

English 121 - Final Readings, Posts, and Reading Questions

Week 12

Narrative of the Life, Frederick Douglass

11/10

WebCT post

C1-9; pp. 694-722

What qualities does autobiographical prose share with fiction? How does Douglass establish his authority to relate the story? What impression does the style and formality of the language give? How does the narration dramatize the experience of slavery for readers? What is the significance of song for Douglass? What are some of the stages of recognition or change that Douglass describes? How does he begin to read and how is it significant? How does slavery transform his mistress, Mrs. Auld? How does he describe the final injustice committed against his grandmother?

11/12

C10; pp. 722-742

Consider how this chapter represents a turning point for Douglass? How does he account for it? Is the impetus outward or inward? In what ways does Douglass adopt the art of the novelist?

11/14

WebCT post

C11-Epi.; pp. 741-53

Why does Douglass omit the details of his escape? What is the effect? Does the appendix read as a natural extension of the narrative? What does it suggest about the multiple "purposes" at work in the narrative?

Week 13

Dora, Sigmund Freud

11/17

WebCT post

Intro, C1; 1354-1384

How does a *case history* compare to other kinds of narratives, such as autobiographies or novels? Where do Freud's language and style appear literary, where scientific? How does Freud convincingly present his own "authority" before readers? Dora's symptoms present a puzzle to Freud and readers; what signs does Freud interpret in pursuing explanations? How does he justify it when his own interpretations are disputed by Dora?

11/19

C2-3; 1385-1407

What is wish-fulfillment? What kinds of "symbols" does Freud identify and how does he interpret them? Why does he think refusals or details omitted are significant?

11/21

WebCT post

C4; 1407-14

Freud's narrative presents a dramatic story and attempts to defend his theories about the unconscious, repression, desire, and wish-fulfillment. How does his interest in the connections between mind and body, between the surface and secret depth, compare with that reflected by other works we have read this semester (Kafka, Tolstoy, Eliot, Achebe)?

Week 14

A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf

11/24

WebCT post

1615-1638

How and why does Woolf seem to mix elements of the persuasive essay with fiction? How does she imagine the situation of a female writer as beset by particular complications? In what way does her writing itself challenge patriarchal norms? What position does she imply towards Freud? What is the implication of the title and what course does she imagine for women writers? Can you see any correspondences with the strategies of Douglass?

Week 15

The House of the Spirits, Isabel Allende

12/1

Questions TBA

12/3

12/5