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Final MA Portfolio

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FINAL MA PORTFOLIO

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of

Bowling Green State University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the Field of English

with a specialization in English Teaching

July 30, 2018

Dr. Kimberly Coates, First Reader

Ms. Kimberly Spallinger, Second Reader

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Jim Lamb

Master's Portfolio

Bowling Green State University

20 July 2018

An Unexpected Journey

One of my favorite types of stories to read and to teach is the journey story. From *The Odyssey* to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, there is something about the story of the journey and all the trials and tribulations that usually occur on journey stories that I find fascinating. Earning my Master's in English from Bowling Green State University has been very much a challenging journey, and it is a journey that I had not anticipated ever making. I had already earned my Master's in Education from Bowling Green back in 2003, and, although the idea of earning a Master's in English appealed to me, I never thought that I would ever be able to find the time to drive back and forth to Bowling Green from my home in Sandusky while also teaching full time and being a husband and father in order to earn one. Then, in 2016, Heidi Steyer, the guidance counselor at Port Clinton High School where I teach, sent me an email that explained that due to the growing number of students taking College Credit Plus classes, Bowling Green was receiving a grant to educate teachers to be able to meet this demand and teach CCP courses. I was going to be able to earn eighteen free credit hours towards my Master's with the option of finishing my degree when the grant was over, but the best part for me was that all of the classes were going to be available online. This was quite unexpected! In spite of the workload that I knew would lie ahead, I eagerly jumped at the chance to begin the journey of earning my Master's in English. That decision has been one of the best that I have ever made. I've learned so much through this program, as evidenced by the four projects that I chose to

represent my journey in my portfolio. Each of the portfolio pieces represent pedagogies that, going forward, will help to inform how I teach for the rest of my career.

The first piece in my portfolio is the final paper I wrote for ENG 6200: Teaching Writing, which was the very first class I took in the Master's program. The number one goal that I had when I began the journey towards my degree was to be able to teach College Credit Plus classes at my high school, so college composition is a class for which I desperately needed to prepare, and Teaching Writing gave me the strong foundation of which I was in need. I learned about and discussed different theories of teaching writing, such as community-engaged pedagogy, expressive pedagogy, process pedagogy, and research writing. We were asked to research one of these pedagogies in depth for a final paper, so I chose one that I thought could inform my teaching for the high school classes that I teach as well. A big push that high school teachers are receiving from administrators is to find ways to meaningfully incorporate technology in our classrooms. Our district pays for a one-to-one laptop program, and the administrators don't want that money wasted. Our students are already coming to us so immersed in technology that, for them, it is second nature. I was interested in how to incorporate the technological skills students already have with their writing skills, and so I focused on new media pedagogy for my paper.

While researching new media, I learned several interesting ideas. For example, I learned that technology could actually be detrimental in the classroom if you do not find ways to make the technology meaningful. I also found out that there are websites such as Schoology that employ message boards which can be an outlet for students to write. Blogging is another technology that helps students engage with writing on a personal level. My original paper was a jumble of different ideas that I researched, but through revising I was able to organize the research that I did into ideas that flowed together much more clearly and cohesively.

Since the first piece in my portfolio focused on the theory of new media pedagogy, I chose for my second piece a teaching-based project that I completed for ENG 6800: Multimodal Composition. I loved this project because it was a practical application of what I learned in class and was something that I actually employed in my teaching this past school year. What we had to do was to design a unit plan that incorporated multimodal composition. I've taught *The Great Gatsby* for years, and when introducing the novel I typically did the standard biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald and a bit of background about the novel. For my multimodal unit plan, however, I included a group project that required students to use technology such as Google Slides, Prezi, a poster board, or video. The project topics covered a range of ideas concerning Fitzgerald and the Jazz Age. The project gave the students much more depth of knowledge concerning *The Great Gatsby* and really helped to put the time period into context. As a forty-six year old teacher, I'm darn near a dinosaur in my teaching methods. The technology available today obviously didn't exist when I first started, and my hesitancy to incorporate anything new in the classroom because of my own fears and insecurities was really stunting my growth and keeping my lessons stale. ENG 6800: Multimodal Composition was a shot in the arm to my teaching. It was amazing to see the students' results as they presented their multimodal projects. Some did videos and took their own initiative to upload it to YouTube (which hadn't even occurred to me), some did amazing posters, and others did presentations using Google Slides and PowerPoint. This project specifically and class in general really helped to broaden the scope of my teaching abilities.

The third piece that I included in my portfolio is the research paper that I did for ENG 6070: Introduction to Literacy and Critical Theory. This is the piece on which I did the most revision for the portfolio. I was really nervous about taking a literary theory class because I had heard

horror stories from several other teachers who had taken it about how difficult the reading could be. To be sure, some of the readings in theory were quite difficult, but there were also some of them with which I really connected. My favorite reading of the semester was one about fairy tales and folk lore. There was mention of Vladimir Propp and his assertion that there are thirty-one functions that are used in the construction of fairy tales which helps to account for the fact that they are all so strikingly similar. We also read Sigmund Freud's explanation of how the feeling of the uncanny in fairy tales occurs because of subconscious memories in the reader. I tried to connect Propp's functions with Sigmund Freud's explanation of the uncanny and apply their ideas to *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, but my writing was all over the place and didn't connect. Instead, I cut out the bit about Freud and focused on applying Propp's labels to *The Turn of the Screw* and in the end I believe that gave my thesis a better focus.

The essay was heavy on research, as I employed fifteen different sources to support my thesis. I have already seen the benefits of writing such a paper in my own pedagogy. Due to successfully tackling that paper I now have more confidence taking my own students through the different steps of a research paper. When they have questions about the process, I am able to rely on the methods that I employed for my own paper for their answer. In fact, during this last semester at school I assigned a paper on *Huckleberry Finn* to my classes and there were several times that I put this paper up on my SmartBoard and took the students through my process. I honestly think that my students respected the fact that I had just recently completed my own research paper, which in turn lent more gravity to the instruction I was giving them. It was like they were thinking "Okay, this guy knows what he's talking about, so I'm going to pay attention to what he's saying." It was nice to be able to earn that approbation, especially with high school students!

My final portfolio piece also gave me more confidence and knowledge that will benefit my own teaching practices. I wrote a paper for ENG 6150: Linguistics on the language of Mark Twain's "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. I found linguistics fascinating because most everyone uses language each day but it was something I never thought much about, which as an English teacher I'm ashamed to admit. How words have morphed over the years and how languages have died out was interesting, but for my paper I wanted to focus on a topic more immediate that would inform my instruction as a teacher of American literature. I've taught Twain for the last fifteen years, so to really study the evolution of his language and style from "Jumping Frog" to *Huck Finn* was really helpful and something I had my students look at these last couple of years. For the bulk of the paper I broke down the seven different dialects Twain employs in *Huck Finn*, which was quite an eye-opener for me and gave me a renewed awe for his literary talents. I had, of course, always read his author's notice preceding the story about the different dialects he used, but never before had I bothered to actually study those voices in depth. Writing this research paper helped me to understand Twain and his style on an even higher level which in turn allowed me to better instruct my students on the intricacies of one of the greatest American authors.

These four portfolio pieces are just a small sample of what I've learned throughout my two-year journey of instruction under the captainship of some supremely talented professors. In addition to these pieces, I actually created a film for ENG 6800: Literature and Film of 9/11 and the War on terror of which I am extremely proud. I also created a seminar-type poster for ENG 6040: Teaching Writing that I could have included in my portfolio. Not only that, but I learned to create a semester-long syllabus in both ENG 6020 and ENG 6090 that will be invaluable to me when I teach my own college-level classes. My journey to a Master's in English was not

something that I had ever anticipated, but I am so fortunate to have been given the opportunity and I am indebted to the people who guided me through the challenges that I faced along the way. The Master's in English program at Bowling Green State University has given me a gift that I'll carry with me for the rest of my life: the gift of knowledge and for that I will be ever thankful.

Jim Lamb

Professor Nickoson

English 6200

5 May 2016

Teaching Writing With Technology: A Paradigm For Change

Technology is everywhere. Hospitals are equipped with the latest technology so that doctors and nurses can save people's lives. Cars are equipped with the latest technology in order to make driving more luxurious and convenient. On any given Sunday in autumn, NFL players can be seen on the sideline studying their tablets trying to spot the tendencies of their opponents in order to find any kind of advantage that may help win the game. Even a little roadside food truck in Norwalk, Ohio, has a gadget that plugs into a cellphone that allows for a credit card to be swiped so that their customers can buy a Philly cheesesteak and fries electronically if need be. For the youth of today especially, technology is as much a part of life as air and water. In fact, the results of a 2013 survey from Project Tomorrow show that "89 percent of high school students have access to Internet-connected smart phones, while 50 percent of students in grades 3 through 5 have access to the same type of devices" (Riedel 1).

Thanks in part to technology, kids are also writing more than ever in the form of text messages, blogs, Tweets, Facebook posts, and other platforms. With so many kids writing, teachers are being forced to keep their heads above water by trying to figure out ways to use

available technology in a way that is educationally sound. Unfortunately, it seems all too often that “On a national scale, an English education fails to educate students to support a digital literacy. Just look at the curriculum and try to figure out where such an education might be taking place: in dark corners only” (Reid qtd. in Haumanm, Kastner, and Witte 45). As evidenced by the recent postings on the Modern Language Association’s Job Information List, which “showed that 59 out of 132 jobs posted in the rhetoric and composition category sought applicants with digital media expertise/interests” (Haumanm, Kastner, and Witte 45), institutions are well aware of the growing trend towards technology . Yet crowbarring technology into the writing classroom for the sake of technology only could end up being counterproductive. As Collin Gifford Brooke points out “‘Add technology and stir’ is perhaps a poor way to improve education in general, but on the smaller scale of the writing classroom, it can be a positive source of experimentation and innovation” (180). With such an ocean of technological tools available, how does one go about navigating the waters? In order to be considered for the writing classroom, technology should be meaningful, engaging, and, perhaps most of all, useful in helping shape a student’s writing.

In order to be considered for the writing classroom, technology ought to be meaningful to the student. For example, the teacher could assign students to compose discussion topics and responses on a message board such as one provided by Schoology. If it is assigned just as busy work or so the teacher can put a checkmark next to some school-mandated technology quota, it will not mean anything to the student. When assigning writing involving technology, it should be remembered that

[i]f we engage students in real writing tasks and we use technology in such a way that it complements their innate need to find purposes and audiences for their work, we can

have them engaged in a digital writing process that focuses first on the writer, then on the writing, and lastly on the technology (Coskie 1).

With this in mind, it may prove beneficial to assign composition on a message board as a means to an end. Perhaps the message board could serve as a way for the student to generate ideas with classmates, something akin to brainstorming. This would also serve as a way to promote collaboration. I have been slow in coming to the technology table, yet recently I created an account on the Schoology website. I then created a message board to be shared between the students in my two sections of Honors American Literature. At first, I was going to create two separate message boards for each class, but in the end I felt that the students might enjoy sharing ideas with kids from the other section and, since both sections were reading Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, I decided to go the route that I did. In the end, the results were better than I could have hoped. The students were required to compose five discussion topics and respond to at least five other comments. All of the students composed their discussion topics, and many of them responded to more than the required number of replies. Students that I had rarely ever heard speak in the classroom were engaging with their peers in a way that they never would have otherwise.

While I was excited that my students were taking an active role in responding to the literature and each other, one thing I did not think through was whether or not I was going to engage with my students on the message board or whether it was a place that was going to be solely theirs. Of course I was going to monitor their comments, but would I respond to them, and if so, how much? After all, I have forty students and each was required to make ten comments for a total of four hundred comments at the minimum! What I decided to do was to comment only if the students were discussing questions that they had that no one seemed to be able to answer. I

would give them little nudges to read certain passages over again in the hopes that that would help them. (Right now, my students are posting on the second half of the book, and I scaled back the number of discussion topics they are required to post to three in order to keep it a bit more manageable.) Since the students were generating so many excellent ideas through collaborative discussion, I then felt I had to harness those ideas to make it more meaningful. The next step of the assignment was to choose a discussion topic other than one of their own and write five-hundred words about it.

The papers the students turned in were some of the most insightful of the year. They discussed everything from the power of love between a father and son to what it is that makes life worth living. The ideas and discussion composed through the message board helped to draw ideas out of students in a way that composing on their own would not have. It was a case where “The measured writing process...bears little resemblance to the bursts and spikes of activity that typically occur online” (Brooke 181). For someone who has taught with the notion that ideas and topics are generated through what I lecture about in class discussion, this was a revelation! I am warming to the idea that “Teachers must abandon the notion that all expertise must flow from the front of the classroom, particularly when it comes to technology” (Brooke 182). Thanks to what I have researched and read for this class, I can say resoundingly: Lesson learned!

While message boards are a useful tool for helping students generate meaningful writing through collaboration, blogging technology is a way to help students engage with writing on a personal level. When I task my students with a writing assignment, I will typically have them begin by freewriting or brainstorming about their topic. This might have included creating webs of related ideas, listing thoughts, making a Venn diagram to show the relationship between ideas, or something of the kind. The idea was that students would generate ideas without regard for

grammar or style or any of the other conventions of a formal paper. Brainstorming and freewriting are techniques that allow

students to let go of their thoughts (including inhibitions, inferiorities, confusions about writing, reading, or even the day's events) through non-stop writing. Once writers are able to give up control of their writing—particularly regarding English pragmatics, conventions, and standards—their writing skills will increase, for they will be uninhibited by the insecurities that result in “bad writing”. And so, the practice of nonstop writing and letting go is a practice in mindfulness (Bryant 4).

While these strategies are still effective, blogging is another way to engage students in brainstorming and freewriting. In “Composing Online: Integrating Blogging into a Contemplative Classroom”, Kendra Bryant says that “A blog is simply an online journal” (6). As such, a blog could serve as a way for a student to freewrite and generate ideas without the pressure of a formal assignment. Not only that, but the blog could turn into a conversation since the public is able to see and comment on what is written. I can remember writing assignments of my own where I would sit with my notebook and write ideas out longhand and then, after erasing, crossing out, and inserting different ideas, I would be ready to go to the typewriter and punch something out. All of the writing I did was internal. I had no idea if what I was saying was making sense or whether or not it would connect with anyone until I turned it in to the teacher. Thanks to modern technology, students can now receive immediate feedback to their writing which will help to strengthen what they are trying to communicate since blogs “commonly include a comments function that permits visitors to the site to leave responses” (Kennedy and Howard 48). Not only used just for freewriting, blogs also “typically facilitate creation of posts, or short written pieces that may include audio, video, or still images” (Kennedy

and Howard 48) that may encourage even more creativity. With all of these options, blogs “are often used not just as journals, as they were in the early days, but as customizable content management systems that support portfolios, magazines, community-based sites, business sites, and many other genres” (Kennedy and Howard 48). In their blog, a student can not only write, but also post links to other websites. Not only that, but students can also support their writing by posting images or videos that could help to strengthen what they are trying to say. Such tools at their fingertips will help to foster creativity in students and allow them to communicate in ways that were not possible when scribbling in a notepad. For example, the homepage for WordPress details everything that is possible for those who wish to sign up (for free) and start blogging. Users can “Start publishing in seconds” and “Instantly create the personal or professional blog of your dreams to share your ideas on the web” (WordPress). In addition, they claim that “Multiple author support and custom user settings foster collaboration” and that “Social features encourage rich interactions and help grow your audience” (WordPress).

Instead of being an individual exercise in drudgery, writing on a blog has become a cool, hip way to communicate with the world. Teachers who decide to utilize blogging “in the contemplative reading and writing classroom...can assist the jet ski writer in learning how to scuba dive so she can be a more holistic student who doesn’t fragment her mind through technology use, but is able to focus and deepen her mind with it” (Bryant 12). Allowing students the freedom to generate ideas through blogging in order to maximize their potential as writers fits well with the expressive pedagogy of writing. Expressive pedagogy

places the writer at the center of its theory and pedagogy, assigning highest value to the writer’s imaginative, psychological, social, and spiritual development and how that development influences individual consciousness and social behavior. Expressivist

pedagogy employs freewriting, journal keeping, reflective writing, and small-group dialogic collaborative response to foster a writer's aesthetic, cognitive, and moral development. Expressivist pedagogy encourages, even insists upon, a sense of writer presence even in research-based writing (Burnham and Powell 113).

Blogging is an excellent way to engage students and allow them express their writing in unique and exciting ways.

Another way to engage students in a unique and exciting way is to give them the opportunity to use digital tools such as PowerPoint or Google Slides for writing instead of, say, a traditional research paper. The idea of the research paper is “to help students learn research skills and practice incorporating sources in an extended, often argument-driven, paper” (Howard and Jamieson 232). Students utilizing PowerPoint or Google Slides can still accomplish the same goals set forth in the research paper, but they can do it in a less regimented way that allows them the freedom to create.

This school year, because of the “Researched Writing” chapter I read for this class, I decided to give my seniors the choice to do a traditional critical analysis paper that included quoting from primary and secondary sources or a digital slide presentation about the novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon. I was a bit hesitant about allowing them to opportunity of doing a digital presentation at first, but then I thought about the fact that not all of my seniors were planning on going to college after high school. Even if they were not planning on going to college right away, I still wanted them to have the experience of going through the process of the research paper, as I feel that there is value in the process pedagogy because

It is the process of discovery through language. It is the process of exploration of what we know and what we feel about what we know through language. It is the process of using language to learn about our world, to evaluate what we learn about our world, to communicate what we learn about our world (Anson 216).

Just because a student was not going to college next year, I did not want them to miss out on that. In the end, I realized that “The alternative is not to cease teaching research but to teach it differently” (Howard and Jamieson 235) for those students.

Since students are comfortable with technology, I need to be as well. It did not seem right that my hesitations should restrict the learning environment for students with technological aptitude. I am “required to expand traditional understandings of text and literacy that have replaced many of the ways that we communicate, create, and socialize. Put simply, there is a need to value and construct different kinds of texts, learning, and interactions within the classroom” (O’Byrne 276). Only two students out of thirty chose to do a slide presentation using the PowerPoint program and one decided to use Google Slides. I thought a lot about what the students who chose to do a digital presentation should have to accomplish for the equivalent of a three to four-page paper, and I decided that the slide presentation needed to be between twenty to twenty-five slides and that it must incorporate the elements of research. Other than that, the students were free to use pictures, graphs, quotes, or something along those lines to illustrate and reinforce their ideas. Since “It is increasingly clear that this generation of adolescents is almost always connected to online information” and because “the Internet has quickly become this generation’s defining technology for literacy, in part due to facilitating access to an unlimited amount of online information and media” (O’Byrne 276), I encouraged them to be creative, but I also required that they “find relevant, reliable sources from the vast array of information

available to them” (Howard and Jamieson 235). I also wanted them “to understand and work with the ideas and sources they (found)” and “to recognize the ways audience, purpose, perspective, and context shape the content of those sources and in turn invite readers to ask questions as they read” (Howard and Jamieson 235).

As it turned out, any doubts I might have had were unwarranted. The students who created the slide presentations did outstanding work, surpassing all my expectations. They did incorporate the elements of research while at the same time adding pictures, artwork, and even short film clips to strengthen their analysis of the novel.

It went so well that next year I think that in my honors classes, where I typically require four papers, I will instead require three papers and one digital project. All of my students will have Chromebooks next year, so I could even assign a project to be done using Google Slides which would then give them the opportunity to “share” that presentation with the other students in class. I envision the students giving the presentation up in front of the room speaking about what they have learned while the students in their seats are engaged on their Chromebooks with the project being presented. There are so many possibilities available that I can’t limit myself to past practices but instead embrace whatever will help my students become better writers. I have to remember that

As digital technologies have changed, so has writing. Web 2.0 tools are in common use and, as part of an increasingly participatory culture, we are all creators of media for public consumption. According to research by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 95% of teens are now online with 70% of teens taking the time to go online daily. Teens are active users of social networking sites, with 80% of teens actively

engaged in some kind of online social media. Therefore, most teenagers aged twelve to seventeen are using some form of electronic personal communication, from sending email to text messaging to posting comments on social networks. Many online spaces foster collaboration and interaction with others through writing (Colwell 136).

I am now on board with “the idea that genres and media might felicitously mix when undergraduates (or even high school students) conduct research” (Howard and Jamieson 236) and will begin to integrate technology into my classroom when I feel that it will benefit students.

Although I am on board with integrating technology into the classroom, are students on board? I asked my students to complete a short survey on technology for me, and the results were surprising. The results made me aware that “It is our responsibility as writing teachers...to understand the scenes where our students write, the tools they will be using to write, and the often uneven attitudes (and access) that our students may have with respect to technology” (Brooke 177). Because of Port Clinton City School’s one-to-one laptop initiative, I currently have thirty-seven students (sophomores in my American Literature Honors class) who have Chromebooks and one hundred and three (juniors and seniors who missed the cutoff for the laptop initiative) who do not have them. I asked the question “Would you like to use school-related technology more, the same, or less each day? Please explain why” and interestingly, twenty-three of the thirty-seven sophomores who have the laptops said they would like to use it less. Lauren said that she would like to use technology “maybe less because it can get overwhelming and stressful sometimes. It’s like you can’t get away from it and school is with you everywhere you go”. Another girl named Rachel said “I would like to use less technology because I like hearing the insights of the teacher. It’s better when people teach, that way, if I have a question I can ask and understand it better than looking something up online and getting

more confused”. One of the boys I have named David said he’d like to use less because “Teachers assign us stuff to do on our laptops at home but I don’t have internet access outside of school”, which of course is something of which teachers and administrators need to be aware. Of the one hundred and three students who don’t have Chromebooks, only forty-six said that they’d like to use more school-related technology during the day. One of my seniors named Drew said “I’m fine with not having a school laptop because if I did I’d have to worry about it all the time”. However, when asked specifically about using technology to write, all thirty-seven sophomores said that there were benefits. Kyle said “I liked using the message board on Schoology because looking at what other people in the class had to say helped me get ideas for my paper. Plus, it’s similar to social media, which made it seem like we were just talking and not doing something for school”. Erin said that she liked Schoology as well because “we can communicate with other students”. Hailey felt like Google Docs was beneficial because “I like to share my essays with friends so that they can read it and give me suggestions about what I wrote”.

From looking through the comments provided by my students, I learned that trying to cram too much technology upon them may have negative results, but there are ways to weave technology into instruction so that it doesn’t become overbearing. Like anything in life, there needs to be a balance to teaching writing or anything else with technology. There are absolutely benefits when technology can be organically integrated into the classroom, and fortunately writing seems to lend itself more than other subjects to these benefits. It is now up to me to figure out what technology makes sense to use with writing pedagogy, and this class has gone a long way towards informing me.

Technology is a major part of the worlds of most of my students. When technologically savvy kids walk into my room, I want to be able to help them harness that readiness to help them learn. As Brooke says, “At some point, new media will simply become an accepted part of the definition of what it means to write well” (187). I have to keep up with the changing landscape of digital media or risk becoming irrelevant. At the same time, I do not want to use technology in my classroom just for the sake of using technology. I want it to be impactful and meaningful, or else I could run the risk of doing more harm than good for my students. The fact that “there is more to new media pedagogy than simply surrendering to the demands of the present moment or accodating our given audience” (Brooke 188) reminds me that there is a way to incorporate technology in my lessons that makes sense. Brooke also states that “Taking an active role in contemporary discussions of pedagogy, and working with technology ourselves in mindful, reflective ways, can put us in the position to shape that landscape ourselves” (188). As a teacher, what could be more exciting than that? The fact that we have a chance to “shape that landscape” all while helping our students become better writers is proof that although “we are still deeply embedded in a transitional phase, caught between the relatively stable habits and practices of literacy and the chaos of what Gregory Ulmer has termed ‘electracy’” it is still an exciting time in field of writing pedagogy.

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Jim Lamb

ENG 6800: Multimodal Composition

Dr. Ethan Jordan

19 April 2017

The Great Gatsby Multimodal Composition Collaboration

ELA Common Core Standards:

Reading Literature:

RL.11-12.1: **Cite** strong and thorough textual evidence to support **analysis** of what the text says explicitly as well as **inferences** drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11-12.3: **Analyze** the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed, etc.).

RL.11-12.6: **Analyze** a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., **satire**, sarcasm, **irony**, or understatement).

RI.11-12.7: **Integrate** and **evaluate** multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Writing:

W.11-12.1: **Write** arguments to support claims in an **analysis** of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant sufficient **evidence**.

W.11-12.2: **Write** informative/explanatory texts to examine and **convey** complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective **selection, organization, and analysis** of content.

W.11-12.9: **Draw evidence** from literary or informational texts to support **analysis, reflection,** and research.

Speaking and Listening:

SL.11-12.1: **Prepare** for and **participate** effectively in a range of **conversations** and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own **clearly and persuasively**.

SL.11-12.5: Make **strategic use** of digital media in presentations.

Essential Questions:

1. What do good readers do? Am I clear about what I just read? How do I know?
2. Author's choice: Why does it matter? What makes a story a "great" story?
3. What do good writers do?
4. What do good researchers do?
5. What makes collaboration meaningful?
6. How can I use digital media effectively?

Unit Goal:

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to find, interpret, and analyze details from multiple sources while working with technology and each other in order to present meaningful information in the form of a multimodal composition.

Objectives:

1. By the end of the unit, the students will successfully prepare and present a multimodal composition relevant to *The Great Gatsby*.
2. To improve the ability of students to cite evidence in order to support their assertions.
3. To master the ability of students to plan a multimodal composition and presentation.
4. To work collaboratively in a group setting.

Accommodations:

For *Learning Styles*:

1. Verbal Learners: Teacher-led lecture and discussion, digital media presentations featuring audio
2. Social Learners: Small-group activity
3. Visual Learners: Digital media presentations featuring images

Expectations:

The classes presenting their multimodal compositions are comprised of students enrolled in American Literature-Honors. The students' grades range from A's to C's. There is one student on a 504 plan that should not need any accommodations for this lesson. The students will be arranged in groups based on their STAR Reading test scores, with the top four scores being placed in a group, then the next four best scores placed in the next group, and so on. The topics they will be assigned to research are relevant in providing background knowledge about F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel *The Great Gatsby*. The students will meet to discuss their topic and research relevant information. They will also meet to plan out an effective multimodal composition about their findings which they will present to the class. During the teacher-led portion of the classes, the expectation is that the students will expand their analytical skills beyond their current level through the modeling of various assertions and conclusions by the instructor.

Skills:

1. Comprehension of reading materials.
2. Analysis of reading materials.
3. Drawing conclusions about reading materials.
4. Researching information relevant to an assigned topic.
5. Collaborating in a group setting.
6. Presenting information to an audience.

Daily Procedures:WEEK 1*Day 1:*

1. Read “Masterpiece: The Great Gatsby” on pages 886 and 887 of the Holt textbook.
2. Pass out handouts (Appendix A) to introduce the multimodal composition projects for the students to research and present in order to provide context and depth of knowledge for *The Great Gatsby*
3. The multimodal composition topics include:
 - a. Advertising in the 1920’s – must include visuals
 - b. Automobiles of the 1920’s – must include visuals
 - c. Prohibition (law enforcement/gangs) – must include visuals
 - d. Music, Dance, and Entertainment in the 1920’s – must include audio
 - e. New York City in the 1920’s – must include visuals
 - f. The Relationship of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald – must include visuals
4. The students will then be placed in groups based on their STAR reading scores.

Day 2:

1. The students will use this period meet in the classroom to discuss which type of multimodal composition they wish to use. They may use Google Slides, PowerPoint, Prezi, a poster board collage display, a video essay, or a format of

their choice approved by the instructor. I will pass out a handout that explores the differences between Prezi, PowerPoint, and Google Slides (Appendix B)

2. The students will also discuss the reflection they have to write about what they learned and the choices they made that led to their final multimodal composition.
3. I will walk around the room to meet with groups and offer assistance.

Days 3, 4, and 5:

1. The students and instructor will meet in the media center in order to work on their multimodal composition projects.
2. I will also assign chapters 1 and 2 of *The Great Gatsby* for the students to read by Monday.

WEEK 2

Day 1:

1. The students will take a quiz over *The Great Gatsby* chapters 1 and 2.
2. I will assign *The Great Gatsby* chapters 3 and 4 for the students to read by Wednesday.
3. Group 1 will present their project about Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.
4. The class will discuss chapter 1 of *The Great Gatsby*.

Day 2:

1. Group 2 will present their project about advertising during the Jazz Age.
2. The class will discuss chapter 2 of *The Great Gatsby*. I will tie in the project about advertising with the billboard of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg mentioned in chapter 2.

Day 3:

1. The students will take a quiz over chapters 3 and 4 of *The Great Gatsby*.
2. Assign chapters 5 and 6 of *The Great Gatsby* for the students to read by Friday.
3. Group 3 will present their project about music and dance during the 1920's.
4. The class will discuss chapter 3 of *The Great Gatsby*. I will tie in the project about music and dance with Gatsby's party.

5. Watch the clip of Gatsby's party from the Baz Luhrman film.

Day 4:

1. Group 4 will present their project about prohibition and gangsters in the 1920's.
2. The class will discuss chapter 4 of *The Great Gatsby*. I will tie in the project about prohibition and gangsters with Gatsby's wealth and his friend Wolfsheim.

Day 5:

1. Quiz over chapters 5 and 6 of *The Great Gatsby*.
2. Assign chapters 7, 8, and 9 of *The Great Gatsby* for Monday.
3. Group 5 will present their project about automobiles in the 1920's.
4. The class will discuss chapter 5 of *The Great Gatsby*. I will tie in the project about automobiles with Gatsby's car, Tom's car, and George Wilson.

WEEK 3

Day 1:

1. Quiz over chapters 7, 8, and 9 of *The Great Gatsby*
2. Group 6 will present their project about New York in the 1920's.
3. The class will discuss chapter 7 of *The Great Gatsby*. I will tie in the project about New York in the 1920's to the party at the Plaza Hotel.

Day 2:

1. Discussion on chapters 8 and 9 of *The Great Gatsby*

Day 3:

1. Unit exam over *The Great Gatsby*

Materials Needed:

1. ChromeBooks
2. Copies of *The Great Gatsby*
3. Notebooks/writing utensil
4. Project handouts

Guided Practice:

1. The teacher will lead the discussion of multimodal compositions, project topics, and *The Great Gatsby*
2. The teacher will circulate among the small groups to ensure that each group is on task and to answer any questions the students may have.

Independent Practice:

1. Students will independently listen to project presentations.
2. Students will independently write notes over the chapters of the book.
3. Students will independently listen to direct instruction from the teacher.
4. Students will independently decide whether the information that was discussed in groups is viable to use in a critical analysis.

Formal Evaluations:

The students will be evaluated on their multimodal composition and reflection (Appendix C).

The students will be tested on their knowledge of *The Great Gatsby* and its elements as part of a formative unit exam.

Informal Evaluation:

The students will be monitored for cooperation, participation, and attentiveness during the group work and subsequent class discussion.

Ongoing Evaluation:

As satire and irony are common literary devices, ample opportunities will be presented throughout the course to expand upon the student's understanding of these and other concepts.

(Appendix A)

The Great Gatsby: Multimodal Composition Project

Your group will be completing a multimodal project that will provide insight and depth of knowledge to F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*.

The project includes a presentation of your research. Your group must decide how to present your research. You could present your research in the form of a PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation, a Prezi, a video essay, a poster board, an infographic, or some other form that you decide. The presentation should last from ten to fifteen minutes.

The project also includes a 500-750 word MLA-formatted reflection about what your group learned about your subject and the reasons behind the choices that your group made that led to your completed presentation.

The project topics include:

1. The relationship of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald (to be presented before discussion of chapter 1)
2. Advertising in the Jazz Age (to be presented before discussion of chapter 2)
3. Music and Dance during the Jazz Age (to be presented before discussion of chapter 3)
4. Prohibition and Gang Warfare during the 1920's (to be presented before discussion of chapter 4)
5. Automobiles of the 1920's (to be presented before discussion of chapter 5)
6. New York City in the 1920's (to be presented before discussion of chapter 6)

Some ideas to keep in mind about a multimodal composition (adapted from Traci Gardner's blog):

1. **Multimodal does not mean digital technology.** Multimodal texts engage multiple modes of communication. You don't need digital technology to do that. An illustrated poster is just as much a multimodal text as a YouTube video is.
2. **It doesn't mean multimedia either.** A multimodal text may use multimedia (photos, animation, words, sounds), but it doesn't have to.
3. **Everything in the composition classroom is multimodal composing.** It's impossible to write a text that engages only one mode. Take a traditional essay, printed out and stapled in the upper left corner. That text includes the linguistic, spatial, and visual modes of communication at a minimum.

4. **People have been learning about multimodal composition for centuries.** Since everything in the writing classroom is multimodal composing, it's not surprising that teachers have always taught about more than one mode of communication. When you learn how to use layout and design to make the words stand out on a page, for example, you're learning multimodal composing techniques.
5. **What's important isn't how, but when and why.** How to use multiple modes of communication when you compose is the easy part. What's important is learning when to engage the different modes of communication and why they bring meaning to the text.
6. **Using every mode doesn't necessarily make a text better.** Use all five modes if they help you communicate your message, but don't add modes just because you can. Make sure that they add to the meaning of the text.
7. **Communicating with the visual mode isn't limited to using photos.** Sure photos can be part of it, but you're also using the visual mode when you add bold text or change the size and color of a font.
8. **The gestural mode includes both body language and movement.** The word *gestural* does make you think of gesture, but gestural mode isn't limited to things that people can do, like smile or wave their arms about. Any kind of movement that communicates with a reader uses the gestural mode.
9. **It's easy to compose a multimodal text.** It's actually impossible *not* to create a multimodal text. When we add words to a word processing document, for example, we may not think about the multimodal communication we are using. We add visual elements when we choose specific fonts, when we add emphasis by changing a font to bold or increasing its size, and when we indent the words to signal the start of a paragraph or a blocked quotation.
10. **It can be challenging, however, to compose a rhetorically effective multimodal text.** It *is* easy to compose a text that uses multiple modes of communication, but it takes work to make sure that the different modes contribute the intended meaning to the text. As you compose multimodal texts, think constantly about your intentions and make sure that the different elements that you add to the text help you say what you intend to.

The following links will provide you with different strategies for and examples of multimodal compositions :

<http://guides.library.vcu.edu/multimodal-faculty/project-examples>

<http://kcwritingcenter.weebly.com/multimodal-projects.html>

<https://creatingmultimodaltxts.com/web-e-texts-blogs-and-social-media/web-pages-wikis-blogs-e-posters-e-books/>

<https://hebrewbible.wordpress.com/2011/04/10/multimodal-products-ideas-for-final-essay-project/>

(Appendix B)

Prezi:

NOTES:

Non-Linear navigation

Map layout

Web-based creation

Free for basic use

Limited printing options

Audio narration and
music import

Must be online to play
linked
YouTube or uploaded
videos

Collaborative. One file,
multiple online editors.

Better for:

Dynamic visually-based
storytelling when
flowing from one
thought into the next is
preferred.

Negatives:

Dependent on updated
plug-ins like Adobe
Flash.

Easy to lose control of
navigation (motion
sickness).

Videos need Internet
access.

Public (Free)
presentations.

PowerPoint:

Linear navigation

Slide-stack layout

Computer-based creation

Purchased with
Microsoft Office Suite

Multiple printing options

Audio narration and
music import

Videos can be embedded
for offline play

One master creator
incorporates all changes
on local computer. May
be stored on a shared
drive to support multiple
editors.

Better for:

Structured presentations
that rely on data
delivered in sequence to
tell a complete story.

Notes can be included.

Negatives:

Less wow factor.

Variances due to creation
and presentation

with different versions

Google Slides:

Linear navigation

Slide-stack layout

Web-based creation

Free

Multiple printing options

No audio import

Must be online to play
linked

YouTube or uploaded
videos

Collaborative. One file,
multiple online editors.

Better for:

Group-created
presentations. Easily
embedded for auto-play
on a Google Site.

Negatives:

Limited offline
accessibility.

Less customizable.

(Appendix C)

Rubric for Multimedia Presentation

Task Description: (Teacher may explain specific assignment in this space.)					
Criteria	weight	Exemplary	Admirable	Acceptable	Attempted
Research of Topic	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use of three or more sources, including at least two Internet and one print source; use of two search engines <input type="checkbox"/> Variety of domain name suffix (.com, .edu, .net) <input type="checkbox"/> Factual information is accurate <input type="checkbox"/> Narrow focus of topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use of two sources, including, including at least one Internet source; use of one search engine <input type="checkbox"/> Most information can be confirmed <input type="checkbox"/> Topic could be more narrowly focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use of one Internet source <input type="checkbox"/> Some errors in information <input type="checkbox"/> Topic somewhat broad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use of only one source <input type="checkbox"/> Numerous errors in information <input type="checkbox"/> Topic too general
Organization (Outline or Storyboard for Planning)	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Logical sequencing <input type="checkbox"/> Menus and paths are clear <input type="checkbox"/> Original; inventive; creative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat logical sequencing <input type="checkbox"/> Menus and paths are mostly clear <input type="checkbox"/> Original 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sequencing is poorly planned <input type="checkbox"/> Menus and paths are sometimes confusing <input type="checkbox"/> Little originality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sequencing is confusing <input type="checkbox"/> Menus and paths are confusing <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent <input type="checkbox"/> Rehash of other people's ideas

Content	20%	<input type="checkbox"/> Covers topic completely and in depth <input type="checkbox"/> Content is readily understandable <input type="checkbox"/> Media used contributes to understanding of topic	<input type="checkbox"/> Covers topic <input type="checkbox"/> Content is mostly understandable <input type="checkbox"/> Media used mostly contributes to understanding of topic	<input type="checkbox"/> Barely covers topic <input type="checkbox"/> Content is somewhat understandable <input type="checkbox"/> Media used somewhat contributes to understanding of topic	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not adequately cover topic <input type="checkbox"/> Content is confusing <input type="checkbox"/> Media used does not contributing to understanding of topic
Graphic Design	25%	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective combination of multimedia and persuasive design elements <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent use of navigational tools and buttons <input type="checkbox"/> Graphics effectively entice audience; accurately convey message	<input type="checkbox"/> Good combination of multimedia and design elements <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate navigational tools and buttons <input type="checkbox"/> Visuals and images are attractive; adequately conveys message	<input type="checkbox"/> Some use of multimedia and design elements <input type="checkbox"/> Some buttons and navigational tools work properly <input type="checkbox"/> Use of visuals and images is limited; message is conveyed	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-1 media used <input type="checkbox"/> Buttons and navigational tools are absent or confusing <input type="checkbox"/> Use of visuals and images is confusing or absent; message is confusing
Mechanics	10%	<input type="checkbox"/> Correct grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling <input type="checkbox"/> All sources are correctly cited	<input type="checkbox"/> Few grammar, usage, mechanics, or spelling errors <input type="checkbox"/> Most sources are correctly cited	<input type="checkbox"/> Several grammar, usage, mechanics, or spelling errors <input type="checkbox"/> Some sources are incorrectly cited	<input type="checkbox"/> Obvious grammar, usage, mechanics, or spelling errors <input type="checkbox"/> Sources are not cited
Teamwork (optional)	10%	<input type="checkbox"/> Work load is divided and shared equally	<input type="checkbox"/> Some members contribute	<input type="checkbox"/> Few members contribute	<input type="checkbox"/> One or two people do all of the work

Assignment Score _____ + Beyond/Bonus _____ =
Final Score

Jim Lamb

ENG 6070 – Introduction to Literacy and Critical Theory

Dr. Erin Labbie

9 November 2017

Vladimir Propp's Seven Spheres of Action in Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*

Folktales have been passed down in every culture for generations. These stories can be used to teach lessons about religion, morals, or values, or they might just be used to entertain. Many folktales have been spun since the art of storytelling began, but in spite of the number and diversity of these tales, they all share striking similarities. Vladimir Propp studied these similarities in order to “delineate the innate order that existed in a disparate body of texts” (Rivkin and Ryan 72). The results of his studies concerning the structures and plot formations of fairy tales were published in Propp's book entitled *The Morphology of the Folktale*. After studying one hundred tales, Propp “concluded that all these tales are constructed by selecting items from a basic repertoire of thirty-one ‘functions’ (that is, possible actions)” (Barry 218). Not every tale contains all thirty-one functions, but all of them, from folktales passed down in the bush of an African jungle to folktales told around a New England hearth, will contain some

of the items. In addition to the thirty-one functions, Propp also identified seven different roles played by characters in folktales that put the thirty-one functions in motion. Propp labeled these seven character types *spheres of action*, because the action in a story revolves around these characters. Included in the seven spheres of action are the villain, the donor (provider), the helper, the princess (a sought-for-person) and her father, the dispatcher, the hero (seeker or victim), and the false hero. It seems, then, that each character in a story should fit nicely into the labels that Propp has established, but that isn't always the case. In fact, Propp himself said that "it is possible to establish that characters of a tale, however varied they may be, often perform the same actions" (Propp 73). Not only that, but "one character may play more than one of these roles in any given tale (e.g. the villain may also be the false hero, the donor may also be the dispatcher, etc.); or one role may employ several characters (multiple villains, for instance)" (Scholes 65). Scholes goes on to say that the seven spheres of action "are basic to much fiction which is far removed from fairy tales in other respects" (Scholes 65). This blurring of characters is especially applicable in Henry James's novella *The Turn of the Screw*. James, who considered to be one of the preeminent psychological novelists ever, has crafted a story in which those who are meant to be helpers may unwittingly be hinderers. Some characters may actually be uncertain of the roles they play. James himself once even said that he wrote not about good and evil, but about 'good-and-evil'. In *The Turn of the Screw*, Henry James has woven a psychologically intricate tale featuring characters that are much too complex to fit within Vladimir Propp's prescribed labels.

There are seven main characters in the governess's story of what happens at Bly as told by Douglas to some holiday companions in the prologue. The characters include the governess herself, her unnamed male employer (who is also the uncle of the two children who reside at Bly

named Miles and Flora), Miles, Flora, Mrs. Grose, and Peter Quint and Miss Jessel (as ghosts or hallucinations). However, figuring out how those seven characters fit together with Propp's seven spheres is no easy task.

One of the most difficult of Propp's seven spheres of action to identify in *The Turn of the Screw* is the villain. One interesting choice for the villain is the governess, a woman who is supposed to be the caretaker of the children and who is not someone the reader would expect. However, one of Propp's thirty-one functions says that the "villain receives information about his (her) victim" (Propp 74). This is true of the governess if Miles, who seemingly dies as a result of what the governess tells him, is considered her victim. The governess receives a letter that informs her that Miles has been expelled from school. She uses this information to question Miles later in the novel and "to force him to a full confession of all his crimes at a point when the child has been harrowed already to the furthest limit of his small resources, when he has gone as far as he can in the way of confession and repentance" (West 338). In her questioning, the governess seemingly makes Miles nervous and uncomfortable, which possibly precludes the consternation and fear that leads to his fatality.

The governess also receives information about Miles from Mrs. Grose in that Miles spent an unusual amount of time with the servant Peter Quint. She says that "It was Quint's own fancy. To play with him, I mean – to spoil him... Quint was much to free" (James 39). Because of this information, the governess fears that Miles is being haunted and possibly possessed by Quint's spirit. It is this fear which renders the governess "in some sense, guilty because of her sin of Faustian pride: it is her insistence that kills little Miles" (West 338).

Another of Propp's thirty-one functions that makes a case for the governess being the villain is that "The villain attempts to deceive his (her) victim in order to take possession of him or his

belongings” (Propp 74). This deception would support the theory “that the governess who is made to tell the story is a neurotic case of sex repression, and that the ghosts are not real ghosts but hallucinations of the governess” (Wilson 115). If the ghosts of Quint and Miss Jessel that the governess sees are mere hallucinations, then she truly does “deceive” both Miles and Flora into thinking they are being haunted. If they believe they are being haunted, they will then see the governess as their savior and she will have gained possession of them, which she selfishly hopes will endear her to her employer. Indeed, “During the unfolding of the story, the governess emerges more and more as a person who has the same dominating qualities as the demoniacal Miss Jessel. The governess, in her incestuous love for the little boy, tries to possess him completely” (Katan 336-337). Both selfishness and deception are qualities of a villain, but while these qualities make the governess a viable candidate for the villain of *The Turn of the Screw*, the more likely candidates for the villain of the story are Peter Quint and Miss Jessel.

The eighth function Propp mentions is that “The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family” (Propp 75). Even though both Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are dead by the time the governess arrives at Bly, the atrocities they committed while they were alive, as implied as they may be, would certainly qualify them as villains. The mere mention of Quint, for example, is enough to cause the greatest distress in Mrs. Grose, one of the servants at Bly and the only servant whose character is developed over the course of the story. Mrs. Grose was afraid of Quint, “Of things that man could do. Quint was so clever – he was so deep” (James 40). Not only was Quint “too free” with Miles as noted earlier, he was “Too free with every one!” (James 39). Of interest is Mrs. Grose’s use of the word “free”. Mrs. Grose, and James for that matter, never tells exactly what the fact that Quint was “too free” means, but it had to be something that shook her up and made her fearful of him. Possibly it was the fact that Quint, a member of the

servile class, was spending an unusual amount of time with Miles, who is from an upper-class family. In Victorian-era England, this would have been seen as a major breach of propriety. However, many critics have speculated that Quint's freedoms with Miles were more nefarious in nature. Concerning Quint, it seems "that the sense of evil which James sought to communicate is to be conceived of largely sexual terms. The horror of the situation is heightened, moreover, by the fact that the boy has been corrupted by the male servant" Quint (Evans 209). The idea that Quint has sexually molested in some way, has in some way taken the child's innocence, is the most heinous of horrors. This would be enough to classify Peter Quint as a villain, but that doesn't seem to be all the evil for which he is responsible before the governess arrives at Bly. He seems also responsible for corrupting both Miss Jessel and Flora. Mrs. Grose goes on to say that she had "never seen one like him. He did what he wished...With them all" (James 47). The fact that Quint "did what he wished" and was "too free" suggests that "the evil which James sought to communicate is to be conceived of largely in sexual terms" (Evans 209). The evil that Quint was capable of is hinted at when the governess says that "there had been matters in his life, strange passages and perils, secret disorders, vices more than suspected, that would have accounted for a good deal more" (James 41). This leaves little doubt that Quint was evil, and that even if he does not appear as a ghost, the psychological suffering he inflicted on those around him accounts for the turmoil dealt with by those still living at Bly. If Quint's ghost does exist, if he "was looking for little Miles" and "wants to appear to *them*" (James 38) as the governess suggests, then that just turns the screw of Quint's villainy even further. However, Quint was not alone in his perpetration of evil.

Miss Jessel, as innocent as she may have been before meeting Peter Quint, is also compliant in the corruption of the children. Mrs. Grose reveals to the governess that "Miss Jessel – *was*

infamous” (James 46). When the governess presses Mrs. Grose to reveal what there was between Quint and Miss Jessel, she replies “There was everything” (James 47). The word everything implies that Quint had indeed seduced Miss Jessel into a sexual relationship, in spite of the fact that “*She* was a lady” and that Quint was “so dreadfully below” (James 47). Not only did Peter Quint have a sexual relationship with Miss Jessel, but he also got her pregnant, which can be implied from Mrs. Grose’s revelation that Miss Jessel “paid for it” (James 47). Since Miss Jessel wasn’t fired from her position at Bly nor arrested, the most likely way that she paid for her tryst with Quint was an illegitimate pregnancy, a pregnancy causing complications from which Miss Jessel perished. Although a sexual relationship between a governess like Miss Jessel and a valet like Peter Quint would have been socially unacceptable in the Victorian era, that fact alone is not enough to qualify her as a villain. In addition to her affair, Miss Jessel knew that Quint was going off with Miles for hours at a time. “You see, after all, Miss Jessel didn’t mind. She didn’t forbid him” (James 52). However, this exchange between the governess and Mrs. Grose explains that Miss Jessel was also involved with the corruption of the children:

Then I went on: ‘At all events, while he was with the man – ‘

‘Miss Flora was with the woman. It suited them all!’ (James 53)

So not only was Miss Jessel involved in a sexual relationship with Quint, not only did she know about the possible corruption of Miles by Quint, but she also participated in corrupting Flora! The fact that Quint and Miss Jessel acted on their both their desire for each other and their desire to corrupt the children proves their villainy. “By almost any civilized standard, such a desire approaches absolute evil. (Quint and Miss Jessel) have violated central taboos, fornicated across class lines, and they have involved children in their crimes” (Heller 71). As a result of the crimes they perpetrated while alive, “Miles feels pederastic passion for Quint’s ghost” while

“Flora feels lesbian love for Jessel’s ghost” (Heller 71). Whether their ghosts actually appear in the story or not, Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are the root of evil in *The Turn of the Screw*, making them, not the governess, the true villains.

The next of Propp’s seven spheres of action is the donor (provider). In *The Turn of the Screw* the donor is the master of Bly. He is the uncle of Miles and Flora and provides them with a beautiful property on which to live as well as providing for their needs and education by hiring the servants and the governess. But more importantly than what he provides for his niece and nephew is what he provides for the governess. He provides her with a job with a salary that “much exceeded her modest measure” (James 9). Not only that, but “the seduction exercised by the splendid young man” (James 9) provided the repressed governess with a sexual fantasy. Indeed, Douglas reveals in the prologue that “She succumbed to it” (James 9). It is not to the governess’s fault that she succumbed to her provider. After all, he was young, handsome, and wealthy, a man with whom, in other circumstances, she wouldn’t have a chance with. But by providing the governess with the opportunity to care for his niece and nephew, the governess sees a possibility, as small as that possibility may be. Since her employer “has brought to bear all the force of his sexual magnetism and the power of his wealth and has appealed to her womanly sympathy in his predicament” (Bell 102), she decides to take on the challenge at Bly even though she does not have the experience to handle it, especially since “She was young, untried, nervous” (James 9).

The master also provides the governess with the opportunity to be the savior of Miles and Flora through the strange nature of his stipulations for her employment. Upon taking the position, the governess “should never trouble him – but never, never: neither appeal nor complain nor write about anything; only meet all questions herself, receive all moneys from his

solicitor, take the whole thing over and let him alone” (James 9). This request renders the governess “more tabooed than any real governess by the absoluteness of her employer’s prohibition of communication with him. James’s governess only fantasizes a romantic annulment of the taboo” (Bell 103). So her employer provides her with not only a sexual fantasy, but also an opportunity to make this fantasy come true if she can meet the requirements that he outlines for her. And one way she can meet these requirements is with the aid of a helper.

Propp says that in each story there will be a helper, and in James’s *The Turn of the Screw*, that helper takes the form of the housekeeper named Mrs. Grose. Mrs. Grose, who, though a minor character, “is an important one (Hoffman 217) is described by the governess early in the novella as being a “stout simple plain clean wholesome woman” (James 12). She is “portrayed in these early chapters as a sane, common-sensical, down-to-earth sort of person” (Hoffman 217) whom the governess can rely on, and as the tale wears on, the governess looks at Mrs. Grose as someone she trusts with her fears and suspicions. Mrs. Grose listens to the governess, but it turns out that “she is not...a superstitious person as one might associate with fictional characters of her type” (Hoffman 217). Mrs. Grose is concerned governess’s well-being, to be sure, and “With the housekeeper, Mrs. Grose, her relationship is certainly affectionate and dependent” (Bell 103), but as far as believing there are ghosts at Bly, she is a bit hesitant. Mrs. Grose instead “presents a realistic point of view that remains in contact with the everyday world in contrast to the intense awareness of the governess, who becomes more and more entangled in the world of evil” (Hoffman 217). Yet because Mrs. Grose is willing to do anything at all to protect the well-being of Miles and Flora she is able to cast aside her doubts and take the governess’s fears about Quint and Miss Jessel’s attempt to possess Miles and Flora as a serious threat. “Because of her realistic viewpoint, her belief in the existence of ghosts is important corroborative evidence for

both the governess and the reader. Though she (Mrs. Grose) never sees the apparitions, she comes to believe in them” (Hoffman 217). Mrs. Grose comes to believe in the apparitions because of what she hears “From that child (Flora) – horrors!” (James 109). She believes that the only way Flora could utter such horrors is because she is under the possession of Miss Jessel. The fact that Mrs. Grose comes to believe in the apparitions is a great relief to the governess, so much so that the governess exclaims “Oh thank God!...It so justifies me!” (James 109). Mrs. Grose, with the information she possesses about Quint and Jessel and the amount of respect she garners from the children becomes a welcome ally for the governess in her times of need. Not only that, but she greatly helps the governess by believing in the fact that the ghosts of Quint and Miss Jessel are real and are attempting to take possession of the children.

Propp’s fourth sphere of action is a child, what he calls “The princess (a sought-for-person) and her father” (Propp 75). In the case of James’s novel, there is not only a princess in Flora, whom the governess describes as being “the most beautiful child I had ever seen” (James 12), but there is also a prince in Miles, who “was incredibly beautiful...everything but a sort of passion of tenderness for him was swept away by his presence” (James 21). Not much, however, is known about Flora and Miles’s father other than the fact that their father is the brother of the employer and that he was “a military brother whom he had lost two years before” (James 7) the governess arrives at Bly.

Miles and Flora are described as so innocent and beautiful by the governess that it seems like she actually does think of them as a prince and princess. Unbeknownst to the governess when she arrives at Bly, however, is that thanks to Peter Quint and Miss Jessel the children are no longer innocent, even though they are truly victims. Miles’s loss of innocence is illustrated by the fact that he has been expelled from his private school. He finally admits to the governess that

he was expelled because he “said things” to “Those I liked” (James 122-123). These things were deemed to vulgar for the headmaster to even write it in a letter to Miles’s uncle. The governess asks Miles what these things were, but before he can answer the ghost of Peter Quint arrives one last time before Miles’s sudden death. It is probable that what Miles says to those he liked was sexual, even homosexual in nature. Miles most likely learned such things in the time he spent with Quint.

Miles is also quite aware of his princely station in life, which is seen in the way he treats the governess. The fact that “His ‘my dear’ was constantly on his lips for me” (James 79) shows that he feels the governess is at most his equal and at least a servant whom he does not need to address with respect. Miles also suggests an attraction between him and his governess. When asked what he stays up at night to think about, he replies “What in the world, my dear, but *you*?” He also admits he thinks “of this queer business of ours...the way you bring me up” (James 88-89). Such talk is suggestive of a prince knowing that he can have what he wants. Flora, however, does not seem to be quite as aware of her role as princess.

Flora, young as she is, has lost her innocence as well thanks to Quint and Miss Jessel. “There is no doubt that Flora is at last corrupted” (Bewley 137). Flora does not seem to notice the presence of the ghost of either Quint or Miss Jessel at any time during the story. She goes about her business of playing and schooling, all the time a seemingly angelic little girl. She does run off once, and although Miss Jessel is near Flora when the governess and Mrs. Grose find her, Flora does not notice. Yet after the governess tells Flora “passionately” that “She’s there, you little unhappy thing – there, there, *there*, and you know it as well as me!” (James 102), a change seems to come over the girl. She becomes ill and she wants nothing to do with the governess (understandably). However, “the dreadful curses that come out of Flora” that “ seem traceable to

no earthly source” (Bromwich xxix) are a sure sign that she is suffering, if not by the possession of Miss Jessel’s spirit, then at the scars of Quint and Jessel’s molestation of the little princess.

Propp’s fifth sphere of action is someone he calls “the dispatcher” (Propp 74). There is an argument to be made here for the ghosts being the dispatchers, as because of them (or the fear of them) Flora is dispatched by Mrs. Grose to London and Miles is dispatched to the afterlife.

However, there is one character that provides a dispatching that is much more important, and that is the governess’s employer. It is he who dispatches the governess to Bly with the orders that she should not contact him for any reason. This dispatching of the governess is what sets the entire events of the story into motion, which is why the uncle is the best choice of a dispatcher.

Propp’s final two spheres of action are “the hero(seeker or victim)” and “the false hero” (Propp 75). The governess fills both of these roles. She is a hero, but “If then we are to see her as a would-be savior we must see her as a false savior” (Lydenberg 276). This is because she is only a hero in her own mind, whereas the motives behind her actions and the results that stem from them make her a false hero to the other characters in the story. The governess starts at Bly because she has admittedly been “carried away in London” (James 13). Because she has fallen for her employer, she wants to follow his directions of not contacting him in order to somehow prove herself to him in the hopes that he will realize what a great job she has done, be thankful for that job, and possibly, as a reward, begin a relationship with her. When the governess realizes that there could be ghosts at Bly who are trying to possess the spirits of Flora and Miles, she decides to try to deal with them herself, which is a very noble, courageous gesture. However, while “she puts up a heroic fight for the souls of her charges” (Lydenberg 276), the choices she makes throughout the novel may not be the wisest. “I find myself basically suspicious of her, not of her good will and certainly not of her ‘firmness’, but of her coolness,

her judgment, her wisdom, and above all her ability to cope with human beings who as human beings are inevitable a mixture of good and evil” (Lydenberg 276).

The following paragraph from chapter six acutely portrays the governess as both hero and false hero:

I scarce know how to put my story into words that shall be a credible picture of my state of mind; but I was in these days literally able to find a joy in the extraordinary flight of heroism the occasion demanded of me. I now saw that I had been asked for a service admirable and difficult; and there would be a greatness in letting it be seen—oh, in the right quarter!--that I could succeed where many another girl might have failed. It was an immense help to me--I confess I rather applaud myself as I look back!--that I saw my service so strongly and so simply. I was there to protect and defend the little creatures in the world the most bereaved and the most lovable, the appeal of whose helplessness had suddenly become only too explicit, a deep, constant ache of one's own committed heart. We were cut off, really, together; we were united in our danger. They had nothing but me, and I--well, I had them. It was in short a magnificent chance. This chance presented itself to me in an image richly material. I was a screen--I was to stand before them. The more I saw, the less they would. I began to watch them in a stifled suspense, a disguised excitement that might well, had it continued too long, have turned to something like madness. What saved me, as I now see, was that it turned to something else altogether. It didn't last as suspense--it was superseded by horrible proofs. Proofs, I say, yes--from the moment I really took hold.

(41)

In this paragraph, the governess knows that her “state of mind” might not be “credible”. Yet she still makes the choice to try to save the children which ends up in the illness of one and the death of the other. The governess feels that she is doing something “extraordinary” that is in the service of something “admirable and difficult”. This shows that she has courage, which is heroic. Yet she also makes mention of the fact that she wants this great thing that she is undertaking to be seen “in the right quarter” and feels that she has what it takes to succeed where other girls have failed. This clearly shows that her attempt to protect the children from evil spirits is not so altruistic after all – she wants her employer will see her actions and realize that she is the one for him. When the governess says that she and the children are “cut off...together” and “united in our danger” and that “They had nothing but me and I – well, I had *them*” it seems that she believes she is doing something heroic. However, it seems like she desires the children for herself in much the same way as she is accusing the ghosts of wanting them! “If she has lost herself in them, she has also found her self by *having them...to possess*” (Lydenberg 277). The governess says that she has stifled her suspense and disguised her excitement, but in reality she is bursting at the fact that she has a chance to prove herself to her secret love. Not only this, but it has “become essential to her sanity and salvation for proofs of the rightness of her imaginings to be forthcoming” (Lydenberg 277). The governess needs there to be ghosts trying to possess the children. She needs the children not to submit themselves to Quint and Jessel but instead she needs them to submit themselves to her. She needs the challenge and the danger in order to fulfill her fantasies and become her employer’s hero. It is precisely *because* she needs these things, however, that she becomes a false hero instead of a true hero.

Through meticulous study and research, Vladimir Propp was able to discern thirty-one functions that take place in a fictional story. These thirty-one functions are perpetrated by seven spheres of action, or characters around which the action of the story revolves. Yet *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James seems to have characters that seem to fulfill several of these roles at once. Therefore, “the Proppian approach seems to hint at the way simple archetypes from much more basic narrative material can provide the shadowy deep foundations of complex realist fiction” (Barry 222). James presents his characters in such a psychologically complex way that one reading will not suffice. For example, upon a first reading, it may seem like the villain of the story is actually the governess, but after multiple readings it becomes clear that Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are the root of evil in the story. Some might identify the governess as being the hero of the story, but upon further examination it may become clear she is no hero at all but instead a false hero. Upon dissecting *The Turn of the Screw*, Henry James seems to prove “what Propp’s system lacks is anything about the way the narrative is *presented*, such as the viewpoint or the style” (Barry 222). It is only after multiple readings that the layers of James’s masterpiece become clear.

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“Jumping” Towards *Huckleberry Finn*: Mark Twain and the Style that Revolutionized and
Redefined American Literature

Mark Twain’s masterpiece *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is one of, if not the most, controversial novels in the history of American literature. Today, the novel is both criticized and defended for its portrayal of African-Americans, most notably in the form of the runaway slave Jim. At the center of the controversy is the pervasive use of the word “nigger”, used two-hundred and nineteen times throughout the novel. As recently as 2011 *Adventures of Huck Finn* was rewritten and censored with the word “nigger” being replaced with the word “slave”. Much debate over this decision raged, eventually garnering national attention when the CBS news program *60 Minutes* aired a segment about *Huckleberry Finn* and people’s reactions to it.

Before the issue of race took center stage, however, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* faced criticism of a different sort. Twain's novel was derided for its portrayal of the main character, Huckleberry, as an ill-educated, unwholesome role model. In fact, the Concord Library in St. Louis refused to circulate the book, complaining that "it is couched in the language of a rough, ignorant dialect, and all through its pages there is a systemic use of bad grammar" (Sewell 86). As time passed, however, Twain's novel has come to be credited with forging a new relationship between style and content, causing a revolution in American literature. In his novel *Green Hills of Africa*, Ernest Hemingway declares that "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*. American writing comes from that" (Hemingway 22). However, Twain's inimitable style didn't just magically appear in the pages of *Huckleberry Finn*. To be sure, Twain was a student of the spoken word from an early age, and his "interest in language started with his lifelong love of good talk" (McKay 62). It is quite possible that he took to writing to share with others his love of the spoken word. Huck's narration is so real and so earnest that as the reader becomes engrossed in his tale it is almost as if Huck is actually there *telling* his story. The illusion of having the story told instead of reading it on the page is created by the way Twain controls the language of the different characters through Huck's point-of view and through the colloquialism of Huck's dialect. The magic of *Huck Finn* is not only in how Twain was able to manipulate the language, but also in how the substance of what is being said is made much more poignant because of the use of regional vernacular. Twain's primary inspiration for his vernacular models "was the oral tradition of the frontier – the boastful bombast of the tall-tale teller and the plain, understated style of the simple, uneducated American" (McKay 63). Such a style did not make its debut in the pages of *Adventures of*

Huckleberry Finn, however. Such a masterful use of language implied a long foreground of development and practice.

Twain's love of conversation was just one stepping stone towards the brilliance of *Huck Finn*. To ensure the authenticity of his writing, Twain spent time "talking and talking and *talking* till it sounds right" (Clemens 227). He also honed his trademark style in his writing. Twain's celebration of folksy dialect can be traced back to his earliest, and arguably his best, short story "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County". Twain spent time working as a gold prospector in Nevada, and his ear soon became tuned to the humorous fashion in which some of his peers told their tall-tales around the campfire at night. The writer in Twain was keen to get not only the stories he heard down on paper but to capture the style in which the stories were told. Although he eventually failed as a gold prospector, Twain did discover something much more valuable in his ability to capture the spoken word on the page, and the result of his experience out West resulted in his first successful short story, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County". Beginning in the pages of "Jumping Frog" and culminating in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain developed then revolutionized the language and style that made him, as Nobel Prize-winning American author William Faulkner said, "the father of American literature" (Faulkner qtd. in Jelliffe 88).

One of Mark Twain's earliest, surely his most accomplished, works up until that point, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County", or "Jim Smiley and his Jumping Frog" as it was first titled, presents a clear indication of from where Twain's trademark style originated.

"Jumping Frog" is a frame story that uses two narrators, the first being an uptight, educated narrator from the East and the second a laid-back, uneducated miner named Simon Wheeler.

Wheeler lives in Angel's Mining Camp in California, and the language with which he tells his

story is in the regional vernacular style for which Twain would come to be known. Constructing such a sharp contrast between the voices of the two narrators provides the story with much of its signature humor. More importantly, “techniques found in the story that are developed in later works” (Cengage 1) such as *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* provide insight into Twain’s evolution as a writer. Symbolically, one can look at the first narrator in the story, an uptight, well-educated man from the East, as the old style of narration that Twain was leaving behind and the second narrator, folksy, colloquial Simon Wheeler, as the new style of narration that Twain was introducing to the world.

Twain uses prescriptive grammar to give voice to the unnamed Eastern narrator, perhaps leaving this narrator unnamed to symbolically stand for all the writers that had come before him who had remained shackled by an unwillingness to experiment with language. The language of the Easterner is a bit conceited thanks to his large vocabulary and lack of any type of a sense of humor. The story begins with the unnamed narrator explaining that “In compliance with the request of a friend of mine, who wrote me from the East, I called on good-natured, garrulous old Simon Wheeler, and inquired after my friend's friend, Leonidas W. Smiley, as requested to do, and I hereunto append the result” (“Jumping Frog” 1). Right at the outset the reader gets a sense that this narrator is a bit of a stick-in-the-mud, which makes the joke that is played on him so much more amusing as the story progresses.

I have a lurking suspicion that Leonidas W. Smiley is a myth; that my friend never knew such a personage; and that he only conjectured that, if I asked old Wheeler about him, it would remind him of his infamous Jim Smiley, and he would go to work and bore me nearly to death with some infernal reminiscence of him as long and tedious as it should be useless to me. If that was the design, it certainly succeeded (“Jumping

Frog” 1)

The story becomes all the funnier knowing that such a highly-educated man isn't sure whether some kind of trick has been played on him or not.

Another element of humor in “Jumping Frog” stems from the contrast of the first narrator with Simon Wheeler, the good-natured barroom historian that relates the story of compulsive gambler Jim Smiley to the first narrator. When telling his story, Wheeler's tone, according to the Eastern narrator, is almost robotic:

He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned the initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was any thing ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in finesse. (“Jumping Frog” 1)

Thanks to this characterization, it becomes humorous to imagine Wheeler sitting there, never changing his pitch, boring the “educated” narrator” to tears. However, when Twain switches to Wheeler's regional vernacular, the level of comedy is ratcheted up another notch, and it is this narrative choice which sews the seeds of what would become the voice of a young boy named Huckleberry Finn. It is clear that “Twain's recognition that he himself was a master of language led him from time to time to rebel against the restraints of prescriptive grammarians and arbiters of usage” (Sewell 31), with the voice of Simon Wheeler being the earliest illustration of such a sentiment in Twain's writing. In his very first sentence, Wheeler states:

There was a feller here once by the name of Jim Smiley, in the winter of '49 or may be

it was the spring of '50, I don't recollect exactly, somehow, though what makes me think it was one or t' other is because I remember the big flume warn't finished when he first come to the camp; but anyway, he was the curiosest man about, always betting on any thing that turned up you ever see, if he could get any body to bet on t' other side; and if he couldn't, he'd change sides ("Jumping Frog" 1).

It is apparent from the get-go that the reader is in for a rollicking narrative from Wheeler and that the first narrator's "formal language contrasts markedly with the vernacular of Simon Wheeler. The humor of the story thus derives not just from Wheeler's manner but from the dialogue between Wheeler's unselfconscious garrulousness and the first narrator's judgmental frame" (Sewell 68). By choosing to write Wheeler's narrative using regional vernacular, Twain makes it seem as though the fat, bald-headed man is talking directly to the reader. Words used by Wheeler such as "Thish-yer", "feller'd", "reg'lar", "cipher", and "j'int" all contribute to Twain's pioneering use of regional dialect.

In his short story, "Twain elevates the typical Southwestern humorous tale to new heights of sophistication with the creation of memorable characters and events and with his subtle use of shifting points of view and believably wrought narrative voices" (Cengage 2). In fact, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" was the "best work Twain had written to date, and marks a turning point in his development as an artist. While the sketch has its stylistic roots in the classical Southwestern frame story, there are touches in the tale that are purely Twain's, and which mark his later writing" (Cengage 2). Thanks to "Jumping Frog" Twain had developed a unique style all his own, a style that would eventually culminate in what many scholars consider the Great American Novel in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Prior to writing *Huck Finn*, Twain used regional vernacular “primarily for humorous storytelling” (McKay 76), such as in “Jumping Frog”. Although Twain kept his trademark humorous style in *Huck Finn*, it was the depth and richness of his themes underneath his humorous voice that has made his landmark novel one for the ages. Also, instead of limiting himself to just one distinct dialect as in “Jumping Frog”, Twain explores the whole spectrum of local color for his masterpiece.

In an explanatory note that precedes *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, “Twain calls attention to one of the book’s chief virtues, the careful attention to and realistic rendering of dialect” (Quirk 100). Twain’s explanatory reads:

In this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri negro dialect; the extremest form of the backwoods Southwestern dialect; the ordinary "Pike County" dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guesswork; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech.

I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding.

All totaled, Twain says that there are seven dialects that he “painstakingly” researched for his novel. He didn’t stop there, however. Even within the seven groups that he details, Twain still had certain individuals “use different locutions, and he made fine distinctions within the speech of even a single character, often through meticulous revision” (Fischer and Salamo 377). To illustrate this point, Huck and Pap Finn both use what Twain calls the “ordinary Pike County dialect”, but Huck always says “again” throughout the novel while Pap says “agin”. It is just such precise specifics such as this that prove Twain was a master at the manipulation of language

and local color, and *Huckleberry Finn* is the pinnacle of his efforts. The genius in Twain's writing, which had its genesis in "Jumping Frog", is how he so effortlessly blends each of the seven different dialects used in *Huck Finn* into one seamless story, which is no small feat considering the wide range of personalities Twain created for *Huck Finn*. However, there are two dialects that rise up amongst the others as being the most revolutionary in the history of American literature.

Although Twain mentions the "ordinary Pike County dialect" third in his explanatory, it was this dialect that revolutionized American literature, as this is the dialect that Huck himself uses to spin his yarn. Ever since writing "Jumping Frog", Twain had been well aware of the complexity of the relationship between spoken English and written English.

Spoken speech is one thing, written speech is quite another. The moment "talk" is put into print, you recognize that it is not what it was when you heard it; you perceive that an immense something has disappeared from it. That is its very soul. To add interpretations to "talk" which would convey the right meaning is something which would require – what? An art so high and fine and difficult that no possessor of it would ever be allowed to waste it on interviews. (Clemens 504-5)

It is precisely this "art so high and fine and difficult" that drives Huckleberry's voice, a voice that is "worldly wise but never jaded" (Quirk 93).

In spite of the fact that he is an outcast, Huck is still innocent, and in spite of the fact that he lies to many characters throughout the book, Huck stays honest with the reader. Twain is able to achieve this innocence and honesty through style. Vernacular features such as Huck being vocabulary-challenged and using nonstandard verb forms give his narration the effect that he is telling his story, not writing it. For example, Huck frequently substitutes the present tense for

the past tense. In one of the most beautifully narrated scenes in the novel, Huck describes a Mississippi sunrise by saying “you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and you make out a log cabin in the edge of the woods” (157). Huck’s use of the “narrative actual present has a firm basis in speech” (McKay 65), giving the illusion that he is conversing with the reader. Huck also “uses the timeless present to frame his moral judgments or his comments and generalizations” (McKay 65). A good example of this is one of the most powerful lines in the novel. After witnessing the horrific tarring and feathering of the duke and king, Huck says “Human beings *can* be awful cruel to one another” (290).

The way Huckleberry uses his verbs is another trademark stylistic choice by Twain. The verbs Huck uses in telling his tale are “both colloquial and concrete” (McKay 65). As Huck and Jim watch a storm roll in, the world “darkens up”. When it is time for Jim to hurry up and escape from Jackson’s Island, Huck tells Jim to get up and “hump yourself”. Huck’s language is “rich in concrete finite verbs”, which “average fifteen percent of the text”, as well as “participle verb forms”, which “fulfill an important role as modifiers” (McKay 65), such as in the Mississippi sunrise when Huck describes “the paleness spreading around” and the “dark spots drifting along” (157). Huck also often adds the prefix “a-“ to present participles, giving his narration a colloquial flavor. During a storm, Huck sees the “tree tops a-plunging about, away off yonder” (59). Huck also uses frequent double-negatives, such as the first sentence of the book when he says “You don’t know about me, without you have read a book by the name of “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer”, but that ain’t no matter” (1). He also confuses words, such as “diseased” instead of deceased, and misspells words, such as “sivilize” instead of civilize. All of these stylistic choices serve to characterize “him as both illiterate and self-effacing” (McKay 66), making his seem like a real person sitting back and telling his story, much as it seemed with

Simon Wheeler in “Jumping Frog”. Huck Finn serves as a pioneer in American storytelling, and “perhaps Huck Finn, as character and voice, was a metaphor for Twain’s mind” (Quirk 97).

Nothing like Simon or Huck had ever been seen in American literature before, but there is another dialect in the novel that was just as groundbreaking as Huck’s.

The second most revolutionary dialect in the book is the first dialect Twain mentions in his explanatory: “the Missouri negro dialect”. This dialect can be found in several characters through the novel, including Jack, Lize, Nat, and Jim. It is interesting to note that all four African-Americans who speak in *Huck Finn* are slaves. There is only one African-American mentioned in the novel who is not a slave, and this person is mentioned by Pap Finn. This African-American is from Ohio and is a professor and, according to Pap, “could talk all kinds of languages, and knowed everything” (34). Huck, however, is not privy to this free black man and never hears him talk, therefore, the reader doesn’t get to, either.

Of the four slaves that Huck does hear speak, only Jim is given extended conversations. For example, Jack is a slave who is owned by the Grangerfords and given to Huck to use while he stays with them. Jack clues Huck (who Jack actually thinks is named George) in to the location of Jim after Huck and Jim had been separated by telling him “Mars Jawge, if you’ll come down into de swamp, I’ll show you a whole stack o’ water-moccasins” (149). When Huck gets to the spot Jack wants, Jack then tells him “You shove right in dah, jist a few steps, Mars Jawge, dah’s whah dey is. I’s seed ‘m befo’, I don’t k’yer to see ‘em no mo’” (149). Twain’s use of “Mars Jawge”, “de swamp”, “stack o’”, “dah’s”, “whah”, “dey”, “befo’”, “k’yer”, and “mo’” are all “typical of black English” (McKay 76) in the years before the Civil War, which is when the story is set. Both Huck and Jim are impressed with how “smart” Jack is in that he never reveals to Huck his true intentions for bringing him into the swamp. Stylistically, as Twain “has Huck

theorize about the effectiveness of Jack's rhetorical strategy, (he) also shares with his reader Jack's coded language, which is different from an ordinary lie, in that on a figurative level he is being truthful and precise: he promised after all, to take Huck to a place crawling with danger. And that's exactly what he did" (Fisher-Fishkin 63). Huck sees Jack as being intelligent in spite of the fact that he is a slave, which comes across in the language Huck uses to relate to the reader what Jack relates to him.

The other two slaves briefly mentioned in *Huck Finn* both live on the Phelps plantation, at which Huck arrives in chapter thirty-one. Nat is used by Tom and Huck to gain access to a captured Jim, and he is characterized as being a "chucklehead" and "punkinheaded". This is much different than the characterization of the clever Jack, and to be sure, Nat's superstitious nature is preyed upon by Tom Sawyer. Tom sees Nat carrying food and suspects he's taking it to Jim. Tom asks Nat if he's taking the food to a dog, to which Nat replies "Yes, Mars Sid, a dog. Cur'us dog, too. Does you want to go en look at 'im?" (295). The speech pattern of Nat is similar to Jack, with both of them using "Mars" to address a superior. When Nat opens the shed where Jim is being held, Jim sings out to Huck and Tom, but in order to keep their relationship with Jim a secret, Tom tells Nat that Jim didn't say a word. Nat blames his mistake on his being bewitched.

O, it's de dad-blame' witches, sah, en I wisht I was dead, I do. Dey's awluz at it, sah, en dey do mos' kill me, dey sk'yers me so. Please to don't tell nobody 'bout it, sah, er ole Mars Silas he'll scole me; 'kase he say dey ain' no witches. I jis' wish to goodness he was heah now – den what would he say! I jis' bet he couldn' fine no way to git aroun' it dis time. But it's awluz jis' so: people dat's sot, stays sot; dey won't look into noth'n en fine it outf'r deyselves, en when you fine it out en tell um bout it,

dey doan b'lieve you. (296-297)

Word choices such as “dey”, “dah”, “sah”, “k'yer”, and “sk'yer” indicate Twain’s close research into the dialect of slaves, something no white author had ever attempted to capture before. Even the slave Lize, who only has two short lines, including “Clah to goodness I hain’t no notion, Miss Sally. She wuz on de clo’s line yistiddy, but she done gone; she ain’ dah no mo’, now” (315), speaks as true to life as Twain could make her by typing on the page exactly what he heard through his ear, a practice that he formed in his story “Jumping Frog”.

While the language of Jack, Nat, and Lize provide insight into Twain’s usage of the “Missouri Negro dialect”, it is the voice of the runaway slave Jim, who also happens to be Huck’s best friend, which gives the novel its moral center. Through Jim and his vernacular, both Huck and the reader learn about compassion, friendship, and equality. Hence, it is not only the dialect Jim uses, but what he says, that elevates his character above a mere stereotype that happens to have real-sounding dialogue. In fact, in the case of Jim, it is actually better to define vernacular as “not only the language of rustic or backwoods characters but also the values, the ethical and aesthetic assumptions, they represent” (Sewell 86). This being the case, Jim has some of the most moving, poignant speeches in the book in spite of the fact that they are colored by Twain in the Missouri negro dialect.

When Jim is first introduced, however, he is characterized more in the spirit of Nat, an overly-superstitious slave who is uneducated and has a penchant for exaggeration. Jim’s first lines in the novel occur after Huck sneaks out of the Widow’s house late at night to meet Tom Sawyer. While heading to rendezvous with some of their friends, Huck trips over a root and makes a noise, waking Jim up. After listening for a minute, Jim says “Who dah?” (6). After waiting for a few moments and getting no reply, Jim goes on to say “Say – who is you? Whar is you? Dog

my cats ef I didn' hear sumf'n. Well, I knows what I's gwyne to do. I's gwyne to set down here and listen tell I hears it agin" (6). There is nothing in these opening lines to prepare the reader for some of the heartbreaking, insightful lines he will deliver later in the story. After Jim waits for a bit he falls asleep, allowing Tom to hang his hat on a tree branch above him. When Jim wakes, he thinks he's been the object of ridicule by witches, much as Nat does later on. Then, as Jim recounts the events of his "bewitching", his story grows more and more exaggerated.

Upon his introduction into the novel, it seems as though Twain only includes Jim to add comic relief. This is especially true later, after Jim and Huck have run away together down the Mississippi. They begin to debate the language of a French man, and the seriousness of Jim's tone in spite of how ridiculous the subject matter is harkens back to Twain's original local-color narrator, Simon Wheeler, from "Jumping Frog".

"Is a cat a man, Huck?"

"No."

"Well, den, dey ain't no sense in a cat talkin' like a man. Is a cow a man? -- er is a cow a cat?"

"No, she ain't either of them."

"Well, den, she ain't got no business to talk like either one er the yuther of 'em. Is a Frenchman a man?"

"Yes."

"*WELL*, den! Dad blame it, why doan' he *talk* like a man? You answer me *dat!*" (97-98)

As the culmination of their debate shows, Jim thinks he has made his point quite clearly and celebrates his "victory" over Huck. "Significantly, Jim is aware of what he has done and how he

has done it” (Chadwick-Joshua 53). After Jim “wins” the argument, Huck says “I see it warn’t no use in wasting words – you can’t learn a nigger to argue, so I quit” (98). But to the reader, the point has already been made. “Huck quits because Jim has learned so well that nothing remains to be said” (Chadwick-Joshua 53). What Twain accomplishes is a blend of both humor and understanding towards Jim. Narrating this passage in Jim’s voice allows the reader to both cheer what Jim perceives as a victory, making Jim more human than slave, while at the same time allowing the reader to laugh at the absurdity of the argument, much like Simon Wheeler accomplishes through his Jim Smiley stories in “Jumping Frog”. While it is an amusing anecdote of lighthearted bonding between Huck and Jim, the conversation serves “little apparent narrative purpose” (Quirk 64) in the novel. However, it does perhaps serve to contrast a few of Jim’s more memorable speeches, one of which occurs in the very next chapter.

In chapter fifteen, Jim gives one of his longer, more heartfelt speeches in the entire novel. In the chapter, Huck and Jim become separated by a thick fog. Huck looks for Jim throughout the night but doesn’t find him until early the next morning. When Huck approaches the raft, he sees that Jim is asleep and decides to play a trick on him by making Jim think he had just dreamed the whole fog incident. Once Jim believes it was a dream, Huck has Jim “interpret” what the dream meant, to which Jim treats Huck to a long narrative which amuses Huck, much as Jim’s exaggerated stories of being abducted by witches amused him earlier in the novel. When Huck finally lets Jim in on the joke, Jim is at first confused, then upset and embarrassed. He calmly goes on to teach Huck a very humbling lesson, allowing Twain to flex his stylistic muscle.

What do dey stan' for? I'se gwyne to tell you. When I got all wore out wid work, en wid de callin' for you, en went to sleep, my heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no' mo' what become er me en de raf'. En when I wake up en fine you

back agin, all safe en soun', de tears come, en I could a got down on my knees en kiss yo' foot, I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin' 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is *trash*; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed. (105)

In spite of the dialect Jim uses, in spite of language such as “wuz”, “bekase”, dah”, and “k’yer”, in spite of the fact that it takes a slave to point out how cruel such an act was, Huck learns one of his most memorable lessons in the novel: that although Jim is black, he has feelings which can be hurt, and it isn’t kind to toy with someone’s emotions like that. Such a speech is much more powerful told in Jim’s vernacular than it would be as told in Twain’s or even Huck’s voice.

The sincerity of this speech is echoed by a story Jim tells Huck in confidence later in the book. Jim mournfully recounts to Huck the awful morning that he found out his four-year-old daughter Elizabeth had lost her hearing and speech after coming down with scarlet fever. On the morning in question, he ordered her to shut a door, but when she doesn’t obey, he smacks her.

Den I went into de yuther room, en 'uz gone 'bout ten minutes; en when I come back dah was dat do' a-stannin' open *yit*, en dat chile stannin' mos' right in it, a-lookin' down and mournin', en de tears runnin' down. My, but I *wuz* mad! I was a-gwyne for de chile, but jis' den -- it was a do' dat open innerds -- jis' den, 'long come de wind en slam it to, behine de chile, ker-*blam!* -- en my lan', de chile never move'! My breff mos' hop outer me; en I feel so -- so -- I doan' know *how* I feel. I crope out, all a-tremblin', en crope aroun' en open de do' easy en slow, en poke my head in behine de chile, sof' en still, en all uv a sudden I says *pow!* jis' as loud as I could yell. *She never budge!* Oh, Huck, I bust out a-cryin' en grab her up in my arms, en say, 'Oh, de po' little thing! De Lord God Amighty fogive po' ole Jim, kaze he never gwyne to fogive

hissself as long's he live! Oh, she was plumb deaf en dumb, Huck, plumb deaf en dumb -- en I'd ben a-treat'n her so! (202)

In this, which is “one of the novel’s finest speeches, and surely one of the most poignant in American literature”, Jim is both “articulate and powerful” (McKay 77). Looking closely at Jim’s diction, one notices that Twain represents the Missouri negro dialect feature of “consonant cluster reduction” (McKay 77). Consonant cluster reduction is when “the second of two consonants in final word position is lost” (McKay 77). For example, the words “chile”, “jis”, “behine”, and “lan” all have their final consonants missing, which makes Jim’s speech specific to the Missouri negro dialect and makes him stand out amongst the other dialects in the book, both for what he says and how he says it. Ironically, even though stylistically Jim “expresses himself with substandard English” (Chadwick-Joshua 105) and even though he has slapped his deaf daughter upside the head, this speech elevates Jim “to a stature unparalleled by any characters yet introduced” (Chadwick-Joshua 105). Such morality underlying an “uneducated” dialect is part of the brilliance of the novel.

The two most revolutionary voices in American literature are the voices of Huckleberry Finn and Jim, both of which are direct descendants of Simon Wheeler. Huck’s voice is the “voice we have come to accept as the vernacular voice in American literature – the voice with which Twain captured our national imagination and that empowered Hemingway, Faulkner, and countless other writers in the twentieth century” (Fisher-Fishkin 4). Perhaps no other narrator has had such a profound effect on writing. Just as groundbreaking was the voice of the runaway slave Jim, who “represented Twain’s painstaking efforts to accurately record, to the best of his ability, the Missouri negro dialect” (Fisher-Fishkin 101). However, more important than getting Jim’s dialect perfect was Twain’s “primary concern” of “communicating Jim’s very human pain”

(Fisher-Fishkin 101). These two voices can be traced all the way back to Twain's earliest short story, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County", a story which the garrulous voice of Simon Wheeler foreshadowed how Twain would later turn American literature on its ear. In the pages of "Jumping Frog", it was easy to see that "Mark Twain was unusually attuned to the nuances of cadence, rhythm, syntax, and diction that distinguish one language or dialect from another, and he had a genius for transferring the oral into print" (Fisher-Fishkin 4). The culmination of this can be found in the masterpiece novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, in which "the first-person vernacular, characteristic dialects, and vivid idioms deny any possibility that language might achieve transparency" (Mitchell 97). It has been over one hundred years since *Huck Finn*'s publication, but no one has yet captured both the voice and heart of a speaker in quite the same way as Twain was able to, and perhaps no one ever will again. In conclusion, it would be apropos to finish Hemingway's quote on *Huck Finn* from the introduction. "There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since" (Hemingway 22), he said. Not too many people would disagree.

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