

“The Bass, the River, and Sheila Mant” by W.D. Withered

Elements of Literature Fourth Course

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1. Responding to Art

1. “Navigating the Missouri”

1. http://www.cartermuseum.org/sites/all/files/styles/artwork_full/public/images/met_art321331_0.jpg?itok=gRNDsw2J

2. “Fog Warning”

1. <http://mfas3.s3.amazonaws.com/objects/SC63316.jpg>

3. “Canoe in the Rapids”

1. http://artrenewal.org/artwork/897/897/31407/canoe_in_the_rapids-large.jpg

2. The Do Now

1. “The Fish” by Elizabeth Bishop

3. Round-Table Discussion

1. Hobbies, Relationships, and Being Yourself

4. Making Connections

1. Culture

2. Geography

3. Astronomy

5. Excerpt from *Trout Fishing in America*

6. Literary Structure of a Story

1. Exposition

2. Rising Action

3. Climax

4. Falling Action

5. Denouement

7. Homework

1. Begin “The Pit and the Pendulum” by Edgar Allen Poe.

1. Please read pages 290 - 294 (only the top of 294)

2. Please take notes by bringing in quotes for discussion.

3. Please bring in any questions you may have about the text, plot, or language.

The Do Now Part I

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I caught a tremendous fish
and held him beside the boat
half out of water, with my hook
fast in a corner of his mouth.
He didn't fight.
He hadn't fought at all.
He hung a grunting weight,
battered and venerable
and homely. Here and there
his brown skin hung in strips
like ancient wallpaper,
and its pattern of darker brown
was like wallpaper:
shapes like full-blown roses
stained and lost through age.
He was speckled with barnacles,
fine rosettes of lime,
and infested
with tiny white sea-lice,
and underneath two or three
rags of green weed hung down.
While his gills were breathing in
the terrible oxygen
—the frightening gills,
fresh and crisp with blood,
that can cut so badly—
I thought of the coarse white flesh
packed in like feathers,
the big bones and the little bones,
the dramatic reds and blacks
of his shiny entrails,
and the pink swim-bladder
like a big peony.
I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine
but shallower, and yellowed,
the irises backed and packed
with tarnished tinfoil

seen through the lenses
of old scratched isinglass.
They shifted a little, but not
to return my stare.
—It was more like the tipping
of an object toward the light.
I admired his sullen face,
the mechanism of his jaw,
and then I saw
that from his lower lip
—if you could call it a lip—
grim, wet, and weaponlike,
hung five old pieces of fish-line,
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,
with all their five big hooks
grown firmly in his mouth.
A green line, frayed at the end
where he broke it, two heavier lines,
and a fine black thread
still crimped from the strain and snap
when it broke and he got away.
Like medals with their ribbons
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
trailing from his aching jaw.
I stared and stared
and victory filled up
the little rented boat,
from the pool of bilge
where oil had spread a rainbow
around the rusted engine
to the bailer rusted orange,
the sun-cracked thwarts,
the oarlocks on their strings,
the gunnels—until everything
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!
And I let the fish go.

The Do Now Part II

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Now that we have read the “The Fish” and “Bass, the River,” let’s discuss how their similarities can be used to contribute to a larger conversation. Though we are probably able to discuss the content and plot of each the poem and short story with accuracy and precision, we want to develop our conversation around their themes and ideas. Yes, content is very important to understand. But at this point in the learning stage, the content should already be understood. In order to generate a strong thesis, we must already have a general understanding of the poem and story’s basic structure and narrative.

So with that said, let’s use today’s Do Now conversation as a way to prepare for Thursday or Friday’s summative writing assignment, which involves us writing the best paragraph possible comparing two or more short stories.

Rather than trying to formulate a group thesis statement, let’s work backwards from a decently prepared idea. Let’s use the following statement as our thesis, and then build a paragraph around that proposition. Before we begin, please keep in mind that the following thesis statement is not set in stone. It is simply an idea. If it needs to be reworded to fit one’s thought-process, then it needs to be reworded to flow and make sense.

“W. D. Wetherell in “The Bass, the River, and Sheila Mant,” and Elizabeth Bishop in “The Fish” utilize the common activity of fishing to reveal to their characters important truths about respect.”

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Cultural Connections:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QetnuKbo1XI>)

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Hanover+Country+Club/@43.7226689,-72.2837019,14.6z/data=!4m2!1m9!2m8!1shotels!3m6!1shotels!2River+Trail,+Hanover,+NH+03755!3rdcb4-9efaae513f0cbbac59cd55927c84!4m2!1d.72.2950146!2d43.6969534!3m1!1d0x0000000000000000:0x8c9659897369879>

(<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/photos-views-supermoon-around-world/>)

Excerpt from *Trout Fishing in America* by Richard Brautigan

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One spring afternoon as a child in the strange town of Portland, I walked down to a different street corner, and saw a row of old houses, huddled together like seals on a rock. Then there was a long field that came sloping down off a hill. The field was covered with green grass and bushes. On top of the hill there was a grove of tall, dark trees. At a distance I saw a waterfall come pouring down off the hill. It was long and white and I could almost feel its cold spray.

There must be a creek there, I thought, and it probably has trout in it.

Trout.

At last an opportunity to go trout fishing, to catch my first trout, to behold Pittsburgh.

It was growing dark. I didn't have time to go and look at the creek. I walked home past the glass whiskers of the houses, reflecting the downward rushing waterfalls of night.

The next day I would go trout fishing for the first time. I would get up early and eat my breakfast and go. I had heard that it was better to go trout fishing early in the morning. The trout were better for it. They had something extra in the morning. I went home to prepare for trout fishing in America. I didn't have any fishing tackle, so I had to fall back on corny fishing tackle.

Like a joke.

Why did the chicken cross the road?

I bent a pin and tied it onto a piece of white string. And slept.

The next morning I got up early and ate my breakfast. I took a slice of white bread to use for bait. I planned on making doughballs from the soft center of the bread and putting them on my hook.

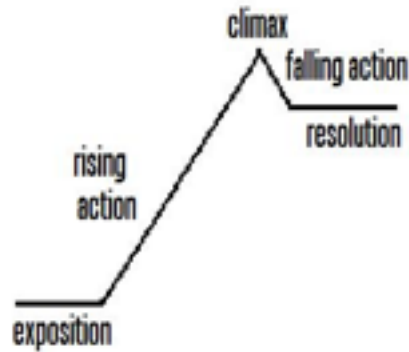
I left the place and walked down to the different street corner. How beautiful the field looked and the creek that came pouring down in a waterfall off the hill.

But as I got closer to the creek I could see that something was wrong. The creek did not act right. There was a strangeness to it. There was a thing about its motion that was wrong. Finally I got close enough to see what the trouble was.

Literary Structure of a Story

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(<http://jordanmccollum.com/wp-content/uploads/plot-chart-labeled.jpg>)

There are a lot of these diagrams floating around on the Internet. Most of them seem to say and show the same thing. Some of them get into specific detail. Some of them are shaped like a wave or roller coaster. But for the most part, one will find the same structure and words throughout most of these diagrams about a story's structure and common elements.

What is illuminating about the diagram presented above is the length of the rising action compared to that of the falling action. As one can see, the rising action takes up much of diagram's length, space, and time. As for the falling action, it appears to happen rather quickly and shortly. Thus, the diagram above is helpful because it reflects the time spent on each aspect of a story.

To further explore this concept, let's revisit the stories we've read so far this year, and designate quotes that signify certain elements of a story's literary structure.

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|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| - "Ice Storm" (pg. 5) | - "By the Waters" (pg. 264) |
| - "Typhoid Fever" (pg. 365) | - "Two Kinds" (pg. 94) |
| - "The Bet" (pg. 209) | - "The Bass, the River" (pg. 36) |

Homework

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1. Begin “The Pit and the Pendulum”

1. 290 - 294 (only the top of 294)
2. Please take notes.
3. Please bring in any questions.