

Reading Responses

Note: please do the responses after they are assigned in class, for the prompts ahead of us may be revised as the semester progresses. Also, please do not print out all the questions at the beginning of the semester since the questions may change over time.

Prompts:

1. In what ways do Charlotte Smith's sonnets appear to be quintessentially Romantic poems? Provide a few specific examples in your explanation.

2. Choose one prompt below to answer about William Blake:

- What seems unique, interesting, striking, memorable, pleasing, disturbing, and/or odd to you about the poems we've read from Blake's Songs of Experience? Include at least a couple of examples. In addition, describe and comment on the general outlook on life that emerges from the poems.

OR

- Write two modern short poems echoing the style and worldview in the Songs of Experience. Each poem should be eight lines.

3. Explain how memory is at the heart of the Wordsworth's poem "Tintern Abbey." In addition, mention a place that might evoke similar nostalgia in you. What place do you connect with meaningful and memorable "spots of time" in your own life (a place that you have returned to at different points in your life and that carries special meaning to you)?

4. Identify and discuss a few examples in "Kubla Khan" where Coleridge seems to be suggesting something about nature, creativity, and/or altered states of consciousness. What stands out to you and why?

5. Choose one prompt on Percy Bysshe Shelley or John Keats:

- Of the four poems by Shelley that we're reading, which do you like best and why? Also, you might consider what similarities (of any sort) you see running through his poems.

OR

- Read the handout "Imagination and Reality in the Odes," in which Jack Stillinger outlines what he sees as a recurring structure of many Romantic lyrics. Explain that basic three-part structure, and then consider to what extent it seems to be true of one of Keats's most famous poems. Choose either "Ode to a Nightingale" or "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Then explain what parts of Keats's poem match up with Stillinger's ideas. Focus especially on what Stillinger says about the conclusion of typical Romantic lyrics. Does the end of the poem suggest that the speaker has worked through something and acquired something by the end? Why or why not?

6. In the head notes on Robert Browning, *The Norton Anthology* explains what a dramatic monologue is, and it points out that when we read a poem such as "My Last Duchess," "we may infer what sort of woman the duchess really was and what sort of man the duke is." The editors add that "we may also infer what the poet thinks." What, then, can you infer about all three of these people? Provide at least two quotations from the poem in your response.

Set One Ends Here & Set Two Begins

7. Perhaps the most allusive part of all of *Wuthering Heights* is the conspicuously missing part! What did Heathcliff do in the time unaccounted for in the novel? What did he do after running away from Wuthering Heights as a dejected youth and before coming back as an "altered" (73), "intelligent" (74), "well-formed man" (74), "plentifully supplied" (78) in terms of finances? Where did he go? How did he survive? What did he do all day? Where did he live? Who did he meet? What did he learn and where? How did he gain his money? In short, what made him into the man we see upon his return?

Imagine you're adding a lost scene to the novel. Imagine Heathcliff has returned and is speaking privately with Catherine, pouring his heart out and telling her what his time away from her was like and what he did in that time to make his return to her possible. You can start like this: "Catherine, after being crushed by your plan to marry Edgar, I . . ."

8. Please read the remarks below and then choose one of the prompts on Hopkins and/or Wilde that follow afterwards:

Gerard Manley Hopkins and Oscar Wilde would seem to have little in common. One became a priest and one was sentenced to prison for engaging in sexual relations with another man, which was considered criminal behavior at the time. However, certain details of Hopkins' biography suggest that he, too, may have been attracted to men. What's more, both men went to Oxford and both were highly influenced there by the teachings of Walter Pater, who *The Norton Anthology* describes as "an aesthete whose emphasis [was] on the intense apprehension of sensuous beauty." As poets, neither one seemed to subscribe to Wordsworth's adage about common language.

- After reading poems by Hopkins and Wilde, provide quotes supporting the idea that "intense apprehension of sensuous beauty" is central to the work of both poets. Consider also the difference in their approach toward attaining this common goal.

OR

- Summarize what Wilde says in *De Profundis*. Then select a couple lines that stand out to you and explain why they struck you as striking, odd, interesting, captivating, confusing, etc.
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9. Choose one of the prompts below:

- What seems to be the main message of Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden," and in what ways do its ideas seem connected to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*? If you'd like, consider also to what extent you think there is or is not any similarity between ideas in Kipling's poem and America's involvement with other countries overseas.

OR

- Identify (quote) and respond to at least one passage that you find significant in revealing the attitudes of the time, the traits of a character, or a theme of the book *The Heart of Darkness*.
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10. Choose one prompt below on the WWI Poets:

- Which one of the World War I poems had the strongest impact on you? Why? Include at least a couple quotations in your response.
 - In Owen's "Dulce Et Decorum Est," life in the trenches is put into perspective for the reader. How did this poem affect you emotionally? What passage stood out to you most?
 - What is Owen's "Strange Meeting" about and what key idea or moral does it seem to leave with the reader?
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11. Choose one of the prompts below on Virginia Woolf:

- Who is Shakespeare's sister, and how is her life different than William Shakespeare's? Present examples and explain what the difference between the two Shakespeares teaches us.

OR

- Pick a passage from Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* that you found particularly meaningful. Reproduce the passage, and then comment on why that passage especially struck you.
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12. Choose one prompt below on William Butler Yeats or T. S. Eliot

- What descriptions in Yeats' "The Second Coming" and "Sailing to Byzantium" stand out most to you and why? Consider especially the signs of an impending apocalypse in "The Second Coming" and the concerns about age in "Sailing to Byzantium."
- "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" evokes a deep sense of alienation and futility around Prufrock's inability to connect with others in his world. How does Eliot convey this sense of failure to connect, and what is it that keeps Prufrock so distant from others and perhaps even from himself?
- Imagine Prufrock's Tattoo. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" includes many striking images: the pair of ragged claws, the coffee spoons, the peach, the rolled trousers, the singing mermaids--all these and more come to mind. Prufrock doesn't seem like the kind of

guy to get a tattoo (or tattoos), but if he did, what kind of tattoo(s) would he get, where would he have it on his body, and why? Be original: Imagine something that isn't mentioned in the poem but that the poem leads us to think might be another fitting image/symbol linked to Prufrock's existence in some way.

13. In Hanif Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic," which character do you sympathize with more— Parvez, the dad, or Ali, the son? Share examples from the story when explaining your response.