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English 102: The Research Paper:
Myth and Modernity

This is a required research-writing course that asks students to write an 8- to 10-page research paper, complete with notes and bibliography. It is common for teachers of this course to design it around a special theme or topic. The theme of this course is "myth and modernity." The course asks students to analyze the mythological and archetypal motifs in the works of four authors—Nathaniel Hawthorne, E. M. Forster, Joseph Conrad, and Jorge Luis Borges—who are known for employing these motifs in their works. The myths used by these authors are for the most part classical (Greek and Roman), but at times they work with Judeo-Christian mythology (for example, the figure of the Devil in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown").

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Required Texts

The following texts are required in this course:

Raymond Clines and Elizabeth Cobb, *Research Writing Simplified,* 4th ed.
Edith Hamilton, *Mythology*
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
          The Secret Sharer and Other Stories
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Young Goodman Brown and Other Stories*
E. M. Forster, *The Collected Tales of E. M. Forster*

Challenges and Rewards

Challenges

"Myth and Modernity" contains several challenges, and it is not the easiest way to complete English 102. However, it is one of the most rewarding courses a student can take. Students in any 102 class must learn how to write a research paper, with all of the technicalities that that entails. In any specialized English 102 class (one that has a specific topic or theme), students must read primary sources (the literature) and secondary sources (the criticism). Students in my "Myth and Modernity" 102 course must juggle three types of sources instead of two: they have to read the primary sources, learn certain myths and archetypes, and read the literary criticism on the works that they analyze in their research papers. Furthermore, students in this class must pick up the tools of literary analysis in order to see what the authors are doing with myth. I have found that the most difficult aspect of this course is the analytical one—getting the students to analyze the primary sources with some sophistication and to understand the literary criticism in the secondary sources. It helps if a student has taken a literature course and is drawn to the course because of its content, as opposed to its convenient time in his or her schedule. However, students can do quite well in the course even if their last formal encounter with literature occurred in high school; when we discuss the first few primary sources (short stories), I review the elements of fiction—narrative techniques, character development, plot, setting, theme, symbol, motif—and this gives students the basic tools with which to work.

A note: I do not expect students to examine the idea of myth as deeply as Bruno Bettelheim or Bronislaw Malinowski (writers that I mention on my source sheet) do. Rather, students are asked to concentrate on how the inclusion of myth in a modern work of literature enhances that work. The source sheet is a list of works that have inspired me and that can provide a more extensive discussion of myth for students who want to examine this subject further.

Rewards

As mentioned above, students learn to see archetypes and classical myths in modern literature. At times these connections are obvious, at others, more recondite. After students become more adept at making these connections, the task becomes easier. Eventually, they begin to see myths and archetypes in other literature they have read in the past, historical and contemporary events, movies, television shows, etc. Although these venues are not a formal part of the course, students do bring them up in class discussion, or I might ask them if they have seen a movie that employs a certain myth or archetype. Their "mythological consciousness" having been raised, they are able to enjoy most forms of discourse on a deeper level.

Texts and Theme

I chose Hawthorne, Conrad, Forster, and Borges because, when I was developing this course, I had to find modern authors who employed myths consistently (not in just one or

two works), so that students could see patterns in the writers' use of myth. The myths that the course includes are therefore limited to those that are employed by these four authors.

Nathaniel Hawthorne is famous for his retelling of classical myths for children in *A Wonder Book*, but he also uses mythological characters in his more adult stories, such as "The Artist of the Beautiful," which includes a character based on Hephaestus, a member of the Greek pantheon. E. M. Forster creates stand-ins for Pan, Apollo, Daphne, the Sirens, and Oedipus in his fantastical short stories. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is very rich, partly for its retelling of a sequence in the *Aeneid*. Lastly, Jorge Luis Borges is well known for his use of the motif of the labyrinth: Daedalus' labyrinth, along with Theseus and the Minotaur, appear in different forms in many of Borges' stories. These are just a few examples of the connections that we make between classical and more modern literature in this course. The works of these four authors are also rich in archetypes, which the students learn to recognize. Having students see these myths and archetypes come alive in these nineteenth- and twentieth-century works goes to the heart of the Great Books philosophy: seeing various themes, characters, and motifs reworked across space and time. To elaborate: the study of mythology and archetypes has the following advantages for college students:

1. Myths are an expression of universal elements of human nature and the subconscious.
2. Myths poetically and symbolically express people's deepest longings, fears, and perennial truths—things they may not otherwise be able to face in their own natures.
3. The study of myths remediates historical and cultural illiteracy.
4. The study of myths gives students a firm basis for their further college studies in literature, as well as in subject areas like humanities and social studies.

Outline of the Course

Class discussion is devoted to the intricacies and mechanics of writing a research paper and the analysis of the fiction of the four assigned authors. Each work of fiction that we discuss is assigned to be read with a relevant section of Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*. Students are encouraged to make parallels between the two works as they are reading them, but if they don't see them then, the connections will be revealed in class discussion. For example, students will be asked to read the section in *Mythology* that deals with the character of Pan, along with Forster's "The Story of a Panic." In class we will examine the clues that Forster leaves to hint at the appearance of Pan in the twentieth-century setting of his story.

The following is a list of the fiction works that we read and the classical myths that appear in them:

Borges

1. "The Circular Ruins": Prometheus and Pygmalion
2. "Death and the Compass"
3. "The Two Kings and Their Two Labyrinths"
4. "Ibn Hakkan al-Bokhari, Dead in His Labyrinth": Numbers 2, 3, and 4 deal with Daedalus, Theseus, the Minotaur, and the story of Daedalus' labyrinth.

Conrad

    5. "The Secret Sharer": Castor and Pollux, Narcissus, Orpheus and Eurydice

    6. *Heart of Darkness*: Demeter, Dionysus, Hades, Charon, the Fates

Forster

    7. "The Story of a Panic": Pan, Nereids, Oreads, the Fates, Janus

    8. "The Story of the Siren": Odysseus, the Sirens

    9. "Other Kingdom": Apollo and Daphne, Arcadia, Midas, Naiads, Dryads

    10. "The Road from Colonus": Oedipus and Antigone, Hades, the Fates

Hawthorne

1. "Young Goodman Brown": Devil myths.
2. "The Artist of the Beautiful": Hephaestus, Prometheus, Aphrodite.

These twelve works also employ various archetypes, such as the hero, creation, water, and certain shapes and colors—too numerous to mention here, but easily detected in the works by the use of my "Myth and Archetypes" handout (see below).

Research Paper

In their research papers, students must refer to at least eight secondary sources, and there must be at least one reference to Hamilton's *Mythology*. These papers will have a thesis that has something to do with the appearance of myth and/or archetypes in at least one work of one of the four authors we have studied. In most cases, the students stick to the works assigned in the class, but they are permitted to choose other works of the authors, with my approval. I encourage them to go beyond what was said in class about the works, and this usually and naturally happens because they have to discuss their secondary sources in conjunction with the fiction they are writing about. The secondary sources, culled from scholarly papers and books written by recognized literary critics, may or may not deal with the myth and archetypes in the primary works, but, of course, they should be used to support the students' ideas (and students may disagree with the critics). I do not assign thesis statements, but I have discussions with the students after they have read some secondary sources on their author and they have come up with a working thesis. In these conferences I help them to sharpen their thesis statements.

    The following are some examples of thesis statements that I have received. In most cases, the myths that appear in the fiction works alluded to have already been listed.

    1. In "Death and the Compass," Jorge Luis Borges pieces together a labyrinth of mythical proportions. He uses geometric symmetry, conflicting characters, and mythological allusions to show that the world itself is an eternal maze.

    2. The use of symbolism and mythological allusions in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Artist of the Beautiful" and "Roger Malvin's Burial" enriches the personalities of the main characters, and the attributes of the implied mythological characters instill life in Hawthorne's characters. (In the latter story, there are characters that resemble figures from the Old Testament—Reuben, Dorcas, Cyrus, Saul, and David.)

3. In *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad paints a shadowy picture, employing imagery and thematic content which parallels that of Virgil's epic tale, the *Aeneid*, in a way that vilifies European imperialism in Africa and its resulting despair and removes the romantic notions often associated with imperialism. Like that of the Roman poet Virgil, Conrad's intent was to censure the destruction of the life and land of the "savages" by those from his own "civilized" society. (*Heart of Darkness* has been seen by several critics as a re-creation of the sixth book of *The Aeneid.* There are many details in Virgil's description of Aeneas' descent into the underworld that are replicated by Conrad in his telling of Marlow's journey to the Congo.)

4. E. M. Forster employs virtuous Hellenistic mythological figures to reveal the majesty in otherwise insignificant, at times unnamed, characters in his stories, "The Road from Colonus" and "The Story of the Siren."

These examples show that students are asked to go beyond a simple pointing out of the myths and archetypes in the modern works. Instead, they are asked to do a formalistic analysis of the presence of these motifs, to justify their presence in the modern works.

Syllabus

Week 1	INTRODUCTION TO MYTH AND LITERATURE *Mythology*, 13–47 Forster, "The Story of a Panic"
Week 2	INTRODUCTION TO LIBRARY RESEARCH *Research Writing Simplified,* 1–11 *Mythology*, 41–43, 91–92, 107–109 Conrad, "The Secret Sharer"
Week 3	FINDING A TOPIC *Research,* 12–14 *Mythology,* 48–64 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
Week 4	THESIS AND ARGUMENT *Heart of Darkness* continued
Week 5	GATHERING EVIDENCE AND EVALUATING SOURCES *Research,* 14–18 Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"
Week 6	NOTE-TAKING AND ANALYSIS *Research*, 19–26, 37–41 *Mythology*, 71–81, 112–115 Borges, "The Circular Ruins"
Week 7	PARAPHRASING AND PLAGIARISM

Mythology, 35, 107–109
Hawthorne, "The Artist of the Beautiful"

Week 8 SUMMARIZING
Research, 27–36
Mythology, 144–145, 157
Borges, "Death and the Compass"

MIDTERM

Week 9 DIRECT QUOTATION
Research, 42–48
Borges, "The Two Kings and Their Two Labyrinths"
         "Ibn Hakkan al-Bokhari, Dead in His Labyrinth"

Week 10 THESIS AND OUTLINE
Research, 58–64
Mythology, 108, 119–120, 223–224
Forster, "The Story of the Siren"
         "Other Kingdom"

THESIS AND OUTLINE DUE

Week 11 INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS
Mythology, 268–277
Forster, "The Road from Colonus"

Week 12 WORKS CITED
Research, 49–57

Week 13 DOCUMENTATION REVIEW

Week 14 RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

Week 15 FINAL EXAM REVIEW

Week 16 FINAL EXAM

Sources

General Sources

I have a few favorite general sources aside from Hamilton's *Mythology* that deal with myth and archetype. The list that follows is by no means complete, but it contains a few classics that you might be familiar with.

Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment.* Analyzes archetypes in fairy tales.

Campbell, Joseph. *Myths to Live By.* Shows how myths are relevant today.

Evans, Oliver, and Harry Finestone. *The World of the Short Story: Archetypes in Action.* An anthology of short stories with introductions discussing the archetypes contained in them.

Frazer, James. *The Golden Bough.* A classic compendium of myth, archetypes, and ritual in ancient and primitive societies.

Hughes, Richard E. *The Lively Image: Four Myths in Literature.* Analyzes the Narcissus, Dionysus, Orpheus, and Christ myths in selected modern authors.

Jung, Carl, ed. *Man and his Symbols.* Jung is famous for his writings on archetypes; this book has other contributors and great pictures illustrating the various archetypes.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays.* The title essay discusses Frazer and the importance of myth to the human psyche.

Weston, Jessie. *From Ritual to Romance.* The Holy Grail study that inspired Eliot's poem *The Waste Land.*

Sources on Individual Works

Ovid

Apollo and Daphne: *Metamorphoses,* Book 1
Midas: *Metamorphoses,* Book 11
Narcissus: *Metamorphoses,* Book 3
Orpheus and Eurydice: *Metamorphoses,* Book 10
Pygmalion: *Metamorphoses,* Book 10

Ovid, *Metamorphoses:*
   http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.html
   This is organized by books and seems to be the only viable web source.

A good lecture on the *Metamorphoses* is available at:
   http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/introser/Ovid.htm

Apollodorus

Daedalus: Apollodorus' *Library*
Theseus, Ariadne, Minotaur: Apollodorus' *Library*

Apollodorus' *Library* can be found as part of Tufts University Perseus Project at:
   http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0022;query=toc;layout=;loc=1.1.1

The Theseus story is in Apollodorus' *Library,* Book 3, Chapters 15–16:

http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0022;query=chapter%3D%2333;chunk=chapter;layout=;loc=3.15.1

and:

http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0022;query=book%3D%234;chunk=chapter;layout=;loc=3.16.1

Homer

Hephaestus and Aphrodite: Homer's *Odyssey,* Book 12
Sirens: Homer's *Odyssey,* Book 12

Search the full text at:

http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext99/dyssy10.txt

A good lecture on Homer and the *Odyssey* can be found at:

http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/introser/Homer.htm

Sophocles

Oedipus: Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone*

Project Gutenberg:

http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/31

For a lecture on Oedipus, see:

http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/introser/oeds.htm

On Sophocles and the whole trilogy, especially *Antigone,* see:

http://www.queensu.ca/classics/clst101/clst101lect30.htm

Hesiod

Prometheus: Hesiod's *Theogony.*

From the "ancientHistory" section at "about.com":

http://ancienthistory.about.com/library/bl/bl_text_hesiod_theogony_5.htm

An excellent background for the Prometheus myth can be found at:

http://www.pathguy/com/promethe/htm

Some general notes on Greek myth and Hesiod can be found at:

http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~jfarrell/courses/spring96/myth/jan17.html

Aeschylus

Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*

From the Internet Classics Archive:

http://classics.mit.edu/Aeschylus/prometheus.html

An excellent background for the Prometheus myth can be found at:
http://www.pathguy.com/promethe.htm

A good site for Aeschylus, including a link to a summary and analysis of Prometheus, is:
http://www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/aeschylus001.html

Virgil

Underworld: Virgil's *Aeneid,* Book 6

From *Bibliomania*:
http://www.bibliomania.com/0/2/173/1106/frameset.html

Summary and analysis are available at *Sparknotes:*
http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/aeneid/

A more sophisticated site is:
http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/netshots/vergil.htm

Borges

"The Circular Ruins": Prometheus and Pygmalion.
"Death and the Compass."
"The Two Kings and Their Two Labyrinths."
"Ibn Hakkan al-Bokhari, Dead in his Labyrinth." Numbers 2, 3, and 4 deal with
Daedalus, Theseus, the Minotaur, and the story of Daedalus' labyrinth.

The most general Borges site:
http://www.themodernword.com/borges/

Conrad

"The Secret Sharer": Castor and Pollux, Narcissus, Orpheus and Eurydice.

Project Gutenberg version:
http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext97/agent10.txt

Cliffs Notes summary and analysis at:
http://www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/LitNote/id-8.html

Heart of Darkness: Demeter, Dionysus, Hades, Charon, the Fates.

Project Gutenberg version:
http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext95/hdark11.txt

Sparknotes summary and analysis:
http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/heart/

A more sophisticated site is:
   http://www.movelguide.com/heartof darkness/

Forster

"The Story of a Panic": Pan, Nereids, Oreads, the Fates, Janus.
"The Story of the Siren": Odysseus, the Sirens.
"Other Kingdom": Apollo and Daphne, Arcadia, Midas, Naiads, Dryads.
"The Road from Colonus": Oedipus and Antigone, Hades, the Fates.

A general site for E. M. Forster is:
   http://forster.thefreelibrary.com/

Hawthorne

"Young Goodman Brown": Devil myths.
"The Artist of the Beautiful": Hephaestus, Prometheus, Aphrodite.

Both of these stories are in Hawthorne's collection *Mosses from an Old Manse,* which can be found at:
   http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext96/manse10.txt

An interesting read: Melville's review of *Mosses from an Old Manse*
   http://www.eldritchpress.org/nh/hahm.html

"Myth and Archetypes" Handout

One source I have put together is a "cheat sheet" of archetypes, with a few paragraphs on myth as well. Students have found this handout quite useful. We use it for reference in class, and they are allowed to use it in their research papers as well. It appears in its entirety below.

Myths

Some definitions of "myth" are the following:

"In classical Greek, 'mythos' signified any story or plot, whether true or false. In its central modern significance, a myth is one story in a mythology—a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, and to establish the rationale for social customs and observances and the sanctions for the rules by which men conduct their lives." M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1971), 102.

"Myth is to be defined as a complex of stories—some no doubt fact, and some fantasy— which, for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life." Alan W. Watts, *Myth and Ritual in Christianity* (1954), 7.

"Myth is fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life, of a primary awareness of man in the universe, capable of many configurations, upon which all

particular opinions and attitudes depend." Mark Schorer, *William Blake: The Politics of Vision* (1946), 29.

Myth "is a direct metaphysical statement beyond science. It embodies in an articulated structure of symbol or narrative a vision of reality. It is a condensed account of man's Being and attempts to represent reality with structural fidelity, to indicate at a single stroke the salient and fundamental relations which for a man constitute reality . . . Myth is not an obscure, oblique, or elaborate way of expressing reality—it is the *only* way." George Walley, *Poetic Process* (1953).

"Myth is the expression of a profound sense of togetherness—a togetherness not merely upon the plane of the intellect . . . but a togetherness of feeling and of action and of wholeness of living." Philip Wheelwright in *The Language of Poetry*, edited by Alan Tate, 11.

"Mythical motifs and images are called 'archetypes' when they are found among many different mythologies and when they recur among peoples widely separated in time and place. Also, they tend to have a common meaning or tend to elicit comparable psychological responses and to serve similar cultural functions. [The archetypal symbols] are those which carry the same or very similar meanings for a large portion, if not all, of mankind. It is a discoverable fact that certain symbols, such as the sky father and earth mother, light, blood, up-down, the axis of a wheel, and others, recur again and again in cultures so remote from one another in space and time that there is no likelihood of any historical influences and causal connection among them." Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (1962), 111.

Archetypes

The following are some examples of archetypes and symbolic meanings.

Images

1. *Water*: the mystery of creation; birth-death-resurrection; purification and redemption; fertility and growth. According to Carl Jung, water is also the most common symbol of the unconscious.

    a. The *sea*: the mother of all life; spiritual mystery; infinity; death and rebirth; timelessness and eternity; the unconscious.

    b. *Rivers*: also death and rebirth (baptism); the flowing of time into eternity; transitional phases of the life cycle; incarnations of deities.

2. *Sun* (fire and sky are closely related): creative energy; law in nature; consciousness (thinking, enlightenment, wisdom, spiritual vision); father principle (moon and earth tend to be associated with female or mother principle); passage of time and life.

    a. *Rising sun*: birth; creation; enlightenment.

    b. *Setting sun*: death.

3. *Colors*:

a. *Black* (darkness): chaos (mystery, the unknown); death; the unconscious; evil; melancholy.

b. *Red*: blood, sacrifice; violent passion; disorder.

c. *Green*: growth; sensation; hope.

4. *Circle* (sphere, egg): wholeness; unity; God as infinite; life in primordial form; union of consciousness and the unconscious—for example, the yang-yin of Chinese art and philosophy, which combines in the circle the yang (male) element (consciousness, life, light, and heat) with the yin (female) element (the unconscious, death, darkness, and cold).

5. The *archetypal woman* (including the Jungian *anima*):

a. The *great mother*, good mother, earth mother; associated with birth, warmth, protection, fertility, growth, abundance; the unconscious.

b. The *terrible mother*; the witch, sorceress, siren—associated with fear, danger, and death.

c. The *soul-mate*; the princess or "beautiful lady"—incarnation of inspiration and spiritual fulfillment.

6. *Wind* (and breath): inspiration; conception; soul or spirit.

7. *Ship*: microcosm; mankind's voyage through space and time.

8. *Garden*: paradise; innocence; unspoiled beauty (especially feminine); fertility.

9. *Desert*: spiritual aridity; death; nihilism or hopelessness.

Motifs or Patterns

1. *Creation*: this is perhaps the most fundamental of all archetypal motifs; virtually every mythology is built on some account of how the cosmos, nature, and people were brought into existence by some supernatural being or beings.

2. *Immortality*: another fundamental archetype, generally taking one of two basic narrative forms:

a. *Escape from time*: the "return to paradise," the state of perfect, timeless bliss enjoyed by people before their tragic fall into corruption and mortality.

b. *Mystical submersion into cyclical time*: the theme of endless death and regeneration—people achieve a kind of immortality by submitting to the vast,

mysterious rhythm of nature's eternal cycle, particularly the cycle of the seasons.

3. *Hero archetypes* (archetypes of transformation and redemption):

   a. The *quest*: the hero (savior or deliverer) undertakes some long journey during which he must perform impossible tasks, battle with monsters, solve unanswerable riddles, and overcome insurmountable obstacles in order to save the kingdom and perhaps marry the princess.

   b. *Initiation*: the hero undergoes a series of excruciating ordeals in passing from ignorance and immaturity to social and spiritual adulthood, that is, in achieving maturity and becoming a full-fledged member of his social group. The initiation most commonly consists of three stages or phases: (1) separation, (2) transformation, and (3) return. Like the quest, this is a variation of the death-and-rebirth archetype.

   c. The *sacrificial scapegoat*: the hero, with whom the welfare of the tribe or nation is identified, must die in order to atone for the people's sins and restore the land to fruitfulness.

Archetypal Phases

Northrop Frye in *Fables of Identity* (1963) provides the following table of archetypal phases with corresponding literary types:

1. The dawn, spring, and birth phase. Myths of the birth of the hero, of revival and resurrection, of creation, and (because the four phases are a cycle) of the defeat of the powers of darkness, winter, and death. Subordinate characters: the father and the mother. The archetype of romance and of most dithyrambic and rhapsodic poetry.

2. The zenith, summer, and marriage or triumph phase. Myths of apotheosis, of the sacred marriage, and of entering into paradise. Subordinate characters: the companion and the bride. The archetype of comedy, pastoral, and idyll.

3. The sunset, autumn, and death phase. Myths of fall, of the dying god, of violent death and sacrifice, and of the isolation of the hero. Subordinate characters: the traitor and the siren. The archetype of tragedy and elegy.

4. The darkness, winter, and dissolution phase. Myths of the triumph of these powers; myths of floods and the return of chaos, of the defeat of the hero. Subordinate characters: the ogre and the witch. The archetype of satire.