ENC 1102

Instructor: Nick Rupert

Spring 2014

Writing Assignment #1: Fiction

**Due Date**: Thurs, Jan. 30th (at the beginning of the class period)

**Length**: 1,200 words

**Submission Parameters**: Submit a clean, printed copy at the beginning of class on the day the paper is due. \*Do not, under any circumstances, email your paper. Emailed papers will receive no credit.

**Format**: 12 pt. Times font, 1” margins all around, double-spaced. There should be no extra gaps between paragraphs, and assuming you run over one page (and you definitely should), include a header with page number in the top right-hand corner.

See example for formatting / writing tips on FrontDoor.

**Quotation Procedure/Stylistics**: Consult handouts and writing guides. Each of your paragraphs should contain multiple specific references to the text. These references must satisfy basic MLA protocol. All quoted materials should be followed by a precise and meaningful analysis.

Ex: The literal circumstances of the novel’s disaster event remain muted: “A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions . . . A dull rose glow in the windowglass” (McCarthy 52).

**Works Cited (?)**: Your analysis must be followed by a Works Cited listing all the specific resources your paper references. Now for the good news: this assignment does not call for any secondary research / source work, so you are encouraged to simply reference whichever story / stories your analysis addresses.

**Prompts**: choose ***ONE*** prompt to explore in your essay.

*O’Connor:*

• O’Connor’s use of names in “Good Country People” seems to carry significance. We have Mrs. Freeman, Mrs. Hopewell, Joy / Hulga Hopewell, and Manley Pointer, whose name is apparently false.

Make an argument for the significance behind the names O’Connor lends her characters and how these names might help characterize or complicate O’Connor’s characters.

• Make an argument for the opposition between Christianity and atheism / nihilism that finds expression in O’Connor’s story. Does the story seem to favor one view over the other, or does its stance on spirituality imply something more complex?

• Make an argument for the figurative significance of Joy / Hulga’s artificial leg. How does the leg serve as a method for O’Connor to go about developing her character, and how is the leg crucial to understanding Joy / Hulga as a character?

*Morrison:*

• In seems that in her story “Recitatif,” Toni Morrison goes to certain lengths to obfuscate the specific racial identities of both Twyla and Roberta. Though Twyla, the narrator, describes the two women standing together “like salt and pepper,” it becomes difficult to distinguish which girl carries which skin shade (201).

Describe what might be at stake in Morrison’s decision to obscure Twyla’s and Roberta’s respective racial identities. Might Morrison’s decision imply something significant about the reader as well?

• Make an argument for the significance of Maggie in the story. Both Twyla and Roberta seem to worry a great deal about not only the abuse Maggie suffers, but also, her racial identity. Why might Maggie’s racial identity be such an important consideration for Twyla and/or Roberta, especially considering that both Twyla and Roberta admit that even if they did not actually kick Maggie, they wanted to?

*Kinkaid:*

• Untraditional in form, Jamaica Kinkaid’s “Girl” reads like a list of various wisdoms and bits of advice that often seem random or disconnected. What does the specificity of these various bits of advice suggest about the speaker and the culture to which the speaker belongs? How is it significant that the narrative itself is addressed to “Girl” rather than a specific person or a different gender group? How might the speaker’s preoccupation with her intended listener’s “becoming a slut” factor into this analysis? (171).

*Munro:*

• Make a case for traditional gender constructions as they appear in Alice Munro’s “Boys and Girls.” How do we interpret the father’s closing remark that “She’s only a girl”? (147). What might be at stake in Munro’s decision to end the story just after this remark and the speaker’s being “dismissed” by her father? (147). You might also want to consider the recurring phrase “only a girl” (140).

• Make a case for why the narrator chooses to watch her father shoot Mack the horse, but attempts to save (however futilely) Flora the horse from slaughter. How and why is the speaker’s connection to Flora different than her connection to Mack?

*Alternate:*

• Each of these stories is at least somewhat concerned with social gender constructions, especially those imposed on female characters. Compare and contrast the various gender constructions from two or more stories to show how they compare / contrast.

**Weight**: 100 points

**Grading Criteria**:

•Does the paper construct a valid argument based on a logical progression of ideas and well-established grounding?

•Do the stylistics reflect the agreed-upon tenets we have discussed?

•Is the prose clear and authoritative?