Section Two: "The Literature of Slavery and Freedom 1746-1865"

Some important names were stated in the Introduction to Gates and McKay's anthology: James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, John Marrant, Olaudah Equiano, John Jea, Phillis Wheatley, and Ralph Waldo Emerson (a white, transcendental writer whom also fought for Native American rights), and each of these people shows in their own voice the power of human reason and will. Prior to winning any rights through the Civil War, these individuals fought through the spoken and written word.

We have read subjects in the first sections that relate to oppression already, so I do not anticipate that graphic descriptions about the issue of slavery in this section will surprise class members. Some Americans dismiss the topic as an event in a history book that occurred over 150 years ago and that people should "let the past stay in the past." However, dismissing the past is something that further oppresses the existence of many people whose culture is still defined by the 400 years of oppression. The issue is personal because it still holds meaning in the way people talk, think, behave, and live, so to dismiss slavery as something that is gone is to dismiss the person. You will find that personalization of the issue in the essays, letters, and poetry in this section, and you have seen evidence in what we have read thus far. As you read, think about slavery in relation to the people who are describing their families' backgrounds that have those stories and fears ingrained into them.

American Memory from the Library of Congress has archived the Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writer’s Project, 1936-1938 collection at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html. These narratives are interviews with former slaves on the “Voices and Faces from the Collection” pages, where students can see pictures of the slaves who tell their stories and can click the “Read the rest of this narrative” link then the “View page images” link to read the whole narrative. The American Memories site also has a collection titled Voices from the Days of Slavery site, located at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/. On this site, you can listen to former slaves tell their stories, sing spirituals, or give advice to their listeners.

Finally, to learn some of the terms, progress to the class web site and listen to the videos regarding symbolism, plot, and character, as those presentations will help you finish the definitions.

Assignments

1/29, Review the works in the previous section and in this section to determine who or what you would like to study for Literary Analysis Paper One. Look to the syllabus but requirements for the paper, and send a proposal via email, stating the author and work studied, focus of the paper, and main points of the paper.

1/29, Read the background sections "The Literature of Slavery and Freedom 1746-1865" (151-62) written by Gates and McKay as you complete this section. Write about an idea that stands out to you as helping clarify something you did not understand or previously know about slaves in the pre-Civil War era for a journal entry.

1/31, Read Olaudah Equiano's background (187-9) and the excerpt from The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself (189-213).
A. Does this piece represent what you would consider African American vernacular form or not? Use characteristics from Gates and McKay, Hurston, and other authors to define your decision.
B. What is Equiano's primary purpose of recording his narrative? As Gates and McKay propose, how well does Equiano establish his credibility in writing the text?
C. Research Olaudah Equiano's narrative in *Literary Reference Center Plus* and *JSTOR* to learn what the primary arguments against Equiano's story are and whether or how those arguments were disproven.
D. Look up the term "slave narrative" in *Dr. Wheeler’s* website and the “Glossary” for the text to determine whether this story qualifies as a slave narrative.

1/31, Read Phillis Wheatley's background (213-5), the 1773 preface and letters from *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (216-7), and discuss the necessity of proving Wheatley's authority in her collection of poetry.

1/31, Read Phillis Wheatley's "To Mæcenas" (27-8) and answer one of the following questions in a journal entry:

A. Research in *Literary Reference Center Plus* and in *Bullfinch's Mythology* regarding the meaning of Mæcenas. Why does she use Mæcenas to refer to Hutchinson? Is this representation appropriate?
B. Trace the role of the Muses throughout the poem.
C. Look up the terms "ode," "rhyme," "rhythm," "meter," "couplet," and "heroic couplet" in *Dr. Wheeler’s* website to determine the form and meter of this piece. Why would she choose that form and meter for this piece? Is it appropriate or not?

1/31, Read Phillis Wheatley's "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (219-20) and answer one of the following questions in a journal entry:

A. Look up the terms "rhyme," "rhythm," "meter," "couplet," and "heroic couplet" in *Dr. Wheeler’s* website to determine the form and meter of this piece. Why would she choose that form and meter for this piece? Is it appropriate or not?
B. Look up the term "alliteration" in *Dr. Wheeler’s* website and locate examples of alliteration throughout this piece. Why are they appropriate? To what do you notice her drawing attention in this work as a result of using alliteration?
C. Research in *Literature Reference Center Plus* and *JSTOR* Wheatley's acceptance or lack thereof with this piece by other African American writers. Find one who accepts and one who does not accept her as a writer and determine whether their assessments are fair and reasonable.

1/31, Read Phillis Wheatley's "On Imagination" (222-3) and answer one of the following questions in a journal entry:

A. Look up the terms "rhyme," "rhythm," "meter," "couplet," and "heroic couplet" in *Dr. Wheeler’s* website to determine the form and meter of this piece. Why would she choose that form and meter for this piece? Is it appropriate or not?
B. Does this piece represent what you would consider African American vernacular form or not? Use characteristics from Gates and McKay, Hurston, and other authors to define your decision.
C. Find another ode regarding imagination and compare Wheatley's piece to that ode. What are the similarities? Does she model the form well? How?
2/5, Read David Walker's background (227-8) and the excerpt from *David Walker's Appeal in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (228-38) and answer one of the following questions in a journal entry.

A. Look up the meaning of the word appeal in a dictionary. Define his appeals, the focus of his appeals, and whether they are valid appeals.

B. What is Walker's primary purpose of recording his appeals? As Gates and McKay propose, how well does Walker establish his argument in the text?

C. Look up the term "slave narrative" in “Glossary” for the text to determine whether this story qualifies as a slave narrative.

D. Research David Walker's narrative in *Literary Reference Center Plus* and *JSTOR* to learn what the primary arguments against Equiano's story are and whether or how those arguments were disproven.

2/5, Read Sojourner Truth's background (245-6), "Ar'n't I a Woman?" (246-7), also known as "Ain't I am Woman?", and the excerpt from *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth, 1878* (247-9) and answer one of the following questions:

A. What are her primary arguments for blacks in "Ar'n't I a Woman"? Are they logical? Why?

B. What are her primary arguments for women in "Ar'n't I a Woman"? Are they logical? Why?

C. Who was Mrs. Frances D. Gage and why would she write part of Truth's narrative? How does a second-hand account by this one woman affect the reflection of the narrative? How does that help or hinder the reader's understanding of whom Truth is?

2/7, Read Frederick Douglass' background (385-7) and the excerpt from *What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?: An Address Delivered in Rochester, New York, on 5 July 1852* (462-73) and answer one of the following questions:

A. Identify Douglass' primary argument and describe how he effectively supports the point throughout the piece. Identify lines and analyze their importance to his primary point.

B. Research his background and the New York address, who else spoke, and why his points are appropriate to offer at this event.

2/7, Read Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (387-452) and respond to one concept that you did not know prior to reading this work.

2/12, Read Frances E. W. Harper's background (491-4) and her piece titled "Woman's Political Future" (518-21) and answer one of the following questions:

A. Identify her primary argument and describe how she effectively supports the point throughout the piece. Identify lines and analyze their importance to her primary point.

B. Research her background and the Columbian Exposition, who else spoke, and why her points are appropriate to offer at this event.

2/12, Read Frances E. W. Harper's background (491-4) and her piece titled "Bury Me in a Free Land" (499-500) and answer one of the following questions:

A. Look up the terms "rhyme," "rhythm," and "meter" on Dr. Wheeler's website to determine the form and meter of this piece. Why would he choose that form and meter for this piece? Is it appropriate or not?
B. Trace a symbol throughout the work, describing its literal and figurative meaning as well as if the symbol is natural or conventional and open or closed.

C. What is the poem’s theme? Describe and show evidence of that theme throughout the poem.

2/12, Read Frances E. W. Harper's background (491-4) and her piece titled "The Slave Mother" (496-7) and answer one of the following questions:

A. Look up the terms "rhyme," "rhythm," and "meter" on Dr. Wheeler’s website to determine the form and meter of this piece. Why would he choose that form and meter for this piece? Is it appropriate or not?
B. Trace a symbol throughout the work, describing its literal and figurative meaning as well as if the symbol is natural or conventional and open or closed.
C. What is the poem’s theme? Describe and show evidence of that theme throughout the poem.

2/12, Read Frances E. W. Harper's background (491-4) and her piece titled “A Double Standard” (502-3) and answer one of the following questions:

A. Look up the terms “quatrain,” "rhyme," "rhythm," and "meter" on Dr. Wheeler’s website to determine the form and meter of this piece. Why would he choose that form and meter for this piece? Is it appropriate or not?
B. Trace a symbol throughout the work, describing its literal and figurative meaning as well as if the symbol is natural or conventional and open or closed.
C. What is the poem’s theme? Describe and show evidence of that theme throughout the poem.

2/14, Read Harriet Jacobs’ background (279-80) and the excerpt from Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (280-315) and answer one of the following questions:

A. Why would Jacobs feel compelled to include what she write in the Preface to her book? Research this work in Literary Reference Center Plus and JSTOR to confirm, support, or discredit your ideas?
B. What is the most striking point about her childhood that must be related about the life of a slave? Research this work in Literary Reference Center Plus and JSTOR to confirm, support, or discredit your ideas?
C. What is the most striking point about her masters that must be related about the life of a slave? Research this work in Literary Reference Center Plus and JSTOR to confirm, support, or discredit your ideas?
D. What is the most striking point about her motherhood that must be related about the life of a slave? Research this work in Literary Reference Center Plus and JSTOR to confirm, support, or discredit your ideas?
E. What is the most striking point about her attempts at escape that must be related about the life of a slave? Research this work in Literary Reference Center Plus and JSTOR to confirm, support, or discredit your ideas?

2/14, Read Henry Highland Garnet's background (345-6) and from An Address to the Slaves of the United States (346-52) respond to anything from his address.

2/19, Read Victor Séjour's background (352-3) and “The Mulatto” (353-65) respond to one of the following questions:

A. In studying literature, a reader must consider how well a story's plot is developed. Define the plot structure in Séjour's work, possibly beginning the entry by stating something similar to "The protagonist is ______, and the central conflict revolves around ______. This means that the plot progression
moves...” Do not use that sentence verbatim, but use the ideas to help you define elements of the plot.

The five tenets of classical plot development include:
1. exposition: where the protagonist, his or her flaws, background information, setting, and potentially foreshadowing to the conflict and the antagonist are introduced
2. rising action: where characters are developed thoroughly, the antagonist reveals his or her intentions for conflict and foreshadowing are offered, and the protagonist's ability to overcome the flaw/tragic end because of the flaw is revealed
3. climax: the highest point of conflict--where the protagonist and antagonist's clash produces a result of the protagonist overcoming the flaw or ending in tragedy--the climax is defined with the protagonist's issue, not the antagonist's
4. declining action: the tension in the conflict lessens and the protagonist's end is coming to a close
5. resolution/denouement: the central conflict is resolved and the protagonist's fate for the conflict is final

B. Who is the protagonist, and who is the antagonist in this work? Define each of the other characters in the story, too. Use the terms round or flat, dynamic or static, and direct and indirect characterization with all of the characters.

C. What is the central theme to this work? Show evidence throughout the work to illustrate this theme.

D. Trace a symbol throughout the work, describing its literal and figurative meaning as well as if the symbol is natural or conventional and open or closed.

2/19, Upload a draft of the paper with the Works Cited page into Turnitin so that I can review how Literary Analysis Paper One is coming along.

2/19, Read James M. Whitefield's background (483-4) and his poem “America” (484-7) respond to one of the following questions:

A. Look up the terms "rhyme," "rhythm," and "meter" on Dr. Wheeler’s website to determine the form and meter of this piece. Why would he choose that form and meter for this piece? Is it appropriate or not?
B. Trace a symbol throughout the work, describing its literal and figurative meaning as well as if the symbol is natural or conventional and open or closed.
C. What is the poem’s theme? Describe and show evidence of that theme throughout the poem.

2/19, Read James M. Whitefield's background (483-4) and his poem “Yes! Strike Again that Sounding String” (487-8) respond to one of the following questions:

A. Look up the terms "rhyme," "rhythm," and "meter" on Dr. Wheeler’s website to determine the form and meter of this piece. Why would he choose that form and meter for this piece? Is it appropriate or not?
B. Trace a symbol throughout the work, describing its literal and figurative meaning as well as if the symbol is natural or conventional and open or closed.
C. What is the poem’s theme? Describe and show evidence of that theme throughout the poem.

2/21, Read James M. Whitefield's background (483-4) and his poem “Self-Reliance” (488-90) respond to one of the following questions:

D. Look up the terms "rhyme," "rhythm," and "meter" on Dr. Wheeler’s website to determine the form and meter of this piece. Why would he choose that form and meter for this piece? Is it appropriate or not?
E. Trace a symbol throughout the work, describing its literal and figurative meaning as well as if the symbol is natural or conventional and open or closed.
F. What is the poem’s theme? Describe and show evidence of that theme throughout the poem.
Works Cited


---. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. Gates and McKay 387-452.


<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/>.


---. "To Mæcenas." Gates and McKay 27-8.