

Mothers and Daughters, Janie in Love, and a Talking Gorilla: Paradigm Shifts & Human Nature (Unit Essay #1)

“Your paradigm is so intrinsic to your mental process that you are hardly aware of its existence, until you try to communicate with someone with a different paradigm.” - Donella Meadows

“Rather than being an interpreter, the scientist who embraces a new paradigm is like the man wearing inverting lenses.” - Thomas Kuhn

You have already written about the ways in which the mothers and daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* experienced intergenerational tension. Coming from such radically different backgrounds, they find both tremendous gaps and meaningful points of connection throughout their relationships. **In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie makes her way through a world whose rules stifle her true heart’s desires.** How does she try to apply her set of values and logic to the world around her? What can she *not* accept? **Finally, characters from all our reading in this unit experienced a paradigm shift** in some way or another. They were dropped into new worlds, new ways of seeing and being, and this often causes significant internal shifts and meaning for our characters.

This literary selection leads us to ask how great a role our worldview plays in adapting to new truths. In our own history, we often see new paradigms met with great resistance: from scientists like Galileo and Einstein, to the civil rights and gender equality movements.

Your big bad question for contemplation during this first unit essay:

How does the study of paradigm shift illustrate and illuminate who we are as human beings?

Write an essay that answers the above question by discussion how two different authors from this unit each conduct their particular project: you will choose ONE text from the summer (Hurston, Tan, or Quinn) and ONE text from our first unit (any one selection from Dillard, Kafka, or Joyce). Cover each text, then move toward your conclusion addressing the big bad question by making connections between the texts and with the greater world around us. Show us the bigger picture, i.e. **make a case for considering these works together, in conversation, instead of in isolation.**

You will be able to to revise this essay eventually, but make sure the draft you turn in (due two weeks from today) is finished. Spend proper time thinking about the topic and your approach. We will be discussing your partial drafts and outlines during our first round of individual conferences next week.

Paper Requirements:

- Interesting title that locates us in the project, i.e. mentions the texts in some way, centered and JUST ONE SPACE above the body of the paper.
- 5 full pages, double spaced, Times New Roman, one inch margins
- Works Cited page listing both works, properly formatted according to MLA guidelines. If you don’t know what those are: <https://bfy.tw/Olly> (I kid, slightly).
 - See also: <https://libguides.wmich.edu/citing/MLA>
- Quotes from each novel, formatted correctly. There is no excuse to not look this up!

- *Don't forget the vocab challenge!* In your unit essay, employ 6 of the following 10 Verbs for Literary Analysis: **Portray, Illustrate, Focus, Emphasize, Demonstrate, Express, Juxtapose, Present, Satirize, & Illuminate**

Due Dates:

- **Week 3: Outline (serves as journal for Week 2)**
 - Can be messy, but it should be complete and illustrate the nitty gritty you're getting into with this paper,
 - Includes quotes you think you will use in your rough draft.
- **Week 4: Rough draft due + Peer Review**
 - Full outline of paper w/ quotes typed
 - First two pages drafted (or more, if you feel so inclined...the more you have done, the more questions you can ask and the more you can get helped out in class)
 - Works Cited page
 - Three specific questions you want to ask me and/or a peer review pal about your paper (these should be jotted down in your notebook; I will check those at the start of class)
- **Week 5: Final draft due**
 - Complete draft! 5 full pages minimum (full = to the very end of the page). And no, before you ask, this does not include the Works Cited page.
 - Metacognitive writing attached, answering three questions (you can number them #1-3, but each answer should be a few complete sentences):
 - What was your process for tackling this paper? How do you approach a project like this? What works for you and what might you do differently?
 - What was your best strength in this paper? What are you most proud of?
 - What was the biggest challenge in completing this paper? If you had more time, what would you have put more effort into?

Critical Lenses and Revisiting Classics (Unit Essay #2)

“As for literary criticism in general: I have long felt that any reviewer who expresses rage and loathing for a novel or a play or a poem is preposterous. He or she is like a person who has put on full armor and attacked a hot fudge sundae or a banana split.” – Kurt Vonnegut

“Everywhere I go, I am asked if I think university stifles writers. My opinion is that it doesn't stifle enough of them.” – Flannery O'Connor

For this essay, we are going to revisit our summer texts using the new critical lenses we learned in Unit #2. We have practiced applying critical lenses to works that are seemingly tailor-made for respective theories, primarily in journal form. Now, you are going to exercise those same muscles on either *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Ishmael*, or *The Joy Luck Club* in a longer essay, utilizing both the critical theory background we've been working with thus far AND published, scholarly works in this same field.

This work forms the heart of literary analysis, which we will continue to dive into all year. Here is your chance to really show off your chops and deepen your mastery of the skill. Your job is to *justify* the use of the theory, and help us understand that the equation is more than the sum of its parts. The theories help us see our beloved novels, poems, and short stories in a wholly new light, and keep those texts fresh, vital, and engaging decades and even centuries after they were written.

Your big bad question for contemplation during this first unit essay:

How does a wisely-chosen critical literary theory illuminate, reveal, or highlight a new, complex, and/or nuanced reading of an already-examined text?

What's your first step? Choosing your text and your theory! You'll want to think both of *natural connections* as well as *opportunity for nuance and complexity*. **In other words, you might not choose the most immediate/obvious theory** (because you might fall into “water is wet, racism is bad” traps), **but you don't want to give yourself too extreme of a challenge** (which might require too much extra research). Choosing topics is actually one of the most important things we do as scholars, and we don't often give the process the time and intention it deserves.

You will employ at minimum three texts for this paper:

- One summer reading novel (a different one than you wrote about in Unit Essay #1)
- At least one other text from Unit #2 to analyze alongside your primary text through the lens of your chosen theory, such as the works by Karen Russell, Alice Walker, and others. Take some care to not just rehash your journals on the topic (self-plagiarism is a thing!), but rather use them diligently and intentionally to assist and bolster your thesis.
- The appropriate corresponding essay(s) from Lois Tyson, depending on which critical lens you'd like to use
- *Optional*: One secondary source of literary criticism (found on JSTOR or another academic database) related to your chosen theory

Regarding the critical theories, you will focus on just ONE theory for this paper. Your goal will be to do a proper deep dive and look at the use of the lens in the text(s) from multiple angles. Your thesis statement will lay out your roadmap and make your approach to your chosen text abundantly clear.

What about your conclusion? Situate your analysis within broader contexts using these strategies. Showcase your ability to see the beauty (or the ugly) the authors wish to share with us. The end of your essay should give us some sense of the “so what?” of it all. Why is it important to look at canonical texts through contemporary lenses? How does this work connect to the outside world, current events, or cultural conversations going on around you? Your secondary source might help you with this, or you might have to push on elsewhere. But it’s just as critical as the analysis itself — don’t leave it as an afterthought.

Paper Requirements:

- Interesting title that locates us in the project, i.e. mentions the texts in some way, centered and JUST ONE SPACE above the body of the paper.
- 5 full pages, double spaced, Times New Roman, one inch margins
- Works Cited page, properly formatted according to MLA guidelines. If you don’t know what those are: <https://bfy.tw/Olly> (I kid, slightly).
 - See also: <https://libguides.wmich.edu/citing/MLA>
- **Another vocab challenge? You bet!** For this essay, you will use no more than TWO (2) forms of the verb “to be” per page, or if you like, TEN (10) TOTAL for your entire paper. We practiced this with a journal, now take it to the next level! This will certainly a challenge, so don’t leave this all to revision time. Try to be mindful of forming these more robust sentences as you write, not just when you edit.
 - All complaining can be directed to your notebooks, wherein your pain will one day make for great art <3

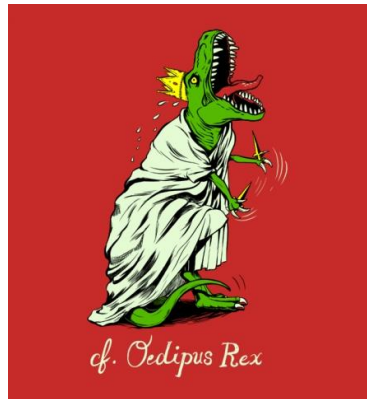
You know what else is a great idea? Literary terms! Tyson gives us so many to work with and you’ve already practiced integrating terms into your journals and weekly writing. Keep up that good work! The more you integrate, the more you’ll have to talk about and analyze. Your notebook and your *Norton* has even more definitions and glossaries for your edification.

Schedule:

- **Rough draft due Week 8.** That includes outline, quotes, and introductory paragraph with thesis.
- **Final draft due Week 9.** Remember help session is there to help you out!
- **Keep in mind that this paper, like all your work, will be eligible for revision.** Your job here is to put good, mindful effort and engagement into this project...NOT necessarily to produce the work of your lifetime or overly sweat the small stuff. If you, for example, just could not deal with the vocab challenge, address it in your metacog. Speaking of...
- **Don’t forget your metacognitive writing!** Usual business: about half a page.
 - What was your process for tackling this paper? How do you approach a project like this? What works for you and what might you do differently?
 - What was your best strength in this paper? What are you most proud of?
 - What was the biggest challenge in completing this paper? If you had more time, what would you have put more effort into?

“What Were the God’s Words?”

Mini-Unit Project for Oedipus Rex



“The ancient Oracle said that I was the wisest of all the Greeks. It is because I alone, of all the Greeks, know that I know nothing.”
– Socrates

For this unit project, you will create a newspaper for and about incidents in the play *Oedipus Rex*. This is a bit of a funky mash-up between summarizing/analyzing the play in and of itself and using a more modern genre to illustrate and express your ideas. (*Insert wry commentary about the contemporary state of the newspaper industry here, but I digress...*) You can place your newspaper at any point in time of the play’s plot, but consider what will give you the most to work with and what will be juiciest to explore.

You have a lot of opportunities to be creative with this assignment! Think of all the places you can insert a little Ancient Greek flair, or some satirical winking, or a few nods to the literary, meta-nature of the tragic form. Think about the name of your newspaper, images or original drawings to include, word choice and diction, design elements like borders and font choices...and so much more.

Project Requirements:

- **3-4 pages total.** Can be more, but note that the minimum number of elements is more important than page count! I want to allow you leeway for appropriate and pleasing formatting / design choices.
- **Newspaper formatting**
 - There are templates everywhere! Google Docs, Slides, Microsoft Word, others...if you aren’t the most inclined in the graphic design department, use the tools available to you. Your end product should look like a newspaper or a newsletter at the very least.
 - Wherever you choose to do your initial assignment, you will export this document as a PDF so as to preserve all the wonderful design choices and formatting work you do.
- **Main cover story. This is required!**

- **Length: 500 words.** Should be clear which article is your “main” story—very likely on page 1, as they say, above the fold!
- **Content:** Choose one critical theory to analyze the events of the play through. This is your sneaky way of getting in a critical lens into this assignment and to practice working with lenses in a creative and/or satirical fashion! However you approach this, it should be clear to me which lens you are using.
- **Voice:** Your main cover story does not need to be written in formal academic voice; you can still use “newspaper” voice, as long as your content demonstrates effort, analysis, and knowledge of the play through a critical lens.
- **Additionally, choose at least five of the following elements to include:**
 - Opinion column
 - Letter(s) to the Editor
 - Arts & Entertainment: movie/music reviews, TV guide listings, etc.
 - Advice Column
 - Classifies
 - Sports
 - Weather
 - Obituaries (spoiler alert?)
 - Sunday comics
 - ...and more! If you have other ideas that feel appropriate, have at it! If you’re not sure if something would qualify as one of your five elements, let’s talk about it.

Due Dates:

- **Week 12, PDF format, uploaded to eLearning 10pm the night before class.** You will also print this out and turn it in at class time. We might reserve some time to share! This due date means it will be due AFTER we get back from our November break.

****And a quick note on satire:** *This project does not HAVE to be satirical in nature, though the very premise does lend itself to a more humorous bent. If that’s not your jam, it’s not your jam! You can execute a wonderful version of this project with plenty of gravitas and seriousness. However, if irony, satire, absurdity, and punnery is right up your alley...well, welcome to your happy place. ***

HAMLET: To Flow or Not To Flow

(That is the Question)

Spoken Word refers to a form of poetry in which a speaker recites a poem or story aloud, either their own or someone else's. **Spoken Word artists often enhance their performance with choreography and other stage-play, such as audience participation, but the main focus remains on narration. Unlike written poems, Spoken Word artists have more communication methods to use, such as body language and voice-tone.**

You just read Act III of *Hamlet* over the break and performed some dashing reader's theater. You will now have enough of the play under your belt to start composing your own spoken word poem & presentation for *Hamlet*. Before you get too anxious, you may have a partner to help you out with this **if you choose**. So team up!

Requirements:

- Hit some of the major points of the play. Must be an accurate reading! Does not need to be a thorough summary, but should demonstrate understanding of the play.
- Reference characters and (a few) quotes from the play in your piece.
- Consider what makes spoken word work: Does your piece play with language? Does it flow? Does it catch the ear? Is it interesting or fun or passionate or any combination of these three? Does it use alliteration/consonance/rhyme/slant rhyme? Do you build images with your words? Are you speaking clearly? With feeling?
- How are you making *Hamlet* relevant to a modern audience? Think about your lit crit strategies—can you perform a reading of *Hamlet* that brings it to the 21st century? Could a feminist, post-colonialist, Marxist, psychological, etc. reading help us find contemporary interest/connections?
- **For a duo:** Does each partner put in 50% of the work? (This means in the writing, as well as in the presentation.)
- **Length:** Poem itself should be no shorter than about a page in length (will likely be longer!) Performance should be about 3-4 minutes in length.
- **Final poem due & shared Week 17 (last week of this semester!)** We'll have a fun day in class bidding farewell to *Hamlet*, performing these projects, and getting excited for second semester.
- **Creativity is the name of the game here!** I've seen some incredibly creative, absurd, out-there, clever, funny, meaningful takes on this assignment over the years.

Special Note: Spoken word is about style and passion and joy and play. **It is not about stereotyping people or the genre itself.** Sometimes, we need a reminder to be culturally-conscious (obviously, not this class, but, y'know, *some*). Below are some examples of spoken word pieces to show you that there is a range of style. You can find room for your own voice in this medium. If you keep your focus on the language and the play with words as well as sound and rhythm, you will be fine. **First and last rule: have fun with it.** Remember, this is not a slam competition—we are performing for one another simply to entertain/inform/inspire each other and to enjoy the art.

Some inspiration and ideas to get you started...notice use of music, gestures, etc.!

- Shane Koyczan and Hannah Epperson, “Remember How We Forgot” (#feels)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBVJuAojr6Y>
- Brave New Voices, “Soldiers” (intense social justice rockstars)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHoopHo8dao>
- Darius Simpson and Scout Bostley, “Lost Voices” (very cool example of partner spoken word)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpPASWlnZIA>
- Jamaal May, “Sky Now Black with Birds” (Detroit poet reading a very intense work)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0Aogn7bAWo>
- Sarah Kay, “Table Games” (lovely piece on the minute details of life)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlcTGDRX450>