

Questions for discussion: readings 4, 5, and 6 Men and Women

Press Ctrl + click or cut and paste into your browser to open hyperlinks for 1 through 6

4) A short story by William Faulkner called “A Rose for Emily”:

http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/wf_rose.html

- a) Notice the descriptions of Emily at the beginning, when she is elderly. Can you find a metaphor or a simile there? (You need to know the difference between those two “figures of speech” meant to be taken figuratively, not literally.) When you say someone is a pig, you do not mean it literally. The same is when you say to someone you eat like a bird. It is not meant literally. **The description of her hair color is literal, real, and it also becomes a significant detail at the very end.**
- b) Think of metaphors and similes you use in your own conversation. List a few. It is a good thing for writers to use metaphors and similes!
- c) Who is narrating this story (that is not the same as saying who wrote it)?
- d) Notice that the narrator says in the first sentence, “WHEN Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house [...]. Is this a criticism of women? Is the portrayal of Emily a criticism?
- e) When she bought arsenic, what did the townspeople think?
- f) Homer was the one man that Emily seemed to care about. Why did people think poorly of him? (It may have to do with geography...)
- g) At the end, what do people find in the locked room? What exactly happened?
- h) Did you notice the line: “When she had first begun to be seen with Homer Barron, we had said, ‘She will marry him.’ Then we said, ‘She will persuade him yet,’ because Homer himself had remarked--he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks' Club--that he was not a marrying man” ? Did it mean anything to you at first? Does it mean anything in retrospect?
- i) Considering all that the author writes about Emily, do you think he, William Faulkner, is showing bias against women?

5) A short story by Flannery O’Connor called “A Good Man Is Hard to Find”:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/goodman.html>

(Flannery O’Connor was a female writer. I added this since her name is unusual.)

- a) Notice that the women in this story often do not have actual names, but the men do. Do you think there is a reason for this or is it just a quirk?
- b) Notice the description of Bailey's wife's head and head wrap, and the grandmother's large bag. Once again, we are dealing with figurative, not literal descriptions. We are supposed to find this style enjoyable and it has an odd visual appeal. Remember: good writing attempts to appeal to the senses. That is why people like to read fiction. Fiction – novels and short stories – is more pleasurable to read than a typical textbook. Fiction is a form of entertainment.
- c) The description of the odd pet at the gas station / rest stop is for enjoyment. O'Connor is distracting us with fun facts. The interactions within the family are almost comical, like watching a comedy. Even when their car turns over, it is because of a cat, and the reactions of the unharmed passengers is amusing. Also, the grandmother's hat flower gets bent.
- d) Notice that the man at the gas station explains the title in a certain context of customers, but the title takes on more significance at the end.
- e) The ending is quite shocking since all the members of the family are slaughtered by a serial killer. Just before she is killed, the grandmother says to the killer that he is like her son? Why was she saying this?
- f) Some people say that this story shows the old woman as the bad one, and she is like a witch with a hat and a black cat, but that seems unfair. She is rather likable and seems to have a good heart. There are no redeeming qualities in the killer.
- g) Do you think that the author is biased against men?

6) A short story by Ernest Hemingway, called “The Short, Happy Life of Francis Macomber”

http://www.standardsinstitutes.org/sites/default/files/material/winter16_ela_9-12_day_2_session_1-macomber.pdf

- a) Notice that the story is out of sequence. Rather than go in chronological order, it starts in the middle, goes back to the beginning, and then ends at the end. Why do you think Hemingway chose to do this?
- b) Who are the three main characters?
- c) Whom do you think the author wants us to like or dislike?
- d) Notice how many things are said about Margot / Margaret: she is openly cheating on her husband and has no remorse.

He writes, “She was an extremely handsome and well kept woman of the beauty and social position which had, five years before, commanded five thousand dollars as the price of endorsing, with photographs, a beauty product which she had never used. She had been married to Francis Macomber for eleven years.”

We would consider her a “trophy wife,” which wealthy men often have. Think of all the music performers and athletes with model wives.

However, when we see an ad does it make a difference to us if we know (or care) if the model actually uses the product?

- e) Then, what does it say about her integrity to mention she got paid to endorse something she did not use?
- f) This couple does not seem to love one another, yet they stay together. What is the attraction, what “power” does each have over the other?
- g) At the end, Margot deliberately shoots Francis dead. Why does she shoot him then, rather than any other time? What was happening to make his life short and happy?

If you look carefully, there are **two scenes** in which we get the POV of the lion. This is a remarkable point of view example: we see up close how the lion is breathing and thinking. It uses limited vocabulary – because it is a lion. Here is one of the scenes: “The lion still stood looking majestically and coolly toward this object [**the lion is seeing the Jeep and doesn’t know the word for it**] that his eyes only showed in silhouette, bulking like some superrhino. There was no **man smell** carried toward him and he watched the object, moving his great head a little from side to side. Then watching the object, not afraid, but hesitating before going down the bank to drink with such a thing opposite him, he saw a man figure detach itself from it and he turned his heavy head and swung away toward the cover for the trees.”

- h) It seems Ernest Hemingway has more respect for the lion than the woman.

Remember: I will be posting questions for discussion on each of these, as if we were having a class discussion. The reading is like having homework.