

ENGL 3000
Dr. J. Comas
03 Apr 2018

FINAL PROJECT (PAPERS 3 & 4) - INSTRUCTIONS

Due Dates

- Thu 4/05 - Selection of Primary Text
- Thu 4/12 - Works Cited of at least 3 secondary texts
- Week of Mon, 4/16 - Bring Paper 3 to individual conference
- Mon 4/30 - Final paper due by 11:59 P.M. via email (james.comas@mtsu.edu)

Papers 3 & 4 = Final Project

There are two paper assignments remaining in our class. But instead of two distinct papers on different literary works, these last two assignments are combined into one larger project. This final project is similar to the earlier paper assignments in that it will focus on a particular work of literature; but unlike the earlier assignments, this last project requires you *to engage with the ideas of literary scholars* as you present your understanding of the literary work. Also, because many students have not written this kind of paper (even though it is the type of writing that real literary critics and scholars do), we will develop the project over three stages:

1. Selection of literary work & secondary texts (submitted as a “Works Cited” page);
2. Analysis of the arguments in critical essays (Paper 3); and
3. Final paper (in which you add your ideas to the critical work on which you reported in Paper 3; that is, the final paper is a combination of Paper 3 and your own ideas)

Stage 1: Selection Of Texts (Apr 05 & 12)

The goal of this project is to write a paper that focuses on *one* primary text and demonstrates your knowledge of a minimum of *three* other texts from at least three different sources, at least *two* of which are critical articles, chapters, or portions of books. The third text may be (a) another work of scholarship or criticism, (b) another literary or critical work by the same author, or (c) biographical or historical information. For example, if you wanted to write on Poe’s “Morella,” your selection could look like this:

1. Primary work: Poe, “Morella
2. Critical text: Curtis Fukuchi, “Repression and Guilt in Poe’s ‘Morella,’” *Studies in Short Fiction* 24 (1987): 149-54.
3. Critical text: Leonard W. Engel, “Obsession, Madness, and Enclosure in Poe’s ‘Ligeia’ and ‘Morella,’” *College Literature* 9, no. 2 (1982): 140-46.
4. Another work by the author: Poe’s Preface to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*
or
Biographical work: The chapter dealing with Poe’s writing of the *Tales* in Arthur Hobson Quinn’s *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
or
Another critical text: Walter G. Neale, Jr., “The Source of Poe’s ‘Morella,’” *American Literature* 9, no. 2 (1937): 237-39.

For another example, using the controversy surrounding O’Connor’s “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” see the section below, “Sample Project.”

Stage 2: Paper On Critical Texts (Apr 17-19)

The next step is to write a paper in which you only report on the ideas and arguments of the two (or more) critical essays you've selected. Using my "Morella" example, in this paper you would describe the arguments of the articles by Fukuchi and Engel (and Neale, if you selected a third critical article rather than another kind of text). Then, in the final paper, you will show your readers (1) that you have a good understanding of what some other literary scholars have said about the particular literary work and (2) how you position your interpretation of the work in relation to what these other scholars have said. More specifically, the purpose of this assignment is to make sure you have a good understanding of the critical texts you will be using in your final paper. In this third paper, the goal is to provide your readers with a summary of these texts by reporting on

- (1) the *problem* the writer is addressing,
- (2) the writer's *response* to that problem (i.e., the writer's thesis), and
- (3) the writer's use of arguments to *support* the thesis.

This type of analysis is similar to the homework assignment early in the semester when I asked you to write about strong and weak arguments in Babener's interpretation of "The Purloined Letter." At the end of this handout, you will find some guidelines for writing this kind of scholarly summary, which is often called a "précis." For extra guidance, I will provide a sample paper, so you can see what this kind of essay looks like.

Stage 3: Final Paper (Apr 30)

In the final paper, you want to show your readers what you know of the scholarly conversation that has taken place regarding your selected literary work (that is, the information that you gathered in Paper 3) and you want to show your readers how you position yourself in relation to those other critical positions. That is, you want a final paper that tells your readers, "Here's what some other critics have had to say about this literary work, and here's what I have to say."

Here are the basic criteria for your final paper: Before I tell you the specific requirements for Paper 3, let me list the requirements for the final paper in order to give you an idea of your long-term goal. (By the way, these requirements are based on requirements the English department established a couple of years ago):

- **Length:** The final paper will be between 2000 and 3000 words--that is, approximately eight to twelve pages, not counting the "Works Cited" page. Remember that approximately half of this writing will come from the work you did for the Stage 2 paper.
- **Basic Grading Criteria:** In order to receive a passing grade, the paper must exhibit the following knowledge and abilities:
 1. The ability to *analyze* and *judge* the interpretive arguments of other scholars (for example, our analysis of the arguments in Babener's article on "The Purloined Letter").
 2. The ability to *position* one's own interpretation in relation to the interpretations of other scholars.
 3. The ability to present an adequately developed thesis and to offer reasoned arguments in support of that thesis.
 4. Knowledge of the formatting and stylistic conventions of academic English as specified in the *MLA Handbook*, including proper formatting of a "Works Cited" page.

Sample Project

For your final project, I encourage you to build your *own* list of readings around a literary work that you find especially interesting. But as I mentioned in class, I'm providing a sample list of readings you *could* use

for a final project focused on Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." I selected O'Connor's story because, as I mentioned during our examination of the story, there has been a long-standing controversy among critics on whether or not to interpret the story along the line that O'Connor, herself, suggested, that is, a religious interpretation focused on the grandmother's reaching out to The Misfit and, thereby, receiving God's grace.

I. Critical Studies

There is a large number of critical studies of "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" and many more that look more generally at topics and themes shared by this story and other O'Connor stories (especially the topic of grace and violence). Some studies focus on O'Connor's knowledge of philosophy and Catholic theology, and thus provide some obstacles for readers without that intellectual background. But the studies I have listed below can be understood without much difficulty.

- Bandy, Stephen C. "One of My Babies": The Misfit and the Grandmother." *Studies in Short Fiction* 33.1 (1996): 107-17. *American Search Premier*. Web. 21 Dec. 2009.
- Desmond, John. "Flannery O'Connor's Misfit and the Mystery of Evil." *Renascence: Essays on Value in Literature* 56.2 (2004): 129-37. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 21 Dec. 2009.
- Dowell, Bob. "The Moment of Grace in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor." *College English* 27.3 (1965): 235-39. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Nov. 2012.
- Doxey, William S. "A Dissenting Opinion of Flannery O'Connor's 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find.'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 10.3 (1973): 199-204. Print.
- Kinney, Arthur F. "Flannery O'Connor and the Fiction of Grace." *The Massachusetts Review* 27.1 (1986): 71-96.
- Ochshorn, Kathleen G. "A Cloak of Grace: Contradictions in 'a Good Man Is Hard to Find.'" *Studies in American Fiction* 18.1 (1990): 113-17. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 15 Nov. 2010.
- Renner, Stanley. "Secular Meaning in 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find.'" *College Literature* 9.2 (1982): 123-32. *JSTOR*. Web. 03 May 2012.
- Shinn, Thelma J. "Flannery O'Connor and the Violence of Grace." *Contemporary Literature* 9.1 (1968): 58-73. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Nov. 2012.

II. Biography

- Cash, Jean W. *Flannery O'Connor: A Life*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002.
- Gooch, Brad. *Flannery: A Life of Flannery O'Connor*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2009.

III. Additional Writings by O'Connor

- O'Connor, Flannery. *The Habit of Being: Letters*. ed. Sally Fitzgerald, New York: Vintage Books, 1980. See in particular, "To Dr. T. R. Spivey (23 May 59)" 334, "To John Hawkes (14 April 60)" 389-90, and "To a Professor of Literature (28 March 61)" 437.
- O'Connor, Flannery. "On Her Own Work." *Mystery and Manners; Occasional Prose*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969. 107-18. Remarks made as an introduction to her reading of "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" at Hollins College, Virginia, 14 Oct. 1963.
- "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction." *Mystery and Manners; Occasional Prose*. Ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969. 36-50.