

Winter 12-8-2019

Final Master's Portfolio

Nicole Harpster
Bowling Green State University, nharpst@bgsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ms_english

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Repository Citation

Harpster, Nicole, "Final Master's Portfolio" (2019). *Master of Arts in English Plan II Graduate Projects*. 58.
https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ms_english/58

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at ScholarWorks@BGSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Arts in English Plan II Graduate Projects by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@BGSU.

FINAL MASTER'S PORTFOLIO

Nicole Harpster
nharpst@bgsu.edu

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 Art in the field of English
With a specialization in Teaching

December 8, 2019

Ms. Lucinda Hunter, First Reader
Ms. Kimberly Spallinger, Second Reader

Table of Contents

I. Analytical Narrative	3
II. Project # 1: Substantive Research and Analysis: Collaborative Writing Unit	8
III. Project # 2: Teaching Based Unit: <i>The Great Gatsby</i> Unit Plan	32
IV. Project # 3: Critical Essay: Teaching in the Age of Science and Technology	44
V. Project #4: Novel Analysis: Female Characters can be Villains Too: An analysis of <i>Sharp Objects</i>	50

Analytical Narrative

I have always known that I wanted to pursue a master's degree after finishing my bachelor's degree; however, for a while, I did not know what type of master's degree would be best suited for me. As a high school teacher, I ultimately decided that I wanted to pursue a program that would benefit my students and give me new ideas to take back to my classroom. I chose the Masters of English with a Specialization in Teaching because the program aligned with what I was looking for in terms of improving my teaching of literature and writing. Throughout this program, I have learned new strategies, pedagogies, and lessons that I can use in my classroom. The projects that I have chosen for my portfolio reflect the theories and methods that I found incredibly insightful and useful throughout my time in this program. Two of these projects include lesson plans that I plan to use in my classroom, and the essays reflect the type of writing assignments I plan to teach my students. These projects are grounded in research and critical analysis of texts, which is what I focus on teaching my students throughout the course of the school year.

The first project in my portfolio is my substantive research project about collaborative writing in the high school classroom. This piece was originally the major course project for English 6200-Teaching Writing. For this final project, we were asked to create a teaching unit based upon one of the topics that were studied throughout the semester. I was most intrigued by what we learned about implementing collaborative writing in the classroom. I chose to create a unit in which my students would work with a partner to write a persuasive speech over a debatable topic of their choosing. This assignment was a combination of research writing and unit plan creation. We had to develop research questions and base our unit upon academic research. The outcome of my research is summarized in the rationale portion of my lesson plan.

For my revision, I have focused on adding more research, expanding upon my rationale, and explaining the outcomes of my research questions in more detail. I think that my lesson plan and unit materials are strong and do not require much revision, but my research was lacking. After reading the feedback from both Professor Jordan and Professor Hunter, I decided to make my final revision more of a research study on collaborative writing, rather than just a unit plan. I added more sources and significantly revised the rationale portion of this project. In my original draft, I only mentioned a couple of common roadblocks that teachers run into when teaching collaborative writing, and I only briefly touched upon my other research question. My revised final drafts go more in-depth by explaining the outcome of each one of my research questions. In addition to expanding upon my research, my final draft also elaborates on my plans for the unit. During peer review and reading comments from my professors, I realized that some areas needed to be clarified. I also tweaked the lesson plan a little bit, so that one of the worksheets that was previously optional is now required. Professor Jordan mentioned several times in her feedback that she believed it would be a good idea to require each student to complete the pre-planning worksheet. My original train of thought was that some students, such as my honors students, may not need a pre-planning worksheet because they could develop their own plan of action. However, after I reflected on Professor Jordan's suggestions, I agree that the majority of students, even those who really need it, will not complete the pre-planning if it is optional. By taking it for a small grade and collecting it as a checkpoint grade, all students will be held accountable and forced to create an organized plan that both group members can agree on. It is also a good way for me to keep track of what each pair is planning to write their persuasive speech about.

I chose a unit plan from English 6090-Teaching Literature for my teaching based project, which is the second project in my portfolio. This project was called “Response to Literature,” and my unit plan revolved around the novel, *The Great Gatsby*. This unit is intended for a freshman introductory level literature course focused on American Literature. This unit is designed to take place at a point in the semester when students have already learned Romanticism and have started Modernism. This unit is a continuation of what the students have already learned about Modernism. It is mainly focused on in-class discussions, along with some online discussions via Canvas. The final assessment for this unit is a literary analysis of the novel. At the time I created this unit, I was also taking two other classes, and I felt very rushed to complete final projects for three courses, so I did not add as much to this unit as I would have liked. For example, I did not include all of the discussion questions I would ask students or the materials I would use to introduce the Socratic seminar. Professor Hunter also suggested that I elaborate on the unit by providing some of the discussion questions as well as handouts and rubrics. In my final draft, I have included discussion questions, handouts, and more detailed instructions throughout the lesson plan.

As I reflect back on this teaching unit, I realized that what makes sense to me might not make sense to another teacher reading my unit, so I need to be very detailed and specific. I tried to think to myself, “If I gave this unit to a student-teacher or another English teacher, would they be able to duplicate my lesson in their own classroom without questions?” I believe my finalized unit provides clear step by step instruction for teaching this unit and provides teachers with all of the necessary materials and handouts.

For my third project, I decided to revise a critical essay titled, “Literature in the Age of Technology and Science.” This essay was assigned in English 6090-Teaching Literature and

argues why teaching literature and the humanities are still just as important as teaching science, technology, engineering, and math. Based on the revision feedback I received, I focused on adding a few more sources, as well as adding teaching examples. This was the hardest project for me to revise. I found it much easier to elaborate and clarify my ideas in the other three projects. With this essay, I struggled to generate ideas and add to my essay without sounding repetitive. This essay really taught me the importance of peer review because without feedback from my peers; I may not have ended up revising this essay. I might have abandoned this essay entirely and picked a different piece to revise; however, my peers provided me with specific feedback and ideas for improving my argument. In the end, I am pleased with the final result.

Finally, I chose to revise my analytical essay of the novel *Sharp Objects* because this was the essay I enjoyed the most throughout my experience in this master's program. While my other three projects needed to be longer and more detailed, my main concern with this essay was that it was actually too long. Overall, I was pleased with my analysis of the novel; however, I felt like my essay really could be condensed down and straight to the point. I struggled with this essay to find the right balance of analysis and summary of the novel so that my analysis would make sense to readers who had not read the book. In the end, I think I ended up adding too much summary because I was too worried about my essay making sense. My goal for this revision was to cut down on the summary of the novel so that my argument remained the focal point throughout the essay.

Additionally, it was suggested by my peer editors that I cut out the analysis of *Gone Girl* and solely focused on *Sharp Objects*. In my final draft, I have eliminated the portions of my essay about *Gone Girl*. I also removed some of the summary, and condensed down certain areas. Overall, I am very satisfied with the final revision of this piece, and although my essay is now

shorter, I think it is much stronger. My analysis is more clear with less summary, and *Sharp Objects* is truly the focus of the essay now that I have eliminated *Gone Girl*.

Throughout this master's program and portfolio completion, I have learned a great deal about the writing process, which I will apply to my teaching. The majority of the courses that I took throughout this program required various types of peer review. I have always used peer review in my classroom, but have struggled to find ways to make it effective. It can be challenging for high schoolers to provide quality feedback to their peers adequately, and teaching peer review has been a series of trial and error until I found the right fit for my students. This program has not only taught me the research that supports the value of peer revision but also better ways to use peer editing with students. Additionally, this master's program has taught me a great deal about the revision process and has helped me to improve my writing. Throughout my portfolio revisions, I have sharpened my writing skills and learned how to write more clearly and concisely.

Substantive Research and Analysis

Major Course Project: Collaborative Writing Unit

Unit Overview and Rationale:

I was inspired to create a collaborative writing unit after reading about collaborative writing in “A Guide to Composition Pedagogies.” Collaborative writing is defined as “Collaborative, or team writing is the process of producing a written work as a group where all team members contributed to the content and the decisions about how the group will function” (Mcdaniel). Collaborative writing is always something I have thought about doing. Still, I found it to be a bit intimidating until I read Rebecca Moore Howard’s suggestions for successfully executing it in the classroom. Additionally, according to Helen Dale, “Collaborative writing implies meaningful interaction and shared decision making and responsibility among group members in the writing of a shared document” (334). This further convinced me to try collaborative writing because having students engage in shared decision making is a life-skill that my students will need in the workforce. This assignment can not only help them to improve their writing together but also their communication and teamwork skills. For example, Richard Nordquist states, “It [collaborative writing] is a significant component of work in the business world, and many forms of business writing and technical writing depend on the efforts of collaborative writing teams.” No matter what career students choose to pursue after high school, collaborative writing will help them communicate with others, work in a team, and collaborate to produce written documents.

Furthermore, Dale mentions that research shows that “students who had coauthored wrote more communicatively and clearly than those who had not, both in their coauthored piece and in subsequent individual writing” (335). By working together, discussing writing, drafting, and

editing together, students will learn from one another and thus improve their writing. This will be particularly helpful for students when they start their persuasive research essay shortly after this unit. Students will be able to apply the formal writing techniques and sentence structures that they came up with together on their individual writing assignments.

Connection to previous learning and future learning:

This is a collaborative writing unit geared towards Honors English I and English I classes. This collaborative writing unit will work hand in hand with our persuasive/ non-fiction unit. With a partner or in groups of three, students will collaborate to write a persuasive speech over a topic of their choice. In our previous unit, students will have learned about the author's purpose, target audience, persuasive techniques, and rhetorical strategies such as ethos, pathos, logos. Students will have watched and analyzed several speeches as well as analyze other non-fiction texts so that they will have a strong understanding of persuasion and rhetorical strategies coming into this unit. This unit requires students to work collaboratively to write a persuasive speech that they will deliver to the class. This unit will include the stages of writing, such as pre-writing activities, outlining, rough drafting, the revision process, and conferences with the teacher. Additionally, this unit will take place about halfway through the school year because Howard suggests that, "it [collaborative writing] should not be begun until a substantial portion of the term has elapsed. In the interim, pedagogy should be sufficiently collaborative (eg., collaborative class discussion, small-group work, collaborative intervention, collaborative revision) that students get to know each other..." (62). By midway through the school year, students will have participated in many collaborative class discussions and small group activities, so they will have gotten to know each other quite well. I also plan to introduce some smaller collaborative writing activities earlier in the school year, so that students are already somewhat

familiar with collaborative writing by the time they write their speech. In my research, I found a great list of collaborative writing activities on a teacher blog called *The Secondary English Coffee Shop*. The activities are ones that are quick and could be used with almost any unit. For example, one activity is called “Snowball writing,” and this could be used as an icebreaker at the beginning of the year, or alongside a short story unit. It asks students to write a short story, then when the time is up, they wad it up and throw it to someone like a snowball, then that person adds to the story, and the process repeats for a few rounds (“The Secondary English Coffee Shop”). Short and engaging activities like this will be a great way to warm students up to the concept of collaborative writing before we start the speech project.

Student Selected Pairs:

Students will be allowed to pick their groups, so this will hopefully aid in the collaboration as well. Research shows that collaborative writing is most successful when students select their partner(s). According to Seyedeh Hamideh Mozaffari, “the student-selected group members led them to be more comfortable with each other from the outset. Results further revealed that the student-selected groups benefited from a better group process and outcome than the instructor assigned ones” (498). I agree that students will feel more comfortable sharing ideas and having a peer review their writing if it is someone they feel comfortable communicating with.

Research Questions:

The following research questions were used to drive the creation of this unit.

- What are the best practices for teaching collaborative writing units?
- What online resources are available that might help students to better understand the assignment and/or help them to generate ideas?

- What are the common issues or roadblocks teachers run into when teaching collaborative writing and how to teachers overcome these issues?

From this research, I learned that collaborative writing aligns with my teaching style and philosophies more than I realized. For example, the article “Pedagogical Support for Classroom Collaborative Writing Assignments,” points out that gives student authority and makes them responsible for their learning (8). This very much aligns with my philosophy of student-centered learning. Most of what takes place in my classroom is student-centered learning because I want students to take ownership of their learning, and I serve as a monitor rather than using a lot of lecturing. Collaborative writing aligns perfectly with this idea. Furthermore, as I researched collaborative writing, I quickly learned that one of the most important best practices is scaffolding. This is not surprising, considering that scaffolding is a standard best practice for teaching any unit in any subject area. For collaborative writing, it is recommended that teachers scaffold by starting with small tasks that build on one another, such as pre-writing activities. Students should also be provided with plenty of resources and handouts that will guide them along the way (Bush and Zuidema 109). I will use handouts such as the planning worksheet and the speech outline to help scaffold each step for students.

In terms of online resources to help students, I found numerous websites that provide students with a list of debatable topics and controversial issues that they could use for their speech. I will provide students with links to these websites on Google Classroom. I will also utilize Google Classroom as a way to keep the unit organized and provide students with digital copies of all of the handouts. Using Google Classroom also provides students with access to materials at home so that students can work on their speech outside of class. Finally, students will also use the Purdue OWL online as a way to check their MLA format.

In addition to researching best practices and online resources, one of my biggest questions was what roadblocks or issues do teachers typically run into when they teach collaborative writing? In the article, “Professional Writing in the English Classroom: Professional Collaborative Writing: Teaching, Writing, and Learning—Together,” author’s Jonathan Bush, and Leah Zuidema identify four of the most common issues that teachers run into during collaborative writing. These issues are resistance, inexperience, friction, and fairness. Some students initially resist collaborative writing because of “bad prior experiences, reluctance to modify ideas to meet those of other group members, and scheduling issues.” Bush and Zuidema continue to state that inexperience and friction cause students to fear having their peers see their writing. Lastly, Bush and Zuidema mention that fairness is also a common issue with collaborative writing. Students often worry that their partner(s) will not carry their weight, or they feel that they did more work than their partner(s) and in turn, worry about their final grade (109-110). I was not surprised to read these four common issues, and I could foresee my students having similar thoughts. Bush and Zuidema provide suggestions for combating these issues, and much of what they suggest connects back to scaffolding. By providing clear instructions, resources, and scaffolding, much of the student’s fear and reluctance to collaborative writing can be eased. Bush and Zuidema also suggest including an individual grading aspect to the project so that each student is held accountable for contributing to the piece of writing. With most group projects, I assign students both an individual and a group grade. I will do the same with this collaborative writing project so that each student is held accountable for contributing to the project. I also like to have students complete an individual evaluation of themselves and their group at the end of group projects. I think this will be beneficial to have students do after they have completed their speech.

Furthermore, the University of Connecticut's online writing center provides a number of excellent resources for collaborative writing instructors, including a short article about assigning roles. By assigning roles, instructors and students alike can reduce the issue of fairness (Ouimette). The article, provided by writing center, "Benne and Sheat's Group Roles: Identifying Both Positive and Negative Group Behavior Roles," presents a list of both task roles and personal and/or social roles. These roles include initiator, information seeker, information giver, opinion seeker, opinion giver, and coordinator, to name a few (Bill et al.). I could give students a mini-lesson on group roles and expectations for group work, and share this article with students. I could project this article on the smartboard and go over each role with students and ask them to think about which roles they think would best fit their individual personalities and strengths. I could also link the article on Google Classroom so that students could refer back to it throughout the unit.

Additionally, I learned that another common issue that teachers run into when teaching collaborative writing is time. "Teaching students how to write takes time, and I see no quick way to help students practice the writing process in their classes and engage in significant collaborative writing opportunities without using class time, sometimes significant amounts of class time" ("Pedagogical Support" 14-15). While time is often an issue for teachers, I always build in-class work time for writing into my schedule and plan, so I do not believe this will be a significant issue for me. At the freshmen level, students still need a great deal of guidance when it comes to writing, so when I assign a writing assignment it is almost always done entirely in class so that students can receive help and feedback, so I am already accustomed to dedicating large chunks of class time to writing. Furthermore, while my schedule of completion for this unit is only two weeks, it can always be adjusted based on my student's needs once we start the unit.

Another common issue that I discovered through my research was group members struggling to come to agreements or not knowing where to start their project. The University of Connecticut's Writing Center suggests that instructors monitor students during class periods as well as dedicate time to meet with each group. They also provide a decision making guide and a planning guide that can help to alleviate some of the students planning problems by providing them with a starting point and questions to guide their decision making progress (Ouimette). As I continued to research ways to help students plan for their collaborative writing project, I came across the Sweetland Center for Writing, which has wonderful group planning and self-evaluation worksheets. I plan to create an optional planning worksheet for students that is modeled after the group work plan worksheet that the Sweetland Center for Writing provides on their website. Their planning worksheet asks students questions like "Will different people take different roles on this project, or will you do all research, visual design, and writing collectively?" ("Assigning and Managing"). I think it is a great idea for students to start by deciding how they will conduct their research. The planning sheet also asks students how they will share information. Will they use Google Docs, Dropbox, email, etc.? Again, I think this is something my students need to decide on the first day, so the planning sheet is a great way for them to brainstorm and create a plan. Hopefully, having a solid plan of action from the start will help prevent arguments and other issues later on throughout the collaborative writing process.

Rhetorical Analysis Unit

Write your own Persuasive Speech

Lesson Plan

Common Core Learning Standards:

W.9-10.1A-E. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics...

W. 9-10. 4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W. 9-10. 6 Use technology, including the internet to produce...

W.9-10. 8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources...

SL.9-10.1 A-B Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions...

**Note: These standards have been condensed for this document. To read the entire standard visit: <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/English-Language-Art/English-Language-Arts-Standards/ELA-Learning-Standards-2017.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>

Unit Essential Questions:

Given any speech students will be able to answer the following using textual evidence:

1. Who is the intended audience?
2. What is the purpose for writing?
3. What is the central argument?
4. How are ethos, pathos, and logos used? (Appeals)
5. How are rhetorical devices used?

**These essential questions also apply to students own written work (persuasive speech).

Learning Targets:

I can...

-Use my existing knowledge of rhetorical analysis and persuasion to write a persuasive speech.

that has an intended audience, central argument, and uses rhetorical devices.

-Effectively use ethos, pathos, and logos in my speech.

-Work collaboratively with my partner to write one cohesive persuasive speech

-I can deliver my speech to the class with my partner(s), using enthusiasm and proper stage presence and etiquette.

Duration: 2 weeks

Materials Needed:

- Smartboard (to project notes)
- Chromebooks
- Rhetorical Analysis notes and handouts

Day 1:

- Review ethos, pathos, logos, and parts of a speech by reviewing the first few slides of the unit introduction PowerPoint. (Students already have notes on this PowerPoint) (see appendix A).
- Introduce the assignment by going over the assignment requirements handout. (see appendix B).
- Give students time to start brainstorming and planning with their partner(s). Students can use the provided speech outline to help them plan (see appendix C).
- Students will use the Group Work Plan handout available on Google Classroom to create a starting plan. **This handout is a checkpoint grade and will be graded.**

- The teacher will circulate the room to monitor students, check progress, and answer questions.
- At the end of the period, teacher will go over the completion schedule with students (see Appendix D) and make final remarks/reminders.

Day 2:

- Begin class by going over student's goal for the day. Remind students of the requirements and remind them to pay attention to the schedule of completion.
- Students need to have their thesis and three claims done by the end of the period. Students will show the teacher their written thesis and verbally explain their 3 main points in order to earn their checkpoint grade.
- The teacher will circulate the room to check thesis statements and claims as well as monitor progress and give help.
- At the end of the class period, remind students that their sources are their checkpoint grade for tomorrow.

Day 3:

- Begin class by going over student's goal for the day. Remind students of the requirements and remind them to pay attention to the schedule of completion.
- Students will continue to work in class to write their speech.
- By the end of the period, students will show the teacher any sources they plan to use to support their thesis.

Day 4:

- Begin class by going over student's goal for the day. Remind students of the requirements and remind them to pay attention to the schedule of completion.

- Students will continue to work in class to write their speech.
- By the end of the period, students will show the teacher their rough drafts

Day 5:

- Begin class by going over student's goal for the day. Remind students of the requirements and remind them to pay attention to the schedule of completion.
- Remind students that should use their Works Cited page notes in the writing section of their binder to help refresh them on how to create a proper MLA Works Cited page. This is also on Google Classroom if students do not have it in their binders. Also, remind students that they can use the Purdue OWL online to assist them as well.
- Students will continue to work in class to write their speech.
- Students will create their works cited page.
- By the end of the period, students will show the teacher their completed Works Cited page for a checkpoint grade.

Day 6:

- Begin class by going over student's goal for the day. Remind students of the requirements and remind them to pay attention to the schedule of completion.
- Students will work to finalize their speech.
- Once students have their speech finalized, they will print off 3 copies (one for each person, plus one for the teacher), then students will practice delivering their speech. Some students may practice in the hallway in order to spread out from other pairs.
- Students will turn in a printed copy of their finalized speech by the end of the period (checkpoint grade).

Day 7-9:

- Students will deliver their speeches to their classmates.
- As an audience member, students will complete the persuasiveness evaluation for each presentation (see appendix E).

Day 10:

- Students will complete a group and self-evaluation about their speech and presentation.

Appendix A

Aristotle's 3 forms of Artistic Proof

- **Ethos:**
 - (Credibility), or ethical appeal, means convincing by the character of the author.
 - refers to the trustworthiness of the writer or speaker
- **Pathos:**
 - (Emotional) means persuading by appealing to the reader's emotions.
 - Helps the audience identify with the writer's point of view--to feel what the writer feels

Aristotle's 3 forms of Artistic Proof

- **Logos:**
 - (Logical) means persuading by the use of reasoning
 - the clarity of the claim, the logic of its reasons, and the effectiveness of its supporting evidence

Parts of the Argument



- **Assertion**-the thesis, statement of opinion, or belief
- **Support for the assertion:**
 - Quick examples
 - Anecdotes (narrative examples)
 - Statements by authorities
 - Statistics
- **Acknowledgement of the opposition**
- **Recommendation**-what the reader/audience is to do

Appendix B

Rhetorical Analysis Unit Persuasive Speech Project English I

The Assignment: With a partner, use your knowledge of Rhetorical Analysis to write your own persuasive speech, which you will present to the class. Your goal is to pick a topic and try to persuade your audience to agree with your point of view.

You can find a huge list of topics on <http://www.myspeechclass.com/persuasivetopics2.html>.

You may need to research your topic online in order to find evidence to support your reasoning. **IF SO, YOU MUST CITE YOUR WORK!!!! THIS MEANS YOU MUST HAVE IN-TEXT CITATIONS AND A WORKS CITED PAGE!!!!** Additionally, you must make sure that you are using credible sources. For example, do not use Wikipedia, do not use blogs, and be cautious of websites that do not have an author.

YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY LOSE 15 POINTS FOR ANYTHING IN YOUR SPEECH THAT SHOULD BE PROPERLY CITED, BUT IS NOT. YOU WILL ALSO LOSE POINTS IF YOUR IN-TEXT CITATIONS AND WORKS CITED PAGE ARE NOT PROPER MLA FORMAT!

Persuasive speech requirements are as follows:

- Must be 1.5-2 pages' double spaced in length. Times New Roman 12-point font.
CORRECT MLA FORMAT
- Include at least 1 example of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos
- Include all parts of the argument (see guided notes)
 - Assertion (thesis)
 - Support for Assertion
 - Acknowledge of the opposition
 - Recommendation
- Must include an MLA works cited page and in-text citations for sources used.
 - *****Use the following resources to ensure that your works cited and in-text citations are done correctly.
 - Miss Harpster's MLA Guide and sample works cited page on Google Classroom
 - Purdue Owl online
 - Sonofcitationmachine.com

What you will turn in:

- Your speech outline
- A highlighted and labeled copy of your speech (Also, print a copy for you to use during presentation)
 - Label your parts of the argument
 - Label your ethos, pathos, logos
 - Label your rhetorical devices
- Your rubric (on back of the assignment handout)

Persuasive Speech Rubric

Introduction: Includes an introduction that introduces the topic, includes an assertion, and support for the assertion (main points)	/5
Ethos: Correctly uses at least one example of ethos.	/5
Pathos: Correctly uses at least one example of pathos	/5
Logos: Correctly uses at least one example of logos	/5
Rhetorical Device #1 _____ is used correctly.	/5
Rhetorical Device #2 _____ is used correctly.	/5
Rhetorical Device #3 _____ is used correctly.	/5
Conclusion: Sums up main points and provides a recommendation to the audience	/5

Outline: Completed and turned in.	/3
Works Cited page and in-text citations are done correctly.	/7

Appendix C

Persuasive Speech Outline

Topic:

Introduction:

Assertion (thesis):

Support for Assertion (Main points you will make throughout speech):

Body:

Acknowledgment of the opposition:

3 main points:

1. _____

Reasoning and Evidence:

Appeals/Devices to support this claim:

2. _____

Reasoning and Evidence

Appeals/Devices to support this claim:

3. _____

Reasoning and Evidence

Appeals/Devices to support this claim:

Conclusion:

Tie up three main points/concluding remarks

Recommendation to the audience:

Appendix D

Rhetorical Analysis Unit
 Persuasive Speech Project
 English I

Schedule of Completion

Week 1	Plan
Monday	-Introduction to assignment -Brainstorming, planning, and work time - Checkpoint Grade: Planning Worksheet due by the end of the period
Tuesday	- Checkpoint Grade: Thesis statement and 3 claims due by the end of the period -In-class work time
Wednesday	-In-class work time - Checkpoint Grade: Sources due
Thursday	-In-class work time - Checkpoint Grade: Rough Draft check (at least half of your speech should be completed.
Friday	-In-class work time - Checkpoint Grade: Works Cited page due
Week 2	
Monday	-In-class work time: Finalize speech and practice your presentation! - Checkpoint Grade: final draft due by the end of the period. Printed!
Tuesday-Thursday	Speech presentations

Appendix E

Persuasive Speech Evaluations

Rate each speech presentation based on its persuasiveness, 5 being the most persuasive and 1 being least persuasive. Then comment on the overall quality of the presentation. In other words, justify your ranking.

Presenter
Name(s) _____

Comments: 1 2 3 4 5

Presenter
Name(s) _____

Comments: 1 2 3 4 5

Presenter
Name(s) _____

Comments: 1 2 3 4 5

Presenter
Name(s) _____

Comments: 1 2 3 4 5

Works Cited

- “Assigning and Managing Collaborative Writing Projects.” LSA,
 isa.umich.edu/sweetland/instructors/teaching-resources/assigning-and-managing-
 collaborative-writing-projects.html.
- Bill T., et al. “Benne and Sheats' Group Roles: Identifying Both Positive and Negative Group Behavior Roles.” *Management Training from MindTools.com*,
https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMM_85.htm.
- Bush, Jonathan, and Leah Zuidema. “Professional Writing in the English Classroom: Professional Collaborative Writing.” *National Council of Teachers of English*, vol. 102, no. 4, Mar. 2013, pp. 107–110.
- Dale, Helen. “Collaborative Writing Interactions in One Ninth-Grade Classroom.” *Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 87, no. 6, July 1994, pp. 334–344.
- Mcdaniel, Rhett. “Collaborative Writing.” Vanderbilt University, *Vanderbilt University*, 15 Nov. 1970, <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/bold/tools/collaborative-writing/>.
- Mozaffari, Seyedeh. “Comparing student-selected and teacher-assigned pairs on collaborative writing.” *Language Teaching Research*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2017, pp. 496-511.
- Nordquist, Richard. “Methods and Benefits of Collaborative Writing.” *ThoughtCo*, ThoughtCo, 1 Apr. 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-collaborative-writing-1689761>.
- Ouimette, Margie. “Collaborative Writing Resources.” Writing Center, 20 Mar. 2014,
writingcenter.uconn.edu/collaborative-writing-resources/#.
- “Pedagogical Support for Classroom Collaborative Writing Assignments.” *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, vol. 28, no. 6, Dec. 2001, pp. 1.
- Tate, Gary, et al. *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

The Secondary English Coffee Shop. "Collaborative Writing Activities." The Secondary English Coffee Shop, 1 Jan. 1970,
secondaryenglishcoffeeshop.blogspot.com/2017/04/collaborative-writing-activities.html.

Teaching Based Unit

The Great Gatsby Unit Plan

English 1500 Response to Literature

Unit Title: The Great Gatsby

Previous Unit: Romanticism

Following Unit: a continuation of Modernism

Academic Level: Freshman, introductory level literature course

Timeline: 4 Weeks (meeting in person every Tuesday and Thursday)

Objectives: Throughout this unit students will be able to:

1. Work together in small groups to collaborate and discuss topics such as how the novel shows the death of the American Dream and how it symbolizes the decline of the American Dream during the 1920's.
2. Use their existing knowledge of the 1920's and characteristics of Modernism to determine how the book is reflective of the historical time period and modern literature.
3. Determine the central ideas, themes, and symbols found in the novel that relate to the decline of the American Dream.
4. Cite textual evidence to support their findings.
5. Write a literary analysis.
6. Conduct a Socratic seminar.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does literature reflect a culture or time period?
2. What is the American Dream? To what extent is it achievable by all?
3. How has the American Dream changed overtime?

4. To what extent does Gatsby's wealth, and all the luxuries that it provides, affect his ability to achieve what he desires?
5. Can we repeat the past?
6. What symbols are found throughout the novel?

Technological Needs:

1. Computer with a projector
2. Canvas

Materials:

1. PowerPoint to display discussion questions and instructions for various assignments.
2. *The Great Gatsby* novel
3. Canvas online discussion boards
4. Handouts and Rubric for Socratic seminar
5. Handouts and notes/instruction for literary analysis

Method of Assessment: Students will be assessed throughout the unit based on their discussion posts on canvas as well as their in-class discussions. Students will be assessed on their Socratic seminar, and their final assessment will be a literary analysis essay over the novel.

In-Class Discussions: All in-class discussions will mostly be student lead, with the teacher serving mainly as the facilitator. I will provide some guiding discussion questions, but students will be encouraged to pose their own questions as well. Students should feel free to drive the conversations towards what they want to discuss and should not feel limited to just discussing my questions.

Canvas Discussions: Students will also be required to continue their discussions outside of class as well via canvas. The structure of the Canvas discussions will vary weekly. Sometimes I will

post several discussion questions in which students will choose 2-3 to focus their discussion post on. Other times, I will ask that students pose 1-2 of their own discussion questions, and then respond to 2-3 of their peer's discussion questions.

Socratic Seminar: Students will complete a fishbowl style Socratic Seminar in class. Prior to the Socratic seminar, I will introduce students to the Socratic seminar in case students have not participated in one before. I will give a verbal explanation as well as a written handout that describes what a Socratic seminar is and what will be required. I will also give students the rubric that they will use when they are observing their partner on the outer circle.

Literary Analysis: The literary analysis essay will be the final summative assessment for this unit. Students will be asked to write a 4-6 page, MLA style essay in which they analyze how symbolism is used throughout the novel to enhance the themes further, specifically how symbolism is used to show the death of the American Dream.

Learning Outcomes: Although some students may have read *The Great Gatsby* in high school, at the college level we will be diving deeper into the text, and analyzing it on a higher level. Students will utilize the close reading and annotating skills that we have worked on throughout this semester as they read the novel. Students will be asked to share their responses to discussion questions throughout the novel, as well as create their own discussion questions. Students will also build upon their knowledge of Modernism and the American Dream in literature in order to better analyze the novel. Finally, in previous units, students have been asked to write literary analysis' and will be asked to do so for this unit as well. Students will expand upon their existing knowledge of literary analysis and continue to sharpen their writing and analysis skills as they complete the essay for this unit.

Classroom Methods and Teaching Philosophy: The majority of this unit will consist of student-centered discussions both online via Canvas and in-class. Student-centered lessons will require students to work together to analyze the novel and identify the themes and symbols. This also provides students with the freedom and opportunity to discuss what they find most interesting, surprising, confusing, etc. throughout the novel. I will serve as a facilitator by providing discussion questions throughout the unit, as well as providing feedback and comments on the online discussion posts. Overall, during discussions, there will be minimal interference from me because I want to let my students drive the discussions where they want it to go and I want them to come to their own conclusions and analyze the novel together before I give them my thoughts and notes. If I feel there are gaps in the discussion, then I will address those gaps in class through direct instruction. During the Socratic seminar, I will not interject in the conversation at all, but rather I will take notes and share my notes and feedback with students once the Socratic seminar has finished. I will give the entire class feedback verbally in class, as well as provide each student with individual feedback using Canvas. Direct instruction will be used throughout the unit to introduce the unit and to give daily directions and explanations of assignments and discussions. Students will be asked to annotate the novel as they read so that they are prepared to reference the text during every discussion.

Unit Overview

Week	Agenda	Assignment Due/Homework
Week 1 Tuesday	-Introduction to the Roaring 20's, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and <i>The Great Gatsby</i> -Lecture and handouts on close reading and annotations. (see links below this schedule)	Read chapters chapter 1-3 by Thursday
Thursday	In-class discussion of chapters 1-3	Read chapter 4 and submit 1-2 discussion questions to Canvas discussion board by Friday at 11:59 pm. Respond to 2-3 of your peer's discussion questions by Sunday at 11:49 pm. Read chapter 5 by Tuesday.
Week 2 Tuesday	-In-Class discussion of chapter 5 as well as discussion of the themes and symbols found in the novel thus far.	Read chapter 6 by Thursday
Thursday	-In-class discussion of chapter 6 as well as discussion of the themes and symbols found in the novel thus far. -Introduction to Socratic seminar. (see handouts) -In-class reading/Socratic seminar preparation work time	Read Chapters 7-8 and prepare for your Socratic seminar discussion.
Week 3 Tuesday	-Socratic Seminar	Finish the novel. Respond to discussion question on Canvas by 11:59 on Wednesday. Canvas Question: How is <i>The Great Gatsby</i> symbolic of the death of the American Dream?
Thursday	-In-class discussion of chapter 9 and the novel as a whole. -Introduction to literary analysis assignment. (see handouts) -Literary analysis work time (topic selection, brainstorming, etc.)	Rough draft of literary analysis due by 11:59 pm Monday. Submit rough draft to Canvas. Note: You must have at least two pages of your

		rough draft done for peer review.
Week 4 Tuesday	-Literary analysis peer review -Literary analysis work time. -Conferences time with instructor	
Thursday	-Literary analysis work time -conference time with instructor	Final draft of literary analysis due to Canvas by 11:59 pm. Tuesday.

Week 1 Reading Assignments:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muZcJXIfCWs>

<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/how-do-close-reading>

https://www.covcath.org/uploaded/06_Students/Annotation_Guide_AP_Language.pdf

Reflection: One of the hardest things for me when I started this unit was picking a text. As a high school teacher, I do not necessarily know what novels and texts are currently being used in introductory level college literature courses. I had to speculate what the previous and future units might look like. I ended up choosing *The Great Gatsby* because even though many high schools teach this novel, not all students do, and I do not think it is a bad idea to ask students to go back to a text that they have previously read and reevaluate it and analyze it with a new critical eye. I also think that sometimes students have not matured enough at the sophomore or junior level of high school to fully grasp *The Great Gatsby*, and at the college level, they will be able to analyze it more. I've always loved to teach *The Great Gatsby*, and I would love the opportunity to teach it at the college level because I would be able to use higher level discussion questions and increase the requirements of analysis. Looking back on my undergraduate literature classes, almost all of them were discussion based, which is how I have modeled my unit. I think students gain the most when they are able to talk about the text with their peers and break it apart together. I use student-centered learning daily in the high school setting, and I would bring this to a college classroom as well which is why much of this unit is student-led discussions. Because

we would only be spending four weeks on the novel, I would ask students to also continue their discussions outside of class online using Canvas discussion boards. I hope that by doing so, the unit will not feel as rushed. I chose to use Socratic seminar because it has been hugely successful for me in the past. My high school freshmen have delivered excellent Socratic seminars this school year, so I can only imagine how elevated it would be at the college level. Instead of a test at the end of this unit, I have chosen to have students write a literary analysis instead. This allows for students to use creativity as they demonstrate their knowledge of the novel. Students would already be familiar with writing literary analysis from previous units, so this would build upon their existing knowledge. Additionally, I will be able to gauge students' knowledge and engagement with the novel through their discussion posts and in-class discussions, which is another reason why I have chosen an essay rather than a unit test.

Unit Materials

Potential Discussion Questions

<p>Week 1 Thursday</p>	<p>Potential Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your impression of Nick Carraway? How might his background color the way he tells this story? How trustworthy is Nick? • Let’s discuss what we know about the “valley of ashes” and the “eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg” so far. What do they reveal about the landscape? • Overall impressions of the novel so far? <p>Students will also pose their own discussion questions.</p>
<p>Week 2 Tuesday</p>	<p>Potential Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the effect that the rain has on the plot? Think of this in terms of how Fitzgerald will use weather as a symbol throughout the novel. • What do you think about Gatsby offering Nick work? • What is the significance of the green light? <p>Students will also pose their own discussion questions.</p>
<p>Week 2 Thursday</p>	<p>Potential Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How truthful was Gatsby when he relayed the story of his life to Nick? Why does Fitzgerald tell the story of Jay Gatz now? • Let’s discuss the meeting of Tom and Gatsby, what does this meeting reveal about each man? • Why didn’t Tom and Daisy enjoy Gatsby’s party and how did Gatsby measure the success of his party? <p>Students will also pose their own discussion questions.</p>
<p>Week 3 Thursday</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will pose their own discussion questions.

Individual Goals for the Socratic Seminar---“fishbowl” style Socratic Seminar

- Come to the fishbowl with **3-4 of your own discussion questions or quotes** you would like to discuss for each story.
- **Speak at least 4 times** throughout the fishbowl.
- **Refer to the text 2 times** or more
- **Ask a new or follow-up question**

Group Goals for the Socratic Seminar

- **DISCUSS!!** While you have questions to guide you, you should not simply go around the circle and share answers!
- You should be having a discussion about your impression of the texts.
 - **Your thoughts, reactions**
 - **The deeper meaning**
 - **Author’s tone**
 - **Questions**
 - **ideas**
 - **Connections to modern society**

Symbolism Literary Analysis Assignment Overview

For this assignment, you will write a 4-6 pages double spaced essay discussing the use of symbolism in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

Your essay must include the following:

- A catchy introduction that mentions the author and title of the work.
- A clear thesis that is the LAST sentence in your introduction. Your thesis should mention the symbol(s) you will be focusing on for your essay.
- Multiple well developed body paragraphs
- A conclusion that ties up all of your ideas and restates your thesis in a way that is different from your introduction.
- At least 4 cited direct quotations from the work.
 - These quotations should be followed by sentences of your own explanation of the quotations.
 - Do NOT include a quotation without explaining its significance and importance.
 - Cite each quotation using MLA format.
- A works cited page (MLA format)

MLA format reminders:

- The Purdue OWL online is a great resource for MLA format
- 12 point Times New Roman Font
- Double Spaced
- No extra spaces between paragraphs
- Last name and page number in the top right header
- Format your paper as follows:

Top Left Corner

Your first and last name

Professor Harpster

Introduction to Literature-Gatsby Analysis

Date (day, month, year---example: 1 December 2019)

Due Dates and Final Copy:

- You will turn in a rough draft for peer review prior to submitting your final draft.
- Your final draft must be submitted by Canvas.
- See our course schedule in the syllabus for due dates.

Peer Revision Guide

Writer's name: _____

Peer reviewers name: _____

Assignment name: _____

Questions to consider during peer revision:

1. Introduction: Does the introduction include an attention grabber, introduce the paper's topic and the writer's approach, and include a thesis statement?

2. What is the writer's thesis statement? If possible, suggest a way to improve the introduction or thesis statement.

3. Structure/organization: How is the paper organized? Does the writer use topic sentences and transitions? Is the information provided in the body paragraphs relevant to the thesis? Is evidence supported with the author's own ideas and analysis?

4. Conclusion: Does the writer restate the thesis? Does the conclusion effectively wrap up the main points and bring the essay to a natural close?

5. Clarity/Style: Identify grammar/punctuation/spelling/usage problems. Is the tone of writing formal? Is there awkward wording in any of the sentences?

6. Resources/MLA format: Does the writer identify and properly cite his/her sources? Are in-text citations done correctly? Is the paper in proper MLA format?

7. Identify the paper's strengths (provide at least 2).

8. Identify the paper's weaknesses (provide at least 2).

Literature in the Age of Technology and Science

In the age of technology and growing scientific discovery, is there still a place for the study of literature? With the ever-growing focus on fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), there are critics both inside and outside of the education world who would argue that there should be less emphasis on teaching literature in school systems. As STEM courses both at the high school and college-level continue to grow, it is important that people do not forget the value of studying the humanities. A well-rounded student is one who is exposed to a variety of courses, both STEM and humanities courses such as literature courses. The study of literature is not only meant for English majors, but rather, every student can gain valuable skills and life lessons from analyzing works of literature. There is value in literature courses at all levels of education, and even technical and science courses should be exposed to great literature because reading such texts instills and reinforces critical and analytical skills, writing skills, and social skills that are beneficial to all students.

Analysis and discussion of great literature teach students to think critically and broadens their minds by exposing them to a variety of cultures, social issues, topics, genres, and ideas, to name a few. Teaching literature instills and reinforces critical and analytical skills in students. No matter what path students plan to take in life, they are going to need to be able to problem-solve, think critically, be analytical, and articulate themselves well. Elaine Showalter agrees when she writes, "Overall, our objective in teaching literature is to train our students to think, read, analyze, and write like literary scholars, to approach literary problems as trained specialists in the field do, to learn a literary methodology, in short to 'do' literature as scientists 'do' science" (25). Literature can help students with all of these skills. Students have to use all of these skills to not only read a text but to be able to discuss and break apart the text both

individually and with their peers. English teachers use literature as a tool to teach these skills. Teachers strive to help their students become well-rounded individuals and expose them to all types of subject matter, which is what literature does. Without the exposure to both liberal arts, such as literature and technical and science courses, how are students supposed to know where their true interests and passion lie? Students need to be exposed to all subject areas, excluding literature courses would be a disservice to all students regardless of their level of interest in English and literature.

Alongside developing critical and analytical skills, literature also provides students with the opportunity to expand their knowledge of different cultures. Literature exposes students to a variety of different cultures, social issues, and other diverse topics. Teachers incorporate multicultural texts into their curriculum in a variety of ways. Some teachers have their entire class read a multicultural text, while others give their students choice by providing a list of multicultural texts for students to choose from. In doing so, teachers expose students to novels and texts that will resonate with their own culture or expose them to a new culture with which they were previously unfamiliar. Including multicultural texts allows for real-world discussions to take place in the classroom, and will better prepare students for the challenges they may face beyond the classroom.

In addition to enhanced critical and analytical skills, students are better writers when they are exposed to strong writing; therefore, strong writers are those who are strong readers. In order to be strong readers, students need to read frequently and need to be able to determine what good writing looks like. This is another purpose of studying literature. Teaching literature directly correlates with teaching writing; the two go hand in hand. Nearly every literature course includes some type of writing assignment, and most writing courses include some literature. Reading

frequently and being exposed to good examples of writing provides students with a solid foundation for their own writing. Not only do teachers ask students to analyze the plot and characters of a text, but also the author's writing style and craft. By having discussions about writer's craft and style, students will better understand what it takes to be a good writer, and in turn, will be able to apply what they learn to their own writing.

Additionally, students need to be able to write about what they read, which is why literature is used in writing courses. Students will learn how to write literary analysis', explanatory essays, comparative essays, etc. In "What We Read," David Richter wisely points out that "the reason so many successful businessmen were once English, and history majors has little to do with the subjects they learned but a lot to do with the continual practice of reading and writing they received" (134). Richter's point is that one does not take a literature course to simply "read books," it is far more than that. The practice of reading and writing is needed in all aspects of life, and every job includes some type of reading and writing. Every career field includes some level of reading and writing, so regardless of a person's major in college or career training, a certain level of reading and writing is required.

Furthermore, the vast majority of literature courses involve discussions of the texts, whether it be small group discussions or whole-class discussions. These discussions serve not only to help students understand the deeper meaning of the text but also to teach students to how to express their ideas, work with classmates, and helps to improve public speaking skills. By having discussions about literature, students are learning valuable social skills. Shy students will slowly come out of their shells, and as students grow more and more comfortable with one another, so will the depth of the conversation. It teaches students to problem solve and to work together, which are necessary skills in the work force.

These types of social interactions are key to student's success in future areas. In his essay "Disliking Books at an Early Age," Gerald Graff explains how discussions with his classmates changed his view on literature and helped him to understand the value of teaching literature. Graff reflects on his early experiences with literature by mentioning that when he was alone with a book, he was bored. Still, when he was given the opportunity to discuss the book with other readers, then he was able to find ways to respond to the book (45). Graff's story is a prime example of the social impact that studying literature can have on students. In literature classes, students engage in in-depth and intellectual discussions. Furthermore, Graff states, "Perhaps even mere literary-critical talk could give you a certain power in the real world. As the possibility dawned on me that reading and intellectual discussion might actually have something to do with my real life..." (44). Graff wisely points out that the skills that students gain from literary discussions will help them in the real world. Those who criticize the study of literature may not realize that regardless of a person's future career, there are life skills learned during literary discussions that can be applied to all kinds real world experiences. Many novels tackle social issues that many students have faced or will eventually face. Discussing such issues can help students to make sense of real-world issues, and help them to better understand the world around them.

Furthermore, incorporating literature into STEM courses can have a strong impact on student's success in their field of study. Jill Donovan compares erasing literature from STEM courses as the equivalent to trading the sun in for a dwarf star; it would be doing students a disservice (31). STEM instructors can use literature as a tool for teaching their students to analyze their research and data. The University of California-Los Angeles conducted a study to determine the impact of literature on STEM programs. The study hypothesized that "1) Training

undergraduates in the primary literature is an effective tool for increasing scientific literacy, and 2) literature training will significantly facilitate the students' transition to postgraduate study" (Kozeracki et al. 340-341). UCLA incorporated literature into their STEM courses in a variety of ways, including weekly journals, research presentations, and seminar speakers, to name a few. The results of the study showed that literature does have an impact on STEM courses, and students reported that studying literature improved their research and "increased their ability to read and present primary scientific research and to present their own research" (342-346). This goes to show that the study of literature lends itself to all areas of study. The study of literature benefits far more students than just the English and writing majors. Additionally, as mentioned in the study from UCLA, reading literature can also improve one's ability to communicate, deliver speeches and presentations, and work in teams. By studying literature in school, students will feel more confident in their ability to communicate and deliver presentations in the future.

In short, those who oppose the study of literature may be unaware of the positive impact that literature has on every subject and its practical application in the real world. Critics of liberal arts classes such as literature should consider the critical and analytical skills, writing skills, and social skills that are taught through literature. As STEM courses continue to grow, it is important for people to remember that the critical and analytical skills needed to complete these courses stem from reading and writing. There is great knowledge to be gained through discussions and analysis of literary texts.

Works Cited

Donovan, Jill. "Teaching Significance: Keeping the Humanities Alive in a STEM-Bending

World." *Independent School*, vol. 76, no. 2, Jan. 2017.

Graff, Gerald. "Disliking Books at an Early Age." *Falling into Theory: Conflicting Views on*

Reading Literature, edited by Leasa Burton, Bedford/St. Martins, 2000, pp. 44-45.

Kozeracki, Carol A., et al. "An Intensive Primary-Literature-Based Teaching Program Directly

Benefits Undergraduate Science Majors and Facilitates Their Transition to Doctoral

Programs." *CBE - Life Sciences Education*, vol. 5, no. 4, Jan. 2006, pp. 340-347.

Richter, David H. *Falling into Theory: Conflicting Views on Reading Literature*. Bedford/St.

Martins, 2000.

Showalter, Elaine. *Teaching Literature*. Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Female Characters can be Villains Too: An analysis of *Sharp Objects*

According to *New York Times* writer, Lauren Oyler, “Things in Flynn’s novels do not get bad; they start out far beyond it and deteriorate as we learn how they got that way.” Oyler is speaking of author Gillian Flynn’s female characters in her domestic thrillers. Flynn’s most popular novels *Sharp Objects*, *Dark Places*, and *Gone Girl*, all include female characters who are deeply damaged from the beginning. As readers are drawn into their lives, they discover how both their past and present contribute to their current mental state. Flynn’s novels have caused quite a stir in recent years because readers are not used to reading about such raw women who are flawed, unlikable, and at times, malicious and villainous. Except for classic fairytales with an evil stepmother such as *Cinderella* or *Sleeping Beauty*, it is rather rare to see to a female villain in literature. In the past, it has been far more likely to read about a female character who is a “damsel” in distress rather than a villain. Furthermore, female characters have typically been portrayed to fit societal expectations of women, and are meant to be amiable characters. In recent years, Gillian Flynn has shifted this idea by creating characters who break the mold of what readers expect in female characters. Flynn creates characters who are deeply flawed, and at times downright unpleasant. Flynn has changed the course of women in domestic noirs by introducing readers to unlikable female characters and villains. In her debut novel, *Sharp Objects*, Flynn depicts females who are murderers, deeply disturbed and psychologically damaged, and manipulative.

Having grown tired of the typical female character who enjoys typical girly activities, is chasing after the guy, or is a heroine, Flynn decided to break away and create female characters who are far from perfect and do not have to be likable. Flynn’s first novel, *Sharp Objects*, published in 2006, is a perfect example of this. In interviews, Flynn has stated that a lack of

female characters with a dark side inspired her to write her first novel, she was tired of the same “chick lit” (Batkin). The story follows a young journalist, Camille, as she travels back to her hometown, Wind Gap, to report on the murder of two young girls, Ann Nash and Natalie Keene. Readers quickly learn that Camille is fighting demons that stem from her childhood. Camille has been to a rehabilitation center in the past for cutting, abuses alcohol, and she has a complicated relationship with her cold and distant mother, who has never recovered from the death of her youngest daughter, Camille’s little sister Marian. As Camille reports on the murdered girls and tries to solve the mystery, readers learn a great deal about Camille’s less than perfect family. While in Wind Gap, Camille stays in her childhood home with her mother, Adora, stepfather, and teenage stepsister, Amma. Readers eventually learn that Adora poisons her daughters in order to take care of them and that Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy is actually how Camille’s younger sister, Marian. It is also revealed at the end of the novel that Amma is the one responsible for the murders of Ann Nash and Natalie Keene. Amma’s motive being that she felt threatened by the girls as they grew close to her mother.

According to writer, Ann Silman, “Here, women are not merely the subjects of harm, but also the subjects and authors of it.” Throughout *Sharp Objects*, nearly all of the female characters are troublesome, and several prove themselves to be villains. Even the main character, Camille, while not a villain, is not particularly pleasant throughout much of the novel, and Adora and Amma prove themselves to be villains in the end. Being victims of harm causes these women to be harmful to themselves, each other, and others around them. Flynn uses the three women to dive into the dark side of the female mind and to show the effects of domestic unease and fractured mother-daughter relationships.

In a recent interview with the *Today Show*, Flynn mentioned that publishers initially turned her away because “people don’t want to read about women like this, women they can’t root for.” While readers may ultimately be rooting for Camille to solve the murders, she is far from the typical heroine. Camille is an alcoholic, and cutting words into her skins shows that she has some deep psychological issues that she needs to work through. In a review of *Sharp Objects*, author A.J. Finn states, “These are familiar archetypes—the prodigal daughter, the chilly matriarch, the ‘woman-child with a gorgeous body...asserting her power over lesser creatures,’ the chorus line of neighbors competing in the grief sweepstakes. In *Sharp Objects*, however, Flynn acid-strips them of sentiment. Her women neither revel in or aspire to what one of them describes, facetiously as “Girl Power.” Mothers will not forbear to remind their children that they do not love them. They discard the make-believe personalities as snakes shed skin. Above all, no one seeks to be likable.” Finn wisely points out that Flynn takes all of these different archetypes of women and twists them to create female characters that readers do not normally encounter.

Camille, Adora, and Amma do not strive to be heroines or admirable women. These women represent the dark side of female psychology and the effects of family dysfunction. Camille openly wears her pain rather than trying to bury it deep down. Her seemingly “gorgeous body” is covered from head to toe to prevent Camille from revealing her scars and turmoil to people. Although she hides her cuts, Camille does not pretend that she has overcome her childhood trauma and come out on the other side stronger. It is not a story of a woman who solves a murder and discovers herself and heals along the way. Similarly, at the end of the Adora and Amma do not have any redeeming qualities. As Finn points out, Adora is not the mother readers would expect, not many mothers would admit to not loving their own child.

While Flynn is undoubtedly not the first author to write about a female murderer, Flynn's characters set themselves apart due to the violent nature of the murders as well as the character's ruthlessness in the pursuit of their goal. Flynn novels take a psychological look at how various upbringing and mental illnesses can lead women to murder. Amma becomes jealous when she learns that her mother has grown close to girls she has helped tutor, and goes to extreme lengths to ensure that she is the center of her mother's attention. Amma ruthlessly eliminates her enemies by murdering them and pulling out their teeth. The fact that Amma pulls out her victim's teeth and uses them to make the floor of her dollhouses shows just how villainous and psychologically damaged she is.

Flynn's characters are also deeply flawed, disturbed, and psychologically damaged. Flynn invites her readers to explore the dark side of the female mind, domestic abuse, and female against female harm. In *Sharp Objects*, readers see how family dysfunction and toxic traits can be passed down from generation to generation if the cycle is not broken. Adora especially symbolizes how parents can pass their dysfunction onto their children. While readers are not given a great deal of insight into Adora's past, readers learn enough to know that Adora did not have a great relationship with her mother, and many of her mother's toxic traits were passed down to her. There is a correlation between Adora's mother's lack of love and affection toward her daughter and how Adora treats Camille. Adora even goes as far as to admit to Camille that she does not love her, much like she felt her mother did not love her. There is also evidence that Adora's mother was mentally unstable and probably needed professional help. For example, Adora's mother once tried to get rid of her by dropping her off in the woods and leaving her. In turn, Adora abuses her power as a mother and poisons her daughters as a way to maintain power and control over her children. When Camille resists her control and the "medicine" her mother is

always trying to give her, Adora turns against her daughter. She becomes cold and distant to Camille while focusing all of her attention to Marian and later Amma. Amma understands that it is dangerous to cross her mother and is safer to go along with her mother when she offers her medicine. Camille's resistance to bending to her mother's will results in Camille growing up ignored as her mother doted on Marian. This would certainly be psychologically damaging to a child and contributes to Camille's cutting problem and other issues in adulthood.

Adora continues to harm Camille in adulthood by continuing to verbally abuse her, such as telling her that she does not love her. Adora is also very insensitive when it comes to Camille's cutting. Adora is rather unsympathetic and does very little to support her daughter's recovery. Rather than try to help her daughter through her issues and self-harm by better understanding her daughter and providing her love and support, she continues to belittle Camille. Adora seems to be more upset that Camille has ruined her beautiful body than she does with the psychological issues that one would have to possess to carve words into their own body. Adora also does not take any responsibility for her role in Camille's traumatic upbringing and mental health issues.

Camille's cutting, alcoholism, and depression are all sure signs of a character who is deeply flawed and undergoing a great deal of psychological distress. Camille is not the typical heroine, and she is unapologetic in her behaviors, which sets her apart from many other female characters in literature. "I am a cutter, you see. Also a snipper, a slicer, a carver, a jabber. I am a very special case. I have a purpose. My skin, you see screams. It's covered with words—cook, cupcake, kitty, curls—as if a knife-wielding first-grader learned to write on my flesh. I sometimes, but only sometimes, laugh. Getting out of the bath and seeing, out of the corner of my eye, down the side of my leg: baby doll. Pull on a sweater and, in a flash of my wrist:

harmful” (Flynn). Camille is upfront and unapologetic about these vices, her relationship with her mother, and she is raw about her emotions, which makes her a realistic character. The novel is not simply a murder mystery but rather a look into family dysfunction, mental illness, and psychology. In her review of the HBO adaptation, *New York Review* writer Lisa Burkin, states, “by the end of the fourth or fifth episode I had started to sense that the series was, in fact, less interested in resolving the mystery and more interested in solving Camille: determining why she is the way she is, and offers, perhaps, some possibility for her redemption.” Camille literally wears her pain by cutting it into her body. Much of this pain stems from her turbulent childhood and the loss of her little sister, Marian. Camille also carries the weight of guilt because she was not able to save her sister. Camille feels responsible for Marian’s death as well because she thinks she should have seen the signs and realized that Marian was only sick when her mother was medicating her.

Moreover, readers learn that Camille was sexually assaulted as a teenager. Camille discusses the events nonchalantly, but some of the words carved in her skin indicate that the sexual assault has impacted her in more ways than she will admit out loud. Words like “harmful,” “vanish,” “wicked,” as well as other explicit words, indicate Camille’s self-hatred, guilt, and shame. Furthermore, Camille’s relationship with men has mainly consisted of sexual relationships rather than lasting relationships. Rather than face many of these issues, though, Camille replaces cutting with drinking. Readers are not left with a happy ending in which Camille makes a breakthrough with her mental health and seeks the therapy she needs.

Amma is another example of how dysfunction is passed down from one generation to the next. Amma’s behavior stems from the way that Adora has raised her, and the way that Adora has tried to convince her that she is sick and needs her mother’s constant care. If Amma had not

also been a victim of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, she might not have felt so possessive over her mother. If her mother had not constantly doted on her and made her the center of attention, then she likely would not have been so outrageously jealous of her mother taking an interest in other girls her age. Adora has the desire to have power and control over people, and this seems to be a personality trait that has been passed down to Amma as well, whether it be hereditary or learned behavior is up for interpretation.

In addition to being psychologically damaged, the women in *Sharp Objects* can be deeply manipulative. Throughout the novel, the women are not just harmed; sometimes, they are the harmers (Silman). To start, Adora has manipulated her daughters for their entire lives by convincing them that they are sick and using her “medicine” to poison her daughters. Adora uses this manipulation to maintain control and power over her daughters. Adora manipulates her daughters into needing her and makes them believe that she is caring for them and healing them. Adora is so skilled in manipulation that she is able to convince her daughters that they are sick even before she actually makes them sick by poisoning them. Adora’s daughters are never really ill until she gives them her “medicine,” yet she is able to convince her daughters that they are getting sick and need to get in bed and let her take care of them. Even when Amma comes to realize that her mother makes her sick, she is willing to go along with it just to have her mother’s attention and to please her mother. Amma gives Adora what she wants even at the cost of her own health, which shows how much psychological damage Adora has caused through her manipulation. Beyond manipulating her daughters, Adora also manipulates her friends and all of the people around her. Adora puts on a persona that she is a stand-up individual in the community. Adora manipulates people into believing that she is a woman who, despite caring for

an ailing child, finds time to run a successful business and participate in community service such as volunteering at the school and planning community events.

Much like her mother, Amma is also a master manipulator, and she shares her mother's desire for power and control. Throughout the novel, Amma practically lives a double life with multiple personalities. Amma changes her behavior and appearance drastically depending on who she is around. When Amma is around Adora, she is childlike and acts like the innocent young daughter who is eager to please her mother. In order to put on a show for her mother, at home, Adora often participates in activities that were too juvenile for a girl her age. For example, at the beginning of the novel, Amma is seen playing on the porch with a large dollhouse that is a replicate of their house. Most thirteen-year-old girls do not still play with a dollhouse. Furthermore, in the presence of her mother, Amma plays dress up with a bedsheet and dresses modestly in clothes that her mother has likely picked for her. Amma is catering to her mother's attempts to keep her a little girl, and she is desperate for her mother's attention and affection. Amma also plays along with her mother when her mother tells her that she is ill as a way to maintain power and control over her own life. Amma tells Camille, "Sometimes, if you let people do things to you, you're really doing it to them" (Flynn). While in this context, Amma is talking about boys, after Camille advises her not to let boys take advantage of her, Amma applies this philosophy with her mother as well. Amma desires to hold power over the people around her, and by pretending to be sick, so her mother takes care of her, she is really holding control and power over Adora. Amma knows that she can manipulate people into believing that they are getting what they want when really she is also getting what she wants. Amma manipulates her mother and father into believing she is the ideal teenage daughter, but once she leaves the house, readers see quite a different side to Amma.

Beyond her mother's watching eye, Amma is a completely different person. While Amma acts younger than thirteen at home, in public, Amma participates in activities beyond her years. When Amma goes out with her friends, she exchanges her modest clothing for short shorts and crop tops. Amma drinks, experiments with illicit drugs, and parties with high schoolers. Amma is the ringleader of her group of mean girlfriends due to her ability to manipulate and bully her peers into submission. At the end of the novel, readers even learn she manipulates her friends into being her accomplices to murder, and she uses her power to keep them silent.

While not as outwardly apparent as Adora and Amma, Camille has also picked up manipulative behavior from her mother. Camille may not be as ruthless as her mother and sister, but she does use people around her in order to get what she wants. For example, Camille has been told all her life how beautiful she is, and while Camille does not see herself as beautiful, she uses what people have always told her to her advantage. For example, Camille uses charm, witty banter, and sex appeal to grow close to Sheriff Willis. Camille does so in order to get information about the investigation from Willis. The police department stays tight-lipped about the investigation, yet Camille is able to manipulate and persuade Willis to exchange bits of information for her articles. Even when Camille and Willis strike up a romantic relationship, it seems clear that Camille is using Willis and does not intend to pursue any type of real relationship with him.

In summation, Gillian Flynn puts a fresh new spin on the domestic noir that has quickly grown in popularity. Readers are drawn into Flynn's dark and twisted female characters and enjoy seeing women with flaws who unapologetically themselves. Fans of Flynn's novels are not only drawn into the mystery, but rather the rich writing that takes readers deep into the minds of the female psychology. Flynn's novels are more than just a psychological thriller; her novels

peer into the lives of women who are murderers, villains, damaged, and manipulative. The popularity of Flynn's novels has led to a new genre of thrillers with a flawed female at the center of the mystery. Novels such as *The Girl on the Train*, *The Woman in the Window*, and *Tangerine* are just a few recent novels that have elements of Flynn's novels.

Works Cited

- Batkin, Liza. "'Sharp Objects' and Damaged Women." *The New York Review of Books*, 30 Aug. 2018, www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/08/30/sharp-objects-and-damaged-women/.
- Finn, A.J. "Gillian Flynn's 'Sharp Objects' Gives Women Permission to Be Bad." *The Washington Post (Online)*, 5 July 2018.
- Flynn, Gillian. *Sharp Objects*. Oahill, 2008.
- "Gillian Flynn and Amy Adams Talk Freedom and Pain in 'Sharp Objects.'" *MSN*, www.msn.com/en-gb/video/other/amy-adams-and-gillian-flynn-talk-freedom-and-pain-in-sharp-objects/vp-AAzwwzIU.
- Oyler, Lauren. "Gillian Flynn Peers into the Dark Side of Femininity." *New York Times (Online)*, 8 Nov. 2018.
- Silman, Anna. "Sharp Objects and the Stories Scars Tell." *The Cut, The Cut*, 11 July 2018, www.thecut.com/2018/07/sharp-objects-marti-noxon-womens-bodies-pain-suffering-scars.html.
- Sutton, Henry, ed., and Laura, ed. Joyce. *Domestic Noir: The New Face of 21st Century Crime Fiction*. Springer Verlag, 2018.

