

Discussion Board, D. Reiss dreiss@clemsun.edu, Engl 214, Spring 2007
 Syllabi and Resources: <http://www.clemson.edu/~dreiss>

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COURSES > AMERICAN LITERATURE TO 1945 - SPRING 2007 > DISCUSSION BOARD

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1 **Announcements - Read Daily**
 Welcome to our class. Our syllabus with course policies, procedures, assignments, and class schedule are online at our [CLASS WEBSITE](#) (a new browser window will open). Click [Overview](#) and [Class Schedule](#) as well as [HELP Links and Resources](#) for Clemson University, our class, literature, writing, and technology tips.

2 **Cyberlounge - Read Daily**
 Use the Cyberlounge to ask and answer questions for your classmates, to request clarification about assignments and class procedures, to suggest discussion topics, and to post your announcements. Submit all non-personal questions and concerns here at the Cyberlounge. Email me dreiss@clemsun.edu with any private concerns.

3 **Introductory Letters**
 Following the guidelines [linked from our Class Schedule Website](#), submit here as a [Reply](#) to the first message, posted by Donna Reiss. Read the first message of each Thread for

4 **Individual Analysis and Personal Responses**
 Following the guidelines for Individual Analysis or Personal Response plus any additional guidelines [linked from our Class Schedule Website](#), submit here as a [Reply](#) to the first (topic), posted by Donna Reiss. Read the first message of each Thread for additional guidelines. Previous submissions are available through the [Archives](#) link.

5 **Early American Voices Discussion**
 Following the guidelines [linked from our Class Schedule Website](#), submit here as a [Reply](#) to the first message, posted by Donna Reiss. Read the first message of each Thread for

6 **Freedom and Slavery Discussion**
 Following the guidelines [linked from our Class Schedule Website](#), submit here as a [Reply](#) to the first message, posted by Donna Reiss. Read the first message of each Thread for

7 **Poetic and Visual Expression-Reflection**
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8 **Transcendentalism Discussion**
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9 **Lincoln-Jacobs Discussion**
 Following the guidelines [linked from our Class Schedule Website](#), submit here as a [Reply](#) to the first message, posted by Donna Reiss. Read the first message of each Thread for a

10 **Creative Responses Gallery**
 Following the guidelines [linked from our Class Schedule Website](#), submit here as a [Reply](#) to the first message, posted by Donna Reiss. Read the first message of each Thread for a

11 **Literary Project**
 Following the guidelines [linked from our Class Schedule Website](#), submit here as a [Reply](#) to the first message, posted by Donna Reiss. Read the first message of each Thread for a

12 **American Drama: Page/Stage to Screen**
 Following the guidelines [linked from our Class Schedule Website](#), submit here as a [Reply](#) to the first message, posted by Donna Reiss. Read the first message of each Thread for a

13 **Streetcar Named Desire Discussion**
 Following the guidelines [linked from our Class Schedule Website](#), submit here as a [Reply](#) to the first message, posted by Donna Reiss. Read the first message of each Thread for a

14 **Emily Dickinson Discussion**
 Following the guidelines included in the first message here, submit your reflection as a [Reply](#) to the first message, posted by Donna Reiss.

15 **Webfolio Gallery**

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Group Page for Literary Project

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"Barn Burning" by William Faulkner: [Click here to access Group pages.](#)



Yokona River Bridge early 1900s from [Mississippi Writers Page](#)

Please use this "private" group area for discussions, email, and file uploads as you develop your Literary Project. I will be reading your discussions regularly throughout the project.

"The Open Boat" by Stephen Crane: [Click here to access Group pages.](#)



USS Commodore from [Naval Historical Center](#)

Please use this "private" group area for discussions, email, and file uploads as you develop your Literary Project. I will be reading your discussions regularly throughout the project.

Done Internet 100%

Sample End-of-Semester Anonymous Survey

Midterm, I give credit for responding to a short survey: what is beneficial and challenging and what suggestions they have.

1. Question 1 Please complete the Clemson University Student Assessment of Instructors before you take this survey. You can close this survey now and return to it. Then, answer True to show you have completed the Clemson University Student Assessment of Instructors. True False
2. Question 2 Please describe some specific aspects of this class that you found to be most beneficial for your learning and for the quality of your experience. How were they beneficial to you? How might they have been even more beneficial?
3. Question 3 Please describe and explain any specific aspects of this class that were challenges or problems for your learning and for the quality of your experience. What changes in the class design or your own approaches to the class might have improved this experience for you?
4. Question 4 What were the benefits and drawbacks for you of our "creative" activities where you wrote poetry or composed visual expressions? What suggestions do you have for this activity in future classes?
5. Question 5 What were the benefits and drawbacks for you of our 2-or-3-letter Discussion letter exchanges and the individual Personal Responses and Individual Analysis submissions? What suggestions do you have for these activities in future classes?
6. Question 6 What were the benefits and drawbacks for you of our collaborative Literary Project? What suggestions do you have for this activity in future classes?
7. Question 7 What did you think of the textbook and the assigned readings from the textbook: introduction/background sections, literary works covered, readability (type size), price in relation to other textbooks? Do you plan to keep this book after class?
8. Question 8 I hope you used the Emerson and Thoreau audio files and the Streetcar Scenes and Sounds presentation. These are my first experiences developing media files for classes, so your feedback is especially valuable. Were they easy to access? Were they helpful to your thinking about the literary works?
9. Question 9 Please add any additional comments you would like. Thank you.

Feedback Letter for Responses to Prufrock, Native Americans, Smith, English 214

Greetings,

I've enjoyed reading your Personal Responses to the first readings for our journey through American literature. Here are my reflections on your responses and some comments about the literary works you read.

Regards,
Donna Reiss

T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

I was impressed with the detail and substance of your responses to this poem. Many of you wrote beyond the required word minimum. Michael P. summed up a response many of you shared: "The speaker in this poem wasn't courageous enough to make the most of his own life, and that is why the poem is so sad and depressing. It's not a love song at all to me rather it is a gloom of wasted opportunity."

Many metaphors in this poem have become so much a part of our culture that they appear in other people's speech and writing. For instance, Michelle K. wrote: "I really enjoyed how Eliot used shocking metaphors to illustrate the poem. In line 3, he describes the evening sky as 'a patient etherized upon a table' (1902). In the third stanza, he is comparing the yellow fog to a cat that comes to rest in a house. These metaphors along with the descriptions of the speaker's cowardliness help set the tone of despair for the poem." Among the lines that are regularly used as **allusions** http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/index.htm#a by others are "Do I dare / disturb the universe" lines 4546, page 1903) and "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons" (line 51, page 1903) as well as the later lines 125126 "I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. / I do not think that they will sing to me" (1905). The footnote in your textbook tells you that the mermaids in Eliot's poem is an **allusion** to Greek mythology and the Sirens whose beautiful singing lured sailors to their death against the rocks. In addition, Lauren B. wrote that those same lines emphasize the speaker's "negative view" of himself, unworthy of the song of the Sirens.

We'll return to modernism at semester's end, reading about a complicated world view that included disillusionment and despair expressed in the arts and in culture in general. The paradox of the pastoral concept of a simple, rural, ideal world in contrast with civilization, commercialization, and urbanization will characterize much of what we read this semester.

Native American Voices

Meghan J. recognized in "The Origin of Stories" not only an important motif in literature about the importance of outward appearance and its impact on individuals and groups but also the importance of stories for a culture in general. **Narrative** http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_no.htm#n traditions are a part of most societies, usually oral stories passed on to preserve beliefs and events. As Joseph wrote, tales in the oral tradition could be told differently by each teller and were performed rather than read, so many versions are likely to exist before and after these literary works are written. People are still translating the *The Odyssey* in new versions, but the "original" oral version is of course lost in the pre-YouTube past. "The Bungling Host," which appealed to several of you, exists in several versions. Like many oral cultures, the Native Americans offered moral lessons with animals as the characters. This tradition continues with children's books and occasionally with an adult book like *Animal Farm* by **George Orwell** <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/Library/special-coll/orwell.shtml>.

Several people questioned the historical accuracy of "Creation of the Whites." Asking such questions is one of the purposes of our class, and one of the issues that will confront us throughout this semester is "fact" versus "fiction." Fiction gives us "truth" (or somebody's version of "truth") with made-up people and events that provide us with a way of looking at the world and understanding its complexity. Cultural stories are not necessarily giving us facts; they might instead be showing us the way some storytellers and their audiences understand the facts—what the facts mean rather than what the facts are. "The Coming of the Whites" gives a particular perspective and does it with metaphor, a key characteristic of much effective writing. How do we read **metaphor** http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_im.htm#m? We look at unlike items that are being compared figuratively to see what similarities are being suggested for our consideration. Try to picture the imaginary incidents. Why, for example, would the Yuchis say "a person emerged from the sea-foam and crawled out upon the log" (40)? Imagine a bigger ship than you'd ever seen, a wooden log upon the sea. People claimed to have come from across the sea.

From the sea-foam? Did the Europeans take more and more of the land of the natives? Picture the boxes as a way to illustrate the concept.

A few people were struck by the simplicity and sincerity of the poetry, and Stephanie G. gave us a detailed look of several images from two of these poems. She noticed the line breaks that fit the rhythms of the poem and the concept of dancing. The sound effects of poetry are always worthy of our attention, and this response provides us a good example.

John Smith

Several people mentioned the difficulty of reading 17th century English. Indeed, it takes extra time not only to read the unfamiliar style but also the vocabulary. English spelling was not formalized until the 19th century as printers decided standardization would be expeditious, so you may see words spelled several ways, for example “History” and “Historie.” We might tell each other that spelling doesn’t matter, just meaning; however, as you have seen, spelling variations really can interfere with readability and meaning. I hope you took time to look up at least some of the words, especially those not totally clear from context.

As we move closer to the present, the language of our readings will become more accessible; meanwhile, we’ll be spending a few weeks with the colonists and reading versions of their writings that are close to the original. Do allow some extra time for reading and perhaps re-reading. If you read excerpts from these same works in high school, the language might have been modernized. That’s fine for introducing youngsters to 17th century literature but loses the language and rhythm that is such an important part of our literary heritage.

Several people mentioned the introductory section where Amy E. Winans, like other scholars of colonial literature and history, describe the Pocahontas story and other passages in Smith’s narrative as “romanticized” to highlight “the ‘superior’ civilization” (126). Smith does give us a wonderful portrayal of what we now call Virginia and New England (thanks to Ashley Goldberg for explaining the historical background for the naming). He writes sailing adventures, captivity narratives, battle stories, pastoral invitations to a promising new world, and testaments to the alleged superiority of English culture.

Ryan M. describes John Smith as “a true explorer,” and gives an example from *A Description of New England*, where Smith wrote, “What so truly suites with honour and honestie, as the discovering things unknown?” (132). Discovering things unknown and bringing honor to himself as well as his country are goals we see throughout his writing. Jason C. also noted Smith’s philosophical perspective as the leader of the Jamestown settlement, where he required everybody to work in order to eat, in other words, contribute to the town, not just live off its meager bounty. Cowan wrote, “Smith’s priority was for the settlers to survive. ‘To plant the earth to remaine to posteritie, but not without labour, trouble, and industrie.’ (135). Everyone had to work to survive in the new colony.”

Writing and Citing

- Focus on and give specific examples from the literary works themselves, including some short quotations with parenthetical page numbers. Generalizations without examples are underdeveloped and unclear; examples without your thoughts and commentary are incomplete. So provide both in such a way that way your classmates can tell you’ve made a genuine effort to read with understanding. Some of our readings, as you already know, do take some time and energy that I hope you’ll find worthwhile.
- You may also include references to the editorial introductions to the literature and to other sources you have consulted so long as you credit them and make clear how you’ve used them, what help they provided you.
- Punctuate quotations within quotations by alternating double and single quotation marks as in several examples I’ve given in this letter.
- If you want to use or understand a literary term, a reputable glossary like the **Thomson Gale Glossary of Literary Terms** http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/ can help with definitions and is more reliable than google or Wikipedia.