

COURSE SYLLABUS

Faculty Information: Dr. David P. Byers

What to Call Me: Feel free just to call me David. If you want to be formal, you can call me Dr. Byers or simply Professor/Professor Byers.

Contact Info: Please contact me via email anytime at dbyers2@tconl.com; you can reach me by phone (402) 498-9685 between 10-5 p.m. CST most days or leave a message and I'll get back to you usually within 24 hours. Other times for phone conferences are available upon request.

Course Name: Great Books 1

Prerequisites:

Credit: 1/2 credit

Course Description: Students will read and analyze five great books: *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, *The Last Battle* by C.S. Lewis, *When the Legends Die* by Hal Borland, *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. In this 15-week course, students will have three weeks to read and analyze each book. Analysis assignments for each book are broken down by chapters or sections of each book with approximately 1/3 of each book being analyzed each week.

Objectives: Students who successfully complete this course will have:

1. Analyzed five classic novels suitable for high school students
2. Determined the genre of each novel
3. Analyzed each novel for application of literary terms to include plot, theme, characters, conflict, and symbolism.

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty prohibits representing the work of others to be one's own (plagiarism) and/or receiving unauthorized aid on an assignment (cheating). Penalties for academic dishonesty may include a grade of "F" on the work in question and/or for the entire course at the professor's discretion.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change as the instructor deems appropriate in order to best meet your needs.

Course Schedule and Assignment Deadlines: Our week will run Monday through Sunday each week so that you have an entire week and weekend to complete your assignments each week. I will send you the upcoming week's homework on Saturday or Sunday before the upcoming week. Homework deadlines are typically Sundays by midnight Omaha time unless otherwise indicated by the professor.

Week 1: 1/16—homework due 1/22
Week 2: 1/22—homework due 1/29
Week 3: 1/29—homework due 2/4
Week 4: 2/5—homework due 2/12
Week 5: 2/12—homework due 2/19
Week 6: 2/19—homework due 2/26
Week 7: 2/26—homework due 3/4
Week 8: 3/4--homework due 3/11
Week 9: 3/11—homework due 3/18
Week 10: 3/18—homework due 3/25
Week 11: 3/25—homework due 4/1
Week 12: 4/1—homework due 4/8
Week 13: 4/8—homework due 4/15
Week 14—4/15—homework due 4/22
Week 15—4/22—homework due 4/29

Level of Work Required

The content of all of your assignments should reflect the best work you can do. You should do your best with every assignment to be sure to include exactly what is required, to go beyond the minimal requirements, and to impress your instructor!

You will be called upon on a number of occasions to integrate theory or ideas with real-life events. This means doing your best to make sense of what you are learning and figuring out how it applies to your past or current experiences, as well as knowledge you may have already acquired.

What to Expect from Your Instructor

- I will reply to your emails within 24-48 hours during the week, but I may need an extra 1-2 days in case of holidays or weekends or illness.
- I will be glad to set up individual appointments with you in person or by phone at mutually convenient days/times.

Emailing Your Work & Assignment Deadlines

Plan to email your work to the instructor on or before the day the assignment is due. Email your work to dbyers2@tconl.com

Course Completion

Courses are considered completed once the student has submitted all the required assignments. At that time, final grades will be emailed to the student in an official transcript.

Format for Emailed Homework

Unless the assignment indicates otherwise, simply type your work in the body of the email. Keep your formatting simple. Just write in block paragraphs, all flush left and then leave a double space between paragraphs so your work is easily read.

What Are Rubrics?

Rubrics are a set of parameters and expectations for your performance in one or more areas of each course. These rubrics are the same for every course throughout the program.

General Rubrics for all Assignments

To earn an "A" for an assignment, you must:

- Submit the work when due
- Follow all instructions for the assignment
- Effectively use standard English--NO use of instant messaging language should be used
- Use excellent writing mechanics including clear, concise language, effective syntax, and appropriately-sized, coherent and focused paragraphs
- Have no more than five spelling errors and/or typos (points are deducted for each one)
- Demonstrate a consistent use of logical reasoning and critical thinking skills
- Thoroughly address *every* point/question from the assignment—using the **five-paragraph method**
- Include paraphrases and/or quotes from expert sources that accurately represent the author's intentions and support your points
- Correctly cite and reference expert sources used in the paper

Week 1: 1/16—homework due 1/22

1. Review the information in this syllabus about genres and literary terms so you can write about them later on.
2. We're going to start with *The Last Battle* by C.S. Lewis. For this week, read chapters 1-5.
3. You don't have to write a formal paper. Instead, in the body of an email, send me the answers to the following questions (writing in complete sentences) by the deadline shown above:
 - a. What genre best fits this book and why?
 - b. Explain from what point of view (see the literary terms later in the syllabus) is the story being told?
 - c. Provide a brief description (not just their names, but also who/what they are) of the main and minor characters in Chapters 1-5.
 - d. Who seems to be the protagonist and who is the antagonist thus far in the story?
 - e. Briefly summarize the plot thus far.
 - f. Give an example and explanation for each of the following used in the story up to this point:
 - i. Foreshadowing
 - ii. Inciting Force
 - iii. Conflict

GENRES

- **Westerns** can be a branch of historical fiction but may more loosely deal with life in the wild American west, as it was settled.
- **Mysteries** often have characters that investigate crimes or various puzzles.
- **Science fiction** tends to use some scientific data as basis for stories, and might focus on things like apocalypse scenarios, future worlds, or space travel, to name just a few.
- **Fantasy** may deal with various “unreal” or magical things, or things not possible in the real world and may contain alternate worlds and/or mythical and made up creatures or peoples.
- **Thrillers** are sometimes called spy thrillers and might have themes in which spies are involved in investigating various events, often on a global scale.
- **Historical fiction** invents characters or deeds for a specific time period and may tell the story of that time period through fictional and non-fictional but fictionalized characters. A variation of this is the period novel, written either during or after a certain time period and particularly emphasizing what it was like to live in that era, with perhaps fictional characters as examples.
- **Action and Adventure** has the main character scale large mountains, go on amazing adventures on land or at sea, overcome amazing obstacles, travel to never-before-seen places. It's action... it's adventure... and these authors offer unforgettable, pulse-pounding fiction and non-fiction literature.
- **Children's** is defined by its own name. These books are for little kids, from toddlers on up to about eleven years of age and usually feature characters in that age range (and/or childlike animals). They are usually big on pictures, and simple in word and theme. Familiar (if faraway) scenes and gentle (or not) moral lessons are paramount.
- **Humor** (may also include offbeat or quirky) incorporates texts that are funny or humorous. Obviously, this genre is highly subjective. Some texts are joke books, spoofs, and often books written by comedians. However, many books have humor as a sub-genre, because the work falls under a literary genre and is also humorous. Always remember that one person's humor is not the same for everyone.
- **Religious and Inspirational** is a genre larger than just religious writing. Some inspirational fiction is written to appeal to a general Christian audience, but more often in the United States it may simply be inspirational fiction.
- **Young Adult** tales are written for folks from about twelve to eighteen years of age. The protagonist is always of that age, as are most of the characters. He or she can live a bizarre magical life, or a dreary suburban one.

LITERARY TERMS

"**Structure**" includes all the elements in a story. The final objective is to see the story as a whole and to become aware of how the parts are put together to produce a unified effect.

ELEMENTS OF PLOT

All fiction is based on conflict and this conflict is presented in a structured format called **PLOT**.

1. **Exposition:** The introductory material which gives the setting, creates the tone, presents the characters, and presents other facts necessary to understanding the story.
2. **Foreshadowing:** The use of hints or clues to suggest what will happen later in the story.
3. **Inciting Force:** The event or character that triggers the conflict is the inciting force.
4. **Conflict:** The essence of fiction. It creates plot. The conflicts we encounter can usually be identified as one of four kinds. (Man versus...Man, Nature, Society, or Self)
5. **Rising Action:** A series of events that builds from the conflict is the rising action. It begins with the inciting force and ends with the climax.
6. **Crisis:** The conflict reaches a turning point. At this point the opposing forces in the story meet and the conflict becomes most intense. The crisis occurs before or at the same time as the climax.
7. **Climax:** The climax is the result of the crisis. It is the high point of the story for the reader. Frequently, it is the moment of the highest interest and greatest emotion. The point at which the outcome of the conflict can be predicted is the climax.
8. **Falling Action:** The events after the climax which close the story.
9. **Resolution:** Rounds out and concludes the action.

CHARACTERIZATION

MAJOR CHARACTERS: Almost always round or three-dimensional characters. They have good and bad qualities. Their goals, ambitions and values change. A round character changes as a result of what happens to him or her. A character who changes inside as a result of what happens to him is referred to in literature as a DYNAMIC character. A dynamic character grows or progresses to a higher level of understanding in the course of the story.

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|---|---|--|
| Protagonist The main character in the story | Antagonist The character or force that opposes the protagonist. | Foil A character who provides a contrast to the protagonist. |
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MINOR CHARACTERS: Almost always flat or two-dimensional characters. They have only one or two striking qualities. Their predominant quality is not balanced by an opposite quality. They are usually all good or all bad. Such characters can be interesting or amusing in their own right, but they lack depth. Flat characters are sometimes referred to as STATIC characters because they do not change in the course of the story.

POINT OF VIEW

1. **First Person:** The narrator is a character in the story who can reveal only personal thoughts and feelings and what he or she sees and is told by other characters. He can't tell us thoughts of other characters.
2. **Third-Person Objective:** The narrator is an outsider who can report only what he or she sees and hears. This narrator can tell us what is happening, but he can't tell us the thoughts of the characters.
3. **Third-Person Limited:** The narrator is an outsider who sees into the mind of one of the characters.
4. **Omniscient:** The narrator is an all-knowing outsider who can enter the minds of more than one of the characters.

CONFLICT

Conflict is the essence of fiction. It creates plot. The conflicts we encounter can usually be identified as one of four kinds.

1. **Man versus Man:** Conflict that pits one person against another.
2. **Man versus Nature:** A run-in with the forces of nature. On the one hand, it expresses the insignificance of a single human life in the cosmic scheme of things. On the other hand, it tests the limits of a person's strength and will to live.
3. **Man versus Society:** The values and customs by which everyone else lives are being challenged. The character may come to an untimely end as a result of his or her own convictions. The character may, on the other hand, bring others around to a sympathetic point of view, or it may be decided that society was right after all.
4. **Man versus Self:** Internal conflict. Not all conflict involves other people. Sometimes people are their own worst enemies. An internal conflict is a good test of a character's values. Does he give in to temptation or rise above it? Does he demand the most from himself or settle for something less? Does he even bother to struggle? The internal conflicts of a character and how they are resolved are good clues to the character's inner strength.

Often, more than one kind of conflict is taking place at the same time. In every case, however, the existence of conflict enhances the reader's understanding of a character and creates the suspense and interest that make you want to continue reading.

FORESHADOWING

An author's use of hints or clues to suggest events that will occur later in the story are all part of foreshadowing. Not all foreshadowing is obvious. Frequently, future events are merely hinted at through dialogue, description, or the attitudes and reactions of the characters.

Foreshadowing frequently serves two purposes. It builds suspense by raising questions that encourage the reader to go on and find out more about the event that is being foreshadowed. Foreshadowing is also a means of making a narrative more believable by partially preparing the reader for events which are to follow.

IRONY

Irony is the contrast between what is expected or what appears to be and what actually is.

1. **Verbal Irony:** The contrast between what is said and what is actually meant.
2. **Irony of Situation:** This refers to a happening that is the opposite of what is expected or intended.
3. **Dramatic Irony:** This occurs when the audience or reader knows more than the characters know.

TONE/MOOD

Tone: The author's **attitude**, stated or implied, toward a subject. Some possible attitudes are pessimism, optimism, earnestness, seriousness, bitterness, humorous, and joyful. An author's tone can be revealed through choice of words and details.

Mood: The climate of **feeling** in a literary work. The choice of setting, objects, details, images, and words all contribute toward creating a specific mood. For example, an author may create a mood of mystery around a character or setting but may treat that character or setting in an ironic, serious, or humorous tone

SYMBOLISM

A person, place or object which has a meaning in itself but suggests other meanings as well can be part of a story's symbolism. Things, characters and actions can be symbols. Anything that suggests a meaning beyond the obvious can be symbolism. Some symbols are conventional, generally meaning the same thing to all readers. For example: bright sunshine symbolizes goodness and water is a symbolic cleanser.

THEME

The main idea or underlying meaning of a literary work is the theme. A theme may be stated or implied. Theme differs from the subject or topic of a literary work in that it involves a statement or opinion about the topic. Not every literary work has a theme. Themes may be major or minor. A major theme is an idea the author returns to time and again. It becomes one of the most important ideas in the story. Minor themes are ideas that may appear from time to time.

It is important to recognize the difference between the theme of a literary work and the subject of a literary work. The subject is the topic on which an author has chosen to write. The theme, however, makes some statement about or expresses some opinion on that topic. For example, the subject of a story might be war while the theme might be the idea that war is useless.

Four ways in which an author can express themes are as follows:

1. Themes are expressed and emphasized by the way the author makes us feel. By sharing **feelings of the main character** you also share the ideas that go through his mind.
2. Themes are presented in **thoughts and conversations**. Authors put words in their character's mouths only for good reasons. One of these is to develop a story's themes. The things a person says are much on their mind. Look for **thoughts that are repeated** throughout the story.
3. Themes are suggested through the characters. The main character usually illustrates the most important theme of the story. A good way to get at this theme is to ask yourself the question, **what does the main character learn** in the course of the story?
4. The **actions or events** in the story are used to suggest theme. People naturally express ideas and feelings through their actions. One thing authors think about is what an action will "say". In other words, how will the action express an idea or theme?

IMAGERY

Language that appeals to the senses is imagery. Descriptions of people or objects stated in terms of our senses.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Whenever you describe something by comparing it with something else, you are using figurative language. Any language that goes beyond the literal meaning of words in order to furnish new effects or fresh insights into an idea or a subject involves figurative language. The most common figures of speech are simile, metaphor, and alliteration.

1. **Simile:** A figure of speech which involves a direct comparison between two unlike things, usually with the words like or as. Example: The muscles on his brawny arms are strong as iron bands.
2. **Metaphor:** A figure of speech which involves an implied comparison between two relatively unlike things using a form of be. The comparison is not announced by like or as. Example: The road was a ribbon of moonlight.
3. **Alliteration:** Repeated consonant sounds occurring at the beginning of words or within words. Alliteration is used to create melody, establish mood, call attention to important words, and point out similarities and contrasts. Example: wide-eyed and wondering while we wait for others to waken.
4. **Personification:** A figure of speech which gives the qualities of a person to an animal, an object, or an idea. It is a comparison which the author uses to show something in an entirely new light, to communicate a certain feeling or attitude towards it and to control the way a reader perceives it. Example: a brave handsome brute fell with a creaking rending cry--the author is giving a tree human qualities.
5. **Onomatopoeia:** The use of words that mimic sounds. They appeal to our sense of hearing and they help bring a description to life. A string of syllables the author has made up to represent the way a sound really sounds. Example: Caarackle!
6. **Hyperbole:** An exaggerated statement used to heighten effect. It is not used to mislead the reader, but to emphasize a point. Example: She's said so on several million occasions.