

British Literature: Late 1800 to Present

English 56B (Fall 2012)

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COLLABORATIVE PROJECT ON 19TH-CENTURY MATERIALS

Often in literature surveys, we get caught up in reading only from the anthologies supplied to us by major publishing houses. But how are the literary texts selected and what is it that we're missing when we read an editor's *version* of literature? This semester, we're going to find out. Using my collection of original 19th-century newspapers, literary annuals, serialized novels, and magazines, groups will investigate the materiality of the text as 19th-century audiences would have experienced it – complete with advertisements, crappy newsprint paper, disappearing ink, and incendiary topics. Instead of calling this a group project, we're going to work on “collaboration,” an instance where a group of students come together to discuss and enhance each other's ideas (rather than divide and conquer a project without every speaking about the topic). To facilitate your success in this new type of environment, use the collaboration/teamwork rubric. Each group will be responsible for taking care of the rare materials and finding a focus about which to research and analyze.

Rationale

The literature in this course is rich with historical, social, political and cultural references as well as being references themselves for later literature and film. For this presentation, students will work together in groups to present information on the authorship, publication, dissemination, reception, structure, characterizations, later references in art – any information that the group finds interesting enough to convey. It's the group's job to decide what is most important to show/tell the class, therefore be discerning about the information and *dynamic* about the presentation. Since the group will essentially begin our discussions for the day, the presentation needs to inspire students to read, play, discuss and generally find out more. Choose from the literature and presentation dates below:

Selections

In our last class session, you selected your collaborators based on the 19th-century material that you checked out. See our Google Doc for a list of emails and collaborators: <http://tinyurl.com/56bcollab>

Research

...or, what are we doing here?

By now, your group has already set up a first meeting, as indicated on the Google Doc spreadsheet. Each collaborator should also already have had a chance to look at the 19th-century material.

Collaborator Roles:

Using the Teamwork/Collaborator's rubric, each group member should take on a specific role:

- Project Manager
- Researcher (as many as you need)
- Research Assistant (organizes the research in a single, accessible space)
- Presentation Manager
- Essay Manager (as many as you need)
- Authors (this should be everyone)
- Copy Editor (as many as you need)

Step 1: The Material Object & Its Audience

Each group should consider the following information to begin constructing a research question:

1. What is the history of this particular title?
2. Who is the author and/or publisher?
3. How is it constructed (e.g., paper, newsprint, book, serial)?
4. What genre does it belong to? (you'll need to consult with me about this! Email is fine.)
5. Where does it fall on the cost scale (from the first day of class lecture)?
6. Who read this material? Who was it intended for?

Step 2: Content & Meaning

Now that you've investigated the background of the material, begin to look at the content:

1. What type of writing is included in this material (e.g., fiction, non-fiction, poetry, etc.)?
2. What type of visual materials are included in this piece? (Engravings are rich with information as are advertisements.)
3. What's the relationship between the writing and the visual?

Step 3: The Research Question

This is the most difficult part. By answering the above preliminary questions, the group should have established some keen interests in a few of the areas. Now, you need to construct a research question. For instance, during that first day when we perused the materials, many of you asked questions based on the engravings, such as if the fire hoses could really reach high enough to put out a fire in a 6-story building. Others working through *The Boys Own* asked about the images of masculinity inherent to the articles and engravings. These are research questions that will start you off.

Your primary goal for this assignment (as a collaborative group) is to construct a research question and attempt to answer it. The next step involves writing up what you found in a collaborative essay and presenting that information to us.

Preliminary Reports (9/13)

On September 13, we will return to the computer lab where each group will report on the preliminary findings and potential research questions. Your group should have met and worked through Steps 1 & 2 by this point. All group members need to be present in order to proceed after this point. At the outset of your presentation, identify each group member's role thus far.

If there is an issue with a group member or you get stuck on the research, this is a moment to bring it to the rest of the class and discuss. In other words, bring your problems so we can solve them.

The Presentation (10/11)

During this 15-minute presentation, each student will participate in discussing the 19th-century material. The presentation should be presented cohesively; in other words, the presentation should clearly show that the group members have shared research, reviewed one another's work and integrated each other's presentations as seamlessly as possible. In the past students have used maps, film clips, songs, historical games, PowerPoint demonstrations, create a game, craft a re-enactment, assess other types of information (what's your major and how can it help you here?), and more to demonstrate and enhance their presentations and their grades.

This presentation requires each group member to perform research either in the library or on the Web. Please be skeptical of any Web resources. For help on research, see the recommended text, *Research Guide for Undergraduates in English & American Literature*.

The Essay (1200 words posted to blog)

Because this project encourages you to look at historical materials from the 19th Century, the final product

will rely on inserting those visual materials into the written portion of the project. The simplest form of dissemination will be a blog post. If your group would like to do something like a wiki or a website, please go ahead. The requirement will be 1200 words assessing your 19th-century material and providing an argument that is an answer to your research question.

Collaboration Assessment

Because this is a truly collaborative effort, students will include a brief assessment of the other group members. Follow the attached Teamwork rubric to assess how well each member did. List the person's name, the grade, and 2-3 sentences explaining that grade. These assessments will be taken into consideration in the group's grade. These assessments will *not* be shared and are intended to alert me to stellar and not-so-stellar performances. Email your assessment to me directly as an attachment on the due date.

Documenting the Essay

Be very careful about plagiarism. If you are unsure, see me, visit the Writing Center or stop by the Peer Mentor Center. Format requirements are below:

- Works Cited page in MLA format (with every source you even glanced at)
- In-text citations in MLA style (parenthetical citation)
- Proofread everything before you turn it in; there should be no spelling or typographical errors
- Submit to Turnitin.com for verification

Grading

You will receive two grades for this assignment:

- ***The first*** will assess your collaboration, which will be based on its effectiveness (preparation, comprehension, depth). Presentations will be based on the entire group performance so be sure to practice with your group members. A missing group member on the day of the presentation will lower this portion of the grade.
- ***A second grade*** will be assigned to your written Essay, which will be based on your ability to communicate your ideas in a formal piece of writing (see the “Departmental Grading Policy” on the Greensheet). Failure to follow the above formatting requirements will result in a lower grade. Late papers will receive the penalization indicated on our Greensheet.