes a craven and bloody tyrant; even his old love for his wife is swallowed up in selfishness; when her death is told him he cannot stay to mourn: “She should have died hereafter.” Only in the last hour of battle does he for one moment recover something of his old brave spirit. With Lady Macbeth the curse works itself out, not in fear but in remorse; it impels her husband to fresh deeds of blood; she has no hand in any murder but the first. But her sin is ever present to her: awake or dreaming she can think of nothing but that awful night, and the stain upon her hand and soul. At last her overtaken brain breaks down; we witness her mental agony in the sleep-walking scene:

*Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes
of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh! oh!
oh!*

And then she dies, a voluntary and most wretched death.

The other personages of the play are completely subordinate to the two central figures. Either they are mechanical, necessary to the incidents and episodes by which the plot moves on, as Ross and Siward; or else they serve to intensify by character-contrast our conception of Macbeth's nature. It is noticeable that Lady Macbeth in this respect, as in others, is entirely isolated. But Macbeth sins both as subject and as lord; in the one relation Banquo and Macduff, in the other Duncan and Malcolm are set over against him. These are loyal, he is treacherous; these are king-like, he is a tyrant.

The witches, of course, come under another category. I take it that, wherever Shakespeare introduces the supernatural, he does so with a definite purpose; it is symbolical, pointing the fact that here, just here, we come upon one of these ultimate mysteries which meet us everywhere when we scratch the surface of things. In *Macbeth*, the supernatural character of the weird sisters denotes the mystery involved in temptation; the mystery, that is, of the existence of evil. They do not tempt Macbeth; he was fallen before he met them; that is brought out clearly enough; they are only personifications of the real internal tempting motives. And, since in the mystery of evil is included the punishment of sin, as well as its origin, so the sisters appear to Macbeth a second time, to ensure his destruction by their deceitful promises.

Adapted for High School from:

The Tragedy of Macbeth

edited by E.K. Chambers

Notes on Act III

Scene 1

The First Crime is hardly over before it leads to the Second. Macbeth cannot feel secure while Banquo lives; his Genius is rebuked under him; no show of honors can win his affection; he remains courteous, cold, and silent. Nor can Macbeth forget that word in the prophecy of the weird sisters about the succession of Banquo's house to the throne.

Banquo's speech leaves no doubt about his view of Macbeth; it shows, too, that in his mind, as in the King's, the promise of the witches is forgotten.

Scene 2

From the moment of her sin, remorse begins to lay hold upon Lady Macbeth. She conceals it in Macbeth's presence, thinking to strengthen him, as

of old; but the two lives are insensibly drifting asunder. Macbeth addresses her in terms of grim love, but he no longer takes her counsel on his schemes, and only half imparts them to her, even at the last moment. As for Macbeth himself, directly there is nothing to be done, he becomes morbid, brooding over his crimes past and future, and playing about them with lurid words.

Scene 3

This scene, in which the Second Crime is accomplished, is the crisis of the play. The escape of Fleance is Macbeth's first check, and from it dates his ruin. Henceforth the irony of the play is against him, and the supernatural powers, which it indicates, slowly work out his punishment.

It is a possible theory that the mysterious Third Murder is Macbeth himself. Always a man of action, it would not be unnatural for him to ensure the complete accomplishment of his design by himself taking a secret part in it.

Scene 4

The effect of Macbeth's crimes is visible in the degeneration of his powers of mind. Formerly he was startled by the "air-drawn dagger," but was able to throw off his weakness. Now the apparition of Banquo masters him with superstitious fears; even the dread of detection cannot restrain him from yielding to them, and the potent influence which his wife had over his will is now sensibly weakened.

Scene 5

I believe that this scene is one of the additions made to the original play by Middleton or some other interpolator. The weird and gloomy atmosphere which hangs about Shakespeare's witches is gone; it is replaced by such prettiness as that of Act III, Scene V. Hecate, an entirely new and unnecessary character, is introduced. The meter is essentially iambic, and not, as with Shakespeare, trochaic.

Hecate is in classical myth Artemis or Diana in her aspect as an infernal deity. In the superstition of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance she became Queen of the Witches, just as Diana, under the name of Titania, became the Queen of Fairies. This belief is very old. Apuleius indeed (*De Asino Aureo*) give the Queen of Witches the name Caupona; but Scot (*Discoverie of Witchcraft*) quotes a decree of the fourth century Council of Ancyra, condemning the profession of witches "that in the night times they ride abroad with Diana, the goddess of Pagans, or else with Herodias."

Scene 6

As in the last scene of Act II, so here we get a side light upon the story; the outside point of view is represented by the lords, who fulfill the functions of the chorus in a Greek drama. Macbeth's conduct has awaked suspicion; his tyranny has made him detested, and already there are hints of the coming retribution.

Unit 28 – Assignments

*When our actions do not
Our fears do make us traitors.*
– Lady Macduff,
Macbeth, Act IV, Scene ii

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Read Acts IV and V of *Macbeth*.

Composition

- Edit your rough draft, making sure that the issue is presented in a clear manner and that your essay is free of mechanical errors. Use the **Evaluation Rubric** in the **Resources** section of **the website** to check your work.
- Review your rough draft and type up your finished essay.

Unit 28 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

The Tragedy of Macbeth

edited by E.K. Chambers

Aristotle's Unity of Plot in Macbeth,

Part 3

We come now to a third kind of unity, of which again Shakespeare makes frequent use—which consists in something so subtle and impalpable that it often defies analysis, and needs to be felt rather than demonstrated. Every reader must be aware that there belongs to each play an indefinable something, a note, a fragrance, a temperament, that distinguishes it from any and every other. We might call this unity of soul, and the last unity of the mind, borrowing a hint from Mr. Pater, who speaks of “unity of the atmosphere here, as there of design—soul securing color (or perfume, might we say?) as mind secures form, the latter being essentially finite, the former vague and infinite, as the influence of a living person is practically infinite.” So in *Macbeth* a thousand delicate touches serve to produce a sense of weird horror, rising to its highest point in the terrors of that unspeakable midnight murder.

Consider first how the keynote of the whole play is given by the appearance of the weird sisters amid thunder and lightning in the first scene; then mark the awful chill that settles on us as we pass the doomed Duncan to the gate of that castle where Lady Macbeth waits to welcome him:

*This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.*

The irony of this only increases our forebodings, and the “guest of summer, the temple-haunting martlet” that nests upon the wall gives an added touch of tragedy. Then night falls, a night fit for the deed to be done. It is pitch dark. “There’s husbandry in heaven; their candles are all out,” says Banquo. Evil things are abroad.

*The night has been unruly;
where we lay
Our chimneys were blown down,
and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i’ the air,
strange screams of death,*

*And prophesying with accents terrible;
Of dire combustion
and confused events
New hatch’d to the woeful time:
the obscure bird
Clamour’d the livelong night;
some say, the earth
Was feverous and did shake.*

Even as the guilty pair set about the preparations for their sin, the vaulted hall is lit by lightning and reechoes with thunder; with them we “hear the owl shriek and the cricket cry.” Innocent men are visited by strange thoughts and dreams.

*There’s one did laugh in ’s sleep and one cried
“Murder!”
That they did wake each other:
I stood and hear them:
But they did say their prayers,
and address’d them
Again to sleep.*

Even such a nobly-strung soul as Banquo’s is smitten with a strange sense of moral weakness and shrinking from the battle with temptation.

*A heavy summons lies
like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep:
merciful powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts
that nature
Gives way to in repose!*

The most awful touch of all is that knocking of some unknown corner of the gate, which calls our minds, strained by the intensity of the situation almost into sympathy with the crime, back to the frightful realities of fact; and this effect is grimly enhanced by the drunken porter, whose fumbling for his keys and swearing at the disturbers of his rest

delays for some moments more the imminent discovery. By such delicate workmanship of detail the poet contrives to produce an impression of weirdness, of something uncanny, which signalizes the play as a whole, and it is in this very effect that the so-called aesthetic unity consists.

One might well trace the sources of this impression through the banqueting and sleep-walking scenes, but it is more worthwhile to point out how the general effect is intensified by comparison with the one scene in England, with its idyllic picture of the good King Edward the Confessor curing his subjects of their diseases. Shakespeare uses freely what Ruskin regards as the device of a second-rate poet, the “pathetic fallacy”—that is, he attributes to the inanimate things of nature a sympathy with the moods and passions of men.

Fourth, and finally, there is in *Macbeth* a special and peculiar unity of structure. The play moves forward with an absolute regularity; it is almost architectural in its rise and fall, in the balance of its parts. The plot is complex; it has an ebb and flow, a complication and a resolution, to use technical terms. That is to say, the fortunes of Macbeth swoop

up to a crisis or turning-point; and thence down again to a catastrophe. The catastrophe of course closes the play; the crisis, as so often with Shakespeare, comes in its exact center, in the middle of the middle act, with the escape of Fleance. Hitherto, Macbeth’s path has been gilded with success; now the epoch of failure begins. And the parallelisms and correspondences throughout are remarkable. Each act has a definite subject: the Temptation; the First, Second, and Third Crimes; the Retribution. Three accidents, if we may so call them, help Macbeth in the first half of the play: the visit of Duncan to Inverness, his own impulsive murder of the grooms, the flight of Malcolm and Donalbain. And in the second half, three accidents help to bring about his ruin: the escape of Fleance, the false prophecy of the witches, the escape of Macduff. Malcolm and Macduff at the end answer to Duncan and Banquo at the beginning. A meeting with the witches heralds both rise and fall. Finally, each Crime is represented in the Retribution. Malcolm, the son of Duncan, and Macduff, whose wife and child he slew, conquer Macbeth; Fleance begets a race that shall reign in his stead.

Adapted for High School from:

The Tragedy of Macbeth

edited by E.K. Chambers

Notes on Acts VI & V

Act IV, Scene 1

Just as the witches symbolized Macbeth’s entrance on the path of crime, so now their sinister presence is prophetic of his punishment. By evil suggestions and ambiguous sayings they inspire in him a false confidence, and lure him on to ruin. The interpolations in this scene are insignificant and easily to be distinguished; the loathsome spells and devilish incantations of the Shakespearian part of it are in harmony with the uncanny note of the whole play. Yet in the elaborate vision which is conjured up for Macbeth, we see a concession to the love for masks and pageants of the Jacobean court.

Act IV, Scene 2

Macbeth’s Third Crime marks a stage in his moral degradation. Compared with those that went before, it is purposeless, merely an expression of the tyrannic mind, partly unhinged by fear. Its only effect is to make the day of reckoning more certain. A slight relief to the tragedy is afforded by the

opening dialogue between Lady Macduff and her son. Shakespeare’s children are singularly precocious in their naiveté. He uses them as effective mediums of irony. An added touch of pathos is given by the mistrust of her husband in which Lady Macduff dies. It should be observed that Lady Macbeth knows nothing of this murder until it is accomplished; the separation between her and her husband has advanced yet further.

Act IV, Scene 3

The cup of Macbeth’s iniquity is full. His final Crime is directly followed by the preparation for his Punishment. In this scene, the only tedious one in the play, we learn of the preparation of an army to depose him; the characters of Macduff and Malcolm, contrasts to his as subject and king, are brought out; and in the episode of the King’s evil, the peacefulness of England thrown into relief the desperate condition of the neighboring kingdom. Incidentally another delicate compliment to James I is introduced.

Act V, Scene 1

The stormy passions of the last scene are followed by one of subdued, whispered horror. The retribution has begun. We see first its workings in the soul of Lady Macbeth. Throughout she is more spiritual than her husband, and with her the beginning of retribution takes the form, not of fear, but of remorse—a brooding remorse that gradually unstrings every nerve. She has taken less and less part in each succeeding crime; since Act III, Scene 4 she has been absent from the stage; she has almost passed out of the life of her husband. Yet in her disordered brain, the details of his crimes jostle with those of her own. The struggle with memory and conscience has proved too much for her; her old self-command and triumphant sovereignty of will are gone.

It is not quite easy to say why prose is used in this scene. Perhaps it appeared proper to the broken utterance of sleep-walking; and of course the Doctor and Gentlewoman, whose emotions are on a lower plane throughout, could not be allowed to use blank verse if Lady Macbeth did not.

“Whether the deep melancholy of remorse often tends to exhibit itself in somnambulism is a fact which, on scientific grounds may be doubted.” (Bucknill, *Mad Folk of Shakespeare*).

Act V, Scene 2

Lady Macbeth has passed from the stage; the rest of her tragedy is acted out in silence; only echoes of it reach us. Macbeth is left alone, face to face with his destiny. Scenes 2 and 3 put before us the tempers of



This was long thought to be the only portrait of William Shakespeare that had any claim to have been painted from life, until another possible life portrait, the Cobbe portrait, was revealed in 2009.

the opposing parties: on the one side, loyalty and hatred of the tyrant; on the other, a spirit broken and bewildered by sin and horror.

Act V, Scene 3

Macbeth has entirely lost command over himself. His rapid transitions from hope to fear, from boasting to whining, his violence to the servant, are alike evidences of internal turmoil. He is completely self-absorbed. In speaking with the doctor of his wife's state, he continually breaks off to consider his own. And in this last stress his tendency to general philosophical reflection becomes more marked. Thus, with consummate art, by leading us to regard Macbeth's fate as part of the general law of things, Shakespeare enables us to extend to him a certain measure of pity, without which the completely tragic effect would be lost. And this is helped by the return of something of his old courage in the actual presence of danger.

Act V, Scenes 4 – 8

The catastrophe of Macbeth's fate begins with the fulfillment of the prediction regarding Birnam wood in this scene and is completed by that as to the birth of his destroyer in scene 8. The toils of retribution close quickly round him. The traditions of Elizabethan drama obliged Shakespeare to make an attempt to represent war on the stage, and the only possible method was that of short typical scenes. But, dramatically, these represent a single continuous action.



The Cobbe Portrait of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) claimed to be a portrait of William Shakespeare done while he was alive.