
An idea that comes up repeatedly in studies of Hurston is her assertion to create stories and characters not solely defined by interethnic conflict. Her goal, according to Champion, is to create "women who defy traditional western (white) literature and myths that depict consequences for women who step outside the gender-biased social roles"(1). Champion notes that "Sweat" "exposes gender oppression by revealing the plight of women in a sexist society" (4). Delia's husband, Sykes, is the member of society who exploits her, Champion suggests, not just the dominant white culture. This article also discusses the familiar critical question of whether Delia's failure to aid Sykes results in her "spiritual downfall" or whether Hurston leaves that issue open to reader interpretation. This article also includes discussion of socioeconomics in several other Hurston short works.


Christensen's intriguing hypothesis states "Most students do not enjoy tragedy because they cannot accept the constraints of a tragic worldview"(164). Christensen proceeds to show how similar the college sophomore is to the character Oedipus, stating "typical college sophomores defy every dark prophecy casting a shadow on the future" (165). The author concludes pessimistically that the genre of tragedy, while capable of showing students much about themselves and the world, may become unrecognizable to future generations.

While I am not suggesting that the University of Dubuque is in any way similar to a prison, this article focuses well on the goal of forging a reader-response relationship between student and text. The author notes the contradiction of reader-response approach in a non democratic environment (such as a prison) while recounting his experience teaching introductory literature in a maximum security prison. He notes "my role was not to stimulate thought but to encourage docility. Yet how can critical learning proceed when the educational goal is acceptance of impersonal 'objective' facts?" (3)'

His students latched on to the play Oedipus more than any other work and he goes on to examine how the story and character of Oedipus connects with this particular student population. DiMatteo finds the Aristotelian elements of "pity and fear" especially relevant with this population of students. These students shared Oedipus' experience of being exiled and outlawed and had fallen from societal grace. Unlike them, though, Oedipus is not offered rehabilitation. DiMatteo finds the "relevance" factor within this experience, as students keenly ask not "What does the text mean?" but "Why does this text seem to address itself to me?"(11).


Though the Myers Library does not own this particular rendition of Williams' play, I strongly recommend it. It is faithful to the text of the play and features strong vivid performances from Joanne Woodward, John Malkovich, Karen Allen, and James McNaughton. Newman's direction captures the interiors of design almost verbatim from Williams' stage notes. Because it so faithfully follows the seven scenes in the text, instructor can choose select scenes rather than
showing the whole film, if desired.


This critical study explores the ambiguity surrounding character Delia Jones in the final moments of the short story, specifically the question of her "moral stature" and whether she fails to act to save her husband. Despite most readers' admiration of Delia's stoic submission to the institution of her marriage, some readers may question why she waits fifteen years to take a stance against the abusive Sykes. Hurd notes that Delia is like other Hurston heroines in that "she emerges as a sharp- tongued yet patient spouse reluctant to venture beyond shrewd verbal maneuvers to come to terms with her unsatisfactory conjugal life"(3).

The article also discussed the biblical concept of *agape* (4) and the New Testament Book of Jude. Hurd suggests that Delia's actions are in keeping with New Testament agape and not Hebrew Scripture notions of revenge, as other scholars have noted. Finally, Hurd also explores imagery of light and dark, noting "a schema of contrasting light and darkness to set Delia's strong faith over against Sykes’s sinister intent"(6) as further evidence of Delia's Christ-inspired character.


Interesting discussion of the theme of male and female conflict in Hurston's fiction. Lupton notes that "Nowhere is this conflict so sharply delineated as in the short story 'Sweat'" (3). Fascinating suggestion that in the final scene when Delia is lying immobile in the grass, "where she waited in the growing heat", she becomes like the snake she fears. Lupton defends an "Adam
and Eve in reverse" motif noting that "Delia (Eve) stops at the Chinaberry tree and gains knowledge, the verb know being present, in one of its forms, three times in that single sentence"(4). This idea certainly supports other critics' ideas about Hurston's treatment of women oppressed by men, rather than helped by them. Lupton’s article is a close textual analysis.


This brief critical article focuses on the element of setting in Hemingway's short story. The author, Maynard, subjectively expresses his opinion about the "selfish man who wants his girlfriend to have an abortion so that they can continue to have fun and be unencumbered by a child" in the first paragraph of the essay. This tone lessons the authority of his article, I believe. However, the author's concise discussion of the motif of "twos" in the story is worth pursuing. This is a close text-based reading rather than a purely theoretical interpretation.


A delightful and brief made-for-TV adaptation of August Wilson's play. Wilson wrote the screenplay and worked closely with the production. Features wonderful performances by Alfre Woodard, Charles Dutton, and Courtney Vance. Students respond warmly to this production and it helps establish the conflict between the siblings, within the characters, and also visualizes the piano. Unfortunately, the adaptation omits a huge central, though not action-packed, chunk of the second Act. This is unfortunate, though not fatal.

One doorway to exploring The Piano Lesson is to encourage students to understand the "problem" of heritage for many African Americans. Wilson's characters, like Alice Walker's in "Everyday Use", struggle to celebrate a rich heritage mired in slavery. Rudolph's article focuses on the tension of African Traditional Religions (ATR) with the "new world" Christianity embraced by many African Americans. Rudolph defines "African Christianity", noting the impact of the Exodus story. In The Piano Lesson, the character of Avery, a Christian minister, is presented as the epitome of Christianity, which Rudolph notes relies "on the written word". This is in contrast to the ATR which has as one if its main tenets, "belief in spirits". Using the scene in which Avery tries to exorcise the ghost of Sutter from Berneice's house, Rudolph cites Pereira (1995) "Christian words are not enough for the demons of the past". Rudolph's article provides a groundwork for a class discussion of the climactic scene in the play in which Berniece calls upon her African ancestors (through the medium of the piano) to drive out the ghost of Sutter (and the ghost of a slave past). This article also explores the theme of unresolved reconciliation with the past in both the African American experience and in the works of August Wilson.

Searle, Leroy F. “The Conscience of the King: Oedipus, Hamlet, and the Problem of Reading.”


This essay is all about reading, or rather misreading of texts by students. This essay is longer and more obtuse than it needs to be (which could easily result in misreading), but if one "skims" the first eight pages of pedagogical discussion, there is much to be said about the tragedy of Oedipus. Searle's offers a "theory of reading" which states "literary texts are themselves already forms of reasoning, and that the reason to respect what a text says... is that the text is not only saying something, but also doing something..."(326). Searle dismisses the familiar reading of
Oedipus as a victim, or perpetrator, or psychological study, and, in fact, dismisses most "interpretive theories". He suggests, instead, reading the play for what it is: a study of the consequences of misreading.


Senior’s essay focuses on teaching Oedipus as a study in the main character’s contradictions, thus letting his flawed humanness emerge. Senior begins his discussion by stating that many teachers "see it [Oedipus] as another academic slough to wade through and then to rinse off" (275). He notes that he sought a new approach to the work as a "response to student demand for relevance and reality" (275). This article focuses on Oedipus' flawed search for truth and how denying the truth of self places one in dire straits. Senior also discusses a "hierarchy of perceptions" in the play and notes how truth is seldom black and white but, instead, composed of hues and shades that obscure it. I think any discussion of the character Oedipus benefits from noting how flawed, but well intentioned the character is and can lead to discussion questions regarding pursuit of truth.


A brief exploration of the symbolism inherent in the title of Hemingway's short fiction. Weeks suggests that this title symbolism and its subsequent development through the narrative "contributes more than any other single quality to the powerful impact". Weeks believes that the "white elephants" provides a vehicle for the characters' ironic dialogue. A good place to begin class discussion of the story, while avoiding blatantly saying "it's a story about abortion", is to analyze the title and possible suggested meanings of "white elephant". A rarity in the East and
an obtrusive undesirable "gift" in the West, the connotations of the title provide a way in to the story. Students often note that the title is a simile, a figure of speech and that the "hills" are one aspect of the motif of division in the story, too.