# THE SYNTHETIC ENGLISH CLASS

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A Final Portfolio

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## Narrative

It would seem that the pursuit of my MA in English has been a study in the synthetic. There was a time in high school when the word evoked for me only images of polyester and rayon. Next, I have a foggy memory of the word in conjunction with Hegel's system of thesis and antithesis that can only be from my undergraduate literary theory course. But the word finally took on a new level of importance for me when I found myself teaching AP English Language and Composition, a course for which students must compose a synthesized argument from provided sources. Today, I find myself applying the word to almost any case that involves the combination of ideas to produce something new. The four pieces included in this portfolio demonstrate my understanding of the English class as synthetic.

The first project included in this portfolio is "The Role of the Essay in Today's High School English Courses," and it explores the ways in which high school English teachers can, in effect, create a synthesized class by promoting and teaching reading and writing simultaneously. A research project I completed for English 6040 Graduate Writing, the project examines the need to use essays and literature as models for student writing. The project was inspired in part by Peter Elbow's "The Cultures of Literature and Composition: What Could Each Learn from the Other," which calls for the joining of the studies of literature and composition in an effort to better serve students.

The revision process for this piece began with a focus on stylistic elements. At the recommendation of Dr. Wallace, I integrated most of the epigraphs from the original draft into the text. Actually, if I recall, the epigraphs were a last-minute addition to the piece when I first submitted it to Dr. Wallace, so I am not surprised that he found them distracting and ineffective. Looking back, I feel the same way.

There is an early section in this paper that discusses the role of the Common Core State Standards as establishing nonfiction as an area study that needs to be promoted. As there has been much national discussion of the Common Core since the initial submission of this paper, I found that I needed to update some statistics. Interestingly, I found that in 2012, forty-five states had adopted the Common Core State Standards, but the current count is only forty-three.

One of the other suggestions Dr. Wallace made was that I focus more on rhetoric. As I revised my original piece, which contained a section entitled "The Creativity of the Essay," I felt as though I was ignoring the logic of the essay. I had assumed before that discussion of this aspect of the essay was not necessary because I believed it was the common approach to the essay. Upon revision, though I decided that an additional section—which I have called "The Logic of the Essay: Teaching Rhetoric"—would balance the section on creativity and help to demonstrate the essay's dual nature. I found that as I revised this project to reflect Dr. Wallace's suggestions regarding the effectiveness of using models in the classroom, what I was actually composing was a project on how to effectively use the task of close reading to facilitate the teaching of writing in a synthetic class.

The second piece in this portfolio is my "Technology and Communication Unit," which I wrote for Dr. Sue Carter Wood's Teaching of Writing course. At the heart of this unit is my interest in facilitating synthesis in my students' writing. The topic used for synthesis is that of technology's impact on communication, and it is one that has always interested my students and me. Though all of the pieces in this portfolio deal with teaching, this project required me to create a complete teaching unit, so it is the piece I would like to highlight as being "teaching based."

The revisions of this particular piece were less extensive than those for my other pieces. I made a few narrative comments that reflect what I learned from having taught this unit; however, the most significant change I made was the removal of the use of "Classical Topical Invention" to help students develop arguments. This was a method I had discovered the semester I composed the unit, and I had not yet implemented it in my classroom. While I have since used it with some success in units with my Advanced Placement English Language and Composition classes, I found it to be more confusing than helpful in my regular senior English classes. Since the original composition of this unit, I have found a careful study of three types of thesis statements (open, closed, and counterargument) to be a much more effective method to use with my students. The "Classical Topical Invention" section has been accordingly replaced with "Three Types of Thesis Statements." The production of a thesis is part of the final synthesis assignment that acts a capstone to the unit's close reading exercises.

Thus far, I have discussed the term *synthetic* as it might be applied to the multifaceted curriculum of the English class. However, the third project in my portfolio deals with the students within English classes. An effective English classroom consists of many voices working together to create meaning and understanding, and in this way, the English classroom is synthetic. "The Foreign Exchange Student in the Mainstream Classroom" examines the ways in which English teachers can facilitate a classroom environment that allows all voices to contribute and focuses particularly on the voices of foreign exchange students.

This project grew out of a unique teaching situation that I experienced early in my career. For several years I had three or four foreign exchange students each year in my

English classes, and I struggled to provide them with educational opportunities that met their specific needs. This paper was written for the Applied Syntax course that is part of the TESOL certificate program. Like the "Technology and Communication Unit" before it, this project is one that I have been able to draw upon in my classroom in the years since I wrote it.

In revising this piece, at the suggestion of Dr. Sheri Wells-Jensen, I added an excerpt from *Huckleberry Finn* and a discussion of the challenges it might present for foreign exchange students. As I examined the dialect used in the excerpt, I found that I was able to integrate into this paper some of what I had since learned from my Applied Phonology class so that the focus of the paper is no longer only on syntax. The remainder of my revisions consisted of rearranging some paragraphs for better transition and of adding some suggestive commentary on teaching methods from on my own experience. It has been a rewarding experience to implement strategies from this piece to promote the voices of students who sometimes go unheard.

The final project in this portfolio truly is a practice in the synthetic. In my eyes, it combines my greatest interests as it explores my interest in historical linguistics, translation studies, literary theory, and pedagogy. "Towards a Synthetic Understanding of *Beowulf*" was born of the work I did with Dr. Erin Labbie while taking English 6070: Theory and Methods of Literary Criticism. It is meant to be an application of the theories of authorship and translation to the text of *Beowulf*, as it might be studied in the secondary classroom. Following the formal paper are several learning modules in which I present methods for integrating theories of authorship and translation in the classroom.

What began with my interest in Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" eventually transformed into a more focused application of Walter Benjamin's writings. I originally submitted this paper to Dr. Labbie in the summer of 2013, and, though I had not formally revised it until this semester, I have been informally refining it since the day I turned it in. I have actually implemented several of the learning modules that I created for this paper and have found them to be effective and engaging. The revision of this piece, though the process was long, was guided by the exemplary feedback I received from Dr. Labbie. She had recommended several sources for me to explore, so revision consisted largely of examining those sources and carefully integrating them into my final piece. I found Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" to be particularly helpful in my revision, but I read several other pieces related to translation theory that found their way into my revisions.

I consider "Towards a Synthetic Understanding of *Beowulf*" to be the project that most evidentially presents "substantive research." Though I am proud of several of the projects I have done during my graduate education, it is the one piece I never tired of revising. Even though each of these pieces may demonstrate the synthetic nature of the English class, it is this piece and the suggestions I received from Dr. Labbie that shaped my thoughts on the subject.

Teaching English is a synthetic endeavor that has been at the heart of every project I have completed for my MA. It is a synthetic approach to students that has led me to facilitate opportunities for all voices to be heard in the English classroom. And it is a synthetic approach to curriculum that has led me to closely intertwine the studies of

composition, linguistics, and literature in an effort to promote in students an understanding of language as a whole.

## Project 1 Final

The Role of the Essay in Today's High School English Courses

The first time my students called the essay a "story," I assumed it was just careless language, but I quickly realized that the problem ran deeper than lazy terminology. The text we were discussing that day in my Advanced Placement English course was Jamaica Kincaid's "On Seeing England for the First Time." It was not my first time teaching the piece to high school seniors, but the discussion that ensued was not what I had expected.

After my students referred to the essay several times as a "story," I found myself drawing charts on the board and asking students to list the different qualities of stories as compared to the qualities of essays. To be fair even Robert DiYanni in his introduction to *One Hundred Great Essays,* an anthology of both classical and contemporary essays intended for use with college students, concedes that essays "can be compared with the short story in that some essays, like short stories, include narrative" (8). Certainly, this similarity is worth pointing out to students. However, my students had completely overlooked the fact that what they were reading was not a piece of fiction. It was no wonder that they were struggling; they were trying to fit the essay into their understanding of plot rather than examining the argumentative nature of the piece.

While teaching the story is an important part of every English teacher's job, contemporary nonfiction, specifically the essay, should be an integral part of every high school English class, as it provides not only an opportunity for rhetorical analysis, but also a model for students' own writing.

## A Difficult Definition

The essay is not always the easiest genre to define, perhaps, as DiYanni points out, because "Most essays, even the most personal ones, are composites and blends" (9). As it floats in the space of nonfiction, it can take many forms and include anything from research and data to narrative and reflection. While some essays neatly exemplify one mode of writing, i.e. narration, exposition, definition, description, comparison, process analysis, and persuasion, many essays often combine several of these modes, further complicating the issue of identifying what is and what is not an essay.

Though the essay may be challenging to define, its status as nonfiction may actually provide students with more direct writing to analyze. As Lauren Slater illustrates in *The Best American Essays 2006*, "The essay was an artery connecting the mind of the reader with the writer, the writer bare and unpretentious, the writer without the veil of character, without the rouge and foundation that compose fiction, which is, when all is said and done, a game of dress-up" (xvii). The essay in Slater's terms is a much more pure presentation of the writer's thoughts than can be gleaned from reading a writer's fiction. Slater goes on to make a distinction between journalism, a medium she deems primarily concerned with presenting clear facts after careful research. The essay, however, is not so much concerned with presenting *fact* as it is with presenting the writer's ideas in general. Unlike traditional journalism, the essay may include speculation and reflection. (Slater xvii). This difficulty in defining the genre arguably may be what makes the essay so difficult for students to recognize, but it may also be what makes it a rewarding genre for study.

As Robert DiYanni explains, the essay may address any range of topics, any type of audience, and any sort of purpose. One may find in a single anthology, essays about politics,

gender, science, sports, technology, or art. They may be aimed at the hostile listener or the agreeable audience. These essays may vary from bitterly sarcastic to wittily complimentary. They may be meant to entertain, persuade, or inform. It is this versatility of the essay as a genre that makes it especially useful in the classroom and has made it a topic of study for centuries (5-7).

## A New Initiative

The essay has roots that date back to the ancient Greek writer Plutarch, the Roman Seneca, and even the tenth-century, Japanese writer Sei Shonagon (DiYanni 1). In fact, the essay has prospered throughout time and throughout the world, with significant essayists popping up throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Not only are anthologies like *One Hundred Great* Essays being utilized in the classroom, but the publishing world has also been producing annual anthologies like *The Best American Essays* to be consumed by the general public for more than twenty years (DiYanni 5). The essay is nothing new, so why should we talk about teaching the essay now?

The Common Core State Standards is a set of benchmarks for student learning coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in an effort to improve K-12 education and better prepare high school graduates for college and the workforce. The standards seek to provide a common framework at a national level that is aligned with international standards. Formally adopted by forty-three states, the District of Columbia, and four territories, including adoption by Ohio in 2010, these standards have been developed with input from a wide range of individuals and organizations, and the Common Core State Standards Initiate Web site features links to endorsements from an array of

educational organizations (*Common Core State Standards Initiative*). Though there has been some outcry against the implementation of Common Core, the Common Core's mission statement is generally not the cause for upheaval, as it purports, "The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy" (*Common Core State Standards Initiative*).

As a state-led initiative, the implementation of the Common Core is at different stages across the country. Ohio's implementation plan has mandated that the K-12 Common Core State Standards will be in full use as a part of Ohio's New Learning Standards by 2014-2015 (Ohio Department of Education). It should come as no surprise, then, that teaching methods and content have been and continue to come under close scrutiny by teachers, principals, governmental organizations, and educational entities. It may be noted that prior to the adoption of the Common Core, many states were using their own set of benchmarks to standardize student learning. So even though the Common Core may not be shockingly different for many teachers, its implementation across the country at the state level has led to a reeducation of teachers and realignment of curriculum.

Common Core State Standards formally adopted in forty-three states advocate that: "Fulfilling the Standards for 6–12 ELA requires much greater attention to a specific category of informational text—literary nonfiction—than has been traditional. Because the ELA classroom must focus on literature (stories, drama, and poetry) as well as literary

nonfiction, a great deal of informational reading in grades 6–12 must take place in other classes" [1] ("Common Core" 5). As the country transitions to the Common Core, ELA teachers should be searching for ways to integrate nonfiction with short stories, novels, drama, and poetry. While I see many strengths in the Common Core State Standards, they seem to lack a discussion of the connection that should exist between the disciplines of reading and writing. Dividing the standards into Reading Standards and Writing Standards is logical, but there is a need in the future for an explanation of how these two disciplines can and should be fused in the ELA classroom.

### The Essay in AP

The Common Core clearly states the need for ELA teachers to teach both fiction and nonfiction texts, but this requirement to integrate the two is not new for many ELA teachers. Seven years ago, at the end of my first year teaching high school English, I was approached by my principal and asked to teach AP English Language and Composition the next year. The course would be new to our school, and I would have to develop and submit my own syllabus for approval by the College Board. Given the task of implementing a new course in my school district, I went straight to The College Board's *English Language and Composition Course Description*, and I found that students enrolling in the course "should be interested in studying and writing various kinds of analytic or persuasive essays on nonliterary topics" (College Board AP). I did not know it at the time, but teaching the AP English Language and Composition course, with its focus on nonfiction and rhetoric, would

[1]It may be worth noting that the Common Core has synonymized informational texts with literary nonfiction. While the essay may fall easily under the umbrella of "literary nonfiction," many essays may not fall under the category of "informational text."

be one of the key elements that made my transition to teaching under the Common Core smooth.

### What We Ask of Our Students

As I think back to my own experiences with nonfiction in school, I am hard-pressed to recall reading a single essay. I recall reading *The Odyssey*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Beowulf*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, and *Macbeth*. I can picture myself sitting at my desk writing essays about these great works of fiction. I can still tell you that I wrote a comparison essay about *The Lord of the Rings* my senior year. But I cannot recall reading a single essay in my entire high school experience, nor do I recall studying rhetorical strategies implemented by writers and speakers. Now, it could be that I just had no liking for essays, and I have blocked them from my memory. However, I should think that had we spent any significant time breaking down the rhetoric of Jonathan Swift or Jamaica Kincaid, I would have some inkling or recollection of these studies.

What I do remember though is writing essays. I recall writing quite a few of them. I, and perhaps my English teachers, could have benefited greatly from the advice of Renee H. Shea, Lawrence Scanlon, and Robin Dissin Aufses who point out that high school students "seldom read the type of writing they are required to produce—that is the essay" (1). If students are truly to be effective writers, they must be exposed to effective writing and asked to analyze the rhetorical strategies therein. It is this study that allows students to see the writing of others as a model for their own, eventually leading students to integrate the rhetorical techniques they identify in professional writing into their own.

As a course focused on nonfiction and rhetoric, AP English Language and Composition pushed me almost as far outside my comfort zone as a teacher as it would my

students. With units on writing editorials and literary analyses in my portfolio, I was not entirely new to teaching nonfiction. As I look back though at what I actually taught in my first year, I am amazed at how little I actually touched on rhetoric. I had thought I had been preparing my students for college writing. What I realized was that my own lessons were lacking a major component: a study of rhetoric in nonfiction. And while I desperately wanted to provide my students with the skills they would need for college, I was unsure of how to integrate these skills into my own classroom. Planning my AP course gave me the opportunity to start over from scratch, and over the years, I have found the concepts I teach in AP trickling down to the other courses I teach.

The textbook I started teaching AP with was Bedford/St. Martin's *The Language of Composition*, and with this text in hand, I armed myself to tackle nonfiction with special attention to the contemporary essay. The introduction *The Language of Composition* reminds teachers "traditionally, in English classes from elementary through high school, students read and study poetry, fiction, and drama to the near exclusion of nonfiction, as if it were not a form of literature. Our students are taught as if they are destined to become literary critics or at least English majors" (Shea 1).

Even in my class of AP students willing to challenge themselves beyond the rigors of a basic classroom, when I ask, "Who's planning to major in English next year?" students rarely raise their hands. While I would love to see my students studying Shakespeare and analyzing Aeschylus in college, the fact remains that many of them never will. What many of them will need to do though is comprehend and eventually create their own nonfiction pieces. Most of my students will need to analyze rhetorical effectiveness, and most of them will need, or at least want, to employ effective rhetorical strategies in their lives after high

school. It is this reminder that has driven me to integrate nonfiction and a study of rhetoric into all the courses I teach.

## The Logic of the Essay: Teaching Rhetoric

The task of teaching high school students to think critically and analyze and write effective, critical essays can seem daunting to teachers who spent much of their education studying literature, where the focus is often on appreciating a work rather than on using it. In teaching rhetoric the terminology itself—*warrant, confirmation, claim, backing, bias, rebuttal, syllogism*—can be daunting, but teachers need not make the matter of studying the rhetoric overly complicated for students. A few quick lessons with simple terminology will provide students with the skills and vocabulary they need for the entire year.

Teaching rhetoric is actually something that teachers can integrate gradually throughout the year. In fact, Richard L. Larson suggests, not that teachers teach entire courses or units on rhetoric, but instead that teachers "adopt a 'rhetorical perspective' in teaching composition" (1060). Larson's proposition does not advocate an overhaul of teaching methods and teaching texts. Instead he encourages teachers to "focus on the relationship of the writer (or speaker) and his listener" (1060). Larson finds fault with textbooks that purport to teach rhetoric, but fail to pay adequate attention to the relationship that should exist between the audience and the writer, a relationship that is quite apparent in Aristotelian rhetoric (1060). The Aristotelian triangle and rhetorical situation also prove, in my experience, to be relatively simple avenues to introduce students to the subject of rhetoric. Whether teaching the triangle with terms of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* or terms of *text*, *author*, and *audience*, students only have to learn three terms at

a time, and they grasp the concepts quickly when presented with real-world scenarios, which will be discussed later.

## The Creativity of the Essay

As teachers endeavor to build critically thinking students capable of logical argumentation and capable of recognizing the connections and similarities that may exist between pieces of both fiction and nonfiction, the worlds of literature and composition must coexist. In "The Cultures of Literature and Composition: What Could Each Learn from the Other?" Peter Elbow struggles with the separate worlds of literature and composition, two worlds that are often cordoned off into separate academic courses. Good essays, however, are written by people who both read and write, by people who both feel literature and analyze it. Elbow asserts: and while these worlds may be more separate in the college setting to which he refers, they are sometimes too separate in the high school curriculum as well.

Teaching composition is actually about teaching students how to think, about teaching them how to take what is in their minds and create something meaningful from it. Using the essay in the high school English class as a model for students' own writing should not be a task cordoned off from creativity. Rather it should be integrated with the language skills that students learn and employ when they study literature. As Peter Elbow points out: "there must be a marriage between literature and composition," and, Elbow admits in his forty years of teaching, he constantly struggled with his two identities as a literature person and as a composition person (466-8). However, the two worlds need not be exclusive. In the ideal classroom, the two fields are interspersed and interact with one another to create a multifaceted learning environment. After all, "The core activity in

teaching composition is the act of reading what's on students' minds; the core activity in teaching literature is reading the literary text" (Elbow 469). The student should and is very much involved in the teaching and learning of composition. And, as Elbow might say, the student is perhaps less involved in the teaching and learning of literature. Combining these two approaches—one focused on the student-teacher relationship, the other on the teacher-text relationship—would help demonstrate the importance of rhetorical situation in both literary analysis and writing.

In his essay Elbow advocates a culture of composition that learns from the culture of literature, and he reminds teachers that "many of the best and most effective essays don't just make good *use* of metaphors and images; rather, they grow out of imaginative metaphorical *thinking*—out of the imagination itself" (472). Elbow is right to worry that students focused only on the logic and clarity of argument will not have the skills to recognize imagination in what they read, nor will they have the skills to engage their imaginations in what they write.

At least in my own experience, high school students are rather well versed in analyzing the creative techniques involved in reading and writing fiction, but when it comes to doing the same with nonfiction, they struggle. They frequently see the purpose of nonfiction as only being to inform. Little thought is given to the role that creativity can play in the writing of an essay that may have the purpose of persuasion and argumentation. My students are adept at recognizing the effect of imagery in fiction, and when reading *Brave New World*, I ask students to focus on the way Huxley uses imagery to create mood in the opening of the novel. They are quick to understand the effectiveness of his descriptions, and attest that they felt the harsh light described by Huxley. However, it takes a set of

carefully orchestrated lessons to help students see that the same descriptive language can play an important role in the essays they read and write as well. Such lessons need to be at the heart of English instruction though if we want our students to be both logical and creative writers.

## What the Essay Can Offer

It should not come as a surprise that the introduction of *One Hundred Great Essays*, explains that reading the essay "requires careful attention to language—to the words on the page and to what's 'written between the lines'" (9). These are not only the skills English teachers would like students to apply to their reading (of both fiction and nonfiction), but these are also the same skills that students should be applying to their own writing. If students are ever to become competent revisionists of their own writing, they must learn to pay "careful attention to [their own] language" and learn to read what is "written between the lines" of their own pages.

In her article "Eavesdropping on Contemporary Minds: Why We Need More Essays in Our High School Classrooms," Kimberly Hill Campbell, whose experience in the classroom proved to her that the essay is an important mode in demonstrating to her students that writing actually does occur and matter outside the realm of academia, explains that, though she had been using classical essays for years, she took too long to work contemporary essays into her teaching. She emphasizes that students need to be aware that essays exist outside the world of school. In her classroom she used essays by Dave Berry to start discussions and show students that essays can actually be fun. Studying essays of contemporary authors helps validate the skills that students may otherwise see as pointless.

## Lessons from My Own Experience

Early in the school year, I introduce students to the basics of rhetoric by drawing the Aristotelian triangle on the board, and labeling it with the terms: *text*, *author*, and *audience*. I then present students with a rhetorical situation. The student is the speaker trying to convince his parent to allow him to go to a party, and I have students write out the argument they would use with their parents. Then I change the audience and purpose; they might be convincing a friend to give them a ride to the party. Such scenarios open up a discussion of how audience and purpose shape the words and explanations that are used in writing. Students are engaged, and effortlessly, I am able to work in more terminology during discussion. Often these quick scenarios lead to more in-depth lessons on appeals and types of evidence. Once students have mastered the basic vocabulary, I move them on to apply their newly acquired vocabulary to written works, beginning with letters or familiar speeches which both have clear audiences and speakers. As the school year progresses, I add in small doses of rhetoric, encouraging students to expand their vocabularies and apply the skills we discuss.

I make a pointed effort to work in the most contemporary examples of essays I can find, and with these pieces, students begin to realize that literary and rhetorical analysis is not something that occurs only under the fluorescent lights of the classroom. For eight years I have asked my senior English students to read "The General Prologue" of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, an activity that culminates in their writing their own prologues, but it was not until recently that students actually came to enjoy the study of archetypes. For that I have to thank Mindy Kaling, whose essay "Flick Chicks" caught my attention in *The New Yorker* in October of 2011. As soon as I read the piece, I flagged it with the word "archetype"

and filed it away to be pulled out in my upcoming unit. In it Kaling lays out seven stereotypical characters that appear in romantic comedies, but, most importantly, Kaling lays them out with a brutal wit that even high-school students who seldom read essays can appreciate. After a brief introduction to Chaucer and the concept of archetypes, I assign students to read Kaling's essay with the simple task of marking any parts they find funny. The next day we begin our discussion with students sharing what they found humorous. Of course, they quote lines like "If you look closely, you can see this woman's ribs through the dress she's wearing—that's how skinny she is, this cheesecake-loving cow" where Kaling is describing the archetype of "The Skinny Woman Who Is Beautiful and Toned but Also Gluttonous and Disgusting" (37). Students enjoy Kaling's contemporary references to films like *The Human Centipede* and *Taken*, actors like Katherine Heigl and Patrick Dempsey. It doesn't take long before students are bringing up their own examples of each archetype, asking me if a specific woman in *Valentine's Day* or *Mean Girls* could qualify as one of Kaling's archetypes. Articles like "Flick Chicks" show students that the skills they practice while reading classic pieces like *The Canterbury Tales* are skills that can and are still used today. It's essays like Kaling's that help validate the work that students are asked to do each day. Not only do the humor and contemporary references lock in students' attention, but they also reveal that rhetorical analysis is actually a skill that they may one day use post high school.

Not only do contemporary essays spark interest in literary studies, but they also serve an important function as models for students' own essays. Don Pedersen begins his article "Question and Answer: Reading Nonfiction to Develop the Persuasive Essay," with a question posed by one of his colleagues—a question I think all English teachers should be

asking—"Doesn't it seem odd to you that we're asking students to write argumentative and analytical essays, but they read primarily fiction?" (59). It only makes sense that if we want students to write nonfiction, they should also be reading and analyzing nonfiction. No one asks students to compose a sonnet without first studying the iambic pentameter and rhyme scheme of a few sonnets. Why then does it seem so common to ask students to write an essay without so much as reading a single example?

Like many teachers of senior English, I require my students to practice writing college application essays. I am embarrassed to admit that my first year teaching I taught this unit by giving students a list of attributes that admissions officials might look for in an essay and reading one or two sample college application essays. It should not have been a surprise to me when my students' own essays left something to be desired. Over the years I have carefully honed my teaching of the application essay, and I am finally seeing my students grow as writers. Not only do I give students sample essays, but, together, we also carefully dissect each sample.

I start with two essays from NPR's *This I Believe* series—Howard White's "The Power of Hello" and Wayne Coyne's "Creating Our Own Happiness." These two essays become the foundation for the unit, and as a class we annotate the two texts, paying specific attention to the author's use of thesis statements, restatement of thesis statements, and examples to support their thesis statements, since it is focused and specific evidence that tend to be the most challenging for my students to maintain in their own writing. After completing the close reading of these two texts, I ask my students to complete what I have dubbed a "*This I Believe* Scavenger Hunt." Students access the *This I Believe* Web site and its thousands of essays, and I ask them to find examples of a list of elements, including an

introduction that grabs their attention, a strong use of imagery, and a sentence with intriguing structure. The next day students share their findings with the class, and we discuss what writing techniques were most often cited by students as effective. Students then have a bank of techniques to experiment with in their own writing.

Using essays as models in the classroom need not take days out of precious class time though. Perhaps one of my most successful uses took only ten minutes. I read the following opening to a feature story on Adele to discuss techniques for opening introductions:

> Standing on stage at New York City's tiny, cavelike Mercury Lounge, a striking young songstress is explaining that the jaggedly melancholic ballad she is about to play was inspired by a former beau. "He's been a huge influence on my songwriting," she confesses, her British accent more pronounced when she speaks. The young woman is smiling, but not joking. Later, after returning to the stage for an encore, she will introduce another tune to the rapt crowd with the words "This song completes the file on my ex-boyfriend." She isn't a star yet—her debut album won't be out for several months—but in this room tonight, the possibility hangs there like a promise. ("Adele: Someone Like Her")

When I stop reading at this point, students thought I was playing a guessing game with them, and they called out the names of a few songstresses, with a few correct answers. When I handed them copies of the complete introduction, they quickly realized that they were in for a bit of quick analysis. I asked students to underline the words, phrases, and techniques that stood out to them, as they re-read the complete introduction. Students

were quick to note the strong vocabulary of the author, the vivid adjectives, the interesting use of dashes. We talked about the technique of intrigue that the author used to draw the reader into the article, and then we moved on.

It wasn't until a few days later when a student came in for help on an essay that she had written that I realized how powerful the Adele introduction had been. The student had been working on revising a personal essay about her experience with volunteer work, and when she sat down at my desk she started with: "I reread my introduction, and I hate it. It's boring. I want it to sound more like the Adele introduction we read in class." That's when I realized just how powerful models are for students as they compose their own essays. As it turns out, the student added a descriptive introduction to her essay, a description of her nervous state as she spoke in front of the entire high school about volunteering. When teachers provide students with examples of strong writing and with the tools to analyze strong writing, good students will gladly pick up those tools and apply them to their own writing endeavors.

In "Rhetorical Theory and the Teaching of Writing," Andrea Lunsford and Cheryl Glenn remind teachers that "they must learn to share authority, thereby enabling students to experience, create, and evaluate their own and others' texts" (Glenn 460). Students then become engaged in their learning and take ownership of and responsibility for their own success as readers, writers, and learners. Model essays, both classic and contemporary, help provide relevance to the work students do in the classroom, and students begin to see that writing is not purely an academic exercise.

## Conclusions

In teaching writing, "relevance" is always on the tip of every good instructor's tongue, and many experts in the field of teaching writing will point out that "relevance" can be achieved by focusing on the rhetorical situation of a writing assignment. As Linda Flower and John R. Hayes note in "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing," "At the beginning of composing, the most important element is obviously the rhetorical problem itself" (259). Students need to understand that to be effective writers they must be engaged in the situation; they must understand their role in conveying information to their audience. Lunsford and Glenn remind us: "As language users, we must be responsible for our words, must take the responsibility for examining our own and others' language and seeing how well, how truly, it represents the speaker" (462). When English teachers are able to help students realize this point, they have become effective teachers because it is at this point that students take responsibility for their own learning, and it is at this point that reading and writing no longer are mere academic exercises, but rather applicable practices.

The key to quality essay-writing instruction is actually quality critical thinking instruction, and asking students to analyze the rhetorical choices of authors, recognizing the effectiveness of various strategies, and applying these realizations to their own work is at the heart of critical thinking. Integrating the contemporary essay into the ELA curriculum will inspire students to use the essay as a means of developing their own understanding of the world around them.

The essay as a difficult genre to define deserves a place in high school curriculum, and as teachers across the country reconsider the content of their courses and their methods of instructions in alignment with the new Common Core State Standards, it is

necessary that they consider the role that this enigmatic genre can play in the teaching of rhetorical analysis, the appreciation of fiction, and the inspiration of composition.

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## Project 1 Original with Comments

Katherine Budke

Dr. Wallace

English 6040

7 December 2012

The Role of the Contemporary Essay in Today's High School English Courses

In preparation for the day's lesson in Advanced Placement English, I had annotated my copy of the reading, prepared an opening prompt for a journal entry, and written discussion questions. The text we would be discussing that day in class was Jamaica Kincaid's "On Seeing England for the First Time," and the discussion that ensued was not what I had expected.

The first time my students called the essay a "story," I assumed it was just careless language, but I quickly realized that the problem ran deeper than lazy terminology. Soon, I was drawing charts on the board and asking students to list the different qualities of stories verses essays. My students had completely overlooked the fact that what they were reading was not a piece of fiction, and they had been attempting to fit it into their concept of a story, rather than examining the argumentative nature of the piece. While teaching the story is an important part of every English teacher's job, the contemporary essay should be an integral part of every high school English class, as it provides not only opportunity for rhetorical analysis, but also a model for students' own writing of their own contemporary essays, providing opportunities for critical thinking and inspiration.

**A Difficult Definition**

*Most essays, even the most personal ones, are composites and blends.*—Robert DiYanni

The essay is not always the easiest genre to define. As it floats in the space of nonfiction, it can take many forms and include anything from research and facts to narrative and reflection. As Lauren Slater describes in *The Best American Essays 2006*, "The essay was an artery connecting the mind of the reader with the writer, the writer bare and unpretentious, the writer without the veil of character, without the rouge and foundation that compose fiction, which is, when all is said and done, a game of dress-up" (xvii). The essay in Slater's terms is a much more pure presentation of the writer's thoughts than can be gleaned from reading a writer's fiction. Slater goes on to make a distinction between journalism, a medium she deems primarily concerned with presenting clear facts after careful research. The essay, however, is not so much concerned with presenting *fact* as it is with presenting the writer's ideas in general. Unlike traditional journalism, the essay may include speculation and reflection. (xvii).

As Robert DiYanni explains in *One Hundred Great Essays*, an anthology of both classical and contemporary essays intended for use with college students, the essay may address any range of topics, any type of audience, and any sort of purpose. One may find in a single anthology, essays about politics, gender, science, sports, technology, or art. They may be aimed at the hostile listener or the agreeable audience. These essays may vary from bitterly sarcastic to wittily complimentary. They may be meant to entertain, persuade, or inform. It is this versatility of the essay as a genre that makes it especially useful in the classroom and has made it a topic of study for centuries (DiYanni).

**A New Initiative**

*The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The*

*standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.*—Common Core State Standards Initiative Mission Statement

As chronicled in *One Hundred Great Essays*, the essay has roots that date back to the ancient Greek writer Plutarch, the Roman Seneca, and even the tenth-century, Japanese writer Sei Shonagon (DiYanni 1). The essay has prospered throughout time and throughout the world, with significant essayists popping up throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Not only are anthologies like *One Hundred Great* Essays being utilized in the classroom, but the publishing world has been producing annual anthologies like *The Best American Essays* to be consumed by the general public for more than twenty years (DiYanni). The essay is nothing new, so why is should we talk about teaching the essay now?

The Common Core State Standards is a set of benchmarks for student learning coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in an effort to improve K-12 education and better prepare high school graduates for college and the workforce. The standards seek to provide a common framework at a national level that is aligned with international standards. Formally adopted by forty-five states and three territories, including adoption by Ohio in 2010, these standards have been developed with input from a wide range of individuals and organizations, and the Common Core State Standards Initiate Web site features links to endorsements from a plethora of educational organizations (*Common Core State Standards Initiative*).

As a state-led initiative, the implementation of the Common Core is at different stages across the country. Ohio's implementation plan has mandated that the K-12 Common Core State Standards will be in full use as a part of Ohio's New Learning Standards by 2014-2015 (Ohio Department of Education). So it should come as no surprise that teaching methods and content have been and continue to come under close scrutiny by teachers, principals, governmental organizations, and educational entities. It may be noted that prior to the adoption of the Common Core, many states were using their own set of benchmarks to standardize student learning. So even though the Common Core may not be shockingly different for many teachers, its implementation across the country at the state level has led to a reeducation of teachers and realignment of curriculum.

As the country transitions to the Common Core, ELA teachers should be searching for ways to integrate nonfiction with short stories, novels, drama, and poetry. While I see many strengths in the Common Core State Standards, they seem to lack a discussion of the connection that should exist between the disciplines of reading and writing. Dividing the standards into Reading Standards and Writing Standards is logical, but there is a need in the future for an explanation of how these two disciplines can and should be fused in the ELA classroom. Common Core State Standards formally adopted in forty-five states advocate that: "Fulfilling the Standards for 6–12 ELA requires much greater attention to a specific category of informational text—literary nonfiction—than has been traditional. Because the ELA classroom must focus on literature (stories, drama, and poetry) as well as

literary nonfiction, a great deal of informational reading in grades 6–12 must take place in other classes"[2] ("Common Core" 5).

**The Essay in AP**

*Students choosing AP English Language and Composition should be interested in studying and writing various kinds of analytic or persuasive essays on nonliterary topics*— The College Board, *English Language and Composition Course Description*

The Common Core clearly states the need for ELA teachers to teach both fiction and nonfiction texts, but this requirement to integrate the two is not new for many ELA teachers. Five years ago, at the end of my first year teaching high school English, I was approached by my principal and asked to teach AP English Language and Composition the next year. The course would be new to our school, and I would have to develop and submit my own syllabus for approval by the College Board. I had no idea what I was getting myself into, but as a new teacher, I could think of no reason to say no.

**What We Ask of Our Students**

*It is no small concern (and no small irony) that in their high school English classes students seldom read the type of writing they are required to produce—that is, the essay.* --Renee H Shea. Lawrence Scanlon and Robin Dissin Aufses

As I think back to my own experiences with nonfiction in school, I am hard-pressed to recall reading a single essay. I recall reading *The Odyssey*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Beowulf*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, and *Macbeth*. I can picture myself sitting at my desk writing essays about these great works of fiction. I can still tell you that I wrote a comparison essay about

[2] [2]It may be worth noting that the Common Core has synonymized informational texts with literary nonfiction. While the essay may fall easily under the umbrella of "literary nonfiction," many essays may not fall under the category of "informational text."

*The Lord of the Rings* my senior year. But I cannot recall reading a single essay in my entire high school experience. Now, it could be that I just had no liking for essays, and I have blocked them from my memory. However, I should think that had we spent any significant time breaking down the rhetoric of Jonathan Swift or Jamaica Kincaid, I would have some inkling of recollection for these studies.

As a course focused on nonfiction and rhetoric, AP English Language and Composition pushed me almost as far outside my comfort zone as a teacher as it would my students. With units on writing editorials and literary analyses in my portfolio, I was not entirely new to teaching nonfiction. After all, what kind of a teacher would I be if I never had my students write essays? As I look back though at what I actually taught in my first year, I am amazed at how little I actually touched on the teaching of rhetoric. Digging through the College Board's course description of AP English Language and Composition (which includes a rather lengthy discussion of the expectations of the college composition class) I recall growing evermore dissatisfied with my own curriculum (College Board AP). I had thought I had been preparing my students for college writing. What I realized was that my own lessons were lacking a major component: a study of rhetoric in nonfiction. And while I desperately wanted to provide my students with the skills they would need for college, I was unsure of how to integrate these skills into my own classroom. Planning my AP course gave me the opportunity to start over from scratch, and over the years, I have found the concepts I teach in AP trickling down to the other courses I teach.

The textbook I started teaching AP with was Bedford/St. Martin's *The Language of Composition*, and with this text in hand, I armed myself to tackle nonfiction with special attention to the contemporary essay. The introduction *The Language of Composition*

reminds teachers "traditionally, in English classes from elementary through high school, students read and study poetry, fiction, and drama to the near exclusion of nonfiction, as if it were not a form of literature. Our students are taught as if they are destined to become literary critics or at least English majors" (Shea 1).

Even in my class of AP students willing to challenge themselves beyond the rigors of a basic classroom, when I ask, "Who's planning to major in English next year?" zero of eighteen students raise their hands. Admittedly, this number is slightly lower than my average polls, but I have come to realize that most of my students are going to continue their studies in an area that—well, let's face it—offers a much more lucrative future for them. While I would love to see my students studying Shakespeare and analyzing Aeschylus in college, the fact remains that many of them never will. What many of them will need to do though is comprehend and eventually create their own nonfiction pieces. It is this reminder that has driven me to integrate nonfiction into all the courses I teach.

**The Creativity of the Essay**

*Surely many of the best and most effective essays don't just make good* use *of metaphors and images; rather, they grow out of imaginative metaphorical* thinking—*out of the imagination itself. But we won't understand the craft of such essays unless we feel their roots in the imagination rather than only in the clear logical thinking and language.*—Peter Elbow.

As teachers work to build critically thinking students capable of logical argumentation and capable of recognizing the connections and similarities that may exist between pieces of both fiction and nonfiction, the worlds of literature and composition must coexist. In "The Cultures of Literature and Composition: What Could Each Learn from

the Other?" Peter Elbow struggles with the separate worlds of literature and composition, and while these worlds may be more separate in the college setting to which he refers, they are sometimes too separate in the high school curriculum as well.

Teaching composition is actually about teaching students how to think, about teaching them how to take what is in their minds and create something meaningful from it. Using the essay in the high school English class as a model for students' own writing should not be a task cordoned off from creativity. Rather it should be integrated with the language skills that students learn and employ when they study literature. As Peter Elbow points out: "there must be a marriage between literature and composition," and . Elbow admits in his forty years of teaching, he constantly struggled with his two identities as a literature person and as a composition person (466-8). However, the two worlds need not be exclusive. In the ideal classroom, the two fields are interspersed and interact with one another to create a multifaceted learning environment. After all, "The core activity in teaching composition is the act of reading what's on students' minds; the core activity in teaching literature is reading the literary text" (Elbow 469). The student should and is very much involved in the teaching and learning of composition. And, as Elbow, might say, the student is perhaps less involved in the teaching and learning of literature. Combining these two approaches—one focused on the student-teacher relationship, the other on the teacher-text relationship—would help demonstrate the importance of rhetorical situation in both literary analysis and writing.

In his essay Elbow advocates a culture of composition that learns from the culture of literature, and he reminds teachers that "many of the best and most effective essays don't just make good *use* of metaphors and images; rather, they grow out of imaginative

metaphorical *thinking*—out of the imagination itself" (472). Elbow is right to worry that students focused only on the logic and clarity of argument will not have the skills to recognize imagination in what they read, nor will they have the skills to engage their imaginations in what they write.

At least in my own experience, high school students are rather well versed in analyzing the creative techniques involved in reading and writing fiction, but when it comes to doing the same with nonfiction, they struggle. They frequently see the purpose of nonfiction as only being to inform. Little thought is given to the role that creativity can play in the writing of an essay that may have the purpose of persuasion and argumentation. My students are adept at recognizing the effect of imagery in fiction, and when reading *Brave New World*, I ask students to focus on the way Huxley uses imagery to create mood in the opening of the novel. They are quick to understand the effectiveness of his descriptions, and attest that they felt the harsh light described by Huxley. However, it takes a set of carefully orchestrated lessons to help students see that the same descriptive language can play an important role in the essays they read and write as well. Such lessons need to be at the heart of English instruction though if we want our students to be both logical and creative writers.

**What the Essay Can Offer**

*Reading essays is a lot like reading other forms of literature.*—Robert DiYanni

It should not come as a surprise that the introduction of *One Hundred Great Essays*, explains that reading the essay "requires careful attention to language—to the words on the page and to what's 'written between the lines'" (9). These are not only the skills English teachers would like students to apply to their reading (of both fiction and nonfiction), but

these are also the same skills that students should be applying to their own writing. If students are ever to become competent revisionists of their own writing, they must learn to pay "careful attention to [their own] language" and learn to read what is "written between the lines" of their own pages.

In her article "Eavesdropping on Contemporary Minds: Why We Need More Essays in Our High School Classrooms," Kimberly Hill Campbell, whose experience in the classroom proved to her that the essay is an important mode in demonstrating to her students that writing actually does occur and matter outside the realm of academia, explains that, though she had been using classical essays for years, she took too long to work contemporary essays into her teaching. She emphasizes that students need to be aware that essays exist outside the world of school. In her classroom she used essays by Dave Berry to start discussions and show students that essays can actually be fun. Studying essays of contemporary authors helps validate the skills that students may otherwise see as pointless.

**Lessons From My Own Experience**

In my own classroom, I make a pointed effort to work in the most contemporary examples of essays I can find, and with these pieces, students begin to realize that literary analysis is not something that occurs only under the fluorescent lights of the classroom. For six years I have asked my senior English students to read "The General Prologue" of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, an activity that culminates in their writing their own prologues, but it was not until recently that students actually came to enjoy the study of archetypes. For that I have to thank Mindy Kaling, whose essay "Flick Chicks" caught my attention in *The New Yorker* in October of 2011. As soon as I read the piece, I flagged it with the word

"archetype" and filed it away to be pulled out in my upcoming unit. Kaling lays out seven stereotypical characters that appear in romantic comedies, but, most importantly, Kaling lays them out with a brutal wit that even high-school students who seldom read essays can appreciate. After a brief introduction to Chaucer and the concept of archetypes, I assign students to read Kaling's essay with the simple task of marking any parts they find funny. The next day we begin our discussion with students sharing what they found humorous. Of course, they quote lines like "If you look closely, you can see this woman's ribs through the dress she's wearing—that's how skinny she is, this cheesecake-loving cow" where Kaling is describing the archetype of "The Skinny Woman Who Is Beautiful and Toned but Also Gluttonous and Disgusting" (Kaling 37). Students enjoy Kaling's contemporary references to films like *The Human Centipede* and *Taken*, actors like Katherine Heigl and Patrick Dempsey. It doesn't take long before students are bringing up their own examples of each archetype, asking me if a specific woman in *Valentine's Day* or *Mean Girls* could qualify as one of Kaling's archetypes. It's articles like "Flick Chicks" that show students that the skills they practice while reading classic pieces like *The Canterbury Tales* are skills that can and are still used today. It's essays like Kaling's that help validate the work that students are asked to do each day. Not only do the humor and contemporary references lock in students attention, but they start to see that rhetorical analysis like the study of archetypes I ask them to do with *The Canterbury Tales* is actually a skill that they may one day use post high school.

Not only do contemporary essays spark interest in literary studies, but they also serve an important function as models for students' own essays. Don Pedersen begins his article "Question and Answer: Reading Nonfiction to Develop the Persuasive Essay," with a

question posed by one of his colleagues—a question I think all English teachers should be asking—"Doesn't it seem odd to you that we're asking students to write argumentative and analytical essays, but they read primarily fiction?" (59). It only makes sense that if we want students to write nonfiction, they should also be reading and analyzing nonfiction. No one asks students to compose a sonnet without first studying the iambic pentameter and rhyme scheme of a few sonnets. Why then does it seem so common to ask students to write an essay without so much as reading a single example?

Like many teachers of senior English, I require my students to practice writing college application essays. I am embarrassed to admit that my first year teaching I taught this unit by giving students a list of attributes that admissions officials might look for in an essay and reading one or two sample college application essays. It should not have been a surprise to me when my students' own essays left something to be desired. Over the years I have carefully honed my teaching of the application essay, and I am finally seeing my students' grow as writers. Not only do I give students sample essays, but, together, we carefully dissect each sample.

I start with two essays from NPR's *This I Believe* series—Howard White's "The Power of Hello" and Wayne Coyne's "Creating Our Own Happiness." These two essays become the foundation for the unit, and as a class we annotate the two texts, paying specific attention to the author's use of thesis statements, restatement of thesis statements, and examples to support their thesis statements, since it is focus and specific evidence that tend to be the most challenging for my students to maintain in their own writing. After completing the close reading of these two texts, I ask my students to complete what I have dubbed a "*This I Believe* Scavenger Hunt." Students are given access to *This I Believe*'s Web

site and its thousands of essays, and I ask them to find examples of a list of things, including an introduction that grabs their attention, a strong use of imagery, and a sentence with intriguing structure. The next day students share their findings with the class, and we discuss what writing techniques were most often cited by students as effective. Students then have a bank of techniques to experiment with in their own writing.

Using essays as models in the classroom need not take days out of precious class time though. Perhaps one of my most successful uses took only ten minutes. Whenever I read, I keep my eyes peeled for strong writing that might serve to help my students, so when I read the following opening to a feature story on Adele in *Entertainment Weekly*, I clipped it to share with my class. Even though we were not focusing on writing introductions, I opened the class by reading:

> Standing on stage at New York City's tiny, cavelike Mercury Lounge, a striking young songstress is explaining that the jaggedly melancholic ballad she is about to play was inspired by a former beau. "He's been a huge influence on my songwriting," she confesses, her British accent more pronounced when she speaks. The young woman is smiling, but not joking. Later, after returning to the stage for an encore, she will introduce another tune to the rapt crowd with the words "This song completes the file on my ex-boyfriend." She isn't a star yet—her debut album won't be out for several months—but in this room tonight, the possibility hangs there like a promise. ("Adele: Someone Like Her")

When I stopped at this point, students thought I was playing a guessing game with them, and they called out the names of a few songstresses, with a few correct answers. When I

handed them copies of the complete introduction, they quickly realized that they were in for a bit of quick analysis. Asking students to underline the words, phrases, and techniques that stood out to them, as they re-read the complete introduction. Students were quick to note the strong vocabulary of the author, the vivid adjectives, the interesting use of dashes. We talked about the technique of intrigue that the author used to draw the reader into the article, and then we moved on to the day's lesson.

It wasn't until a few days later when a student came in for help on an essay that she had written that I realized how powerful the Adele introduction had been. The student had been working on revising a personal essay about her experience with volunteer work, and when she sat down at my desk she started with: "I reread my introduction, and I hate it. It's boring. I want it to sound more like the Adele introduction we read in class." That's when I realized just how powerful models are for students as they compose their own essays. As it turns out, the student added a descriptive introduction to her essay, a description of her nervous state when addressing the high school about volunteering. When teachers provide students with examples of strong writing and with the tools to analyze strong writing, good students will gladly pick up those tools and apply them to their own writing endeavors.

In "Rhetorical Theory and the Teaching of Writing," Andrea Lunsford and Cheryl Glenn remind teachers that "they must learn to share authority, thereby enabling students to experience, create, and evaluate their own and others' texts" (Glenn 460). Students then become engaged in their learning and take ownership of and responsibility for their own success as readers, writers, and learners. Model essays, both classic and contemporary, help provide relevance to the work students do in the classroom. Students begin to see that writing is not purely an academic exercise.

**Conclusions**

In teaching writing, "relevance" is always on the tip of every good instructor's tongue, and many experts in the field of teaching writing will point out that "relevance" can be achieved by focusing on the rhetorical situation of a writing assignment. As Linda Flower and John R. Hayes note in "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing," "At the beginning of composing, the most important element is obviously the rhetorical problem itself" (259). Students need to understand that to be effective writers they must be engaged in the situation; they must understand their role in conveying information to their audience. Lunsford and Glenn remind us "As language users, we must be responsible for our words, must take the responsibility for examining our own and others' language and seeing how well, how truly, it represents the speaker" (462). When English teachers are able to help students realize this point, they have become effective teachers because it is at this point that students take responsibility for their own learning, and it is at this point that reading and writing no longer are mere academic exercises, but rather applicable practices.

The key to quality essay-writing instruction is actually quality critical thinking instruction, and asking students to analyze the rhetorical choices of authors, recognizing the effectiveness of various strategies, and applying these realizations to their own work is at the heart of critical thinking. Integrating the contemporary essay into the ELA curriculum will inspire students to use the essay as a means of developing their own understanding of the world around them.

The essay as a difficult genre to deserves a place in high school curriculum, and as teachers across the country reconsider the content of their courses and their methods of instructions in alignment with the new Common Core State Standards, it is necessary that

they consider the role that this enigmatic genre can play in the teaching of rhetorical analysis, the appreciation of fiction, and the inspiration of composition.

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***Comments***

HI Katie!

Nice work on revising your draft--I think you really strengthened your argument all-around, and your final piece is very strong. I only have a few suggestions, should you choose to use this essay for your final portfolio.

1.)while I liked the section headings, I found the use of more than a few (i.e., 2) epigraphs distracting. I'd suggest integrating all of the epigraphs except for the very first one into the text itself.

2.)your focus on rhetoric could be brought out a bit more explicitly throughout--you raise it at the beginning, but then don't come back to it (again, in an explicit way) until the end. This might entail actually using some more sources--or integrating more citations from the sources you already have--that specifically refer to the benefits of studying rhetoric. This seems relevant given that what you're arguing is the use a particularly rhetorically-specific genre of writing, used to do particular things. Furthermore, if we follow your argument re: using models to demonstrate student writing goals (which I do!), then what we are teaching when we're teaching essays is not to "appreciate" the essay (which is the stereotype of the "literary" model of teaching) but rather to actually USE the form of the essay do DO something: persuade, etc.

Thanks again, and have a great break!

Rob

## Project 2 Final (Teaching)

Technology and Communication Unit

**Unit Description:**

This unit is designed to use near the beginning of the year. The unit addresses the issue of technology's effects on communication. Students will journal and answer analysis questions both orally and in writing throughout the unit. The culmination of the unit will be a short, single-source, argumentative essay in which the students make a claim about technology and communication using one of the texts analyzed in class as either supporting evidence or as a counterpoint to their claim.

The methods used in this unit have been chosen to emphasize writing as a process. Activities are meant to build to the final synthesis essay by starting with more basic summarizing activities and moving towards students engaging with a source in their own arguments.

**Unit Objectives:**

- Students will be able to identify the main points made by Goldwasser in "What's the Matter with Kids Today?"
- Students will be able to write summaries of the main points made by Goldwasser.
- Students will be able to identify the subject and message in cartoons.
- Students will be able to summarize in writing the message of cartoons.
- Students will be able to synthesize opinions from either the Goldwasser essay or one of the cartoons with their own opinions regarding technology's effects on communication.

**Level:** Grade 12

**Assessment:**

All journal entries will be assessed once a quarter for completion. I will informally assess understanding during the unit as students share their journal entries in small groups or as a whole class. The final writing assignment will be assessed according to the rubric in Appendix C. Completion of in-class activities including participation in peer-response groups may be graded on a pass/fail scale.

**Methods:**

**Day 1**

Statement of Purpose: Technology affects all of you every day. (Some of you are probably on your laptops now as I say this.) Today I want you each to consider what role technology plays in communication. Take a few minutes to respond in your journal to the prompt on the board.

1. Give students 10 minutes to write a journal entry in response to the following question.
    a. Do you think the technology has had a positive or a negative effect on communication? Give examples to support your opinion.
2. Share responses briefly with a partner. Then move to sharing with the whole class. Create a class chart that lists positive and negative examples addressed by students.
3. Assign students to read "What's the Matter with Kids Today?" by Amy Goldwasser.
    a. Goldwasser, Amy. "What's the Matter with Kids Today?" *They Say/I Say: With Readings.* Ed. Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. 236-40. Print.
4. Have students write answers to the following questions adapted from *They Say/I Say: With Readings.*
    a. What is the view that Amy Goldwasser argues against, and what evidence does she offer in support of that view?
    b. What is your reaction to the quotation from Nobel Prize-winning writer Doris Lessing, in paragraph 2? Why do you think Goldwasser quotes Lessing?
        i. This question will be particularly important to discuss. In reading this essay, students often struggle with making a distinction between Goldwasser's stance and Lessing's stance. This could be an opportunity to discuss how writers use quotations from the opposition and then refute them in their own writing.
    c. "Inane" means silly or stupid. Do you agree with Lessing's second quote? Has the Internet "seduced a whole generation into its inanities"? Is it true that kids "don't read, don't write, don't care about anything farther in front of them than their iPods"? Do you read, write, or care? About what?
    d. What benefits does Goldwasser attribute to young people's Internet use? How does Goldwasser seem to understand thinking and learning as they relate to our interactions with technology?
    e. So who cares? Does Goldwasser make clear to her readers why this topic matters? What else could she say to make this point more effectively?
    f. In paragraph 16, Goldwasser asserts, "Once we stop regarding the Internet as a villain, stop presenting it as the enemy of history and literature and worldly knowledge, then our teenagers have the potential to become the next great voices of America." What do you think of this statement? Do you agree with it? Disagree with it?
    g. Why do you think Goldwasser leads with the counterargument instead of her own ideas?

**Day 2:**

Statement of Purpose: Yesterday you studied an essay by Goldwasser and you answered some questions about the essay. It is not enough to just read something and answer questions for a grade. I want you to be able to talk and write about the ideas of other people. To start, you and a few other students will compose a summary of the Goldwasser essay.

1. Begin as a whole class by briefly reviewing the rhetorical situation of the Goldwasser essay.
2. Place students in groups of 3 of 4. Have students share their answers to the Goldwasser questions in their groups. Each group should then compose a one-paragraph summary of the article to share with the class.
    a. Good summaries will contain the title, author, and main point(s).
    b. Great summaries will also make a comment on either the tone or structure of the essay!

Statement of Purpose: Arguments don't always come in the form of essays, so we are also going to look at some visual arguments. While looking at cartoons may seem simple, I am asking you today to actually study and analyze them. You may find that cartoons can make highly effective arguments because not only do they make a claim, they usually do so with humor.

3. Share the four cartoons (Appendix A) with all students electronically. Ask them to work with their group to complete the following in their journal.
    a. "Read" each of the following cartoons carefully. Then select two cartoons for which you will each type up responses to the following. Please make sure your responses are in complete sentences.
        i. Identify the specific type of technology addressed in the cartoon.
        ii. How has the technology addressed been used?
        iii. What is the cartoonist saying about the technology?
        iv. Describe your reaction to the cartoon. (May prompt orally with: Is it funny? Is it accurate? Did you easily understand its message?)
4. Discuss each of the cartoons as a class. Be sure to draw connections between the cartoons and Goldwasser's essay during discussion.
5. **Extension**: If time allows, present students with additional documents concerning technology's effects.
    a. Harris, Mark. "Taking Multitasking to Task." *Entertainment Weekly* 4 March 2011: 29. Print.
        i. In the first two paragraphs, what does Harris lay out as the topic of his essay?

        ii. In paragraph three Harris uses a metaphor comparing his use of technology to eating. Describe the metaphor. Do you think the metaphor is effective? Why or why not?
        iii. What point is Harris making in paragraph four?
        iv. What is the hyperbole used by Harris at the beginning of paragraph six? What is the effect of him exaggerating here?
        v. From your reading of paragraph six, how does Harris think we should consume entertainment?

vi. What is Harris' final resolution? Do you think his resolution is a good one? Is it one you think you would benefit from yourself? Why or why not?

**Day 3:**

Statement of Purpose: Now that you have viewed several arguments (both visual and textual), it is time for you to come up with an argument of your own on the topic of technology and communication.

1. Present students with the writing assignment handout (Appendix C). Go over the expectations of the assignment.
2. Ask students to look back at their journal entries from day one. Make a list of possible technologies that students might discuss in their essays.
3. Use Three Types of Thesis Statements (Appendix E) to help students generate possible thesis statements for an essay.
4. Students should select/write their own thesis and plan their essay.
5. Homework: Students should type a rough draft of their essay to share with the class tomorrow.

**Day 4:**

1. Open class with a brief whole-class discussion of the writing experience from the night before. What did students have trouble with? How long did it take to write the essay? What part of the essay was the easiest to write? Etc.

Statement of Purpose: Today you will each be sharing your drafts in a peer-response group. These groups are meant to help you find strengths and weaknesses in your draft. The more thought and effort you each put into your group, the more benefits you will reap from the experience.

2. In peer-response groups of four (Students will maintain these groups for the rest of the unit), have students read their drafts aloud.
    a. Before groups begin reading, go over the following:
        i. Benefits to the Reader
            1. You will hear your essay in a new way.
            2. You might recognize fluency problems in your essay.
            3. You will receive responses from your peers about what you have done well.
        ii. Benefits to the Listener
            1. You will practice your critical thinking and critical listening skills.
            2. You will learn more about your classmates.
            3. You may get some good ideas that you could use in your own writing.
            4. You will hear other perspectives on the topic of technology and communication.
        iii. What you should do
            1. Keep your comments positive!
            2. While listening, try to think of at least one thing you can say in response. Here are some ideas.
                a. What was the author's main point?

   b. What wording/phrasing was particularly catchy?
   c. Ask a question about something you didn't understand or that you think the author might consider answering in his/her essay.
3. Homework instructions for students: In your journal identify two aspects of your essay you would like to improve that you noticed in your peer-response group. You will be sharing these entries with your group tomorrow.
4. As students work in their groups, ask groups to recommend a student's essay for in-class revision tomorrow. Selected and willing students should email their essays to the teacher.
5. If time allows, and if students seem to need extra guidance, a sample essay is provided in Appendix D. The essay uses a separate, though related, cartoon. Use it to point out how the author has summarized the cartoon, but also shown how the cartoon relates to her own argument.

**Day 5:**
Statement of Purpose: Last night you wrote about two aspects of your essay that you would like to improve. Today, I would like you to each share your goals for your essay with your peer-response group. Remember this is your chance to get guidance from your peers. Be honest (but kind) with one another. If you have no idea how to fix your essay, don't be afraid to tell your group this. Before you get into your groups, let's take a look at a couple essays from volunteers, so you can get an idea of what should happen in your peer-response groups.

1. Using one or two of the sample essays submitted yesterday, discuss the strengths as a whole class. Ask the writer of each essay to share what he/she is going to work on. Offer suggestions for improvement.
2. In peer-response groups, students will share their journal entries from yesterday.
3. Students should take the remaining class time to work on revising their own essays.
4. Leave five to ten minutes at the end of class to allow for a brief discussion of the revision process. Are there any areas students are still struggling with?

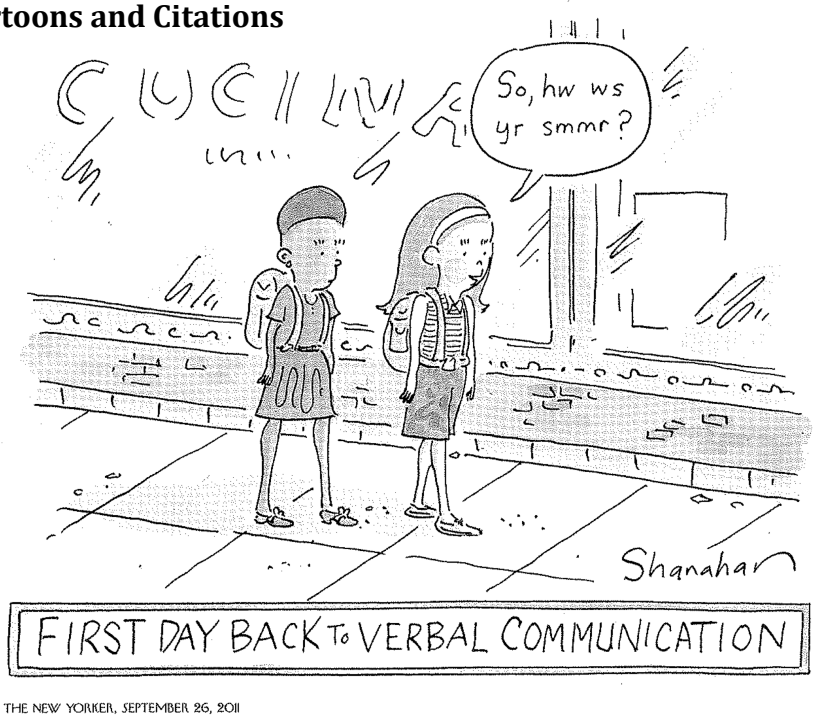
**Day 6:**
Statement of Purpose: Today you will be meeting in your peer-response group one more time. Your goal today is to provide one another with beneficial feedback on your essays. When you leave here today, you should be prepared to make any necessary revisions to your essay. If you have any questions for me throughout the peer-response process, just "throw your hands up in the air sometimes and say ay-oh."

1. Go over the Peer-Response sheet with students and explain exactly what should happen in their groups.
2. In peer-response groups, students should read the essay of at least one of their peers and complete the Peer-Response Sheet.
3. After reading and answering the questions on the Peer-Response Sheet, students should sift through the feedback they've received and clarify anything they need to with the responder for the essay.
4. Homework: Finish revising and editing your essay for tomorrow. Print your essay so it is ready to be submitted.

**Day 7 (After returning graded final drafts)**

1. Upon receiving the graded copy of their essay back, students should complete the Assignment Cover Sheet and prepare the assignment to be put in their writing folder.
    a. Each assignment placed in the writing folder for eventual inclusion in the final portfolio should include the following items paper-clipped together in the following order: Assignment Cover Sheet, final draft, any printed rough drafts, and any printed/handwritten prewriting.

**Appendix A: Cartoons and Citations**




8 THE NEW YORKER, SEPTEMBER 26, 2011

Shanahan, Danny. Cartoon. *New Yorker* 26 September 2011: 8. Print.

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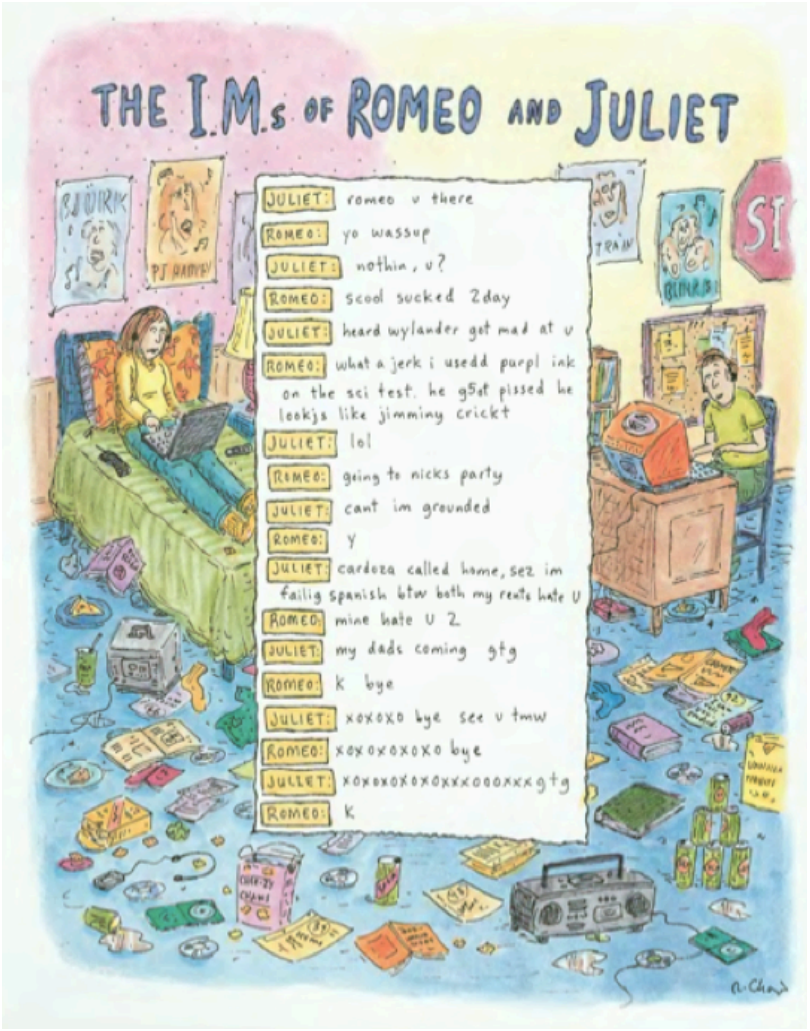
*"Nice, but as long as there are readers there will be scrolls."*

Karasik, Paul. Cartoon. *New Yorker* 7 May 2012: 26. Print.




Chast, Roz. Cartoon. *New Yorker* 4 February 2002: 84. Print.


Keefe, Mike. Cartoon. *Denver Post* 27 March 2009. Web.

**Appendix B: Goldwasser Essay**

Goldwasser, Amy. "What's the Matter with Kids Today?" *They Say/I Say: With Readings.* Ed. Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. 236-40. Print.

# What's the Matter with Kids Today?

**Nothing, actually. Aside from our panic that the Internet is melting their brains.**
**Amy Goldwasser**

The other week was only the latest takedown of what has become a fashionable segment of the population to bash: the American teenager. A phone (land line!) survey of 1,200 17-year-olds, conducted by the research organization Common Core and released Feb. 26, found our young people to be living in "stunning ignorance" of history and literature.

This furthered the report that the National Endowment for the Arts came out with at the end of 2007, lamenting "the diminished role of voluntary reading in American life," particularly among 13-to-17-year-olds, and Doris Lessing's condemnation, in her acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in literature, of "a fragmenting culture" in which "young men and women … have read nothing, knowing only some specialty or other, for instance, computers."

Kids today — we're telling you! — don't read, don't write, don't care about anything farther in front of them than their iPods. The Internet, according to 88-year-old Lessing (whose specialty is sturdy typewriters, or perhaps pens), has "seduced a whole generation into its inanities."

Or is it the older generation that the Internet has seduced — into the inanities of leveling charges based on fear, ignorance and old-media, multiple-choice testing? So much so that we can't see that the Internet is only a means of communication, and one that has created a generation, perhaps the first, of writers, activists, storytellers? When the world worked in hard copy, no parent or teacher ever begrudged teenagers who disappeared into their rooms to write letters to friends — or a movie review, or an editorial for the school paper on the first president they'll vote for. Even 15-year-old boys are sharing some part of their feelings with someone out there.

We're talking about 33 million Americans who are fluent in texting, e-mailing, blogging, IM'ing and constantly amending their profiles on social network sites — which, on average, 30 of their friends will visit every day, hanging out and writing for 20 minutes or so each. They're connected, they're collaborative, they're used to writing about themselves. In fact, they choose to write about themselves, on their own time, rather than its being a forced labor when a paper's due in school. Regularly, often late at night, they're generating a body of intimate written work. They appreciate the value of a good story and the power of a speech that moves: Ninety-seven percent of the teenagers in the Common Core survey connected "I have a dream" with its speaker — they can watch Dr. King deliver it on demand — and eight in 10 knew what "To Kill a Mockingbird" is about.

This is, of course, the kind of knowledge we should be encouraging. The Internet has turned teenagers into honest documentarians of their own lives — reporters embedded in their homes, their schools, their own heads.

But this is also why it's dangerous, why we can't seem to recognize that it's just a medium. We're afraid. Our kids know things we don't. They drove the presidential debates onto YouTube and very well may determine the outcome of this election. They're texting at the dinner table and responsible for pretty much every enduring consumer cultural phenomenon: iPod, iTunes, iPhone; Harry Potter, "High School Musical"; large hot drinks with gingerbread flavoring. They can sell ads on their social network pages, and they essentially made MySpace worth $580 million and "Juno" an Oscar winner.

Besides, we're tired of having to ask them every time we need to find Season 2 of "Heroes," calculate a carbon footprint or upload photos to Facebook (now that we're allowed on).

Plus, they're blogging about us.

So we've made the Internet one more thing unknowable about the American teenager, when, really, it's one of the few revelations. We conduct these surveys and overgeneralize — labeling like the mean girls, driven by the same jealousy and insecurity.

Common Core drew its multiple-choice questions for teens from a test administered by the federal government in 1986. Twenty-plus years ago, high school students didn't have the Internet to store their trivia. Now they know that the specific dates and what-was-that-prince's-name will always be there; they can free their brains to go a little deeper into the concepts instead of the copyrights, step back and consider what Scout and Atticus were really fighting for. To criticize teenagers' author-to-book title matching on the spot, over the phone, is similar to cold-calling over-40s and claiming their long-division skills or date of "Jaws" recall is rusty. This is what we all rely on the Internet for.

That's not to say some of the survey findings aren't disturbing. It's crushing to hear that one in four teens could not identify Adolf Hitler's role in world history, for instance. But it's not because teenagers were online that they missed this. Had a parent introduced 20 minutes of researching the Holocaust to one month of their teen's Internet life, or a teacher assigned "The Diary of Anne Frank" (arguably a 13-year-old girl's blog) — if we worked with, rather than against, the way this generation voluntarily takes in information — we might not be able to pick up the phone and expose tragic pockets of ignorance.

The average teen chooses to spend an average of 16.7 hours a week reading and writing online. Yet the NEA report did not consider this to be "voluntary" reading and writing. Its findings also concluded that "literary reading declined significantly in a period of rising Internet use." The corollary is weak — this has as well been a period of rising franchises of frozen yogurt that doesn't taste like frozen yogurt, of global warming, of declining rates of pregnancy and illicit drug use among teenagers, and of girls sweeping the country's most prestigious high school science competition for the first time.

Teenagers today read and write for fun; it's part of their social lives. We need to start celebrating this unprecedented surge, incorporating it as an educational tool instead of meeting it with punishing pop quizzes and suspicion.

We need to start trusting our kids to communicate as they will online — even when that comes with the risk that they'll spill the family secrets or campaign for a candidate who's not ours.

Once we stop regarding the Internet as a villain, stop presenting it as the enemy of history and literature and worldly knowledge, then our teenagers have the potential to become the next great voices of America. One of them, 70 years from now, might even get up there to accept the very award Lessing did — and thank the Internet for making him or her a writer and a thinker.

**Appendix C:**

## Writing Assignment: Technology and Communication

Yesterday we looked at four cartoons that addressed the effects that technology has had on communication, and earlier we examined an article by Goldwasser that discussed the benefits of teens' Internet usage. Today you will be developing your own opinion regarding technology's impact on communication.

**Your response should seek to answer the question:**
**How has technology impacted today's communication?**

Requirements:

1. You must use ONE source that has been presented in class.
    b. You may agree or disagree with whichever source you use.

2. You must refer to the text you use specifically. Name it and give the author.

3. You must cite any quotes or paraphrases you use. You may do this in text (in words in the sentence), or you may do this with parenthetical citations.

4. You must not only summarize what argument the author/artist is making, but also give your own opinion about the argument. You should explain how your own opinion fits in with the author's/artist's opinion.

5. You should use MLA format and include a Works Cited page.

6. Keep your tone relatively formal for this response. Avoid the use of "I" and "you."

**Technology and Communication Writing Assignment Rubric** **Name** _____

_____/4 MLA Format, including an accurate title and citation

_____/4 Introduction features a catchy/interesting opening

_____/4 Thesis takes a clear stance on the issue of how communication has been affected by technology.

_____/10 Summary/paraphrase of source material is accurate and complete.

_____/10 Clearly explains the connection between the thesis and the source material.

_____/8 Mechanics

**_____/40 Total**

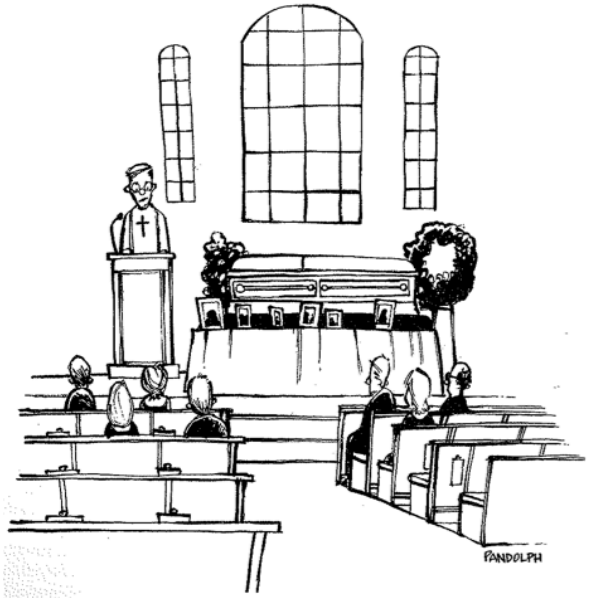
**Appendix D: Sample Essay**

Student Name
Ms. Budke
English 12
1 September 2012

The Loss of Sincerity

Technology today has infiltrated our most private, most intimate affairs. Cell phones, the Internet, Twitter, Facebook, Google—all of these have changed the way we communicate with one another on a daily basis, and while there are certainly benefits to all these technologies, there is certainly an intrusive quality to them all as well.

Corey Pandolph's recent cartoon in the *New Yorker* depicts a traditional Christian funeral service presided over by a minister. As onlookers focus on the minister, he instructs, "Today's service will be using the hashtag '#Jerrysdead.'" Even the somber grief of a funeral has been trivialized by its association with Twitter.



*"Today's service will be using the hashtag '#Jerrysdead.'"*

What Pandolph realizes is that some things in life aren't made better by technology. It's true, placing a funeral service on Twitter may allow more people to participate, but isn't a funeral the type of event one should really be physically present for? Condolences are better received in person than sent through the cloud of the Internet. Something is lost when communications are not face-to-face, and that something is not hard to name: it's sincerity. Today's reliance upon technology has led to an irreverence and an insincerity that results in texted breakups, Facebook birthday wishes, and maybe even tweeted funerals. All of these are better experienced in person.

Work Cited

Pandolph, Corey. Cartoon. *New Yorker* 17 October 2011: 66. Print.

## Appendix E: Three Types of Thesis Statements

**An effective thesis statement previews the argument that will be made in an essay.**

***Closed Thesis Statement.***

- Establishes the main idea of the argument
- Previews the main points the writer will make
- Helps organize and focus a short essay
- **Example:** The three dimensional character, exciting plot, and complex themes of the Harry Potter series make them not only legendary children's books but enduring literary classics.
- **Your Turn:**

***Open Thesis Statement.***

- Establishes the main idea of the argument
- Suitable for longer essays that might have six, seven, or even more main points
- Avoids being cumbersome because it does not preview the essay's main points
- **Example:** The popularity of the Harry Potter series demonstrates that simplicity trumps complexity when it comes to the taste of readers, both young and old.
- **Your Turn:**

***Counterargument Thesis Statement.***

- Establishes the main idea of the argument
- Is a variant of either the open or closed thesis statement
- Usually includes a summary of a counterargument qualified by *although* or *but* preceding the writer's opinion
- Immediately acknowledges the counterargument
    - This may make an argument seem stronger and more reasonable.
- Sets the writer up for a smooth transition through concession and refutation
- Often leads to a qualified or modified position rather than an absolute statement of support or rejection
- **Example:** Although the Harry Potter series may have some literary merit, its popularity has less to do with storytelling than with merchandising.
- **Your Turn:**

The explanations and examples in this handout are taken from:

Shea, Renee H., Lawrence Scanlon, and Robin Dissin Aufses, eds. *The Language of Composition*. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013. Print.

**Appendix F: Peer-Response Sheet**

## Reading and Responding: You're about to have all kinds of fun in here!

Author's Name _____ Responder's Name _____

As you read and review your classmate's draft, please keep these questions in mind. Your goal is to provide helpful commentary to the author of the essay you are reading.

The author will then read your answers and decide how to revise his/her essay accordingly. For instance if the author reads your answer to number 3, and thinks "Wow, that's not what I was trying to say!" then the author will know he needs to make his thesis clearer.

As an added bonus, by answering these questions about your peer's draft, you'll improve drastically and quickly your ability to answer the same questions about your own draft. I know: this is totally blowing your mind right now! Try to get over it and get on to answering these questions!

1. The Assignment. Does the draft carry out the assignment? (Hint: Look at the assignment sheet and rubric I already gave you.) How might the writer better fulfill the assignment?

2. The Title and Introduction. Is the title interesting? Does the introduction catch the reader's interest? What does the opening accomplish in terms of hooking the reader's interest?

3. The Thesis and Purpose. Paraphrase the thesis as a promise: "In this essay, I will…" Does the draft fulfill that promise? Why, or why not? What is the writer's purpose? How does the draft fulfill (or not fulfill) that purpose?

4. The Rhetorical Stance. Where does the writer stand on issues involved with this topic? What words or phrases in the draft indicate the values the writer holds with regard to this topic?

5. The Source. Is the source summarized accurately? If not, what is the inaccuracy? How does the source relate to the thesis? Does it support or refute it? Is this connection made clear in the essay?

6. The Sentences. Choose two sentences you consider the most interesting or best written—stylistically effective, entertaining, or otherwise memorable. Then choose two sentences you see as weak—confusing, awkward, or uninspiring. Advise your peer on how to revise those three weak sentences.

7. The Words. Highlight the words that are particularly effective; underline those that are weak, vague or unclear. Do any words need to be defined or replaced? Are there any potentially offensive words in the draft?

8. The Conclusion. Does the draft conclude in a memorable way? Does it end abruptly? Trail off? Restate the introduction? How else might this draft end? If you like the conclusion, give two reasons why.

9. Final Thoughts. What are the main strengths of this draft? Weaknesses? What surprised you—and why? What do you want to know more about? What is the writer's single most important comment or point?

Adapted from Glenn, Cheryl and Melissa A. Goldthwaite. *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008. 71-3. Print

**Appendix G: Portfolio Assignment Cover Sheet**

## *Portfolio Assignment Cover Sheet.*

Please type the following information, and print this sheet. Each assignment placed in your writing folder (for eventual inclusion in your final portfolio) should include the following items paper-clipped together in the following order: this portfolio assignment cover sheet, final draft, any printed rough drafts, and any printed/handwritten prewriting.

**Name:**

**Assignment**
What topic did you write about?

What type of assignment was this? Analysis, argument, synthesis, poetry, parody, etc. If you need help with this question, just ask me.

**Process**
What steps did you take as you worked on the assignment?
What problems did you encounter?
How did you try to overcome the problems?
What strategies worked well for you in writing this assignment?
How do you know the strategies worked—what's the evidence?
What one or two things would you like feedback on?

**Final Grade:**

**Comments**
Look at the final draft and teacher comments on your assignment. How do you think you did? What did you do well? What would you like to take with you as a lesson learned from this assignment?

## Project 2 Original with Comments

Katie Budke

Dr. Wood

English 6200

19 June 2012

Final Project: Technology and Communication Unit

**Unit Description:**

This unit is designed to use near the beginning of the year. The unit addresses the issue of technology's effects on communication. Students will journal and answer analysis questions both orally and in writing throughout the unit. The culmination of the unit will be a short, single-source, argumentative essay in which the students make a claim about technology and communication using one of the texts analyzed in class as either supporting evidence or as a counterpoint to their claim.

The methods used in this unit have been chosen to emphasize writing as a process. Activities are meant to build to the final synthesis essay by starting with more basic summarizing activities and moving towards students engaging with a source in their own arguments.

**Unit Objectives:**

- Students will be able to identify the main points made by Goldwasser in "What's the Matter with Kids Today?"
- Students will be able to write summaries of the main points made by Goldwasser.
- Students will be able to identify the subject and message in cartoons.
- Students will be able to summarize the message of cartoons in writing.
- Students will be able to synthesize opinions from either the Goldwasser essay or one of the cartoons with their own opinions regarding technology's effects on communication.

**Level:** Grade 12

**Assessment:**

All journal entries will be assessed once a quarter for completion. I will informally assess understanding during the unit as students share their journal entries in small groups or as a whole class. The final writing assignment will be assessed according to the rubric in Appendix C. Completion of in-class activities including participation in peer-response groups may be graded on a pass/fail scale.

**Methods:**

**Day 1**

State the Purpose: Technology affects all of you every day. (Some of you are probably on your laptops now as I say this.) Today I want you each to consider what role technology plays in communication. Take a few minutes to respond in your journal to the prompt on the board.

5. Give students 10 minutes to write a journal entry in response to the following question.
    a. Do you think the technology has had a positive or a negative effect on communication? Give examples to support your opinion.
6. Share responses briefly with a partner. Then move to sharing with the whole class. Create a class chart that lists positive and negative examples addressed by students.
7. Assign students to read "What's the Matter with Kids Today?" by Amy Goldwasser.
    a. Goldwasser, Amy. "What's the Matter with Kids Today?" *They Say/I Say: With Readings.* Ed. Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. 236-40. Print.
8. Have students write answers to the following questions adapted from *They Say/I Say: With Readings.*
    a. What is the view that Amy Goldwasser argues against, and what evidence does she offer in support of that view?
    b. What is your reaction to the quotation from Nobel Prize-winning writer Doris Lessing, in paragraph 2? Why do you think Goldwasser quotes Lessing?
    c. "Inane" means silly or stupid. Do you agree with Lessing's second quote? Has the Internet "seduced a whole generation into its inanities"? Is it true that kids "don't read, don't write, don't care about anything farther in front of them than their iPods"? Do you read, write, or care? About what?
    d. What benefits does Goldwasser attribute to young people's Internet use? How does Goldwasser seem to understand thinking and learning as they relate to our interactions with technology?
    e. So who cares? Does Goldwasser make clear to her readers why this topic matters? What else could she say to make this point more effectively?
    f. In paragraph 16, Goldwasser asserts, "Once we stop regarding the Internet as a villain, stop presenting it as the enemy of history and literature and worldly knowledge, then our teenagers have the potential to become the next great voices of America." What do you think of this statement? Do you agree with it? Disagree with it?
    g. Why do you think Goldwasser leads with the counterargument instead of her own ideas?

**Day 2:**

State the Purpose: Yesterday you studied an essay by Goldwasser and you answered some questions about the essay. It is not enough to just read something and answer questions for a grade. I want you to be able to talk and write about the ideas of other people. To start, you and a few other students will compose a summary of the Goldwasser essay.

6. Begin as a whole class by briefly reviewing the rhetorical situation of the Goldwasser essay.
7. Place students in groups of 3 of 4. Have students share their answers to the Goldwasser questions in their groups. Each group should then compose a one-paragraph summary of the article to share with the class.
    a. Good summaries will contain the title, author, and main point(s).
    b. Great summaries will also make a comment on either the tone or structure of the essay!

Statement of Purpose: Arguments don't always come in the form of essays, so we are also going to look at some visual arguments. While looking at cartoons may seem simple, I am asking you today to actually study and analyze them. You may find that cartoons can make highly effective arguments because not only do they make a claim, they usually do so with humor.

8. Share the four cartoons (Appendix A) with all students electronically. Ask them to work with their group to complete the following in their journal.
    a. "Read" each of the following cartoons carefully. Then select two cartoons for which you will each type up responses to the following. Please make sure your responses are in complete sentences.
        i. Identify the specific type of technology addressed in the cartoon.
        ii. How has the technology addressed been used?
        iii. What is the cartoonist saying about the technology?
        iv. Describe your reaction to the cartoon. (May prompt orally with: Is it funny? Is it accurate? Did you easily understand its message?)
9. Discuss each of the cartoons as a class. Be sure to draw connections between the cartoons and Goldwasser's essay during discussion.
10. **Extension**: If time allows, present students with additional documents concerning technology's effects.
    a. Harris, Mark. "Taking Multitasking to Task." *Entertainment Weekly* 4 March 2011: 29. Print.
        i. In the first two paragraphs, what does Harris lay out as the topic of his essay?

        ii. In paragraph three Harris uses a metaphor comparing his use of technology to eating. Describe the metaphor. Do you think the metaphor is effective? Why or why not?
        iii. What point is Harris making in paragraph four?
        iv. What is the hyperbole used by Harris at the beginning of paragraph six? What is the effect of him exaggerating here?
        v. From your reading of paragraph six, how does Harris think we should consume entertainment?

vi. What is Harris' final resolution? Do you think his resolution is a good one? Is it one you think you would benefit from yourself? Why or why not?

**Day 3:**

Statement of Purpose: Now that you have viewed several arguments (both visual and textual), it is time for you to come up with an argument of your own on the topic of technology and communication.

6. Present students with the writing assignment handout (Appendix C). Go over the expectations of the assignment.
7. Ask students to look back at their journal entries from day one. Make a list of possible technologies that students might discuss in their essays.
8. Use Classical Topical Invention to generate possible thesis statements for an essay. Use Appendix E to explain the different topics to students. Have students come up with various thesis statements in small groups using topic invention. Then share these all with the class.
9. Students should select/write their own thesis and plan their essay.
10. Homework: Students should type a rough draft of their essay to share with the class tomorrow.

**Day 4:**

6. Open class with a brief whole-class discussion of the writing experience from the night before. What did students have trouble with? How long did it take to write the essay? What part of the essay was the easiest to write? Etc.

Statement of Purpose: Today you will each be sharing your drafts in a peer-response group. These groups are meant to help you find strengths and weaknesses in your draft. The more thought and effort you each put into your group, the more benefits you will reap from the experience.

7. In peer-response groups of four (Students will maintain these groups for the rest of the unit), have students read their drafts aloud.
    a. Before groups begin reading, go over the following:
        i. Benefits to the Reader
            1. You will hear your essay in a new way.
            2. You might recognize fluency problems in your essay.
            3. You will receive responses from your peers about what you have done well.
        ii. Benefits to the Listener
            1. You will practice your critical thinking and critical listening skills.
            2. You will learn more about your classmates.
            3. You may get some good ideas that you could use in your own writing.
            4. You will hear other perspectives on the topic of technology and communication.
        iii. What you should do
            1. Keep your comments positive!

2. While listening, try to think of at least one thing you can say in response. Here are some ideas.
    a. What was the author's main point?
    b. What wording/phrasing was particularly catchy?
    c. Ask a question about something you didn't understand or that you think the author might consider answering in his/her essay.
8. Homework instructions for students: In your journal identify two aspects of your essay you would like to improve that you noticed in your peer-response group. You will be sharing these entries with your group tomorrow.
9. As students work in their groups, ask groups to recommend a student's essay for in-class revision tomorrow. Selected and willing students should email their essays to the teacher.
10. If time allows, and if students seem to need extra guidance, a sample essay is provided in Appendix D. The essay uses a separate, though related, cartoon. Use it to point out how the author has summarized the cartoon, but also shown how the cartoon relates to her own argument.

**Day 5:**

Statement of Purpose: Last night you wrote about two aspects of your essay that you would like to improve. Today, I would like you to each share your goals for your essay with your peer-response group. Remember this is your chance to get guidance from your peers. Be honest (but kind) with one another. If you have no idea how to fix your essay, don't be afraid to tell your group this. Before you get into your groups, let's take a look at a couple essays from volunteers, so you can get an idea of what should happen in your peer-response groups.

5. Using one or two of the sample essays submitted yesterday, discuss the strengths as a whole class. Ask the writer of each essay to share what he/she is going to work on. Offer suggestions for improvement.
6. In peer-response groups, students will share their journal entries from yesterday.
7. Students should take the remaining class time to work on revising their own essays.
8. Leave five to ten minutes at the end of class to allow for a brief discussion of the revision process. Are there any areas students are still struggling with?

**Day 6:**

Statement of Purpose: Today you will be meeting in your peer-response group one more time. Your goal today is to provide one another with beneficial feedback on your essays. When you leave here today, you should be prepared to make any necessary revisions to your essay. If you have any questions for me throughout the peer-response process, just "throw your hands up in the air sometimes and say ay-oh."

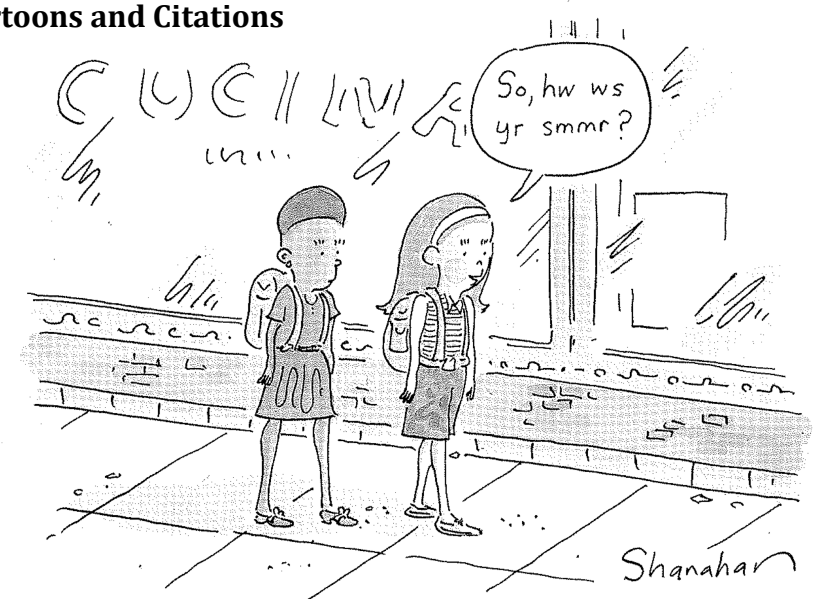
5. Go over the Peer-Response sheet with students and explain exactly what should happen in their groups.
6. In peer-response groups, students should read the essay of at least one of their peers and complete the Peer-Response Sheet.

7. After reading and answering the questions on the Peer-Response Sheet, students should sift through the feedback they've received and clarify anything they need to with the responder for the essay.
8. Homework: Finish revising and editing your essay for tomorrow. Print your essay so it is ready to be submitted.

**Day 7 (After returning graded final drafts)**

2. Upon receiving the graded copy of their essay back, students should complete the Assignment Cover Sheet and prepare the assignment to be put in their writing folder.
    a. Each assignment placed in the writing folder for eventual inclusion in the final portfolio should include the following items paper-clipped together in the following order: Assignment Cover Sheet, final draft, any printed rough drafts, and any printed/handwritten prewriting.

**Appendix A: Cartoons and Citations**




8 THE NEW YORKER, SEPTEMBER 26, 2011

Shanahan, Danny. Cartoon. *New Yorker* 26 September 2011: 8. Print.

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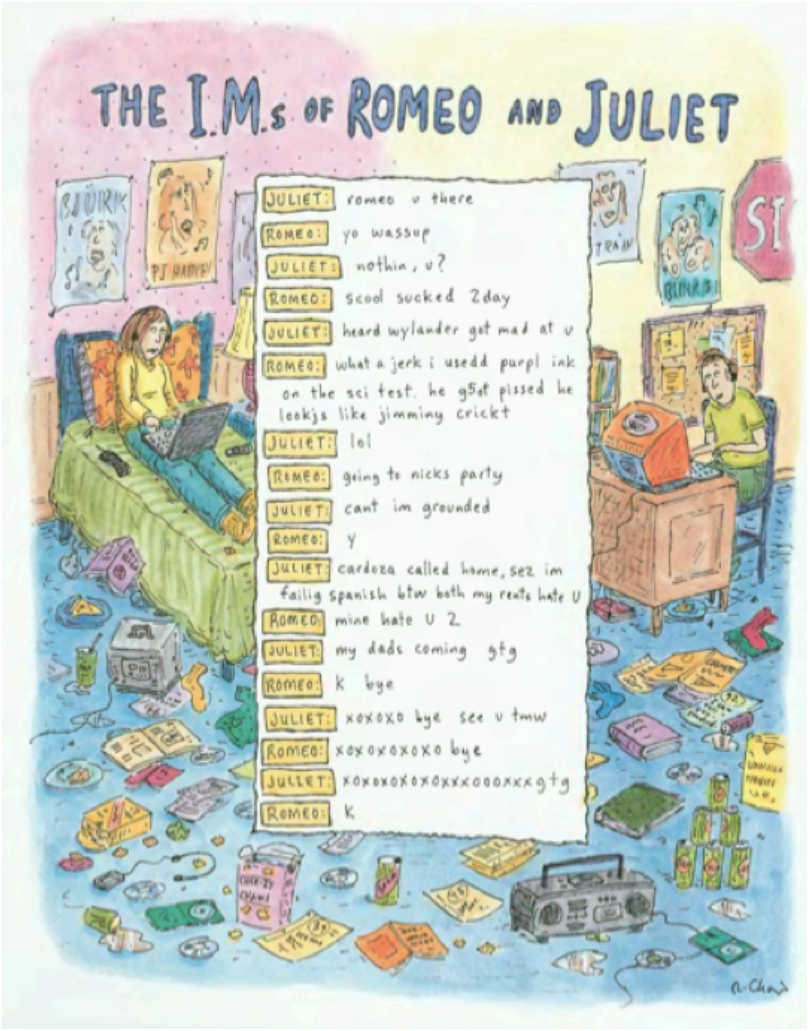
*"Nice, but as long as there are readers there will be scrolls."*

Karasik, Paul. Cartoon. *New Yorker* 7 May 2012: 26. Print.




Chast, Roz. Cartoon. *New Yorker* 4 February 2002: 84. Print.


Keefe, Mike. Cartoon. *Denver Post* 27 March 2009. Web.

**Appendix B: Goldwasser Essay**

Goldwasser, Amy. "What's the Matter with Kids Today?" *They Say/I Say: With Readings.* Ed. Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. 236-40. Print.

# *What's the Matter with Kids Today?*

AMY GOLDWASSER

**Nothing, actually. Aside from our panic that the Internet is melting their brains.**

THE OTHER WEEK was only the latest takedown of what has become a fashionable segment of the population to bash: the American teenager. A phone (land line!) survey of 1,200 17-year-olds, conducted by the research organization Common Core and released February 26, found our young people to be living in "stunning ignorance" of history and literature.

This furthered the report that the National Endowment for the Arts came out with at the end of 2007, lamenting "the diminished role of voluntary reading in American life," particularly among 13- to 17-year-olds, and Doris Lessing's condemnation, in her acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in

AMY GOLDWASSER is a freelance editor for *Vogue*, *Seventeen*, and the *New Yorker*, among other publications, and teaches editing at the Columbia Publishing Course. She is the editor of *Red: The Next Generation of American Writers—Teenage Girls—On What Fires Up Their Lives Today*, a 2007 collection of essays by teenage girls from across the United States. The piece included here first appeared in *Salon* in 2008.





literature, of "a fragmenting culture" in which "young men and women . . . have read nothing, knowing only some specialty or other, for instance, computers."

Kids today—we're telling you!—don't read, don't write, don't care about anything farther in front of them than their iPods. The Internet, according to 88-year-old Lessing (whose specialty is sturdy typewriters, or perhaps pens), has "seduced a whole generation into its inanities."

Or is it the older generation that the Internet has seduced—into the inanities of leveling charges based on fear, ignorance and old-media, multiple-choice testing? So much so that we can't see that the Internet is only a means of communication, and one that has created a generation, perhaps the first, of writers, activists, storytellers? When the world worked in hard copy, no parent or teacher ever begrudged teenagers who disappeared into their rooms to write letters to friends—or a movie review, or an editorial for the school paper on the first president they'll vote for. Even 15-year-old boys are sharing some part of their feelings with someone out there.

We're talking about 33 million Americans who are fluent 5
in texting, e-mailing, blogging, IM'ing and constantly amending their profiles on social network sites—which, on average, 30 of their friends will visit every day, hanging out and writing for 20 minutes or so each. They're connected, they're collaborative, they're used to writing about themselves. In fact, they choose to write about themselves, on their own time, rather than its being a forced labor when a paper's due in school. Regularly, often late at night, they're generating a body of intimate written work. They appreciate the value of a good story and the power of a speech that moves: Ninety-seven percent of the teenagers in the Common Core survey connected "I have a dream" with its speaker—they can watch Dr. King deliver it

on demand—and eight in ten knew what *To Kill a Mockingbird* is about.

This is, of course, the kind of knowledge we should be encouraging. The Internet has turned teenagers into honest documentarians of their own lives—reporters embedded in their homes, their schools, their own heads.

But this is also why it's dangerous, why we can't seem to recognize that it's just a medium. We're afraid. Our kids know things we don't. They drove the presidential debates onto YouTube and very well may determine the outcome of this election. They're texting at the dinner table and responsible for pretty much every enduring consumer cultural phenomenon: iPod, iTunes, iPhone; Harry Potter, *High School Musical*; large hot drinks with gingerbread flavoring. They can sell ads on their social network pages, and they essentially made MySpace worth $580 million and *Juno* an Oscar winner.

Besides, we're tired of having to ask them every time we need to find Season 2 of *Heroes*, calculate a carbon footprint or upload photos to Facebook (now that we're allowed on).

Plus, they're blogging about us.

So we've made the Internet one more thing unknowable about the American teenager, when, really, it's one of the few revelations. We conduct these surveys and overgeneralize—labeling like the mean girls, driven by the same jealousy and insecurity. 10

Common Core drew its multiple-choice questions for teens from a test administered by the federal government in 1986. Twenty-plus years ago, high school students didn't have the Internet to store their trivia. Now they know that the specific dates and what-was-that-prince's-name will always be there; they can free their brains to go a little deeper into the concepts instead of the copyrights, step back and consider what Scout





and Atticus were really fighting for. To criticize teenagers' author-to-book title matching on the spot, over the phone, is similar to cold-calling over-40s and claiming their long-division skills or date of *Jaws* recall is rusty. This is what we all rely on the Internet for.

That's not to say some of the survey findings aren't disturbing. It's crushing to hear that one in four teens could not identify Adolf Hitler's role in world history, for instance. But it's not because teenagers were online that they missed this. Had a parent introduced 20 minutes of researching the Holocaust to one month of their teen's Internet life, or a teacher assigned *The Diary of Anne Frank* (arguably a 13-year-old girl's blog)—if we worked with, rather than against, the way this generation voluntarily takes in information—we might not be able to pick up the phone and expose tragic pockets of ignorance.

The average teen chooses to spend an average of 16.7 hours a week reading and writing online. Yet the NEA report did not consider this to be "voluntary" reading and writing. Its findings also concluded that "literary reading declined significantly in a period of rising Internet use." The corollary is weak—this has as well been a period of rising franchises of frozen yogurt that doesn't taste like frozen yogurt, of global warming, of declining rates of pregnancy and illicit drug use among teenagers, and of girls sweeping the country's most prestigious high school science competition for the first time.

Teenagers today read and write for fun; it's part of their social lives. We need to start celebrating this unprecedented surge, incorporating it as an educational tool instead of meeting it with punishing pop quizzes and suspicion.

We need to start trusting our kids to communicate as they will online—even when that comes with the risk that they'll spill the family secrets or campaign for a candidate who's not ours. 15



Once we stop regarding the Internet as a villain, stop presenting it as the enemy of history and literature and worldly knowledge, then our teenagers have the potential to become the next great voices of America. One of them, 70 years from now, might even get up there to accept the very award Lessing did—and thank the Internet for making him or her a writer and a thinker.

**Appendix C:**

## Writing Assignment: Technology and Communication

Yesterday we looked at four cartoons that addressed the effects that technology has had on communication, and earlier we examined an article by Goldwasser that discussed the benefits of teens' Internet usage. Today you will be developing your own opinion regarding technology's impact on communication.

**Your response should seek to answer the question:**
**How has technology impacted today's communication?**

Requirements:

1. You must use ONE source that has been presented in class.
    b. You may agree or disagree with whichever source you use.

7. You must refer to the text you use specifically. Name it and give the author.

8. You must cite any quotes or paraphrases you use. You may do this in text (in words in the sentence), or you may do this with parenthetical citations.

9. You must not only summarize what argument the author/artist is making, but also give your own opinion about the argument. You should explain how your own opinion fits in with the author's/artist's opinion.

10. You should use MLA format and include a Works Cited page.

11. Keep your tone relatively formal for this response. Avoid the use of "I" and "you."

**Technology and Communication Writing Assignment Rubric** **Name** _____

_____/4 MLA Format, including an accurate title and citation

_____/4 Introduction features a catchy/interesting opening

_____/4 Thesis takes a clear stance on the issue of how communication has been affected by technology.

_____/10 Summary/paraphrase of source material is accurate and complete.

_____/10 Clearly explains the connection between the thesis and the source material.

_____/8 Mechanics

**_____/40 Total**

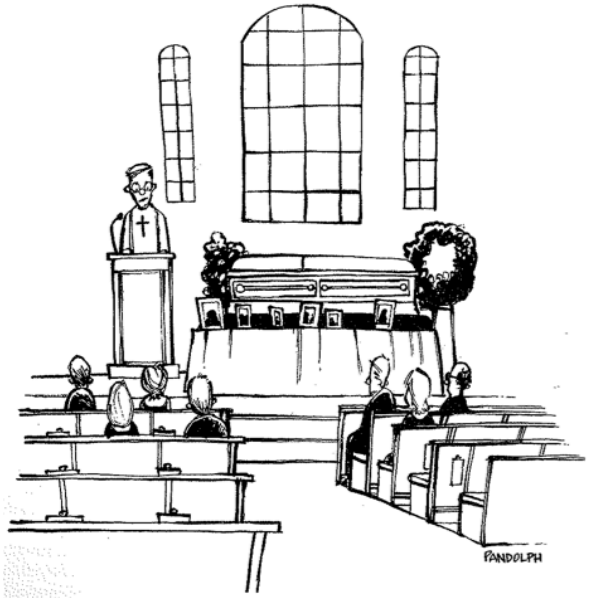
**Appendix D: Sample Essay**

Student Name
Ms. Budke
English 12
1 September 2012

The Loss of Sincerity

Technology today has infiltrated our most private, most intimate affairs. Cell phones, the Internet, Twitter, Facebook, Google—all of these have changed the way we communicate with one another on a daily basis, and while there are certainly benefits to all these technologies, there is certainly an intrusive quality to them all as well.

Corey Pandolph's recent cartoon in the *New Yorker* depicts a traditional Christian funeral service presided over by a minister. As onlookers focus on the minister, he instructs, "Today's service will be using the hashtag '#Jerrysdead.'" Even the somber grief of a funeral has been trivialized by its association with Twitter.



*"Today's service will be using the hashtag '#Jerrysdead.'"*

What Pandolph realizes is that some things in life aren't made better by technology. It's true, placing a funeral service on Twitter may allow more people to participate, but isn't a funeral the type of event one should really be physically present for? Condolences are better received in person than sent through the cloud of the Internet. Something is lost when communications are not face-to-face, and that something is not hard to name: it's sincerity. Today's reliance upon technology has led to an irreverence and an insincerity that results in texted breakups, Facebook birthday wishes, and maybe even tweeted funerals. All of these are better experienced in person.

Work Cited

Pandolph, Corey. Cartoon. *New Yorker* 17 October 2011: 66. Print.

## Appendix E: Classical Topical Invention

***Definition.*** Definition always answers the question "What is/was it?" in a variety of contexts. The subject can be defined in its immediate context, in a larger context, in different settings, in space, in time, or in a moral continuum. Here are some examples:

- Cloning is a form of asexual reproduction.
- Cloning humans is immoral.
- Cloning cells may one day make it possible to grow healthy organs.

***Analogy.*** Analogy always asks the question "What is it like or unlike?" and the subject of the analogy usually answers the question by explaining a lesser-known element.

- A clone is like an identical twin.
- Cloning is, according to Josef Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), "Nazi madness."
- Cloning opens Pandora's box

***Consequence.*** Consequence always answers the question "What caused/causes/will cause it?" or "What did it cause/is it causing/will it cause?" It is not a *topic* to be taken lightly because, even in a thesis statement, it demands that the writer trace the chains of consequence to the end. Consequence can be either explanatory or predictive.

- If therapeutic cloning is made illegal, it will hinder scientific progress in finding new treatments for diseases.
- Cloning farm animals will help framers produce higher-quality mean.
- The uproar over questionable cloning practices may cause U.S. lawmakers to ban human stem-cell research.

***Testimony.*** Testimony always answers the question "What does an authority say about it?" Authorities can range from experts and statistics to eyewitnesses and accepted wisdom.

- The National Right to Life organization opposes embryonic stem-cell research.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration questions the safety of food derived from cloned animals.
- Thomas Okarma, President and CEO of Geron Corporation, opposes human reproductive cloning but supports beneficial applications of therapeutic cloning technology.

## Look I used this method myself with the random topic of knitting!

***Definition.*** Knitting is the art of taking thread or yarn and turning it into fabric. It involves two needles and an ability to count.

***Analogy.*** Knitting is not like sewing because you are actually creating something entirely new, not just cutting out pieces of fabric and putting them together. Knitting trumps sewing.

***Consequence.*** Complex knitting requires knitters to look for and memorize patterns, a skill that is sure to be helpful in studying mathematics. Like playing music, knitting may also have a positive influence on academics.

***Testimony.*** Dr. Wood attests that knitting and other activities that keep the hands busy can help some students keep their minds focused during class.

Glenn, Cheryl and Melissa A. Goldthwaite. *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008. 156-9. Print.

**Appendix F: Peer-Response Sheet**

## Reading and Responding: You're about to have all kinds of fun in here!

Author's Name _____ Responder's Name _____

As you read and review your classmate's draft, please keep these questions in mind. Your goal is to provide helpful commentary to the author of the essay you are reading.

The author will then read your answers and decide how to revise his/her essay accordingly. For instance if the author reads your answer to number 3, and thinks "Wow, that's not what I was trying to say!" then the author will know he needs to make his thesis clearer.

As an added bonus, by answering these questions about your peer's draft, you'll improve drastically and quickly your ability to answer the same questions about your own draft. I know: this is totally blowing your mind right now! Try to get over it and get on to answering these questions!

1. The Assignment. Does the draft carry out the assignment? (Hint: Look at the assignment sheet and rubric I already gave you.) How might the writer better fulfill the assignment?

2. The Title and Introduction. Is the title interesting? Does the introduction catch the reader's interest? What does the opening accomplish in terms of hooking the reader's interest?

3. The Thesis and Purpose. Paraphrase the thesis as a promise: "In this essay, I will…" Does the draft fulfill that promise? Why, or why not? What is the writer's purpose? How does the draft fulfill (or not fulfill) that purpose?

4. The Rhetorical Stance. Where does the writer stand on issues involved with this topic? What words or phrases in the draft indicate the values the writer holds with regard to this topic?

5. The Source. Is the source summarized accurately? If not, what is the inaccuracy? How does the source relate to the thesis? Does it support or refute it? Is this connection made clear in the essay?

6. The Sentences. Choose two sentences you consider the most interesting or best written—stylistically effective, entertaining, or otherwise memorable. Then choose two sentences you see as weak—confusing, awkward, or uninspiring. Advise your peer on how to revise those three weak sentences.

7. The Words. Highlight the words that are particularly effective; underline those that are weak, vague or unclear. Do any words need to be defined or replaced? Are there any potentially offensive words in the draft?

8. The Conclusion. Does the draft conclude in a memorable way? Does it end abruptly? Trail off? Restate the introduction? How else might this draft end? If you like the conclusion, give two reasons why.

9. Final Thoughts. What are the main strengths of this draft? Weaknesses? What surprised you—and why? What do you want to know more about? What is the writer's single most important comment or point?

Adapted from Glenn, Cheryl and Melissa A. Goldthwaite. *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008. 71-3. Print

**Appendix G: Portfolio Assignment Cover Sheet**

## *Portfolio Assignment Cover Sheet.*

Please type the following information, and print this sheet. Each assignment placed in your writing folder (for eventual inclusion in your final portfolio) should include the following items paper-clipped together in the following order: this portfolio assignment cover sheet, final draft, any printed rough drafts, and any printed/handwritten prewriting.

**Name:**

**Assignment**
What topic did you write about?

What type of assignment was this? Analysis, argument, synthesis, poetry, parody, etc. If you need help with this question, just ask me.

**Process**
What steps did you take as you worked on the assignment?
What problems did you encounter?
How did you try to overcome the problems?
What strategies worked well for you in writing this assignment?
How do you know the strategies worked—what's the evidence?
What one or two things would you like feedback on?

**Final Grade:**

**Comments**
Look at the final draft and teacher comments on your assignment. How do you think you did? What did you do well? What would you like to take with you as a lesson learned from this assignment?

***Final Comment from Dr. Sue Carter Wood***
Gosh, Katie--I'm just blown away by your unit plan! So many good points to note: I love the range of source arguments you provide, that serve as both models and invention for your students own arguments. I love the way you work with a topic that involves young people as objects of discussion--but turn them into subjects through their discussion and writing. But perhaps most of all I love how you so skillfully work with peer response and revision--truly masterful directions and plans here to get students oriented to the work they are to do and the benefits to them and the tone that is acceptable/expected in your classroom. Truly first-rate work here! I will keep a copy for my files if you don't mind. I hope that you have at least half the fun teaching this unit that I did in reading it.

## Project 3 Final

The Foreign Exchange Student in the Mainstream Classroom

While many content and English as a second language (ESL) teachers find themselves faced with a population of immigrant students, I have found myself in what I believe is a rather unusual position. Each year I have a handful of foreign exchange students in my classes. While these students' successes may not be of official concern to their hosting schools, they are, nonetheless, of concern to me and their other teachers.

While ESL students living in the United States on a permanent basis are very much the responsibility of the school in which they are enrolled, this is not precisely the case for foreign exchange students who generally are not planning to obtain a diploma in the United States. Foreign exchange students, unlike immigrant students, in Ohio do not generally participate in mandatory standardized testing in the form of the Ohio Graduation Test, as they are not planning to receive a diploma. (Heffner). Furthermore, since schools are only required to provide ESL students classified as limited English proficient (LEP) with special education services, it is unlikely that a foreign exchange student would be tested in such an official capacity, given his or her temporary student status in the United States. The Ohio Department of Education provides the following guidelines from the Lau Resource Center regarding the education of foreign exchange students:

> It is not mandated that districts formally assess foreign exchange students as potential Limited English Proficient LEP students. The assumption is that students selected to participate in foreign-exchange programs in U.S. schools should have sufficient English skills to participate effectively in U.S. mainstream classes. Consequently, and in accordance with federal guidelines

> on serving foreign-exchange students under No Child Left Behind, districts are not required to assess and serve foreign-exchange students as LEP (5).

To this description, it is added that schools should not refrain from assessing foreign exchange students as LEP students because of a fear of accountability consequences; rather schools should do what is in the best interest of the student (6). If teachers feel that a foreign exchange student is struggling significantly in a mainstreamed class, the student should be assessed and may then be officially identified as LEP, thus warranting official services. While these certainly are commendable guidelines set forth by the Ohio Department of Education, in schools without TESOL staff already on faculty, it seems likely that the red tape of hiring new staff for a temporary student will prevent struggling foreign exchange students from ever being assessed or officially identified. The responsibility then of meeting the needs of these students is likely to indefinitely lie with the mainstream teachers.

The school in which I teach—a small, rural school—has no ESL population to speak of, so there is no ESL teacher. Should ESL students enroll in the school, it would, of course, be necessary to provide a qualified teacher for them. However, until that time, teachers like myself find themselves modifying curriculum and delivery methods for foreign exchange students and doing so without the input of a certified TESOL instructor. The experience of teaching foreign exchange students in mainstream classes is not precisely the same as that of teaching immigrant ESL students, but there may be something learned from the programs in place for addressing the needs of immigrant ESL students.

According to the Ohio Department of Education, during the 2010-2011 school year there were over 39,800 limited English proficient (LEP) students of a total 1,828,650

students enrolled in Ohio's elementary and secondary public schools. While such a number constitutes a small percentage of the total student population, it is actually a 38 percent increase from numbers reported five years prior and a 199 percent increase from numbers reported ten years prior ("Profile of Ohio's English Language Learners"). Ohio's LEP population (which likely includes few foreign exchange students) is made up of students from a variety of backgrounds including immigrants, refugees, and even students whose families have lived in the state for quite some time but still use a language other than English as their primary language at home. With the increase in LEP students and with such a wide variety of learners within this population, flexibility in programming is imperative.

The Ohio Department of Education actually lays out several possibilities for the instruction of LEP students. Bilingual education is a feasible option for schools with large populations of LEP students with the same native language, and it allows students the opportunity to study content in both their native language and English. Immersion classes consist entirely of LEP students, but they do not formally teach language. Instead, teachers in these settings focus on content, adjusting teaching methods to fit the abilities of their LEP students. In contrast pull-out ESL courses do include formal language instruction, and these courses may be in conjunction with bilingual education, providing students with native-language supplements. In-class or inclusion instruction is the term that Ohio uses to describe what is often described elsewhere as sheltered instruction and involves an approach that integrates content and language instruction ("Characteristics of Programs"). Ultimately, the goal of all English language programs is for all students to be mainstreamed, a practice of placing students in regular English-delivery classrooms with minimal

modifications to teaching methods and content. It is in these mainstream classes that most foreign exchange students are placed.

There are varying advantages to all of the programs outlined above. Unfortunately, the number of students needing language services is likely to dictate the programming choices more than the specific needs of the students. Even schools with large populations of LEP students, for instance, may not be able to run bilingual education programs because there may not be enough students with the same native language. Furthermore, schools are limited by the staff they have available. A school with a limited number of TESOL teachers or bilingual teachers may be forced to rely on programs like immersion for logistical scheduling reasons. Such situations may not be of the greatest educational benefit to students, but they may be unavoidable.

In terms of educating the foreign exchange student who is studying in America not only to gain English language proficiency but also for the cultural experience, mainstreaming and sheltered instruction are the only viable options. Deborah J. Short makes a distinction between sheltered instruction and mainstreaming in "Integrating Language and Content for Effective Sheltered Instruction Programs." While mainstreamed LEPs may receive modifications and some language assistance in the English-delivery mainstream classroom, sheltered instruction combines the teaching of content with the teaching of language. In "Sheltered English: Modifying Content Delivery for Second Language Learners," Nina Glaudini Rosen and Linda Sasser discuss sheltered instruction, defining it as content-based instruction (CBI) that integrates content instruction with language instruction. Rather than teaching LEPs merely English, sheltered instruction seeks to teach English language skills and concepts through content (35-6). Furthermore,

sheltered instruction is distinct from the ESL class in its integration of content and language. While mainstreaming involves placing LEPs in classes with native speakers, sheltered instruction may also occur in classes entirely of LEPs. In either circumstance, Short points out that, "To really make a difference for English language learners, a sheltered program must be a broader, school-based initiative that takes into account the total schooling ELLs need" (111). The development of language skills is a complex process, and it is one in which all educators should be involved. Even though sheltered instruction programs are designed to move students into the mainstream classroom, all teachers should remember that language competence is not something achieved instantaneously, and even students who are deemed ready for the mainstream classroom are likely to continue to struggle with some areas of English language proficiency. The path to language fluency is not, after all, one with a clear end; there is always room for growth and development.

Teachers in sheltered instruction programs and even mainstream classrooms are often serving in the role of transition facilitator. The goal, after all, is to shift students away from assistive courses. Kate Kinsella emphasizes the necessity of teaching LEPs effective learning strategies, thereby making them more independent learners. LEPs who are not given specific strategies for learning, she points out, can easily waste their time. In one of her examples, she describes a student's self-generated vocabulary list. In creating the vocabulary list, it is clear that the student failed to pay attention to the context of the selected words, as he listed inappropriate definitions for polysemous words. As he generated his vocabulary list for a text about U.S. history, the student included definitions like "wave – to move one's hand as a signal or greeting." The original history text, however,

contained the phrase "wave of immigrants"(46-49). The student failed to use the context of the sentence to help him determine the meaning of his identified vocabulary word.

Kinsella lays out several strategies for assisting such students, but perhaps one of the most direct is providing LEPs with a script including possibilities for interrupting—"Excuse me, but…" "Sorry for interrupting, but…"; asking for clarification—"I have a question about that." "Could you please repeat that?"; and requesting instructional assistance—"Could you please help me?" "Can you please help me do this?" (58). Such a script may be especially helpful to less proficient students; however, providing all LEPs with such a script and creating a lesson around using these phrases would help students at all levels feel more comfortable in working with their teachers and peers.

There are certainly differences between permanent LEPs and foreign exchange students, but both students are likely to have to cope with anxiety (though it may originate from varying sources) in the classroom. Deborah J. Short worries that immigrant students often are forced to assimilate into a new culture and master a new language much more quickly than is desirable. It can take years for an LEP student to work his or her way up to language proficiency equal to that of a native speaker, and while this may be feasible for an elementary student, high school students simply do not have the necessary time (Short 108-9). Pushing students to assimilate quickly is certainly not without drawbacks. In N. Eleni Pappamihiel's "English as a Second Language Students and English Language Anxiety: Issues in the Mainstream Classroom," Pappamihiel examines 178 middle school Mexican immigrant students in ESL and mainstream classrooms in the United States. Pappamihiel points out that "Although there have been few investigations on the effect of English language anxiety on the acquisition of English, there have been several studies that have

concluded that foreign language anxiety does have an adverse effect on learning" (332). Pappamihiel continues, however, to claim that the same factors that affect anxiety in the foreign language classroom are only intensified in the ESL classroom (332). We might speculate, then, that these anxieties would only be further intensified in the mainstream classroom. The primary fear is that language anxiety leads to students' withdrawal from classroom activity, thereby decreasing the effectiveness of any instruction. Pappamihiel's studies found that anxiety can play a significant role in students' language development. Students who moved to the mainstream classroom from an ESL classroom, she points out, often exhibited signs of stronger anxiety, and Pappamihiel advocates for mainstream teachers who are more aware of the anxieties that LEP students may face and who are more prepared to help students cope with these anxieties (328).

Pappamihiel's study included both quantitative data collection and interviews from focus groups. The interviews revealed much about the possible reasons why students showed more language anxiety in the mainstream classroom than in the ESL classroom. LEPs reported nervousness about the reaction of their native-English-speaking peers, sometimes fearing that native speakers will laugh at them or will not want to work with them. LEPs also reported that they were more comfortable speaking with content teachers who used at least some of their native language (in this case Spanish) in class (339-340).

The students in Pappamihiel's study were permanent residents, but it stands to reason that foreign exchange students would also struggle with similar language anxiety. Immigrant students may feel anxiety from the pressure to assimilate and even renounce their native language and culture, and these anxieties may be less apparent in a student only temporarily studying in the United States. However, foreign exchange students are

likely to be dealing with additional anxieties of their own. They are, after all, in many cases living away from their parents for the first time in their lives. While anxiety in the English classroom probably can't be eradicated for these students, teachers can create lessons that focus on the specific needs of non-native English speakers, thereby facilitating a comfortable, understanding environment.

Focusing on the specific needs of foreign exchange students and immigrant LEP students in the content classroom requires content teachers to closely examine aspects of their texts that they may normally pay no attention to. While native speakers of English may have little or no problem understanding adjective clauses in a text, Keith S. Folse in *Keys to Teaching Grammar to English Language Learners*, reminds teachers that a close analysis of content books is a good idea. Looking for reduced adjective clauses in the texts your students are asked to analyze can make the teacher conscious of problematic sentences students may encounter (196-199). Certainly this guideline applies to other grammar points as well, and as teachers become more aware of the complexities that their texts contain for both native and non-native English speakers, they will prepare themselves to better serve and assist their students.

In fact, I have found that examining texts from the perspective of a non-native speaker often leads to a deeper understanding for all students. In my first few years teaching Burton Raffel's translation of *Beowulf*, I found that students had trouble following the long, descriptive sentences that are often heavily laden with participial phrases. One passage describing the monster Grendel begins:

> A powerful monster, living down
>
> In the darkness, growled in pain, impatient

As day after day the music rang
Loud in the gall, the harp's rejoicing
Call and the poet's clear songs, sung
Of the ancient beginnings of us all, (32).

Passages like the one above can be difficult for native and non-native speakers alike, and one way I help students learn to interpret such passages, is by having them examine the syntax of the sentences. We discuss main verbs and subjects, identifying "a powerful monster" as the main subject above and "growled in pain" as the main verb. Doing this helps students identify the heart of what they are reading. We then discuss the construction of descriptive participial phrases like "living down in the darkness." I ask students what this phrase is describing, and they are able to tell me that it describes the monster and where he dwells. Students quickly become aware of how to writers can use these phrases to embellish their work. Finally, I ask students to add their own participial phrases to pre-constructed sentences. The entire exercise is closely focused on both reading comprehension and writing skills, and it is a lesson that both my foreign exchange students and American students take with them as we continue reading complex texts and writing descriptive sentences throughout the year. While non-native English speakers may need to focus on details like the –ing ending used for the present participle, native English speakers often need to focus more on proper punctuation of participial phrases. Lessons like the one above are lessons that can easily be used in a mainstream classroom to meet the needs of a variety of students.

While the sentence structure of Burton Raffel's *Beowulf* proves challenging for both native and non-native English speakers, texts like Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry*

*Finn* pose unique challenges to non-native English speakers. Twain's work, laden with examples of American dialect, exposes students to Twain's use of dialect for rhetorical purposes. Take for instance the following passage from chapter six in which Huck Finn's Pap rails against blacks being able to vote:

> And that ain't the wust. They said he could VOTE when he was at home. Well, that let me out. Thinks I, what is the country a-coming to? It was 'lection day, and I was just about to go and vote myself if I warn't too drunk to get there; but when they told me there was a State in this country where they'd let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I'll never vote agin. Them's the very words I said; they all heard me; and the country may rot for all me—I'll never vote agin as long as I live (26).

A passage such as this provides ample opportunity for instructing both native and non-native English speakers. Adger, Wolfram, and Christian point out that using such literature can lead to discussion of "the author's purposes for using vernacular features in writing, a medium in which readers are more accustomed to seeing standard dialect" (139). Before such a discussion can occur though, non-native English speakers may need explicit instruction in the decoding of the text. Such lessons may be focused on the text at a phonemic level. It may be helpful to point out Pap's tendency to delete the retroflex liquid, as seen in Pap's pronunciation of "worst" as "wust" or to point out the deletion of the initial vowel as indicated by the apostrophe in "'lection." Other lessons might consist of examining syntactical patterns like the addition of the phrase "Thinks I" to the beginning of a sentence where Standard English might use "I thought." These lessons in how to read dialect are

likely to be unnecessary with native English speakers, but they should precede any discussion of the rhetorical purpose of dialect when working with non-native speakers.

It is admittedly difficult to facilitate lessons like this that may be aimed at only one or two students in an entire class. Often times the demands and needs of the majority overrule the demands and needs of the few. Lessons like those mentioned above might be best delivered in a one-on-one setting while other students are working. I have found though that, provided the non-native speaker is comfortable with the teacher doing so, my own classes of native English speakers are often extremely interested to learn about the challenges that face non-native English speakers. In the past, when I have been addressing specific needs with foreign exchange students, I have found other students listening in, and as I explain the intricacies of English grammar, I find myself redirecting my explanation from a single student to the entire class. These moments when curiosity piques students' interest, are, in fact, opportunities for teaching. As nearly all of my students are monolingual, it is enlightening for them to consider the challenges that might be faced by multilingual students on a regular basis. When teachers take advantage of these opportunities, the English classroom can become a classroom for promoting respect for other languages, other cultures, and even other people.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs advocates: "Hosting exchange students globalizes your classrooms and broadens the minds of students and faculty, who can then share U.S. culture and customs with international students." If nothing else my students have come to realize that their own knowledge of world geography is unbearably limited. Actually though foreign exchange students are the most influential in the small contributions they make to class discussion on a daily basis. Just recently my senior English

class was complaining about Aldous Huxley's use of the grapheme æ in words like "hypnopædia." I explained that the symbol is called an ash, and is characteristic of older spellings or British spellings. It was not until a Norwegian foreign exchange student pointed out that his language still uses the letter, that my class was satisfied to move on to another topic of discussion though, eventually forgiving Huxley for using what they saw as a made up letter. Similar language issues have also come up when we discuss the kennings and compounding of *Beowulf*. It's inevitable then that any German student present will want to share with us the longest German word they know. Students gawk in amazement, and it is moments like these when I see students glimpse the wonder of language.

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## Project 3 Original with Comments

Katherine Budke

Dr. Sheri Wells-Jensen

English 5170

28 April 2013

The Foreign Exchange Student in the Mainstream Classroom

While many content and English as a second language (ESL) teachers find themselves faced with a population of immigrant students, I have found myself in what I believe is a rather unusual position. Each year I have a handful of foreign exchange students in my classes. While these students' successes may not be of official concern to their hosting schools, they are, nonetheless, of concern to me and their other teachers.

While ESL students living in the United States on a permanent basis are very much the responsibility of the school in which they are enrolled, this is not precisely the case for foreign exchange students who generally are not planning to obtain a diploma in the United States. Foreign exchange students, unlike immigrant students, in Ohio do not generally participate in mandatory standardized testing in the form of the Ohio Graduation Test, as they are not planning to receive a diploma. (Heffner). Furthermore, since schools are only required to provide ESL students classified as limited English proficient (LEP) with special education services, it is unlikely that a foreign exchange student would be tested in such an official capacity, given his or her temporary student status in the United States. The Ohio Department of Education provides the following guidelines from the Lau Resource Center regarding the education of foreign exchange students:

> It is not mandated that districts formally assess foreign exchange students as

> potential Limited English Proficient LEP students. The assumption is that students selected to participate in foreign-exchange programs in U.S. schools should have sufficient English skills to participate effectively in U.S. mainstream classes. Consequently, and in accordance with federal guidelines on serving foreign-exchange students under No Child Left Behind, districts are not required to assess and serve foreign-exchange students as LEP (5).

To this description, it is added that schools should not refrain from assessing foreign exchange students as LEP students because of a fear of accountability consequences; rather schools should do what is in the best interest of the student (6). If teachers feel that a foreign exchange student is struggling significantly in a mainstreamed class, he or she should be assessed and may then be officially identified as LEP, thus warranting official services. While these certainly are commendable guidelines set forth by the Ohio Department of Education, in schools without TESOL staff already on faculty, it seems likely that the red tape of hiring new staff for a temporary student will prevent struggling foreign exchange students from ever being assessed or officially identified. The responsibility then of meeting the needs of these students is likely to indefinitely lie with the mainstream teachers.

The school in which I teach—a small, rural school—has no ESL population to speak of, so there is no ESL teacher. Should ESL students enroll in the school, it would, of course, be necessary to provide a qualified teacher for them. However, until that time, teachers like myself find themselves modifying curriculum and delivery methods for foreign exchange students and doing so without the input of a certified TESOL instructor. The experience of teaching foreign exchange students in mainstream classes is not precisely the same as that

of teaching immigrant ESL students, but there may be something learned from the programs in place for addressing the needs of immigrant ESL students.

According to the Ohio Department of Education, during the 2010-2011 school year there were over 39,800 limited English proficient (LEP) students of a total 1,828,650 students enrolled in Ohio's elementary and secondary public schools. While such a number constitutes a small percentage of the total student population, it is actually a 38 percent increase from numbers reported five years prior and a 199 percent increase from numbers reported ten years prior ("Profile of Ohio's English Language Learners"). Ohio's LEP population (which likely includes few foreign exchange students) is made up of students from a variety of backgrounds including immigrants, refugees, and even students whose families have lived in the state for quite some time but still use a language other than English as their primary language at home. With the increase in LEP students and with such a wide variety of learners within this population, flexibility in programming is imperative.

The Ohio Department of Education actually lays out several possibilities for the instruction of LEP students. Bilingual education is a feasible option for schools with large populations of LEP students with the same native language, and it allows students the opportunity to study content in both their native language and English. Immersion classes consist entirely of LEP students, but they do not formally teach language. Instead, teachers in these settings focus on content, adjusting teaching methods to fit the abilities of their LEP students. In contrast pull-out ESL courses do include formal language instruction, and these courses may be in conjunction with bilingual education, providing students with native-language supplements. In-class or inclusion instruction is the term that Ohio uses to describe what is often described as sheltered instruction and involves an approach that

integrates content and language instruction ("Characteristics of Programs"). Ultimately, the goal of all English language programs is for all students to be mainstreamed, a practice of placing students in regular English-delivery classrooms with minimal modifications to teaching methods and content. It is in these mainstream classes that most foreign exchange students are placed.

There are varying advantages to all of the programs outlined above. Unfortunately, the number of students needing language services is likely to dictate the programming choices more than the specific needs of the students. Even schools with large populations of LEP students, for instance, may not be able to run bilingual education programs because there may not be enough students with the same native language. Furthermore, schools are limited by the staff they have available. A school with a limited number of TESOL teachers or bilingual teachers may be forced to rely on programs like immersion for logistical scheduling reasons. Such situations may not be of the greatest educational benefit to students, but they may be unavoidable.

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***Comments: Really, a nice job and a terrific rewrite, too. The addition of the details made the whole thing even more convincing.

So, I dig around for any suggestions to make: about the only things I can think to suggest here are these:

1. I liked very much the Beowulf example: it helped me to understand what you're facing in the classroom. It might be instructive to include, after that, a passage that doesn't seem so complex to the native speaker but that contains a couple reduced adjectival clauses or something else that makes the grammar hard to sort out. Maybe something in dialect from Mark Twain: something the native speaker gets but is pretty complex? Or maybe, one of those math story problems that might be hard?
Or, instructions for some worksheet?

The other thing I could think to add might be any advice/thoughts for teachers like you: you did some of this and did it very well. You could add in more. Do you have any local teachers' newsletter? This piece might be nice for other teachers to read.

I'm still tweaking the grades on test 3: adjusting to eliminate any questions that turned out to be missed by more than a few people. In any case, your grade is currently a 91%: and that won't go down.***

## Project 4 Final (Research and Analysis)

Towards a Synthetic Understanding of *Beowulf*

Hwilum cyninges þegn,
guma gilp-hlæden, gidda gemyndig,
se ðe eal-fela eald-gesegena
worn gemunde, word oþer fand
soðe gebunden; secg eft ongan
sið Beowulfes snyttrum styrian,
ond on sped wrecan spel gerade,
wordum wrixlan.

At times the scop,
a thane of the king, glorying in words,
the great old stories, who remembered them all,
one after another, song upon song,
found new words, bound them up truly,
began to recite Beowulf's praise,
a well-made lay of his glorious deed,
skillfully varied his matter and style.
(*Beowulf* 867-74)[3]

And so Beowulf's accomplishment—his defeat of the monstrous Grendel—was sung throughout the land and throughout the ages, so that today, centuries later, we too hear the story sung not from one single manuscript written in Old English, but more often read from one of many translations, each seeking to remain loyal to a different aspect of the text.

In a world of standardized tests and continually changing learning standards, today's high school English teacher must carefully weigh the value of each piece of literature, often selecting to teach those pieces that can offer students the most "bang for their buck." When teaching *Beowulf* to a group of high school students, teachers must ask themselves what it is they hope students will/might/should gain from reading the epic. The opportunities for learning and discovery about *Beowulf* are immense; one teacher may emphasize formal and structural poetic attributes of Old English, teaching students to recognize the effects of caesura and alliteration; she may focus on the narrative form, emphasizing digressions, boasts, and lays; finally she may focus on what the poem can reveal to the modern reader about cultural concepts like *wergild* or *wyrd*. All of these focuses have value, and it is likely that a study of the epic will at least touch

[3] All Old English excerpts provided in this document are taken from Chickering, Howell D., Jr., trans. *Beowulf: A Dual-Language* Edition. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1977. Print. The modern text here is also from the aforementioned Chickering translation.

upon each one. Promoting such a synthetic view of the text as both formal, structural, topical, poetic, and historical, different elements of literary theory will help to develop a comprehensive and effective literary pedagogy. Specifically, in the case of *Beowulf*, the lack of singular author, the transition from orality to literacy, the significance of individual and community action, and the cultural and geographical movements all contribute to a view of the text that is explicated by way of theories of authorship and translation.

## On the Difficulties of Translation

The excerpts below compare Howell D. Chickering's 1977 translation of *Beowulf* with that of Burton Raffel's 1963 translation, a translation commonly found in excerpted form in high school English textbooks.

**Chickering**

At times the scop,
a thane of the king, glorying in words,
the great old stories, who remembered them all,
one after another, song upon song,
found new words, bound them up truly,
began to recite Beowulf's praise,
a well-made lay of his glorious deed,
skillfully varied his matter and style.
(867-74)

**Raffel**

And sometimes a proud old soldier
Who had heard songs of the ancient heroes
And could sing them all through, story after story,
Would weave a net of words for Beowulf's
Victory, tying the knot of his verses
Smoothly, swiftly, into place with a poet's
Quick skill, singing his new song aloud
While he shaped it, and the old songs as well—
(867-74)

The differences in these two translations help expose the dilemmas that translators face. Chickering's translation clearly seeks to preserve the caesura of the original poem, not only recreating it through his phrasing which divides each line syntactically, but also in the visual presentation of each line split in two with typographical spacing. Chickering's translation may be more loyal to the rhythms of Old English, but Raffel's translation, which may lack the rhythm

and runes of the original Old English *Beowulf*, may, with its poetic use of the metaphor of weaving a poem,[4] be more attune to the poetic sensibilities of the modern reader.

Translation is a balancing act complicated by an array of factors. In 1923 Walter Benjamin commented on this balancing act when he published "The Task of the Translator" as an introduction to the translation of Baudelaire's *Tebleaux Parisiens*. In his introduction Benjamin posits that the audience of a translation should be of little concern to the translator, an idea that seems to go against the very notion of translation, an act that makes accessible to a certain group of people a work that was not originally accessible to them. However, Benjamin's opening sentence states: "In the appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful" (15). The translation of poetry should therefore seek to be loyal to the poem first, before it seeks to please the reader. For Benjamin, the translation of poetry must forget the reader because very rarely would the original poem have been composed for the reader (16). "No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener" (15). Art, it would seem in Benjamin's terms, is not created for the sake of the audience.

To translate a poem is not a matter of merely substituting a word in one language for a similar, corresponding word in another language. Benjamin continues, then, in his description of the translator's task, to explain that a good translation seeks to convey "the unfathomable, the mysterious, the 'poetic'" ("Task of the Translator" 15). Finally, he poses the question of whether a translator must also be a poet in order to translate a poem. This notion that the translator must translate "the unfathomable, the mysterious" is one that Seamus Heaney is well aware of, as, in

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[4] Seth Lerer points out that "one of the expressions used for making poetry in Old English is *wordum wrixlan*—to weave together words" (20). His book *Inventing English* offers a thorough explanation of the history of the English language discussion of elements of Anglo-Saxon poetry. Lerer, Seth. *Inventing English*: *A Portable History of the Language*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. Print.

his introduction to his own translation of the epic, he writes, "It is one thing to find lexical meanings for the words and to have some feel for how the metre might go, but it is quite another thing to find the tuning fork that will give you the note and pitch for the overall music of the work" (xxvi-xxvii). For Heaney, translating the poetic feelings of *Beowulf* was much like sensing a melody. In her discussion of Benjamin, Marilyn Gaddis Rose might be explaining this melody when she writes, "Pure language, which we glimpse when we translate contains the inexpressive, the unexpressible, the unexpressed (*Unaussprechliche, Ausdrücklose, Unausgresprochene*)" (165-6). Translation seeks to express both the lines of poetry and also what lies between the lines. Or at least this is the goal when a translator endeavors to translate a poem into poetic form.

In considering the difficulties of translation, it should also be noted that poetry is sometimes translated from one language to another without any intent of preserving poetic form. While many translators (e.g. Chickering, Raffel, Heaney, Liuzza) rework the epic *Beowulf* into Modern English poetic form, there also exist translations that render the epic in Mondern English prose. This can be seen in the translations of E. Talbot Donaldson, Barry Tharaud, and, as Joan Acocella points out in her book review, J.R.R. Tolkien.[5]

### Translation vs. Authorship

The epic *Beowulf* is traditionally thought of as an anonymous work, an epic or extended elegy of oral tradition written down many years after its oral origin by an unknown scribe. Scholars are comfortable with this lack of singular authorship, which is a common occurrence in the study of medieval literature. Yet, *Beowulf*'s multiple translations and iterations point to a

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[5] Acocella's review of the recently published Tolkien translation of *Beowulf* offers a commentary on the difficult decisions faced by both Tolkien and Heaney in creating their translations. Acocella argues that Heaney's poetic translation may be more accessible to modern readers, but Tolkien's prose translation may be closer to capturing the exact meaning and details of the epic. Acocella, Joan. "Slaying Monsters." *The New Yorker* 2 June 2014: 70-6. Print.

question about authorship as a means of translation and presentation. *Beowulf*'s lack of singular authorship is both a result of its oral beginnings and its translation throughout time, with each rendering creating a new landscape for readers to observe; thus these varied renderings have resulted not in a singular understanding of the epic but rather in a synthetic idea of its meaning and significance.

With its unknown authorship, Beowulf has always evoked musings about the identity of the author. As the epic contains elements of both pagan and Christian life, readers may wonder about the religious stance of the author. One may ask why these pagan and Christian elements are intermingled. Is this a reflection of the scop's own pagan beliefs entwined with those of a Christian scribe? Or is the intermingling merely a reflection of a single author's perspective on the complex religious state of the times? Either way, the search for significance and meaning in *Beowulf* continues today, and often that search begins with a question regarding authorship as it is bound to the question of intentionality. *Beowulf*'s author is unknown, and this facilitates, to use Barthes' terms, "the death of the Author" and "the birth of the reader" (1326) thereby opening the text for interpretation and allowing "language [to] speak, not the author" (Barthes 1323). Without an identified author to afford readers an explanation of the text, readers must examine the text itself to see what it has to say about paganism and Christianity.[6]

For Barthes, writing is a form of violence; he refers to the moment when a writer puts something down on paper, losing, at that moment, some control over how his ideas will be interpreted. The Author is dying, giving up power, so that his words can be interpreted by others.

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[6] For a more thorough discussion of the impact of Christian Latin on Old English and the interaction between "monastery and mead hall" (220) in Anglo-Saxon literature, see Orchard, Andy. "Monasteries and Courts: Alcuin and Offa." *Beowulf and Other Stories: A New Introduction to Old English, Old Icelandic and Anglo-Norman Literatures*. 2nd ed. Ed. Richard North and Joe Allard. Harlow, England: Pearson, 2012. 219-45. Print.

If we are to allow that readers have the ability and right to interpret a text in their own way, to find their own meaning in a text, then the Author must relinquish some of his control over interpretation. This is what must occur when a translator works to translate a text.

The task of translation is not a simple one, perhaps because, as Roland Barthes points out, "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (1324). Here, it could be said that Barthes is speaking of the oral tradition of literature itself, which does by its nature shift and "blend and clash" with each retelling by each scop. With its caesura, alliteration, and stock phrases to aid in memorization, the Anglo-Saxon epic is composed in such a way that lends to its being passed down from person to person, and inevitably each new singer of epic may leave his or her mark upon it.

The authorship of *Beowulf* is complicated by its origins in oral literature. Carol Braun Pasternack argues that Old English poetic texts actually differ from both oral and printed compositions, and she prefers to use the term "inscribed" to refer to texts like *Beowulf*, which "inherit significant elements of vocality from their oral forebears and yet address the reader from the pages of manuscripts" (520). Pasternack is reluctant to apply the word "written" to such texts, feeling that it too much ignores the role of the poet in a text's performance. Interestingly, she also feels that the term "written" leads readers to construct a singular "authorial voice" to whom the words of the text are then attributed (520). Pasternack's discussion of *Beowulf* falls well in line with the type of reading that Barthes finds essential in "The Death of the Author."

When studying a work originating in oral tradition and written down by an anonymous scribe, the quest to know and understand the author may seem a relatively fruitless one. Though we may discern certain things about the author from the text, we will never know the author

himself. In terms of medieval literature, this is significant not only because we do not know the identity of most authors, but also because the claim to place importance on such knowledge is not present in the middle ages. As Barthes argues: "The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person'" (1322). Barthes seeks to eradicate this quest to know the author, and he warns readers that "The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us" (Barthes 1322). However, the truly beautiful aspect of *Beowulf* is that even if the reader does seek an explanation of the work in the author, the reader will come up empty handed. There is no singular author to provide answers. There is no biographical information about the writer to support any conclusions. It is this empty-handedness that will push the reader to study the text more carefully.

Carol Braun Pasternack is careful to make a distinction regarding the search for an author in *Beowulf*. She argues that, "Instead of implying an author, Old English verse implies tradition" (532). As readers search for the tradition—which Pasternack defines as the formulaic echoes and patterns of Old English verse—in texts, they are then led to see the interrelationships between texts. While Pasternack's claim sounds quite a bit like the search for an author in a text, she is careful to explain that through searching for tradition and realizing intertextuality, readers are actually led to more diverse readings (531-3). In the end, Pasternack agrees very much with Barthes' call for readings that recognize that a text's meaning lies in the "blend and clash" (Barthes 1324). This notion of cannot be any more appropriately applied than it is when it is

applied to *Beowulf*, a tale exposing the blending and clashing of the paganism and Christianity and orality and literacy.

The complexities of *Beowulf*'s authorship are only complicated by issues of translation, and many a scholar has taken it upon him/herself to translate *Beowulf*'s original Old English into Modern English so that even those least aware of the history of the English language might read and enjoy. I might note though that a translator changes the way in which a reader receives a text much in the same way a photographer changes the way in which viewers see landscape. The shift in perspective is discussed at length in Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" where he expounds upon the effects of making art available to wide expanses outside of the artwork's original setting. With the translation of *Beowulf* into Modern English—including both prose translations like those of E. Talbot Donaldson and Barry Tharaud and poetic translations like those of Seamus Heaney and Burton Raffel—the epic has been brought to a wide audience who far surpass in number the limited audience who can read and critique Old English poetry. (e.g.: it is part of popular culture). It seems appropriate that an epic in the oral tradition should be available to the masses. It is only fitting that what was once a story that "leaped / The seas, was told and sung in all / Men's ears" (Raffel 149-51) should once again be able to fall on men's ears who will understand it. "The cathedral," Benjamin reminds us, "leaves its site to be received in the studio of an art lover; the choral work performed in an auditorium or in the open air is enjoyed in a private room," ("Work of Art" 1054) so too does the epic tale leave the British Library of London where the original medieval manuscript resides[7] to meet the student in the classroom or even the audience member in the movie theatre.

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[7] Incidentally, the manuscript of *Beowulf* may now be viewed online at the British Library's Web site. For more information, see Harrison, Julian. "Hwæt! Beowulf Online." *Medieval Manuscripts Blog*. British Library, 11 February 2013. Web. 26 June 2013.

Though translation certainly expands the audience of a text, it cannot be denied that something is always lost in translation: "the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place" (Benjamin, "Work of Art" 1053). While Benjamin worries about the "aura" of a piece of art being lost during reproduction, it might be argued that in the case of an anonymous work like *Beowulf*, that aura was perhaps weaker to begin with; then there is little to be lost in reproducing *Beowulf*. However, Benjamin, in discussing the reproduction of the work of art does add that only the original work of art contains its history, a history, which "includes changes to the physical structure of the work over time, together with any changes in ownership" ("Work of Art" 1053). It is precisely this history that one must be aware of when reading works in translation.

To merely read the translations of Seamus Heaney or Burton Raffel or Howell D. Chickering, Jr., or any translation for that matter, is to ignore the history of *Beowulf*, is to ignore the origin story. Just as the original painting ages with time and bronze sculpture develops its patina, so too does the epic hold a history of where it has been and how it has been read. Each translator brings something new to the text.

In examining the various translations of *Beowulf*, it is enlightening to turn to the translators themselves who frequently put forth brief introductions to their translations. While these introductions often include historical information, they also give a peak at the translator's thoughts about the task of translation (which I gather from the remarks of several translators is a daunting endeavor). Certainly, Raffel's use of alliteration and Chickering's loyalty to caesura may be noted in the translations themselves, but it is interesting to hear Raffel state, "I have felt it advisable, even obligatory, to alliterate much more freely, occasionally as the Old English alliterates, more usually in irregular patterns developed *ad hoc*" (xxii). Raffel goes on to spend

the better part of a paragraph listing the ways in which he remained loyal to or strayed from the Old English alliterations. There is an apologetic tone in all of this, and Raffel's reverence for *Beowulf* is apparent in it.

When translators are devoted to their subject (And who would undertake the task of translating a 3182-line poem, if he weren't devoted to it?), they recognize a sense of responsibility to the original, even if the original has no author. The sense of responsibility is owed to the poem itself, not to the author. Howell D. Chickering, Jr., also recognizes this setback when he writes, "The trouble is that *Beowulf* is so rich in meaning that no single translation, however excellent, can make all or even most of its poetry come across" (ix). No single translation of the epic can do it justice. This, as Chickering recognizes, is precisely what makes dual-language publications handy. With the Old English text published side-by-side the Modern English, there is little doubt that the reader will—no matter what his Old English skills may be—be able to completely ignore the provenance—or to use Benjamin's word "history"—of the text ("Work of Art" 1053).

Benjamin is correct to warn, "The technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence" ("Work of Art" 1054). Studying only one translation of *Beowulf* without even acknowledging the original text should not be a task that occurs, but rather, study should include at least a nod to the original Old English and perhaps an examination of multiple translations so that students may develop an understanding of the influence that a translator has upon how a work is received.

## Popular "Translations" of *Beowulf*

*Beowulf* has been reworked numerous times through the translation from Old English text to Modern English text, but the epic has also been retold in other genres as well. With each new version of the epic's story, the audience is asked to consider how the new author—translator, film director, cartoonist, whatever the case may be—has influenced the way in which the audience will perceive the subject matter. "Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception" (Benjamin, "Work of Art" 1055). These new modes of production of the old epic help to further open opportunities for study and interpretation.

As Seamus Heaney explains in the introduction to his translation, when *Beowulf* is viewed as "three archetypal sites of fear," (xii), it is then that readers can conceive of the story elsewhere. Heaney imagines the epic "transformed in performance in a *banraku* in Japan" or as an "animated cartoon" (xii-xiii). It is this ability to transform the epic that Heaney feels has brought *Beowulf* into the third millennium. It is the translatability of the text that has allowed the epic to not only be read by masses of modern readers, but it is also the translatability of the text that has allowed it to be recreated in visual formats as well.

With the accessibility of modern translations, today's student can now begin to see connections between the ancient epic and popular culture, whether that pertains to noting similarities to the modern superhero or recognizing the archetypal hero throughout time. Students are now able to see what works like *The Lord of the Rings* or even *Harry Potter* have drawn from the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. With numerous accessible translations of the text, one must no longer study Old English in college to appreciate the beauty of the epic, nor must one sit down and open a book to be exposed to Beowulf's story.

Gareth Hinds' graphic novel, published in a series of three comic books, features vivid, graphic drawings. While Hinds' work may not present readers with a complete textual translation of the *Beowulf* manuscript, it certainly provides a colorful avenue of entry into the text. Large parts of the story take place with no words whatsoever. In fact, Beowulf's descent into the watery home of Grendel's mother, his fight with her, his seeing and seizing of the ancient battle sword on the wall, his killing of her, his vengeful quest to capture Grendel's head, and even his ascent out of the water to be greeted by the awaiting Geats all occur over the span of fifteen pages with absolutely no text. The plot of the original epic does remain intact in this retelling of the tale though, despite the absence of text. Where Hinds does include text, he relies upon the translation from *The Harvard Classics,*[8] which he likes because of "the way it preserves the essential feeling of Old English poetry" (Hinds Introduction). One element that the translation preserves quite well is alliteration. The comic book opens with: "To Hrothgar was given such glory of war, such honor of combat, that all his kin obeyed him gladly till great grew his band of youthful comrades" (Hinds 1). The language of the translation is in places difficult, and Hinds himself admits that some of the words used in the translation are used no longer, so he provides a brief glossary at the beginning of the book. While the drawings and style may pull new, young readers into the epic, it seems unlikely that Hinds' graphic novel will pull struggling readers into the language of *Beowulf* the way that Seamus Heaney's translation of the text might.

Graphic novels are not the only genre to take an interest in *Beowulf*. Robert Zemeckis' 2007 film version piqued interest with prominent actors including Anthony Hopkins, John Malkovitch, and Angelina Jolie and with the use of motion-capture technology. While the story—or more likely Angelina Jolie's gold-leaf body—caught the attention of teenagers,

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[8] As Hinds notes in an introduction to his graphic novel, the text of his graphic novel comes from *The Harvard Classics*, Volume 49, Copyright 1910 by P.F. Colllier & Son.

Zemeckis takes some liberties with the epic's plot. This only makes it even more necessary that those interested in the film should also study its history and seek out a textual version of it.

Finally, we cannot conclude a discussion of reimagining the epic without mentioning John Gardner's retelling of the Beowulf legend from the point of view of the monster Grendel. In his novel Gardner humanizes the monster and leads us to view the tale from another angle. Perhaps it is the classic heroic nature of *Beowulf* that draws people to reimagining the epic. Fredric Jameson might chalk it up to the exhausted status of today's world. "There is another sense in which the writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds—they've already been invented; only a limited number of combinations are possible; the unique ones have been thought of already" (1851). All of the great stories have already been told, so today's writers are left to re-imagine the stories of the past, to retell them in their own words. Jameson reminds us that this is why we have fallen back on "pastiche: in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum" (1851). It is little wonder then that the epic has drawn the attention of numerous authors, from Heaney and Raffel to Hinds and Gardner.

It seems everyone wants to pay homage to *Beowulf*. Heaney writes of his own experience: "the earliest lines I published when I was a student were as much pastiche Anglo-Saxon as they were pastiche Hopkins" (xxiii). As Heaney sat down to translate *Beowulf*, he reports discovering that his own early poetry actually possessed Anglo-Saxon metrics with lines that balanced two halves in the style of caesura and each half possessing two stressed syllables (xxiii). Heaney had been using the Anglo-Saxon style without even realizing it, and certainly this can occur when working with pastiche. There is nothing wrong with speaking through Jameson's "masks," but it

is important to recognize the masks for what they are. Translations are not the original works, and if we are to truly appreciate *Beowulf*, we must peer behind the masks, if only to glimpse at the original.

## Conclusion: Text in Context

The study of *Beowulf* should not be a stand-alone unit, focused on a singular text. Rather a *Beowulf* unit should employ multiple texts. As Gerald Graff writes in his 1986 essay "Taking Cover in Coverage," "A department should consider the unit of teaching to be the issue or context, not the isolated text; texts to be taught should be chosen not only for their intrinsic value but for their usefulness in illustrating exemplary problems and issues" (1970). With multiple translations and interpretations of *Beowulf* now available to students, it is possible to select texts that will open the door for students to take genuine interest in Anglo-Saxon literature and in the theory of translation. Verse translations may help students to understand the poetic melody of the epic, prose translations may offer insight to the details of the tale, and side-by-side translations can expose students to the historical aspects of the language. Teachers have an array of resources available to help them move students from a one-dimensional understanding of the text to a synthetic appreciation.

Teachers may inspire their students to take interest in any number of aspects of *Beowulf* by utilizing lessons on a host of subjects from studying poetic techniques to defining Old English words. The richest understanding of the text will develop, however, not when students study a single version of the poem, but when students engage in an in-depth study of all that the epic touches. Perhaps most importantly, through the study of *Beowulf* and authorship, teachers can emphasize the text itself. Finally, integrating theory, multiple translations, film, graphic novels, historical background will lead to students to a synthetic understanding of the text, helping

students to see that a text is, in fact, “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (Barthes 1324).

## Related Lesson Modules

**Description:** This set of modules is to be used in conjunction with a unit on *Beowulf*. The modules below are not meant to be a complete unit, but they are, instead, meant to be supplements to a complete study of the epic. The modules are flexible, so they may be used at various times, that is, before, during, or after the reading of *Beowulf*. Some modules are of course better suited for certain times because they contain excerpts of the epic. It is up to the teacher to decide if these modules would be better used as scaffolding or as reviewing lessons. The ideas and procedures are intended to be manipulated to best serve students' and teachers' needs, and so they are not presented in a strict order but rather in an order that should be viewed as flexible.

Following the methods listed below are a list of additional resources not found on the Works Cited page of this document and a set of student handouts to accompany the modules.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to articulate their own opinions regarding the role of the author in literature.
2. Students will be able to recognize how their own opinions relate to the opinions presented in "The Death of the Author."
3. Students will be able to articulate some of the problems that translators encounter, especially in the cases of translating poetry.
4. Students will be able to identify key attributes of Anglo-Saxon poetry and Old English.

**Level:** Grade 12

**Methods**

**Module 1: Authorship**

Procedure:

1. Assign students one of the questions below to answer in their journals. Allow them about ten minutes to write their answers. Then ask them to share their answer with a partner before discussing each question as a class.
    a. How would you define the word author? What makes someone an author?
    b. What, if anything, do you generally like to know about an author before reading his/her writing?
    c. Is it necessary that you know about an author's biography (when they were born, where they lived, what jobs they held, etc.) before reading his/her work?
    d. Why might teachers sometimes ask you to read the "background information" before reading a story, novel, or poem?
2. Explain to students that today they will be examining the role the author plays in the study of literature.
3. Read Roland Barthes' essay together as a class, working through the important quotations as you read. If there is not time to finish the essay in class, have students finish it on their own. They should come ready to discuss the Discussion Questions the next day.

**Module 2: Google Translate**

This module addresses the accuracy of mechanized translation as opposed to human translation. (If there is time a teacher could make a connection here to Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.")

Procedure:

1. Have students type the following sentences into Google Translate.
    a. *Flinging my arms out to the sides, I fell. I had faceplanted on the front steps to the fanciest restaurant in town, and I was far from fortunate enough to believe that fate would have prevented anyone from witnessing my falter. For sure, some person would have the pleasure of finding it all very funny.*
    b. Any original passage will work, but for the best results, include some literary elements that will get lost in translation. It must also be an original passage. Otherwise there are likely to have been reliable translations done already. Try having students translate into both languages closely and distantly related to English. (German and Arabic are good for this.)
2. Students should then translate into another language and back into English. Ask students why they think the sentence is not always the same. Then ask them if they know how Google Translate works.
3. Have students read "I, Translator" by David Bellos. Use the following questions either as homework or as in class discussion
    a. What would you identify as David Bellos' thesis?
    b. What type of literary element is at play in the phrase "Tale of terrible translation to tell"?
    c. What does the author mean when he writes, "no such thing as a 'correct translation' exists?
    d. Why does Bellos think we will never be able to do away with human translators?
    e. Why are Google translations of older texts like *Les Miserables* more accurate than Google translations of newer texts?
    f. What are the limitations of Google Translate?

**Module 3: *Beowulf* Translations**

This module requires students to compare various translations of a single passage of *Beowulf*. Discussion during this module should lead students to identify elements characteristic to Anglo-Saxon poetry.

Procedure:

1. If the terms *alliteration*, *caesura*, *kenning*, *prose*, and *verse* have not yet been introduced to students, do so. If the terms have been covered, take three minutes to review them with students. Understanding these terms will help students in the following task and as they articulate their analyses.
2. Have students try their hand at translating a very short passage of Old English into Modern English. Place students in pairs to work through "Just How Hard Can Translation Be?" Ask students to share their translations and discuss the difficulty.
3. Place students in groups of four. Provide each group with a set of the "Eight Versions of *Beowulf* from 'The Battle with Grendel's Mother.'" Cut these translations apart ahead of time. Instruct students to examine the various translations. Then ask the groups to sort

their translations. They may sort them into as many or as few categories as they like, but they must also write an explanation of why they sorted the translations the way that they did.

4. Have each group explain how the sorted the translations.
    a. In sharing make sure students touch upon the elements of Anglo-Saxon poetry that have been covered.
5. Follow-Up Question
    a. If you were asked to translate *Beowulf* from Old English, what would you have to keep in mind as you did your translation?
    b. Thinking back to the rhetorical triangle of author, audience, text, what role does the translator play? Where does he/she fit into the triangle? is it even a triangle anymore?

**Module 4: "What the Hell" and "Slaying Monsters"**

This module addresses the issue of translation and asks students to consider the question "How much freedom should a translator take with a text?"

Procedure:

1. Joan Acocella's article "What the Hell" that appeared in *The New Yorker* discusses translations of Dante's *Divine Comedy* as well as what Dan Brown's newest novel owes to it. The entire article could be used to show that writers are in fact interested in the issue of translation. However, the second section of the article discusses the "major sacrifices" made by Mary Jo Bang in modernizing Dante's "Inferno."
2. Ask students read this excerpt and discuss or write answers to the following questions.
    a. What are the advantages of a modernized translation like that of Mary Jo Bang? What are the disadvantages?
    b. What are the responsibilities of the translator? Do his/her responsibilities lie more with the original text/its author or with the audience who will be reading the translation? Explain your stance.
3. If teachers would like to provide students with an example of analysis comparing two translations of *Beowulf*, Joan Acocella's "Slaying Monsters" would be useful. The review of Tolkien's translation of *Beowulf* offers a summary of the epic and Anglo-Saxon culture, as well as a discussion, through comparison to Seamus Heaney's translation, of Tolkien's stylistic choices in translating the epic. Excerpts of this text might be useful in introducing students to the poetic elements of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

**Additional Resources for Classroom Use:**

1. The British Library's Digital Manuscript
    a. "Cotton MS Vitellius A XV." *Digitized Manuscripts*. British Library. n.d. Web. 26 June 2013. <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Vitellius_A_XV>.
    b. Here, the original *Beowulf* manuscript may be viewed in the library's digital viewer. *Beowulf* can be found on pages ff132r-201v in the viewer.
2. *Beowulf: The Epic in Performance*
    a. Bagby, Benjamin. *Beowulf: The Epic in Performance*. Benjamin Bagby. n.d. Web. 26 June 2013. <http://www.bagbybeowulf.com/index.html>.

   b. Bagby performs a selection of *Beowulf* in Old English accompanied by his own Anglo-Saxon harp playing as he seeks to reproduce the epic as it may have originally been performed. This site contains a brief video excerpt of his performance, but more clips can be found on YouTube.
3. "An ABC of Translating Poetry"
   a. Barnstone, Willis. "An ABC of Translating Poetry." *Poets.org*. 1997-2013. Web. 26 June 2013. <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15984>.
   b. If you are looking for a fun approach to the serious dilemmas encountered by the translators of poetry, this is a good piece. Barnstone, here, offers commentary and tips on the art of translating poetry. He give a comment for each letter of the alphabet.
4. *Anglo Saxon Aloud*
   a. Drout, Michael D.C. *Anglo Saxon Aloud*. Anglo Saxon Aloud. 2013. Web. 26 June 2013. <http://acadblogs.wheatoncollege.edu/mdrout/>.
   b. Drout posts podcasts here of himself reading various bits of Anglo-Saxon literature. Sections of *Beowulf* are included as well as the Lord's Prayer, which may be of interest to students who know it in Modern English.
5. "Ages of English Timeline"
   a. "Ages of English Timeline." Game designer and builder, Luecker Interactive. Editorial consultant and audio, David Crystal. *British History*. BBC. 2013. Web. 26 June 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/launch_tl_ages_english.shtml>.
   b. This interactive timeline allows viewers to explore the history of the English language in ten acts, spanning the Anglo Saxon invasions in 449 AD to present day. Audio clips from each time period allow listeners to hear how the English language has changed throughout time.

**Student Handout: The Death of the Author**

As we read "The Death of the Author," pay close attention to the quotations below. These quotations will be vital as you work towards an understanding of what is being said about the Author. In the space provided, you should jot down notes for yourself on the meaning of each quotation. When provided, you should also seek to answer the question related to each quotation.

| | **Quotation** | **Your Notes** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | The *author* still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs. (1322) | What is the purpose of writing a diary or a memoir?<br><br>Why might diaries and memoirs be more likely to unite a writer's person with a writer's work than say novels or poetry? |
| 2. | The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically entered on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions… (1322) | What is Barthes' tone here?<br><br>Does Barthes like the fact that so much weight is placed on the Author? |
| 3. | The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it. (1322) | Put this one in your own words. |
| 4. | [I]t is language which speaks, not the author… (1322) | Put it in your own words please. |
| 5. | The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. (1324) | In your own words, how is the relationship between father and child like the relationship between Author and work? |

| | **Quotation** | **Your Notes** |
|---|---|---|
| 6. | We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' | What do you think is meant by the term "Author-God"? |

| | |
|---|---|
| of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original blend and clash. (1324) | If a text does not release a single meaning, what kind of meaning does it release? |
| 7. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. (1325) | How does giving a text an Author limit its meaning? |
| 8. Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; for it, the writer is the only person in literature. (1326) | Why do you think people haven't paid attention to the reader in the past? |
| 9. [T]he birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author. (1326) | Please explain this in your own words. |

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Based on what you read in "The Death of the Author," describe the old way of viewing the author's role in literature. Describe the new way. Which does Barthes prefer.
2. What is the difference between the Author and the scriptor as discussed on page 1324?
3. In your opinion, who is more important when it comes to reading and interpreting literature: the author or the reader?
4. Why do you think Barthes capitalizes Author?
5. How might we relate all this to the rhetorical triange of text, author, audience?

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. 2nd ed. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: Norton, 2010. 1322-6. Print.

**Student Handout: Just How Hard Can Translation Be?**

| **Old English** | **Your Translation** |
|---|---|
| Æfter þæm wordum Weder-Geata leod | _____ |
| efste mid elne, nalas andsware | _____ |
| bidan wolde; brim-wylm onfeng | _____ |
| hilde-rince. | _____ |
| (1492-95) | |

**Snippets from Old English-English Dictionaries**

Because words often have suffixes and prefixes added to them, you will not always find the exact Old English word from above defined below. However, (bearing in mind that I have only a smidgeon more knowledge of Old English than you) I have compiled a list of words that I think will help you figure out what the passage above means. Some words also had multiple definitions, but I simplified the task for you a bit by only providing the most relevant. Take a few minutes to translate the short passage above. First, figure out what the words mean. Then if you like, see if you can re-write the passage in your own Modern English, keeping the basic content as close to the original as possible. For an added bonus, you might even throw some alliteration into your translation.

| **Old English** | **Modern English** | | **Old English** | **Modern English** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| andswarian | answer | | hild | battle, warfare |
| Æfter | according to, after | | rinc | man* |
| bidan | wait, wait for | | leod | man, person of a nation, prince |
| brim | edge, sea, seacoast, shore | | mid | with |
| brim-wylm | seawave, surge* | | nealles, nalas | not at all, by no means, least of all* |
| efstan | hasten | | onfeng | seizing on, grasping; hostile seizure, attack* |
| elnian | to emulate, be zealous, exert one's self* | | þæm | pronoun—them, these* |
| ellen | strength, valor | | Weder | storm, weather |
| ellne | quickly | | willan, wolde | to will or to wish |
| Geata | gate* (Here it just means Geat.) | | word | utterance, word |

Definitions with an * are from Grein. All others are from Jember.

Grein, Christian Wilhelm Michael, et al. *A Handy Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1885. *Hathi Trust Digital Library*. PDF.

Jember, Gregory K., ed., et al., *English-Old English, Old English Dictionary*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1975. Print.

**Student Handout: Eight Versions of *Beowulf* from "The Battle with Grendel's Mother"**

**Old English**

Æfter þæm wordum Weder-Geata leod
efste mid elne, nalas andsware
bidan wolde; brim-wylm onfeng
hilde-rince. Ða wæs hwil dæges,
ær he þone grund-wong ongytan mehte.
Sona þæt onfunde se ðe floda begong
heoro-gifre beheold hund missera,
grim ond grædig, þæt þær gumena sum
ælwihta eard ufan cunnode.
Grap þa togeanes, guð-rinc gefeng
atolan clommum; no þy ær in gescod
halan lice; hring utan ymb-bearh
þæt heo þone fyrd-hom ðurhfon ne mihte,
locene leoðo-syrcan laþan fingrum.
(1492-1505)

**R.M. Liuzza**

After these words the Weder-Geat man
hastened boldly, by no means wished to stay
for an answer; the surging sea received
the brave soldier. It was the space of a day[9]
before he could perceive the bottom.
Right away she who held that expanse of water,
bloodthirsty and fierce, for a hundred half-years,
grim and greedy, perceived that some man
Was exploring from above that alien land.
She snatched at him, seized the warrior
in her savage clutches, but none the sooner
injured his sound body—the ring-mail encircled him,
so that she could not pierce that war dress,
the locked coat of mail, with her hostile claws.
(1492-1505)

**Ruth P. M. Lehmann**

When these words were said the Weders' chieftain
advanced valiantly— advice or answer
he would not wait for; the wild flood received
the daring hero. Much of the day had passed
before he glimpsed the ground, the gravel bottom.
She who had defended the flood for fifty years,
greedy for battle, grim and angry,
sensed already that a certain one
hunted downward toward haunted realm.
She groped toward him, grasped the warrior
with her cruel claws but might not cleave open
such a sound body, circled and protected
by buckled breastmail. She could not break apart
the hard-linked hauberk with hostile fingers.
(1492-1505).

**Burton Raffel**

As his words ended
He leaped into the lake, would not wait for anyone's
Answer; the heaving water covered him
Over. For hours he sank through the waves;
At last he saw the mud of the bottom.
And all at once the greedy she-wolf
Who'd ruled those waters for half a hundred
Years discovered him, saw that a creature
From above had come to explore the bottom
Of her wet world. She welcomed him in her claws,
Clutched at him savagely but could not harm him,
Tried to work her fingers through the tight
Ring-woven mail on his breast, but tore
And scratched in vain.
(1492-1505)

[9] Or "it was daylight." [Liuzza's footnote.]

**Seamus Heaney**

After these words, the prince of the Weather-Geats
was impatient to be away and plunged suddenly:
without more ado, he dived into the heaving
depths of the lake. It was the best part of a day
before he could see the solid bottom.
Quickly the one who haunted those waters,
who had scavenged and gone her gluttonous rounds
for a hundred seasons, sensed a human
observing her outlandish lair from above.
So she lunged and clutched and managed to catch him
in her brutal grip; but his body, for all that,
remained unscathed; the mesh of the chain-mail
saved him on the outside. Her savage talons
failed to rip the web of his warshirt.
(1492-1505).

**E. Talbot Donaldson**

After these words the man of the Weather-Geats turned away boldly, would wait for no answer: the surging water took the warrior. Then was it a part of a day before he might see the bottom's floor. Straightway that which had held the flood's tract a hundred half-years, ravenous for prey, grim and greedy, saw that some man from above was exploring the dwelling of monsters. Then she groped toward him, took the warrior in her awful grip. Yet not the more for that did she hurt his hale body within; his ring-armor shielded him about on the outside so that she could not pierce the war-dress, the linked body-mail, with hateful fingers.
(26-7).

**Howell D. Chickering**

After these words the man of the Weders
turned away boldly, would not wait
for answer, farewell. The surging waters
received the warrior. After that plunge,
it was most of the day before he found bottom.
Soon enough she who war-thirsty held
the kingdom of waters for a hundred winters,
fierce and kill-greedy, saw that some human
came to explore the water-devils' home.
Then she snatched him up, seized the good warrior
in her horrible claws; but none the sooner
broke into his body; he was ringed all around,
safe from puncture; her claws could not pierce
his close-linked rings, rip the locked leather.
(1492-1505).

**Barry Tharaud**

After this boast, Beowulf of the storm-braving Geats turned boldly away and without waiting for a reply, plunged into the water.

It was the better part of a day before Beowulf saw the bottom of the mere. She who held sway over the mere for fifty years saw at once that a man had invaded from above this region of monsters. Ravenous for prey, the grim mother of Grendel groped toward Beowulf and took the warrior in her fearful grip. Yet for all that she could do, she was unable to wound his strong body, for he was shielded within the tightly woven armor so that she could not pierce the chain-mail corselet with her dreadful claws.
(99-101).

**Student Handout: What the Hell**

*The following is an excerpt from* "What the Hell" by Joan Acocella Joan, printed in *The New Yorker* on May 27, 2013, pages 82-5.

Mary Jo Bang, a poet and a professor of English at Washington University, in St. Louis, has much the same purpose: to convey Dante's internal music. Unlike James, she has made some major sacrifices to this end. In her Inferno (Graywolf), the only canticle she has taken on so far, she does not use end rhyme, and she does not hold herself to any regular metre. (James used iambic pentameter.) But, having cast off those restraints, she adopts another one. James was trying, he said, to be true to Dante. Bang is trying to be true to contemporary life, to the "post-9/11, Internet-ubiquitous present." As this implies, she aims to be faithful to something else as well: undergraduates. She writes, "I will be most happy if this postmodern, intertextual, slightly slant translation lures readers to a poetic text that might seem otherwise archaic and off-putting"—especially, I presume, to nineteen-year-olds. On the surface, this appears to be a laudable purpose, but whenever you hear those words "true to contemporary life," run for cover.

The trouble starts on the first page. The pilgrim speaks of his relief upon issuing from the dark wood. He says that he felt like a person who, almost drowned at sea, arrives, panting, on the shore. Bang places him, instead, at the edge of a swimming pool. But these two things—the ocean and the neighborhood pool—are nowhere near the same, and every nineteen-year-old knows what the ocean is. Other anachronisms create worse problems. Bang, in her lines, includes references to Freud, Mayakovsky, Colbert, you name it. She picks up swatches of verse from T. S. Eliot and Sylvia Plath. But, if readers get into the swing of these, what are they going to do when they encounter the Roman Catholic theology that is the spine of the Divine Comedy, and which Bang says, in her introduction, that she will honor? ("God has to look down from Heaven; Satan has to sit at the center of Hell.") Wouldn't it be better if she let the reader know that there are old things as well as new things—that there is such a thing as history? She is not unaware of this, as her learned footnotes demonstrate. Why is she keeping it from her readers? If they knew it, they might find out who Mayakovsky is, which I doubt that they have done.

Oddly, given Bang's stated aims, she's happy to court obscurity. She says that the she-wolf that detains the pilgrim outside the wood has a "bitch-kitty" face; Virgil tells the pilgrim to climb the "meringue-pie mountain" that lies ahead. "Bitch-kitty" gets an explanatory footnote: Bang says it's something that she found in the Dictionary of American Slang. My edition of that book says "bitch kitty" was a phrase of the nineteen-thirties and forties. (Roughly, it meant a "humdinger.") Did Bang expect today's readers to know it? Not really, it seems. She says that she wants these oddities to be fleeting pleasures for us. To me, they're not pleasures, but just oddities, something like finding a Tootsie Roll in the meat loaf.

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## Project 4 Original with Comments

***All starred comments are comments from Dr. Labbie.***

*** Hi Katie,
I'm sorry it has taken me this long to return comments to you.
This is a GREAT paper, as I said.
I am impressed with your ideas and insights, as well as with your ability to "translate" what you have done here into a lesson for class!

If you would like to develop this paper there is plenty to do. My comments in the track changes guide you to this.
I think section headings would help.
Also, your question about translation as a form of mechanical reproduction hinges on a truly interesting thesis.
I think some research about this topic would be helpful in developing the paper.

If you have questions about my comments, or if you would like for me to look at another version of this paper I'll be happy to do so.
I think you are onto something here that could be a solid part of a thesis.

Yours,
Erin***

Katherine Budke

Dr. Erin Labbie

English 6070

28 June 2013

Avenues to Reading and Interpreting *Beowulf*

Hwilum cyninges þegn,
guma gilp-hlæden, gidda gemyndig,
se ðe eal-fela eald-gesegena
worn gemunde, word oþer fand
soðe gebunden; secg eft ongan
sið Beowulfes snyttrum styrian,
ond on sped wrecan spel gerade,
wordum wrixlan.
(*Beowulf* 867-74)[i]

And sometimes a proud old soldier
Who had heard songs of the ancient heroes
And could sing them all through, story after story,
Would weave a net of words for Beowulf's
Victory, tying the knot of his verses
Smoothly, swiftly, into place with a poet's
Quick skill, singing his new song aloud
While he shaped it, and the old songs as well—
(867-74)[ii]

And so Beowulf's accomplishment—his defeat of the monstrous Grendel—was sung throughout the land and throughout the ages, so that today, centuries later, we too hear the story sung not from one single manuscript written in Old English, but more often read from one of many translations, each seeking to remain loyal to a different aspect of the text. ***I'd start with Chickering's dual language edition in your epigraph, set up the problem of literal translation, and then introduce Raffel as a comparison…Change the epigraph to match then.*** The excerpt above and on the right is from Burton Raffel's translation, a translation commonly found in excerpted form in high school English textbooks, and while it may lack the rhythm and runes of the original Old English *Beowulf*, one cannot argue that the metaphor of weaving a poem is beautifully wrought by Raffel. ***Be careful about making statements of aesthetic judgment right off in your opening.***

When teaching *Beowulf* to high school students, it goes without saying that there ***Why does it go without saying? We used to learn it in high school, and some places still do this, so, can you set up the question about what people should learn from the epic a bit differently?*** simply is not time to teach students to read Old English, and so teachers must ask themselves what it is they hope students will/might/should gain from reading the epic. The opportunities for learning and discovery about *Beowulf* are immense; one teacher may emphasize formal and structural poetic attributes of Old English, teaching students to recognize the effects of caesura and alliteration; another teacher may choose to focus on the narrative form, emphasizing digressions, boasts, and lays; still another teacher may focus on what the poem can reveal to the modern reader about cultural concepts like *wergild* or *wyrd*. ***Can't a teacher do all of these things, explain them, and then focus on the other items.***All of these focuses have value, and it is likely that a study of the epic will at least touch upon each one. Promoting such a synthetic

view of the text as both formal, structural, topical, poetic and historical, different elements of literary theory will help to develop a comprehensive and effective literary pedagogy. Specifically, in the case of *Beowulf*, the lack of singular author, the transition from orality to literacy, the significance of individual and community action, and the cultural and geographical movements all contribute to a view of the text that is explicated by way of theories of authorship and translation.

The epic *Beowulf* is traditionally thought of as an anonymous work, an epic of oral tradition written down many years after its oral origin by an unknown scribe. Scholars are comfortable with this lack of singular authorship, which is a common occurrence in the study of medieval literature. Yet, *Beowulf*'s multiple translations and iterations point to a question about authorship as a means of translation and presentation. **This paper seeks to explore the connections between translation and authorship in the reproduction of an anonymously authored text.*** Although your introduction is excellent, this is not a thesis—it is a theme. Try to articulate a thesis based on your focus in the above paragraph as it is established. It is close! IE: the lack of singular authorship in a text…verb…translation and authorship…***

With its elements of both pagan and Christian life, the question of authorship ***but what is the connection between unknown authorship and pagan and Christian life? Can't we have both in a text where we know the author? Like Tolkein for instance?***is one that has always surrounded *Beowulf*. One may ask why these elements are intermingled. Is this a reflection of the scop's own pagan beliefs entwined with those of a Christian scribe? Or is the intermingling merely a reflection of the complex religious state of the times? Either way, the search for significance and meaning in *Beowulf* continues today, and often that search begins with a question regarding authorship as it is bound to the question of intentionality. ***Develop this

statement please. How does Christianity relate to intentionality? Why would a pagan author/scribe/poet/scop differ from a Christian on in focus? Would the "intentionality" of revealing or concealing authorship be the same in each?*** As Roland Barthes points out in "The Death of the Author," "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (1324). Here, it could be said that Barthes is speaking of the oral tradition of literature itself which does by its nature shift and "blend and clash" with each retelling by each scop. With its caesura, alliteration, and stock phrases to aid in memorization, the Anglo-Saxon epic is composed in such a way that lends to its being passed down from person to person, and inevitably each new singer of epic may leave his or her mark upon it. ***Notes to secondary articles about the style of *Beowulf* and oral transmission would be helpful here. Also, development of this sentence would be helpful (perhaps even a paragraph is needed here).***

When studying a work originating in oral tradition and written down by an anonymous scribe, the quest to know and understand the author may seem a relatively fruitless one. Though we may discern certain things about the author from the text, we will never know the author himself. In terms of medieval literature, this is significant not only because we do not know the identity of most authors, but also because the claim to place importance on such knowledge is not present in the middle ages. As Barthes argues, the "Author" is a modern invention. ***Cite full statement here and footnote.*** Barthes seeks to eradicate this quest to know the author, and he warns readers that "The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us" (Barthes 1322). However, the

truly beautiful aspect of *Beowulf* is that even if the reader does seek an explanation of the work in the author, the reader will come up empty handed. There is no singular author to provide answers. There is no biographical information about the writer to support any conclusions. It is this empty-handedness that will push the reader to study the text more carefully.

Carol Braun Pasternack is careful to make a distinction regarding the search for an author in *Beowulf*. In "The Textuality of Old English Poetry," she argues that, "Instead of implying an author, Old English verse implies tradition" (532). ***What does "tradition" mean here?***As readers search for the "tradition" in texts, they are then led to see the interrelationships between texts. While Pasternack's claim sounds quite a bit like the search for an author in a text, she is careful to explain that through searching for tradition and realizing intertextuality, readers are actually led to more diverse readings (531-3). In the end, Pasternack agrees very much with Barthes call for readings that recognize that a text's meaning lies in the "blend and clash" (Barthes 1324).***You are working with complex and difficult material here- good effort- there are some details to pin down, but I'd return to this after a month and review it if I were you- you might have a clearer sense of things. This is a really important part of your argument and I think you can develop this paragraph a bit more. Perhaps even bring in elements of Beowulf's topics of tradition within the tale—that is, isn't Beowulf, in part, about the possibility for tradition to last, be recognized, or to be passed on by way of ritual and storytelling?***

Now, since *Beowulf* can be read without the concern of interpreting it as the author intended, we are free to interpret it in a way that is most loyal to the original text. ***I'm not sure that 'concern' is a better word here than 'worry'—the sentence might need work.***It is Barthes, after all, who reminds readers that, "it is language which speaks, not the author" (1323). Of course, only the select few are actually capable of reading and studying the language of the

original *Beowulf*. While learning Old English may not be the most daunting task, it certainly is not a necessary task for today's high school student who stands to gain something from the epic, even if it is not studied in its original tongue.***Why not study it in its original tongue? Grammar here in the final sentence is off, and I think it is because the transition isn't happening smoothly in concept. For this entire paragraph: Why not think specifically about authorship and translation as editorship- is the translator an author, is an editor a translator, is the group of voices comprising Beowulf a case of oral translation (of ideas) as much as it is a case of oral transmission?***

This is where the issues of translation become apparent, and many a scholar has taken it upon him/herself to translate *Beowulf*'s original Old English into Modern English so that even those least aware of the history of the English language might read and enjoy. **It should be noted though that a translator changes the way in which a reader receives a text much in the same way a photographer changes the way in which viewers see landscape.** The shift in perspective is discussed at length in Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" where he expounds upon the effects of making art available to wide expanses outside of the artwork's original setting. *** This is an interesting argument in the previous two sentences. Is this a common argument? Is it your own development? In many ways, this is the central thesis of your paper. If you were to truly revise this paper, it would be toaward the idea of making the connection between translation and mechanical reproduction as similar means—have you read Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator"? Photographers would contest this, but I think that you have a point here.*** With the translation of *Beowulf* into Modern English—including both prose translations like those of E. Talbot Donaldson and Barry Tharaud and poetic translations like those of Seamus Heaney and Burton Raffel—the epic has

been brought to a wide audience who far surpass in number the limited audience who can read and critique Old English poetry. (e.g.: it is part of popular culture). It seems appropriate that an epic in the oral tradition should be available to the masses. It is only fitting that what was once a story that "leaped / The seas, was told and sung in all / Men's ears" (Raffel 149-51) should once again be able to fall on men's ears who will understand it. "The cathedral," Benjamin reminds, "leaves its site to be received in the studio of an art lover; the choral work performed in an auditorium or in the open air is enjoyed in a private room," (1054) so too does the epic tale leave the British Library of London where the original medieval manuscript resides[iii] to meet the student in the classroom or even the audience member in the movie theatre.

Though translation certainly expands the audience of a text, it cannot be denied that something is always lost in translation: "the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place" (Benjamin 1053). While Benjamin worries about the "aura" of a piece of art being lost during reproduction, it might be argued that in the case of an anonymous work like *Beowulf*, that aura was perhaps weaker to begin with; then there is little to be lost in reproducing *Beowulf*. However, Benjamin, in discussing the reproduction of the work of art does add that only the original work of art contains its history, a history which "includes changes to the physical structure of the work over time, together with any changes in ownership" (1053). It is precisely this history that one must be aware of when reading works in translation. *** You are really going to have to read some secondary pieces about Benjamin, translation, and photography. If you don't include them in your argument, you will need to cite them in your bib. But I think that once you read them you will find a way to include them here. I'll add some to a list at the end here.

Lawrence Venuti, The Translation Studies Reader

WALTER BENJAMIN AS TRANSLATION THEORIST: A RECONSIDERATION

Marilyn Gaddis Rose

*Dispositio*

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These are good places to start- then find others that are relevant please.***

To merely read the translations of Seamus Heaney or Burton Raffel or Howell D. Chickering, Jr., or any translation for that matter, is to ignore the history of *Beowulf*, is to ignore the origin story. Just as the original painting ages with time and bronze sculpture develops its patina, so too does the epic hold a history of where it has been and how it has been read. Each translator brings something new to the text. ***Good sentence.***

In examining the various translations of *Beowulf*, it is enlightening to turn to the translators themselves who frequently put forth brief introductions to their translations. While these introductions often include historical information, they also give a peak at the translator's thoughts about the task of translation (which I gather from the remarks of several translators is a daunting endeavor). Certainly, Raffel's use of alliteration and Chickering's loyalty to caesura may be noted in the translations themselves, but it is interesting to hear Raffel state, "I have felt it advisable, even obligatory, to alliterate much more freely, occasionally as the Old English alliterates, more usually in irregular patterns developed *ad hoc*" (xxii). Raffel goes on to spend the better part of a paragraph listing the ways in which he remained loyal to or strayed from the Old English alliterations. There is an apologetic tone in all of this, and Raffel's reverence for *Beowulf* is apparent in it.

When translators are devoted to their subject (And who would undertake the task of translating a 3182-line poem, if he weren't devoted to it?), they recognize a sense of responsibility to the original, even if the original has no author. Howell D. Chickering, Jr., also recognizes this setback when he writes, "The trouble is that *Beowulf* is so rich in meaning that no single translation, however excellent, can make all or even most of its poetry come across" (ix). No single translation of the epic can do it justice. This, as Chickering recognizes, is precisely what makes dual-language publications handy. With the Old English text published side-by-side the Modern English, there is little doubt that the reader will—no matter what his Old English skills may be—be able to completely ignore the provenance—or to use Benjamin's word "history"—of the text (1053).

Benjamin is correct to warn, "the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence" (1054). Studying only one translation of *Beowulf* without even acknowledging the original text should not be a task that occurs, but rather, study should include at least a nod to the original Old English and perhaps an examination of multiple translations so that students may develop an understanding of the influence that a translator has upon how a work is received. ***I think you need a section heading for the next section and have added one (Which would mean that the previous section also gets a heading).***

### Popular "Translations" of *Beowulf*

*Beowulf* has been reworked numerous times through the translation from Old English text to Modern English text, but the epic has also been retold in other genres as well. With each new version of the epic's story, the audience is asked to consider how the new author—translator, film director, cartoonist, whatever the case may be—has influenced the way in which the

audience will perceive the subject matter. “Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception” (Benjamin 1055). These new modes of production of the old epic help to further open opportunities for study and interpretation.

As Seamus Heaney explains in the introduction to his translation, when *Beowulf* is viewed as “three archetypal sites of fear,” (xii), it is then that readers can conceive of the story elsewhere. Heaney imagines the epic “transformed in performance in a *banraku* in Japan” or as an “animated cartoon” (xii-xiii). It is this ability to transform the epic that Heaney feels has brought *Beowulf* into the third millennium. ***Good point—can you note more about this and the relevance or repetition of B in pop culture?***

With the accessibility of modern translations, today’s student can now begin to see connections between the ancient epic and popular culture, whether that pertains to noting similarities to the modern superhero or recognizing the archetypal hero throughout time. Students are now able to see what works like *The Lord of the Rings* or even *Harry Potter* have drawn from the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. No longer must one study Old English in college to appreciate the beauty of the epic, nor must one sit down and open a book to be exposed to Beowulf’s story.

Gareth Hinds’ graphic novel, published in a series of three comic books, features vivid, graphic drawings. While Hinds’ work may not present readers with a complete textual translation of the *Beowulf* manuscript, it certainly provides a colorful avenue of entry into the text. Large parts of the story take place with no words whatsoever. In fact, Beowulf’s descent into the watery home of Grendel’s mother, his fight with her, his seeing and seizing of the ancient battle sword on the wall, his killing of her, his vengeful quest to capture Grendel’s head, and even his

ascent out of the water to be greeted by the awaiting Geats all occur over the span of fifteen pages with absolutely no text. The plot of the original epic does remain intact in this retelling of the tale though, despite the absence of text. Where Hinds does include text, he relies upon the translation from *The Harvard Classics*[iv] which he likes because of "the way it preserves the essential feeling of Old English poetry" (Hinds Introduction). One element that the translation preserves quite well is alliteration. The comic book opens with: "To Hrothgar was given such glory of war, such honor of combat, that all his kin obeyed him gladly till great grew his band of youthful comrades" (Hinds 1). The language of the translation is in places difficult, and Hinds himself admits that some of the words used in the translation are used no longer, so he provides a brief glossary at the beginning of the book. While the drawings and style may pull new, young readers into the epic, it seems unlikely that Hinds' graphic novel will pull struggling readers into the language of *Beowulf*.

Graphic novels are not the only genre to take an interest in *Beowulf*. Robert Zemeckis' 2007 film version piqued interest with prominent actors including Anthony Hopkins, John Malkovitch, and Angelina Jolie and with the use of motion-capture technology. While the story—or more likely Angelina Jolie's gold-leaf body—caught the attention of teenagers, Zemeckis takes some liberties with the epic's plot. This only makes it even more necessary that those interested in the film should also study its history and seek out a textual version of it.

Finally, we cannot conclude a discussion of reimagining the epic without mentioning John Gardner's retelling of the Beowulf legend from the point of view of the monster Grendel. In his novel Gardner humanizes the monster and leads us to view the tale from another angle. Perhaps it is the classic heroic nature of *Beowulf* that draws people to reimagining the epic. Fredric Jameson might chalk it up to the exhausted status of today's world. "There is another sense in

which the writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds—they've already been invented; only a limited number of combinations are possible; the unique ones have been thought of already" (1851). All of the great stories have already been told, so today's writers are left to re-imagine the stories of the past, to retell them in their own words. Jameson reminds us that this is why we have fallen back on "pastiche: in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum" (1851). It is little wonder then that the epic has drawn the attention of numerous authors from Heaney and Raffel to Hinds and Gardner.

It seems everyone wants to pay homage to *Beowulf*. Heaney writes of his own experience: "the earliest lines I published when I was a student were as much pastiche Anglo-Saxon as they were pastiche Hopkins" (xxiii). As Heaney sat down to translate *Beowulf*, he reports discovering that his own early poetry actually possessed Anglo-Saxon metrics with lines that balanced two halves in the style of caesura and each half possessing two stressed syllables (xxiii). Heaney had been using the Anglo-Saxon style without even realizing it, and certainly this can occur when working with pastiche. There is nothing wrong with speaking through Jameson's "masks," but it is important to recognize the masks for what they are. Translations are not the original works, and if we are to truly appreciate *Beowulf*, we must peer behind the masks, if only to glimpse at the original.

## Conclusion: Text in Context

The study of *Beowulf* should not be a stand-alone unit, focused on a singular text. Rather a *Beowulf* unit should employ multiple texts. As Gerald Graff writes in his 1986 essay "Taking

Cover in Coverage," "A department should consider the unit of teaching to be the issue or context, not the isolated text; texts to be taught should be chosen not only for their intrinsic value but for their usefulness in illustrating exemplary problems and issues" (1970). As mentioned earlier, teachers may ask their students to read *Beowulf* for any number of reasons. However, the richest understanding of the text will develop when students study not a single version of the poem, but when students engage in an in-depth study of all that the epic touches. Through studying *Beowulf*, teachers may reveal to students the complexities of translation and authorship. Integrating theory, multiple translations, film, graphic novels, historical background: all of these will help students to see that a text is, in fact, "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Barthes 1324). ***There is a lot more you can do in conclusion here.***

## Related Lesson Plans

**Description:** This set of modules is to be used in conjunction with a unit on *Beowulf*. The modules below are not meant to be a complete unit, but they are, instead, meant to be supplements to a complete study of the epic. The modules are flexible, so they may be used at various times, that is before, during, or after the reading of *Beowulf*. Some modules are of course better suited for certain times because they contain excerpts of the epic. It is up to the teacher to decide if these modules would be better used as scaffolding or as reviewing lessons. The ideas and procedures are intended to be manipulated to best serve students' and teachers' needs, and so they are not presented in a strict order but rather in an order that should be viewed as flexible.

Following the methods listed below are a list of additional resources not found on the Works Cited page of this document and a set of student handouts to accompany the modules.

**Objectives:**

5. Students will be able to articulate their own opinions regarding the role of the author in literature.
6. Students will be able to recognize how their own opinions relate to the opinions presented in "The Death of the Author."
7. Students will be able to articulate some of the problems that translators encounter, especially in the cases of translating poetry.
8. Students will be able to identify key attributes of Anglo-Saxon poetry and Old English.

**Level:** Grade 12

**Methods**

**Module 1: Authorship**

Procedure:

4. Assign students one of the questions below to answer in their journals. Allow them about ten minutes to write their answers. Then ask them to share their answer with a partner before discussing each question as a class.
    a. How would you define the word author? What makes someone an author?
    b. What, if anything, do you generally like to know about an author before reading his/her writing?
    c. Is it necessary that you know about an author's biography (when they were born, where they lived, what jobs they held, etc.) before reading his/her work?
    d. Why might teachers sometimes ask you to read the "background information" before reading a story, novel, or poem?
5. Explain to students that today they will be examining the role the author plays in the study of literature.
6. Read Roland Barthes' essay together as a class, working through the important quotations as you read. If there is not time to finish the essay in class, have students finish it on their own. They should come ready to discuss the Discussion Questions the next day.

**Module 2: Google Translate**

This module addresses the accuracy of mechanized translation as opposed to human translation. (If there is time a teacher could make a connection here to Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.")
Procedure:

4. Have students type the following sentences into Google Translate.
    a. *Flinging my arms out to the sides, I fell. I had faceplanted on the front steps to the fanciest restaurant in town, and I was far from fortunate enough to believe that fate would have prevented anyone from witnessing my falter. For sure, some person would have the pleasure of finding it all very funny.*
    b. Any original passage will work, but for the best results, include some literary elements that will get lost in translation. It must also be an original passage. Otherwise there are likely to have been reliable translations done already. Try having students translate into both languages closely and distantly related to English. (German and Arabic are good for this.)
5. Students should then translate into another language and back into English. Ask students why they think the sentence is not always the same. Then ask them if they know how Google Translate works.
6. Have students read "I, Translator" by David Bellos. Use the following questions either as homework or as in class discussion
    a. What would you identify as David Bellos' thesis?
    b. What type of literary element is at play in the phrase "Tale of terrible translation to tell"?
    c. What does the author mean when he writes, "no such thing as a 'correct translation' exists?
    d. Why does Bellos think we will never be able to do away with human translators?
    e. Why are Google translations of older texts like *Les Miserables* more accurate than Google translations of newer texts?
    f. What are the limitations of Google Translate?

**Module 3: *Beowulf* Translations**
This module requires students to compare various translations of a single passage of *Beowulf*. Discussion during this module should lead students to identify elements characteristic to Anglo-Saxon poetry.
Procedure:

6. If the terms *alliteration*, *caesura*, *kenning*, *prose*, and *verse* have not yet been introduced to students, do so. If the terms have been covered, take three minutes to review them with students. Understanding these terms will help students in the following task and as they articulate their analyses.
7. Have students try their hand at translating a very short passage of Old English into Modern English. Place students in pairs to work through "Just How Hard Can Translation Be?" Ask students to share their translations and discuss the difficulty.
8. Place students in groups of four. Provide each group with a set of the "Eight Versions of *Beowulf* from 'The Battle with Grendel's Mother.'" Cut these translations apart ahead of time. Instruct students to examine the various translations. Then ask the groups to sort their translations. They may sort them into as many or as few categories as they like, but

they must also write an explanation of why they sorted the translations the way that they did.

9. Have each group explain how the sorted the translations.
    a. In sharing make sure students touch upon the elements of Anglo-Saxon poetry that have been covered.
10. Follow-Up Question
    a. If you were asked to translate *Beowulf* from Old English, what would you have to keep in mind as you did your translation?
    b. Thinking back to the rhetorical triangle of author, audience, text, what role does the translator play? Where does he/she fit into the triangle? is it even a triangle anymore?

**Module 4: "What the Hell"**

This module addresses the issue of translation and asks students to consider the question "How much freedom should a translator take with a text?"

Procedure:

4. Joan Acocella's article "What the Hell" that appeared in *The New Yorker* discusses translations of Dante's *Divine Comedy* as well as what Dan Brown's newest novel owes to it. The entire article could be used to show that writers are in fact interested in the issue of translation. However, the second section of the article discusses the "major sacrifices" made by Mary Jo Bang in modernizing Dante's "Inferno."
5. Ask students read this excerpt and discuss or write answers to the following questions.
    a. What are the advantages of a modernized translation like that of Mary Jo Bang? What are the disadvantages?
    b. What are the responsibilities of the translator? Do his/her responsibilities lie more with the original text/its author or with the audience who will be reading the translation? Explain your stance.

**Additional Resources for Classroom Use:**

6. The British Library's Digital Manuscript
    a. "Cotton MS Vitellius A XV." *Digitized Manuscripts*. British Library. n.d. Web. 26 June 2013. <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Vitellius_A_XV>.
    b. Here, the original *Beowulf* manuscript may be viewed in the library's digital viewer. *Beowulf* can be found on pages ff132r-201v in the viewer.
7. *Beowulf: The Epic in Performance*
    a. Bagby, Benjamin. *Beowulf: The Epic in Performance*. Benjamin Bagby. n.d. Web. 26 June 2013. <http://www.bagbybeowulf.com/index.html>.
    b. Bagby performs a selection of *Beowulf* in Old English accompanied by his own Anglo-Saxon harp playing as he seeks to reproduce the epic as it may have originally been performed. This site contains a brief video excerpt of his performance, but more clips can be found on YouTube.
8. "An ABC of Translating Poetry"
    a. Barnstone, Willis. "An ABC of Translating Poetry." *Poets.org*. 1997-2013. Web. 26 June 2013. <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15984>.

   b. If you are looking for a fun approach to the serious dilemmas encountered by the translators of poetry, this is a good piece. Barnstone, here, offers commentary and tips on the art of translating poetry. He give a comment for each letter of the alphabet.
9. *Anglo Saxon Aloud*
   a. Drout, Michael D.C. *Anglo Saxon Aloud*. Anglo Saxon Aloud. 2013. Web. 26 June 2013. <http://acadblogs.wheatoncollege.edu/mdrout/>.
   b. Drout posts podcasts here of himself reading various bits of Anglo-Saxon literature. Sections of *Beowulf* are included as well as the Lord's Prayer, which may be of interest to students who know it in Modern English.
10. "Ages of English Timeline"
   a. "Ages of English Timeline." Game designer and builder, Luecker Interactive. Editorial consultant and audio, David Crystal. *British History*. BBC. 2013. Web. 26 June 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/launch_tl_ages_english.shtml>.
   b. This interactive timeline allows viewers to explore the history of the English language in ten acts, spanning the Anglo Saxon invasions in 449 AD to present day. Audio clips from each time period allow listeners to hear how the English language has changed throughout time.

**Student Handout: The Death of the Author**

As we read "The Death of the Author," pay close attention to the quotations below. These quotations will be vital as you work towards an understanding of what is being said about the Author. In the space provided, you should jot down notes for yourself on the meaning of each quotation. When provided, you should also seek to answer the question related to each quotation.

| | **Quotation** | **Your Notes** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | The *author* still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs. (1322) | What is the purpose of writing a diary or a memoir?<br><br>Why might diaries and memoirs be more likely to unite a writer's person with a writer's work than say novels or poetry? |
| 2. | The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically entered on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions… (1322) | What is Barthes' tone here?<br><br>Does Barthes like the fact that so much weight is placed on the Author? |
| 3. | The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it. (1322) | Put this one in your own words. |
| 4. | [I]t is language which speaks, not the author… (1322) | Put it in your own words please. |
| 5. | The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. (1324) | In your own words, how is the relationship between father and child like the relationship between Author and work? |

| | Quotation | Your Notes |
|---|---|---|
| 6. | We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original blend and clash. (1324) | What do you think is meant by the term "Author-God"?<br><br>If a text does not release a single meaning, what kind of meaning does it release? |
| 7. | To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. (1325) | How does giving a text an Author limit its meaning? |
| 8. | Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; for it, the writer is the only person in literature. (1326) | Why do you think people haven't paid attention to the reader in the past? |
| 9. | [T]he birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author. (1326) | Please explain this in your own words. |

**Discussion Questions:**

6. Based on what you read in "The Death of the Author," describe the old way of viewing the author's role in literature. Describe the new way. Which does Barthes prefer.
7. What is the difference between the Author and the scriptor as discussed on page 1324?
8. In your opinion, who is more important when it comes to reading and interpreting literature: the author or the reader?
9. Why do you think Barthes capitalizes Author?
10. How might we relate all this to the rhetorical triange of text, author, audience?

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. 2nd ed. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: Norton, 2010. 1322-6. Print.

**Student Handout: Just How Hard Can Translation Be?**

| **Old English** | **Your Translation** |
|---|---|
| Æfter þæm wordum Weder-Geata leod | _____ |
| efste mid elne, nalas andsware | _____ |
| bidan wolde; brim-wylm onfeng | _____ |
| hilde-rince. | _____ |
| (1492-95) | |

**Snippets from Old English-English Dictionaries**

Because words often have suffixes and prefixes added to them, you will not always find the exact Old English word from above defined below. However, (bearing in mind that I have only a smidgeon more knowledge of Old English than you) I have compiled a list of words that I think will help you figure out what the passage above means. Some words also had multiple definitions, but I simplified the task for you a bit by only providing the most relevant. Take a few minutes to translate the short passage above. First, figure out what the words mean. Then if you like, see if you can re-write the passage in your own Modern English, keeping the basic content as close to the original as possible. For an added bonus, you might even throw some alliteration into your translation.

| **Old English** | **Modern English** |
|---|---|
| andswarian | answer |
| Æfter | according to, after |
| bidan | wait, wait for |
| brim | edge, sea, seacoast, shore |
| brim-wylm | seawave, surge* |
| efstan | hasten |
| elnian | to emulate, be zealous, exert one's self* |
| ellen | strength, valor |
| ellne | quickly |
| Geata | gate* (Here it just means Geat.) |

| **Old English** | **Modern English** |
|---|---|
| hild | battle, warfare |
| rinc | man* |
| leod | man, person of a nation, prince |
| mid | with |
| nealles, nalas | not at all, by no means, least of all* |
| onfeng | seizing on, grasping; hostile seizure, attack* |
| þæm | pronoun—them, these* |
| Weder | storm, weather |
| willan, wolde | to will or to wish |
| word | utterance, word |

Definitions with an * are from Grein. All others are from Jember.

Grein, Christian Wilhelm Michael, et al. *A Handy Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1885. *Hathi Trust Digital Library*. PDF.

Jember, Gregory K., ed., et al., *English-Old English, Old English Dictionary*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1975. Print.

**Student Handout: Eight Versions of *Beowulf* from "The Battle with Grendel's Mother"**

**Old English**

Æfter þæm wordum Weder-Geata leod
efste mid elne, nalas andsware
bidan wolde; brim-wylm onfeng
hilde-rince. Ða wæs hwil dæges,
ær he þone grund-wong ongytan mehte.
Sona þæt onfunde se ðe floda begong
heoro-gifre beheold hund missera,
grim ond grædig, þæt þær gumena sum
ælwihta eard ufan cunnode.
Grap þa togeanes, guð-rinc gefeng
atolan clommum; no þy ær in gescod
halan lice; hring utan ymb-bearh
þæt heo þone fyrd-hom ðurhfon ne mihte,
locene leoðo-syrcan laþan fingrum.
(1492-1505)

**R.M. Liuzza**

After these words the Weder-Geat man
hastened boldly, by no means wished to stay
for an answer; the surging sea received
the brave soldier. It was the space of a day[10]
before he could perceive the bottom.
Right away she who held that expanse of water,
bloodthirsty and fierce, for a hundred half-years,
grim and greedy, perceived that some man
Was exploring from above that alien land.
She snatched at him, seized the warrior
in her savage clutches, but none the sooner
injured his sound body—the ring-mail encircled him,
so that she could not pierce that war dress,
the locked coat of mail, with her hostile claws.
(1492-1505)

**Ruth P. M. Lehmann**

When these words were said the Weders' chieftain
advanced valiantly— advice or answer
he would not wait for; the wild flood received
the daring hero. Much of the day had passed
before he glimpsed the ground, the gravel bottom.
She who had defended the flood for fifty years,
greedy for battle, grim and angry,
sensed already that a certain one
hunted downward toward haunted realm.
She groped toward him, grasped the warrior
with her cruel claws but might not cleave open
such a sound body, circled and protected
by buckled breastmail. She could not break apart
the hard-linked hauberk with hostile fingers.
(1492-1505).

**Burton Raffel**

As his words ended
He leaped into the lake, would not wait for anyone's
Answer; the heaving water covered him
Over. For hours he sank through the waves;
At last he saw the mud of the bottom.
And all at once the greedy she-wolf
Who'd ruled those waters for half a hundred
Years discovered him, saw that a creature
From above had come to explore the bottom
Of her wet world. She welcomed him in her claws,
Clutched at him savagely but could not harm him,
Tried to work her fingers through the tight
Ring-woven mail on his breast, but tore
And scratched in vain.
(1492-1505)

[10] Or "it was daylight." [Liuzza's footnote.]

**Seamus Heaney**

After these words, the prince of the Weather-Geats
was impatient to be away and plunged suddenly:
without more ado, he dived into the heaving
depths of the lake. It was the best part of a day
before he could see the solid bottom.
Quickly the one who haunted those waters,
who had scavenged and gone her gluttonous rounds
for a hundred seasons, sensed a human
observing her outlandish lair from above.
So she lunged and clutched and managed to catch him
in her brutal grip; but his body, for all that,
remained unscathed; the mesh of the chain-mail
saved him on the outside. Her savage talons
failed to rip the web of his warshirt.
(1492-1505).

**E. Talbot Donaldson**

After these words the man of the Weather-Geats turned away boldly, would wait for no answer: the surging water took the warrior. Then was it a part of a day before he might see the bottom's floor. Straightway that which had held the flood's tract a hundred half-years, ravenous for prey, grim and greedy, saw that some man from above was exploring the dwelling of monsters. Then she groped toward him, took the warrior in her awful grip. Yet not the more for that did she hurt his hale body within; his ring-armor shielded him about on the outside so that she could not pierce the war-dress, the linked body-mail, with hateful fingers.
(26-7).

**Howell D. Chickering**

After these words the man of the Weders
turned away boldly, would not wait
for answer, farewell. The surging waters
received the warrior. After that plunge,
it was most of the day before he found bottom.
Soon enough she who war-thirsty held
the kingdom of waters for a hundred winters,
fierce and kill-greedy, saw that some human
came to explore the water-devils' home.
Then she snatched him up, seized the good warrior
in her horrible claws; but none the sooner
broke into his body; he was ringed all around,
safe from puncture; her claws could not pierce
his close-linked rings, rip the locked leather.
(1492-1505).

**Barry Tharaud**

After this boast, Beowulf of the storm-braving Geats turned boldly away and without waiting for a reply, plunged into the water.

It was the better part of a day before Beowulf saw the bottom of the mere. She who held sway over the mere for fifty years saw at once that a man had invaded from above this region of monsters. Ravenous for prey, the grim mother of Grendel groped toward Beowulf and took the warrior in her fearful grip. Yet for all that she could do, she was unable to wound his strong body, for he was shielded within the tightly woven armor so that she could not pierce the chain-mail corselet with her dreadful claws.
(99-101).

**Student Handout: What the Hell**

*The following is an excerpt from* "What the Hell" by Joan Acocella Joan, printed in *The New Yorker* on May 27, 2013, pages 82-5.

Mary Jo Bang, a poet and a professor of English at Washington University, in St. Louis, has much the same purpose: to convey Dante's internal music. Unlike James, she has made some major sacrifices to this end. In her Inferno (Graywolf), the only canticle she has taken on so far, she does not use end rhyme, and she does not hold herself to any regular metre. (James used iambic pentameter.) But, having cast off those restraints, she adopts another one. James was trying, he said, to be true to Dante. Bang is trying to be true to contemporary life, to the "post-9/11, Internet-ubiquitous present." As this implies, she aims to be faithful to something else as well: undergraduates. She writes, "I will be most happy if this postmodern, intertextual, slightly slant translation lures readers to a poetic text that might seem otherwise archaic and off-putting"—especially, I presume, to nineteen-year-olds. On the surface, this appears to be a laudable purpose, but whenever you hear those words "true to contemporary life," run for cover.

The trouble starts on the first page. The pilgrim speaks of his relief upon issuing from the dark wood. He says that he felt like a person who, almost drowned at sea, arrives, panting, on the shore. Bang places him, instead, at the edge of a swimming pool. But these two things—the ocean and the neighborhood pool—are nowhere near the same, and every nineteen-year-old knows what the ocean is. Other anachronisms create worse problems. Bang, in her lines, includes references to Freud, Mayakovsky, Colbert, you name it. She picks up swatches of verse from T. S. Eliot and Sylvia Plath. But, if readers get into the swing of these, what are they going to do when they encounter the Roman Catholic theology that is the spine of the Divine Comedy, and which Bang says, in her introduction, that she will honor? ("God has to look down from Heaven; Satan has to sit at the center of Hell.") Wouldn't it be better if she let the reader know that there are old things as well as new things—that there is such a thing as history? She is not unaware of this, as her learned footnotes demonstrate. Why is she keeping it from her readers? If they knew it, they might find out who Mayakovsky is, which I doubt that they have done.

Oddly, given Bang's stated aims, she's happy to court obscurity. She says that the she-wolf that detains the pilgrim outside the wood has a "bitch-kitty" face; Virgil tells the pilgrim to climb the "meringue-pie mountain" that lies ahead. "Bitch-kitty" gets an explanatory footnote: Bang says it's something that she found in the Dictionary of American Slang. My edition of that book says "bitch kitty" was a phrase of the nineteen-thirties and forties. (Roughly, it meant a "humdinger.") Did Bang expect today's readers to know it? Not really, it seems. She says that she wants these oddities to be fleeting pleasures for us. To me, they're not pleasures, but just oddities, something like finding a Tootsie Roll in the meat loaf.

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[i] All Old English excerpts provided in this document are taken from Chickering, Howell D., Jr., trans. *Beowulf: A Dual-Language* Edition. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1977. Print. ***KATIE: You could put the note to the translation here or fix the columns to work again up above. Since this is an epigraph you don't need full information in the text, but your notes should have full information, including the full documentation of Chickering—why do you not use the dual language edition above? Why use Rafell?***

[ii] Raffel, Burton., trans. *Beowulf: A New Translation.*Toronto: New American Library, 1963. Print. The author of this paper has chosen to quote from Burton Raffel's translation here as it is the translation she teaches from most frequently. This circumstance is based largely only the availability of the text in the high school in which she teaches.***Adjust this footnote depending on the changes made to the introduction.***

[iii] Incidentally, the manuscript of *Beowulf* may now be viewed online at the British Library's Web site. For more information, see Harrison, Julian. "Hwæt! Beowulf Online." *Medieval Manuscripts Blog*. British Library, 11 February 2013. Web. 26 June 2013.

[iv]As Hinds notes in an introduction to his graphic novel, the text of his graphic novel comes from *The Harvard Classics*, Volume 49, Copyright 1910 by P.F. Colllier & Son.