HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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FRENCH LITERATURE

Contents

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF FRENCH LITERATURE

French literature has its roots in the late Middle Ages, and is from its origins inflected by the pre modern world view of late antiquity. Epic and lyric both thrive in the growingly sophisticated work of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. Without a sense of nationhood, however, even the strong individuals among these writers—Christine de Pisan, Francois Villon—seem almost to be voices creating in a geopolitical vacuum.

By the sixteenth century the French monarchy had consolidated much that was undefined in earlier centuries, and the great Renaissance voices we hear—the Pléiade, Rabelais, Montaigne—come through to us with that individuality Montaigne proclaimed to be the keynote of his entire opus, a massive testimony to the simple nature of being here as a human being. In a poet like Ronsard we begin to hear the tones of love, romance, hope, pathos which mark the multi sided lyricist in its increasingly accessible contemporary form. We *hear* Ronsard.

The seventeenth century, much of it presided over by a rich, powerful, despotic, and stimulating monarchy, imposes on us, to this day, as the *Grand Siècle*, the *Great Century,* of French culture. During this period, as France grows into cultural self-awareness, there is an explosion of powerful, and publically supported theatre: the great tragedies of Racine and Corneille, the comedies of Moliere, which so sharply mock the foibles of the rising Middle Class. Prose writers as diverse as the maximist duc de la Rochefoucauld or the subtle social analyst, Mme. de Lafayette, converge on the traits of a rapidly evolving social and economic culture, in which the elite still retains the sense of *noblesse oblige*, and the person on the street looks up with admiration.

The eighteenth century, an age of 'Enlightenment,' brings the new science, and its new egalitarian mentality, to the front of social awareness. Diderot and his associates, in creating the Encyclopédie, bring to general attention the new world views of a modern society raising questions about traditional values, and especially about the traditional religious world views of earlier France. Brilliant thinkers, like Voltaire and Rousseau, plunge into the effort to describe and promote a new world, in which mankind will improve at avoiding traditionalist pitfalls, and at acquiring self-awareness. Needless to say, this is a century of prose, not of poetry.

The nineteenth century, ushered in by the Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, traverses a roller coaster of political transformations and upheavals, sees the nation move into new cultural complexities of a world gradually becoming international. With the growth of the cities, urban culturescapes attract the attention of writers fascinated with the texture of the real: Balzac, de Maupassant, or Flaubert, who anatomizes life in the loneliness of the heart in the provinces. Where once, at century's beginning, there was the effusiveness of Romantic poetry, in Lamartine or de Musset, now there is the cold abstract poetry of Valéry or Mallarmé who, at century's end, seek refuge in the cold air of the pure.

The twentieth century, as all Westerners know, is the period when mankind decided to tear things apart and start all over again. Surrealism is one of the byproducts of this World War chaos, and we see it thrive in the poetries and manifestos of Breton and Aragon. Brilliant novelists, like Gide and Sartre, look closely at the character of their evolving society, and at the vise, between joy and despair, which increasingly constricts modern man. Inner life novelists like Marcel Proust and Francois Mauriac go into those places of despair, envy, hope, and frustration which increasingly mark the character of the person in the middle, the little person caught in the juggernaut of our time. One of the finest minds, and stylists, at work on defining the contemporary human condition is Albert Camus, whose small masterpiece, *The Stranger*, has crystallized in itself a sense of the entire perplexity of trying how to relate to the rapidly self-transforming twentieth century.

MEDIAEVAL

Overview

Though the deep origins of both the people and the language of France must be traced as far back as the tribe of the Galli, a tribal group living on the borders of the declining Roman Enpire, and ultimately destined to build their Gallo-Roman dialect into what we call Old French, the language form in which we find the first authentic texts of French literature, is found in the 11th century.

From the outset, the creative output of this culture devolved about a variety of kinds of expression: religious poetry, chansons de gestes, 'songs of heroic deeds,' and epic style romances.

Four short works, chiefly of linguistic interest, were written in the tenth century. In the eleventh century, The importance of the Church and of feudalism are indicated by the three types of literary productions: saints' lives, neo-Latin religious works; and *chansons de geste*, poems concerning the mighty deeds of heroes. Both the large number and the excellence of *chansons de gestes*, poetic romances, and lyrics written during the twelfth century, have led critics to call this the Golden Age of mediaeval French literature. This poetry shows an increase in polish, in sophistication, and in social consciousness over that of preceding centuries.

The thirteenth century is noteworthy for its prose romances, its drama, its satire, its lyrics, and its allegory. Much of the literature of this century reflects the rise of the bourgeoisie. It shows an increasing tendency toward rationalism, realism, and cynicism. The literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries shows the disastrous effects of the Hundred Years' War. There was at that time little opportunity or inspiration for imaginative works. A few narrative poems, a few prose chronicles, and a few lyrics were written, but as a whole the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were literarily sterile.

Unit discussion questions

Christine de Pisan has become an object of attention among Feminist critics. Do you see why? Is she a proto Feminist in her writing? What attitude did her culture tend to have, toward the place of women in society?

Is there a meeting point between the sacred and the criminal, in the work and thought of Francois Villon? Is that a meeting point which you can identify in other parts of mediaeval French culture? Architecture? Sculpture? Music?

What is the meaning of the 'grail' in *Perceval*? Does that epic centrally concern religious ritual, or is it primarily a simple Bildungsroman quest narrative?

What kind of devotion of the Virgin Mary quickens in the *Roman de la Rose*? Is this a literary or a devotional text?

Does Roland die a hero in the C*hanson de Roland*? Or was he a fool not to call Charlemagne to his military aid?

Poetry

Lyric

Christine de Pisan

Christine de Pisan. Christine de Pisan (1363-1430) was a remarkably self-willed and creative lyric poet, eminent to us now for the vigor with which she stood up for women's rights, in an era when women were being viewed as breeders and beauties, and on the street and in literature widely viewed as harlots. Christine was none of those things, and deeply resented this harsh male dominated attitude.

Life and work of Christine de Pisan. Christine de Pisan was married at fifteen to a French nobleman, who died ten years later, leaving her a widow with three children dependent on her. Unlike most women in her situation, at the time, she managed to create a role for herself as a professional writer, the first such in the West. The capacity for this self-creation lay in her early exposures to literature and culture. Born in Venice, her father a Councillor to the City of Venice, she remained in the shadows, learning, marrying, mothering, but from early childhood on conversant with major libraries and book collections, in that cultural crossroads environment. Until the mid 1390's she wrote ballads, heavily tinged with chivalry and chivalric lore, a chief stock of her reading. After her husband's death she began to show her works, which were of great autobiographical as well as chivalric interest, and she gained widespread attention among the noble courts of France. It was in that fashion, as her work was heard and read, that she won apointments as court writer for several dukes and finally for the King of France, Charles VI. In this professional life she supported herself and her children, and ultimately completed some forty one books in a thirty year period of writing.

Themes in the work of Christine de Pisan. The major collections of Christine de Pisan's work are her *Book of the Three Virtues*, a history of her nation—which was barely conscious of its nationhood at this time—from the Trojan War to the founding of France. Her second, and most widely read and influential, book was *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405). In that book she imagines a symbolic city in which women are greatly admired and emulated—a fantasy that lies deep in Christine's drive. The greatest of the female virtues—Reason; Justice; Rectitude—are celebrated and virtually divinized in this text, which especially needs understanding against its background.

The background of Christine de Pisan's defence of women. There has been much discussion of Christine de Pisan's so *called* feminism. The distinguished Existentialist thinker, Simone de Beauvoir, believed Christine de Pisan was an early feminist, interested in gender issues; others followed that conception, making her something of a hero to some in the 'women's movement' of the last century. However we see Christine's strong position, we know it was aired conspicuously, in her time, by her public critical attacks on the poet Jean de Meung, and his *Roman de la Rose.* In that chivalric epic, Jean de Meung celebrates the wonder of women, while at the same time denigrating them. It would be fair to say that, in the epic, Jean de Meung slanders and vilifies women, agents of seduction, untrue spirits, vulgar sluts. The language he adopts is from the streets, and expressed current attitudes bitterly familiar to Christine de Pisan.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Book of the City of Ladies, trans. Brown-Grant, 1999.

Secondary source reading,

Willard, Charity, *Christine de Pisan: Her Life and Works,* 1984.

Further reading

Altmann and McGrady, eds., *Christine de Pisan: A Casebook*, 2003.

Original language reading

Kosta-Thefaine, Jean-Francois, *La Pretresse et la guerrière*, 2008**.**

Suggested paper topics

Was Christine de Pisan a feminist, as we might understand the expression today, or was she simply a talented woman of her time playing at the chivalric rules of male female give and take? Is it easy to misinterpret gender attitudes at a distance of several centuries from ourselves? Why?

Review the attitude toward woman in fourteenth century France. What kinds of freedom did women have? Study the problems Christine de Pisan had, in acquiring the inheritance due her on her husband's death. Do you think those problems were at the root of her fierce defense of women?

Excerpt http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/ballad-v/ttp

Since, O my Love, I may behold no more
Thy sovereign beauty that was all my cheer,
My heart is given up to sorrows sore :
For though the wealth of all the world were here,

There is no ease but in beholding thee
Who art afar ! Whence I of tears am fain
Mourning the happy days that used to be :
Yet unto none but thee may I complain.

Doubt not of this, true love whom I adore,
Thine image in my soul is ever clear :
I think but on the blessedness of yore
And on thy beauty, simple-sweet and dear.
So fiercely smiteth love, I may not flee
Nor may my soul the dread assault sustain :
Death could not bring a sorrier weird to see,
Yet unto none but thee may I complain.

Alas ! one only mercy I implore.
When I am dead (as I to death am near)
Pray for me, and thy praying shall restore
My wounded spirit : shed one tender tear.
Great were my comfort if my piteous plea
Might touch thy heart, if sorrow might constrain
Thy lips to sigh, such need of sighs have we.
Yet unto none but thee may I complain.

Sweet flower, to whom I do abandon it;,
My heart is broken down with bitter pain
For one whom Fortune would not have me see :
Yet unto none but thee may I complain.

Villon, Francois

Francois Villon; the mystery of his work and life. Francois Villon (1431-disappears into the mist, ca. 1480)) was the strongest French lyric poet of the Middle Ages, and to our day one of the most influential French poets, regularly translated, staged, and put to music around the globe. And yet this man was a rascal, as they said in his time, meaning actually a serious criminal. How is this state of affairs possible? Is it not significant that he was born in the same year in which Joan of Arc was burned to death at the stake, as a supposed heretic.

Villon's Life. Born Francois de Montcorbier (or Des Loges or Corbueil or Corbier) he assumed the surname of his foster father, who was a Professor of Canon Law kind enough to take Villon into his house, after the early death of Villon's parents. Francois received both a Bachelor's and a Masters degree at the University of Paris (1452) and seemed destined to be a clergyman; but on the way to that career he became associated with a band of vagabonds and thieves and got into serious and lifetime trouble with the law. (In 1456 he was involved in a 'scuffle' argument in which he was apparently found guilty of murdering a priest—who was part of the brawl; not long after he was suspected of involvement in the robbery of the chapel of the College de Navarre, after which he given a sentence of banishment—later reprieved; whereupon he set out on four years of wandering, one step ahead of the law, writing his major poetry –*Le Grand Testament*—and, as we know from his poetry itself, picking up every nuance of the street and underworld language of the time.

Villon's Work. Villon's poetrc output was small. His two longest works were *Le Petit Testament* (1456) and *Le Grand Testament* (1461), in which he bequeathes many imaginary objects and qualities to his friends and enemies—who range from dignitaries to ruffians. Inserted within the Testaments are many short lyrics, chiefly ballades and rondeaus. Two famous lyrics are the 'Ballad of Lost Ladies' and the 'Ballad of the Hanged.' Many of these poems are difificult to interpret today, because they turn on in-jokes, slang, or the kinds of socially unpermitted language of the streets—the attack level we find in the *Roman de la Rose*, which Christine de Pisan found so objectionable.

Villon's world view. Villon is justly praised for the depth and sincerity of his emotions and for the vigor and precision of his style. He combines feeling with a hearty sense of humor. He can weep over the transiency of beautiful things, and yet jest grimly about his approaching execution. He has infinite zest for physical pleasures—wine, food, warm shelter in winter, beautiful women. Nature, for him, is nearly always harsh or cruel, and he has great pity for poor suffering rascals. Yet he never whines with self-pity, nor does he blame his own miseries on Fate; he confesses his guilt and prays only for God's mercy and forgiveness. This last preoccupation of Villon is deeply typical of his time, clerical throughout and saturated with the doctrines of the Church, but living the secular life to the hilt, as though to guarantee oneself enough to confess.

Reading

Primary source reading

Georgi, D., editor and translator, *The Poems of Francois Villo*n, 2013.

Secondary source reading

Fein, David, *Francois Villon Revisited*, 1997.

Further reading

Kinnell, Galway, translator, *The Poems of Francois Villon,* 1982.

Original language reading

Le Testament, "Ballade de bonne doctrine,' ed. Richner and Henry, 1974.

Suggested paper topics

Do you know other poets than Villon whose lives and works were created from the social depths, in or out of crime? Is there a tradition of the poet as a social misfit? When did this tradition form? Where? Does it apply today? Does this tradition have a presence in Asian, as well as Western, literature?

Does the dark and often cruel humor of Villon's poetry go with the Christian world view which forms the backdrop of his work? Is there room for play in the Mediaeval Christian world picture, which offers assurance of salvation but keeps the sinner, which we all are, hanging cheerfully on the brink? Is the gargoyle tradition, on Gothic churches, part of this dark hilarity of the Christian Middle Ages?

Excerpt http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/ballade-to-our-lady/

Lady of Heaven and earth, and therewithal
Crowned Empress of the nether clefts of Hell,—

I, thy poor Christian, on thy name do call,
Commending me to thee, with thee to dwell,
Albeit in nought I be commendable.

But all mine undeserving may not mar
Such mercies as thy sovereign mercies are;
Without the which (as true words testify)
No soul can reach thy Heaven so fair and far.
Even in this faith I choose to live and die.
Unto thy Son say thou that I am His,
And to me graceless make Him gracious.
Said Mary of Egypt lacked not of that bliss,
Nor yet the sorrowful clerk Theophilus,
Whose bitter sins were set aside even thus
Though to the Fiend his bounden service was.
Oh help me, lest in vain for me should pass
(Sweet Virgin that shalt have no loss thereby!)
The blessed Host and sacring of the Mass
Even in this faith I choose to live and die.

A pitiful poor woman, shrunk and old,
I am, and nothing learn'd in letter-lore.
Within my parish-cloister I behold
A painted Heaven where harps and lutes adore,
And eke an Hell whose damned folk seethe full sore:
One bringeth fear, the other joy to me.
That joy, great Goddess, make thou mine to be,—
Thou of whom all must ask it even as I;
And that which faith desires, that let it see.
For in this faith I choose to live and die.

Epic

Chanson de Roland

The French Epic. *The Chanson de Roland* was one of many heroic songs, some of epic dimension, which circulated throughout France in the Middle Ages, and which were very popular from the l2th to the l4th centuries. (We need to note that France was during this period not yet quite France, but was a loosely bundled together collection of duchies and kingdoms, in which royal courts hosted entertainment both for the nobility and for the man and woman serving as serfs on the manor.) These songs were recited (to music) by a group of j*ongleurs*, who were no doubt familiar with the basic outlines of the songs they performed, but at the same time improvised as their genius permitted. The writing down of this traditional heroic material is hard to date, but we are in any case certain that composers came along, in the course of time, who brought tales to a certain fullness, and that then clerics were primarily responsible for the written texts. In the case of the epic before us, the *Chanson de Roland*, the decisive composer, Turoldus by name, was the one who wrote out the text of the epic, containing some 4,004 lines, in the form we now call the Oxford manuscript. The date of Turoldus' brilliant composition was between 1140-1170.

The hero of the epic. The hero of the *Chanson de Roland* is a noble knight fighting in the army of Charlemagne. (Note: the fighting involved, and described in the poem, dates from three hundred years prior to the composition by Turoldus.) The plot of the tale is complex as is the significance of it, and we have to marvel at the internal brilliance of the oral popular tradition. It goes like this. The army of Charlemagne is engaged in combat with the Saracens in Spain; the armed conflict between Christians and Muslims is raging. Charlemagne decides to propose a truce to the Saracens, and thereupon the French army, under the command of Roland, decides to send a deputation to Spain to negotiate a settlement. Roland chooses his uncle, Ganelon, to carry out this sensitive mission. Ganelon accepts the assignment, but with deep resentment, because he knows the fatal dangers of the mission, and suspects Roland of wanting to get rid of him. So deep is Ganelon's resentment that instead of negotiating a peace settlement he plots with the Saracens to ambush Roland and his men as they withdraw from Spain. The treacherous ambush takes place, Roland finds himself and his men cut off, and then Roland makes a gesture which characterizes him and brings the moral energy of the epic to the fore. In his pride and honor he refuses to call on Charlemagne's help, which he could have done by blowing Roland's famed hunting horn—which acquires almost a magical power here. Only when it is too late does Roland, expiring, blast out his lungs into the trumpet, but the gasped fury is so strong that the hero dies in the effort, and is in that moment taken up into heaven. In the aftermath, still within the epic, Charlemagne fights the battle of Roncesvalles, finally making the Saracens his servants.

The Christian Tenor. The contemporary reader must work to assess the Christian tenor of this epic. Roland is called *proulx*, brave, but one must read into this trait his entire knightly dignity. (We are reading about the world of Charlemagne, which was itself already touched by early mediaeval Christianity. At the same time we are reading a poem composed *at the time of the Crusades,* when the image of the faithful knight hero was predominant.) Roland's ascension into heaven is a credible event horizon, given a pervasive world view that includes the everpresent possibility either of salvation or damnation.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Song of Roland, trans. Crossland (Cambridge, Ontario, 1999), pp. 1-78.

OR

Project Gutenberg http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/391

Secondary source reading

Keen, Maurice, *Chivalry* ,1984.

Further reading

History of Old French Literature; Holmes, Urban (Nook Books, 2012).

Original language reading

La Chanson de Roland, ed., tr. Joseph Bedier, 1937 (and often republished)

Suggested paper topics

What kind of hero is Roland? Does he use good judgment in sending Ganelon to negotiate in Spain? Is his refusal to call for assistance, after the ambush of his forces, heroic or foolish? What do you make of his instantaneous ascension into heaven? Does that event indicate God's total approval of Roland's behavior?

The *Chanson de Roland* was apparently composed, as a full scale epic, some three centuries after the events that form its material. From what perspective does the epic seem to be written, that of the participants in the 'original events,' or that of the world of the composer, Turoldus? Do many epics reflect a significant time gap between the composer's perspective and that of the participants in the original events of the epic?

Excerpt http://www.wright.edu/~christopher.oldstone-moore/roland.htm

XXX

Oliver mounts upon a lofty peak,
Looks to his right along the valley green,
The pagan tribes approaching there appear;
He calls Rollanz, his companion, to see:
"What sound is this, come out of Spain, we hear,
What hauberks bright, what helmets these that gleam?
They'll smite our Franks with fury past belief,
He knew it, Guenes, the traitor and the thief,
Who chose us out before the King our chief."
Answers the count Rollanz: "Olivier, cease.
That man is my good-father; hold thy peace."

LXXXI

Upon a peak is Oliver mounted,
Kingdom of Spain he sees before him spread,
And Sarrazins, so many gathered.
Their helmets gleam, with gold are jewelled,
Also their shields, their hauberks orfreyed,
Also their swords, ensigns on spears fixed.
Rank beyond rank could not be numbered,
So many there, no measure could he set.
In his own heart he's sore astonished,
Fast as he could, down from the peak hath sped
Comes to the Franks, to them his tale hath said.

LXXXII

Says Oliver: "Pagans from there I saw;
Never on earth did any man see more.
Gainst us their shields an hundred thousand bore,
That laced helms and shining hauberks wore;

And, bolt upright, their bright brown spearheads shone.
Battle we'll have as never was before.
Lords of the Franks, God keep you in valour!
So hold your ground, we be not overborne!"
Then say the Franks "Shame take him that goes off:
If we must die, then perish one and all."

Roman de la Rose

Overview This chivalric romance epic length poem reveals one of the fullest expressions of chivalry and romance in the high Middle Ages, the l3th century. It is in the first part of the poem that these qualities are on display, for that part reflects the dominant chivalric mode of mediaeval sensibility. That first part, 4058 lines of heroic pentameter, was composed by Guillaume de Lorris, ca. 1230. It is entirely about the art of love, mediaeval style—suggestive perhaps of Ovid's *Art of Love,* but strongly tinged with courtly values. The second part of the poem, taken on at the death of Lorris, was composed by Jean de Meun, who began his work in 1275, and composed 17, 247 lines of the same verse pattern. His work, as we shall say more fully, was of a deeply different tenor from that of Lorris, more worldly and cynical. The result is a double epic, consisting of two sharply different, though remotely related, parts.

The Themes of the *Roman*. The theme of both parts of the poem is love, of course, and the way to understand ladies and win the one you want. The first part, in which chivalry and romance dominate, starts with the implication that the poem is a dream, related by a lover. The lover's first steps, as the poem opens, carry him to a high wall, which surrounds the castle of a nobleman, a castle called Deduit, or Pleasure. The lover is counseled by the Love God on the best way to pursue the lovely lady he seeks within the *hortus conclusus* (the enclosed garden) whiich lies within the castle walls—and which in the thought of the time served as a metaphor for the perfect womb of the Virgin Mary. In the course of setting up a plan for the lover, the Love God dispenses a great deal of useful advice on female psychology—no small part of the wide fascination of the text in its time. In the later portion of the poem, while still holding to the dream castle theme, the poet Jean de Meun studs his advice on love with many warnings about the degraded nature of women. For Jean de Meun *Raison*, *Reason*, becomes the presiding deity, and the spokesperson for caution in the battle ground of romance. But Jean de Meun goes farther, in his spirited assault on the many vices of his time. He takes particular aim against sodomy, which was a sin for the Church, and which seems to Jean to be a beastly deviation from nature. The allegorical deity Genius is assigned especially to the attack on the sodomites, whom he urges to use their styluses to write on the beautiful tablets, women, God has provided for them. Genius wishes sodomites to burn in hell, and in addition 'may they suffer the loss of scrotum and testicles.' It is this kind of attack, and a wide range of scurrilous languages Jean de Meun employs, that in part account for the widespread fascination with this text of his.

The Influence of the Roman de la Rose. More than 300 manuscripts of the Roman were in circulation not long after its composition, which testifies to the attraction of the work. Part of the poem was in its time translated from Old French into Middle English, and one of the translators, reputedly, was Chaucer.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Romance of the Rose, trans. Hargan, l999.

Secondary source reading

Lewis, C.S., *The Allegory of Love,* 1936. (Old, but absolutely the classic on the topic.)

Further reading

Huizinga, Johan, *The World of the Middle Ages*, 1989.

Original language reading

Zumthor, Paul, Ess*ai de poétique médiévale,* l972.

Suggested paper topics

Look at some of the illustrated mediaeval manuscripts of the *hortus conclusus*, to see what ravishing concepts of beauty and peace are summoned up there. Can you see why the lover, in the first part of the *Roman de la Rose,* needed advice on how to proceed within the castle walls? What is the relation between the doctrine of the closed garden and Catholic tradition concerning the birth giving of Mary?

Look into the intersecting world perspectives of Christine de Pisan, Francois Villon, and Jean de Meun. Can you see why Christine de Pisan eagerly joined the public debate about Jean de Meun's work, and why she so disparaged it? Can you imagine Francois Villon reading Jean de Meun? What would his attitude have been?

Excerpt http://www.library.rochester.edu/robbins/medsex-heckelR1

The God of Love and the Affair of the Heart

The God of Love, who had maintained his constant watch over me and had followed me with drawn bow, stopped near a fig tree, and when he saw that I had singled out the bud that pleased me more than did any of the others, he immediately took an arrow and, when the string was in the nock, drew the bow -- a wondrously strong one -- up to his ear and shot at me in such a way that with great force he sent the point through the eye and into my heart. Then a chill seized me, one from which I have, since that time, felt many a shiver, even beneath a warm fur-lined tunic. Pierced thus by the arrow, I fell straightway to the earth. . . . I took the arrow in my two hands and began to pull hard at it, sighing as I pulled. I pulled so hard that I drew out the feathered shaft, but the barbed point called Beauty was so fixed inside my heart that it could not be withdrawn. It remains within; I still feel it, and yet no blood has ever come from there.

I was in great pain and anguish because of my doubled danger: I didn't know what to do, what to say, or where to find a physician for my wound, since I expected no remedy for it, either of herbs or roots. But my heart drew me toward the rosebud, for it longed for no other place. If I had it in my power, it would have restored my life. Even the sight and scent alone were very soothing for my sorrows.

I began then to draw toward the bud with its sweet exhalations. Love selected another arrow, worked in gold. It was the second arrow and its name was Simplicity. It has caused many a man and woman all over the world to fall in love. When Love saw me approach, he did not threaten me, but shot me with the arrow that was made of neither iron nor steel so that the point entered my heart through my eye. No man born, I believe, will ever dislodge it from there, for I tried, without any great joy, to pull the shaft from me, but the point remained within. Now know for a truth that if I had been full of desire for the rosebud before, my wish was greater now. As my woes gave me greater distress, I had an increased desire to go always toward the little rose that smelled sweeter than violets.

Chretien de Troyes

Chretien the man and writer. Chretien de Troyes (1135-1190) was a learned and imaginative courtier, who served for many years at the court of Marie de Champagne, a setting in which he gained his sharp eye for behavior and psychology, and learned the ways of the world in a protected environment. In that elite world he carried out an active writing life, and though *Perceval* is the text which most carries his name today, he was prolific in many versions of romance: in the *Erec*, the story of a patient and long-suffering wife—the story which the English poet Tennyson retells in *Geraint and Enid. Lancelot the Cavalier of the Cart* tells of the amour of Lancelot and Guinevere. Other surviving works are *Yvain, the Cavalier of the Lion; Percival the Gallois;* and *William of England*. Chretien was the greatest of the French Romancers and the first to organize the Arthurian tales into a cycle. He was also the first to introduce into written literature Lancelot and his love for Queen Guinevere.

Chretien's Perceval. The *Perceval* itself is the fifth romance of Chretien, a 9000 line poetic account of both the life of Sir Gawain, and of the grail legend, which deals with the fate of the chalice from the Last Supper of Jesus Christ. That Chalice was ultimately saved by the faithful Jew, Joseph of Arimatheia. In Chretien's account of the grail legend much attention is paid to the character of the young knight, Perceval, who is raised as something of a wild child, in the forests of Wales, and sets forth on adventures—first to the castle of King Arthur. While at Arthur's court, Perceval distinguishes himself by an act of remarkable bravery, by killing a knight who has been harassing the king. Perceval falls in love with Blanchefleur—a lady of distinction at the court—thereby showing his sensitivity to the finesse of love—this is, after all, Romance literature. While returning one day to King Arthur's castle—the fictive *geography* of these events is hazy—Perceval comes upon an aged ill man, whom the texts calls The Fisher King, a figure of royalty sitting in an area of depressed land situated next to a body of stilled and stagnant waters. (This figure is inherently mysterious, a representative of the sickness of the land or the times.) While staying with the Fisher King, Perceval beholds a strange procession including a beautiful lady carrying a bleeding lance; the wounded King seems some kind of representative of a Christ transpierced. On return to Arthur's castle, Perceval is confronted by a very ugly woman who asks him why he had not inquired of the Fisher King the reason for the King's illness. It is here that the Perceval section of the Romance breaks off, leaving us with a sense that a great mystery had lain before our knight, and that he had not altogether fathomed it, or its healing/saving potential.

Perceval and Eliot. The American poet T.S. Eliot, in his long poem *The Wasteland,* reaches to Chretien's vision, of a world sick and despondent, and needing to be asked the right questions as a step toward healing. This is a powerful example of the living energy of a classic literary insight.

Reading

Primary source reading
Chretien de Troyes, *Perceval, the Story of the Grail,* tr. Bryant, 1996.

Secondary source reading
Loomis, Roger, *The Grail: From Celtic myth to Christian symbol,* 1991.

Further reading

The New Arthurian Encyclopedia, ed. by Lacy Norris, 1991,

Original language reading

Koehler, E., *L'*av*enture chevaleresque,* l974.

Suggested paper topics

What is literarily compelling about the legend of young Perceval and his search for the grail? Is there a luring mixture of concrete quest with vagueness, which makes one feel in the presence of a mystery? What seems to you the relation between the tale of Perceval, and that of the far worldlier Gawain, the subject of the second half of this Romance epic?

Look at the Parzifal epic by the contemporary German poet, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and study its relation to the (earlier) work of Chretien. Each poet is concerned with both the adventurous and the spiritual quests of their heroes. Which hero seems to you the more complex and interesting? Which hero learns the most from his quest?

Excerpt http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/theme/perceval

For a noble beginning
A romance can begin worthily
With the most enjoyable tale there is:
That is, the [Story of the] Grail, whose secret
No one should ever reveal or recount;
For the story might reveal so much
Before it's recited to the end
That someone could suffer for it
Who had not violated the secret;
The wise thing, then, is to leave it
And simply pass it by;
For, unless Master Blih is lying,
No one should reveal the secret.
Now listen to me one and all
And you will hear a tale
That will be a delight to listen to,
For in it will be the seven guards,
Who throughout the world have charge
Of all the good stories that have ever been told.
These writings will recount
What sort of people the seven guards are,
How [they act] and what end they will come to;
For you have never heard the story
Told or recounted truthfully;
Yet how and why the powerful country
Of Logres was destroyed
Was noised and bruited widely;
Time was, it was much discussed.
The kingdom went to ruin,
The land was so dead and desolate
That it wasn't worth two bits;
They lost the voices of the wells
And the maidens who dwelled in them.
Indeed, the maidens served a very important purpose:
No one who wandered the highways,
Whether at night or in the morning,
Ever needed to alter his route
In order to find food or drink;
He had only go to one of the wells.
He could ask for nothing

In the way of fine and pleasing food
That he would not have forthwith…

16TH CENTURY

Overview

The literature of the French Renaissance had many of the characteristics of Italian Renaissance literature. Individualism, humanism, a spirit of adventure, and a careful attention to form and technique were usually evident. The era of the French Renaissance in literature has been divided into four parts: the period of origins (1494-1515; the national period (1515-1550); the Italian period (1550-1572); and the age of Montaigne (1572-1598).

No literature of importance was written during the age of origins.

At the beginning of the national period the so called *Grands Rhetoriqueurs,* the Great Rhetoricians, were dominating French poetry; they emphasized technique, rhetoric, and intricacy of versification and rhythm. They were opposed by Clément Marot (1497-1544) who aimed at simplicity, clarity, and elegance. The poetry of Marguerite de Navarre falls into this period. Her best poems are either
religious or personal. Her *Prisons* is an allegorical poem in which Christianity and Platonism are blended, and her *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* is a series of theological discussions. In prose, as distinct from poetry, this period saw huge achievements: the work of Rabelais, Calvin's I*nstitutes*, and a work by Marguerite de Navarre, her *Heptameron*, based around a collection of short stories by Boccaccio.

The Italian period is dominated by the *Pleiade*, a group of poets who stressed the importance of Greek and Latin poetry, and who attempted successfully to enrich the French language.

Montaigne was the greatest writer of the last period of Renaissance French literature. The religious troubles of the time inspired both poetry and prose. The most notable pieces are by Agrippa d'Aubigne: *Les Tragiques*—seven cantos of poetry giving the Protestant view of the religious wars—and the *Menippean Satire*, a piece of religious and political satire written by Catholics, but supporting the moderate party and expressing preference for a French Protestant rather than a foreign Catholic as King of France.

Discussion questions

Is Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron* a naughty set of tales, following in the model of Boccaccio, or a complex period piece, exploring social values and women's views of life?

How does Ronsard's view of poetry cohere with those of other members of the Pléiade? Dubellay and de Baif? Is there a philosophical dimension to the work of this school? Or is metric and attitude the dominant base of the movement?

Does Rabelais share, with Francois Villon, a sense of the intersection between the very serious, even the 'sacred,' and the gross? Is Rabelais noticeably more ironic than Villon, toward the blending of these two forms of sensibility?

Montaigne claims to present himself just as he is. Is that the way you read him? Does he conceal himself in order to reveal himself? What is his attitude toward mankind's tendency to deceive itself?

Poetry

Ronsard, Pierre de

Ronsard, life and works. Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585), called in his day the 'Prince of Poets,' was born in the Valley of the Loire, into an illustrious family. His ancestors had founded the French branch of the family in their Manoir de la Poissonière, having behind them a history of noble exploits in the Hundred Years War. Ronsard himself was educated at home, then sent, in the fashion of aristocratic youth, to a nearby College, the College de Navarre where he benefitted from the traditional firm training in Greek and Latin. At the age of twelve he became a page of the Duke of Orleans; from that portal his way was opened into an early life of travel and sophisticated exposure. When Madeleine of France was married to the King of Scotland, Ronsard was sent along to serve as a page; his subsequent youthful travels thus included extensive stays in Scotland and England, and shortly later in Germany and Italy. He was by age twenty fluent in English, German, and Italian, no small part of his qualifications for poetic eminence, not to mention his diplomatic prospects, for at this point Ronsard seemed destined for an important role as a representative of the monarchy. At this fulcrum point in his brilliant youth, however, he was struck by deafness, a handicap challenging his strongest powers; and only the power of his personality led him to a life of extraordinary literary creativity. Ronsard determined quickly that he would be unable to pursue a diplomatic career, and betook himself to study the College Coqueret, where he was to confirm his true vocation, as a poet, and to make the acquaintance of those other distinguished young men—with whom he was to become immersed in the *Pleiade* movement. (The *Pleiade* were a cohort of seven brilliant and congenial poets, who named themselves after the Alexandrian septet of ancient fame, and who numbered such luminaries as Ronsard, du Bellay, and Antoine du Baif.) Ronsard's self-deepening took over with several years of intense study of Greek and Latin literatures—one might think of the studious preoccupations of Rabelais or Margaret of Navarre—and before long came an increasingly close friendship with a kindred spirit, Joachim du Bellay, who was to be Ronsard's partner in his literary career. Not long after the formation and fruition of the Pleiade, Ronsard was ready to retire to his country home, to take advantage of many kinds of royal perquisites, and to create the works that have made him famous: works touching every literary genre except drama, and paying constant close tribute to the poetries of Latin authors like Ovid and Horace.

Ronsard's genius in poetry: deeply immersed in the subtle turns of phrase, enjambements, and feeling for interior cesurae, Ronsard did his best work when letting deep feeling out in measured and nostalgic tone. (The works we turn to with greatest pleasure are the *Hymns,* (1555), and the *Amours* (1556). His immense popularity in his day—the next two centuries would usher in a sharp decline in Ronsard's literary reputation—is to us clearest in the infinite (and perfect) sadness of a sonnet like the following translation by the equally great English poet, W.B. Yeats:

When you are very old, at evening, by the fire,
spinning wool by candlelight and winding it in skeins,
you will say in wonderment as you recite my lines:
"Ronsard admired me in the days when I was fair."
Then not one of your servants dozing gently there
hearing my name's cadence break through your low repines
but will start into wakefulness out of her dreams
and bless your name — immortalised by my desire.

Reading

Primary source reading

Wolfe, Humbert, *Sonnets for Helen*, l972.

Secondary source reading

Kenny, Neil, *An Introduction to Sixteenth century French Literature and Thought,* 2008.

Further reading

Castor, Grahame, *Pleiade Poetics,* l964.

Original language reading

Fumaroli, Marc, *L'age de l'éloquence*, 1980.

Suggested paper topics

Do you think that we, today, are still enchanted by the Renaissance poetic theme of immortalizing a beloved individual, or oneself, in poetry? Is that a poetic conceit that leave us cold, or a perennial desire of the human imagination?

Ronsaid, unlike Villon for example, lived and wrote from a very privileged background. Do you feel the results of this privilege in his poetry? Does he nonetheless seem to write for the human condition in a broad sense? Was Renaissance lyric, in France, largely a creation of the upper middle class or aristocracy?

Excerpt http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/French/Ronsard.htm#_Toc69989198

I'd like to turn the deepest of yellows,
Falling, drop by drop, in a golden shower,
Into her lap, my lovely Cassandra's,
As sleep is stealing over her brow.

Then I'd like to be a bull, white as snow,
Transforming myself, for carrying her,
In April, when, through meadows so tender,
A flower, through a thousand flowers, she goes.

I'd like then, the better to ease my pain,
To be Narcissus, and she a fountain,
Where I'd swim all night, at my pleasure:

And I'd like it, too, if Aurora would never
Light day again, or wake me ever,
So that this night could last forever.

Fiction

Rabelais, Francois

Francois Rabelais. Francois Rabelais (1495-1553) was born in the province of Touraine, and by an uninterrupted progression passed through religious education and into monkhood as a Franciscan friar in the convent of Fontenay-le-Comte. From the start, though, Rabelais' passion had been for learning, and he had rapidly found his way into the study of Greek, Hebrew and Arabic. This scholarly turn alienated the Franciscans, who had come to prefer poverty to learning, and were glad to see Francois join the Benedictine order, which soon he left in order to serve as a simple parish priest. Needing more income he then turned toward the study of medicine, which was to become his career, and in the course of which he grew close to many of the opinion shapers of his time, like Clément Marot or Maurice Scève. Through a series of partially realized writings, which were the true muscle of Rabelais' daily life,
he created two remarkable works, *Gargantua* (1534) and *Pantagruel* (1532), which established his reputation.

Main Themes of his Work. The basic outline of Rabelais's writings is simple: talk, philosophy, anecdote, history, gossip, scandal, and a hearty secular philosophy of 'do what you will,' 'fais ce que voudra,' weave their ways around a tale involving Gargantua (a hero out of Arthurian legend), his immense and grossly vulgar son, Pantagruel, and Pantagruel's buddy in arms, Panurge. It characterizes the subordination of plot to tale and brilliant chatter that much of the long work of Rabelais is devoted to the tricky question of whether Panurge should get married.

The Cultural Position of Rabelais: Rabelais—like all the authors included earlier—thought and worked in a firm and still orthodox Christian tradition. The mediaeval perspective from which he emerged to a secular career, clung to him in his scorn for women, common among mediaeval men, his deep sense of allegory, and the heavy coarseness of much of his imagination—how about the hero who floods Paris by pissing copiously from the summit of Notre Dame Cathedral? On the other hand, though, Rabelais builds on a pagan joie de vivre and a love of secular life which allies him with many post Christian energies of French literature.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Complete Works of Francois Rabelais, tr. Frame, l999.

Secondary source reading

Bahtin, M.*, Rabelais and his World,* 2013.

Further reading

Febvre, L., *The problem of unbelief in the l6th century*, 1982.

Original language reading

Faure, Paul, *La Renaissance,* l999.

Suggested paper topics

Much of the material, in Rabelais's work, is taken from rough scenes of life, one might say from the scatological imagination. Are you surprised at this turn of sensibility in one who was for a long time a Franciscan friar? Is there a broadly scatological tenor to some late Mediaeval and Renaissance art?

How would you characterize the ‘freedom’ that Rabelais considers of supreme importance in life? Is it a freedom for license, the freedom of justified self-control, or the freedom of a society in which individuals feel mutual respect for one another? Does Rabelais’ sense of freedom derive from his particular religious training?

Excerpt http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/rabelais.html

Now every method of teaching has been restored, and the study of languages has been revived: of Greek, without which it is disgraceful for a man to call himself a scholar, and of Hebrew, and Latin. The elegant and accurate art of printing, which is now in use, was invented in my time, by divine inspiration; as, by contrast, artillery was inspired by diabolical suggestion. The whole world is full of learned men, of very erudite tutors, and of most extensive libraries, and it is my opinion that neither in the time of Plato, of Cicero, nor of Papinian were there such faculties for study as one finds today. No one, in future, will risk appearing in public or in any company, who is not well polished in Minerva's workshop. I find robbers, hangmen, freebooters, and grooms nowadays more learned than the doctors and preachers were in my time.

Why, the very women and girls aspire to the glory and reach out for the celestial manna of sound learning. So much so that at my present age I have been compelled to learn Greek, which I had not despised like Cato, but which I had not the leisure to learn in my youth. Indeed I find great delight in reading the *Morals* of Plutarch, Plato's magnificent*Dialogues*, the *Monuments* of Pausanias , and the *Antiquities* of Athenaeus, while I wait for the hour when it will please God, my Creator, to call me and bid me leave this earth.

Therefore, my son, I beg you to devote your youth to the firm pursuit of your studies and to the attainment of virtue. You are in Paris. There you will find many praiseworthy examples to follow. You have Epistemon for your tutor, and he can give you living instruction by word of mouth. It is my earnest wish that you shall become a perfect master of languages. First of Greek, as Quintillian advises; secondly, of Latin; and then of Hebrew, on account of the Holy Scriptures; also of Chaldean and Arabic, for the same reasons; and I would have you model your Greek style on Plato's and your Latin on that of Cicero. Keep your memory well stocked with every tale from history, and here you will find help in the Cosmographies of the historians. Of the liberal arts, geometry, arithmetic, and music, I gave you some smattering when you were still small, at the age of five or six. Go on and learn the rest, also the rules of astronomy. But leave divinatory astrology and Lully's art alone, I beg of you, for they are frauds and vanities. Of Civil Law I would have you learn the best texts by heart, and relate them to the art of philosophy. And as for the knowledge of Nature's works, I should like you to give careful attention to that too; so that there may be no sea, river, or spring of which you do not know the fish. All the birds of the air, all the trees, shrubs, and bushes of the forest, all the herbs of the field, all the metals deep in the bowels of the earth, the precious stones of the whole East and the South -- let none of them be unknown to you.

Marguerite de Navarre

Public importance of Marguerite de Navarre. Marguerite de Navarrs (1492-1549) was princess of France, queen of Navarre, and wife to Henry II of the kingdom of Navarre. Her brother was to become King of France, as Francis I, and she herself was to become the ancestress of the Bourbon line of Kings of France. (She was grandmother to Henry of Navarre, who as Henri IV was to become the first Bourbon king of France.) Nor were these noble frameworks the peak of Marguerite's worldly importance, for she was a serious imaginative writer, a patroness to the greatest French writers of her time—Rabelais, Montaigne, Marot—and what some have called the first modern woman. One might give some thought in this setting to Christine de Pisan, also viewed—from a different optic—as the first modern woman.

Life and work of Marguerite de Navarre. Marguerite was already in birth privileged with a distinguished gene pool: her father took an eleven year old bride, Louise, who was in absolute truth a prodigy, and though Marguerite was obliged by her father—for reasons of estate consolidation—to marry an older man widely considered a laggard and a dunce, she took advantage of her enforced move to the city of Cognac, close to Italy, to enlarge her cultural awareness, and to fall under the spell of the great Italian tale-teller Giovanni Boccaccio. For this intense growing atmosphere Marguerite was well prepared by the classical education she had been given as a child, and when her brother became king she was enabled to give full vent to her literary talents. She became the center of a literary salon, the 'New Parnassus,' and began to share out the distinguished personality she had been forming for herself. Her first published work, the *Miroir de l'ame pecheresse* (1511), *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, grew from the loss of her first and only child and serves as a rich complement to the imaginative tales she constructed in the *Heptameron (1558).* In the *Mirror* she writes 1400 lines of verse lamenting her miserable behaviors in life—her faithlessness, her unreliability, her lack of faith—and then tracking her path back to grace.

Marguerite the confessional writer. The intensity of her soulful confessions not only seemed arbitrary and self-indulgent, to the many contemporaries who found her self-confessions heretical, but found an attentive ear in others, such as Anne Boleyn, the wife of Henry VIII, who quite probably promoted Marguerite's ideas in England, on the highest levels and at such a degree that the Protestant turn to Elizabethan religious life may owe something to Marguerite's work. Marguerite's most famous work, the *Heptameron*, reflects a very different turn of imagination—a turn which shows how many sided the Renaissance French mind could be. As we see, in the prologue to this work, the influence of Boccaccio's *Decameron* is strong—and the parallel to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is evident. A group of travelers is detained in an abbey, while waiting for the completion of a bridge, which will enable them to continue on their way. Each traveler in turn—though the sequence was incomplete at Marguerite's death—offers a diverting tale, which will help the company pass the time. It is surprising for the modern reader to discover how bawdy, risque, and entertaining these tales can be. What can be more guaranteed to keep you awake, than the tale of the nobleman who, becoming aware that the king is cuckolding him with his wife, then takes up with the queen, generating a pattern of mutual deceits which keeps the foursome quite happy.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Heptameron, tr, intro by Paul Chilton, 1984.

Secondary source reading

Cholakian, P and Cholakian., R., *Marguerite. de Navarre, Mother of the Renaissance*, 2006.

Further reading

Lyons, J. and McKinley, M., *The Heptameron and early modern Culture*, l993.

Original language reading

Janda, Pierre, *Une princesse de la Renaissance, M. d'Angouleme*, l973.

Suggested paper topics

What interface do you see between *The Mirror of the Sinful Soul* and the *Heptameron*? While some of the tales in the latter are provocative and sensuous, the former text appears to beg for freedom from the temptations of the body, and its sinful life. Do these two texts fit together? Can you think of contemporary (to us) parallels to this kind of double sensibility?

How would you compare the narrative contents of the *Heptameron* with those of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Decameron* of Boccaccio? Is Marguerite, a lady, far more delicate in sensibility than her two male counterparts? Is she more complex and devious, as a narrator?

Excerpt http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/navarre/heptameron/heptameron.htm

TWO children were born of the marriage of Charles of Orleans, Count of Angoulême, a prince of the blood royal of France, and Louise, the daughter of Philip Duke of Savoy, and Margaret of Bourbon. The elder of the two was Margaret, the principal subject of this memoir, born on the 11th of April, 1492; the younger, born on the 12th of September, 1494, was the prince who succeeded Louis XII. on the throne of France, February, 1515, under the name of Francis I.

Married when she was little more than eleven years old, Louise of Savoy was left a widow before she had completed her eighteenth year, and thenceforth devoted herself with exemplary assiduity to the care of her children, who repaid her solicitude by the warm affection they always felt for their mother and for each other. She was a woman of remarkable beauty and capacity, and her character and conduct were deserving, in many respects, of the eulogies which her daughter never wearied of lavishing upon them; but less partial writers have convicted her of criminal acts, which brought disasters upon her son and her country. In the first year of his reign, Francis I. committed the regency of the kingdom to his mother, and set out on his expedition to Italy. He was absent but a few months; nevertheless, this first regency enabled Louise of Savoy to fill the most important offices with men entirely devoted to her interests, and even to her caprices and to gratify by any and every means the insatiable thirst for money with which she was cursed.

In the beginning of the year 1522, Lautrec, one of the king's favorites, who commanded his forces in Italy, lost in a few days all the advantages which Francis had gained by the victory of Marignano. He returned to Paris with only two attendants, and sought an audience of the king, who refused at first to receive him. Finally, at the intercession of the Constable of Bourbon, Francis allowed Lautrec to appear before him, and after loading him with reproaches, demanded what excuse he could offer for himself. Lautrec calmly replied, "The troops I commanded not having been paid, refused to follow me, and I was left alone."–"What!" said the king, " I sent you four hundred thousand crowns to Genoa, and Semblançay, the superintendent of finance, forwarded you three hundred thousand."–"Sire, I have received nothing." Semblançay being summoned to the presence, "Father," said the king, (who addressed him in that way on accouut of his great age), "come hither and tell us if you have not, in pursuance of my order, sent M. de Lautrec the sum of three hundred thousand crowns?"–"Sire," replied the superintendent, "I am prepared to prove that I delivered that sum to the duchess your mother, that she might employ it as you say."–"Very well," said the king, and went into his mother's room to question her.

Essay

Michel de Montaigne

Montaigne the man. Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) was a French essayist, diplomat, psychologist, and perceptive student of human behavior, and in these roles exercised an unparalleled influence over his Renaissance contemporaries, as well as over thinkers and writers to our own day.

The background of this essayist. Michel de Montaigne was born near Bordeaux, of a very rich family. (His great grandfather, a brilliant merchant in herring, had purchased the great estate on which Michel and his father were raised, and with it conspicuous social prominence. In that privileged condition, Montaigne was raised with extraordinary care, and after a design worked out by his father, who remained the most powerful influence in Montaigne's own life. (Father and son both occupied the role of Mayor of Bordeaux.) The pedagogical design, with which Montaigne was raised and to which he referred often in his writings—cf. the renowned essay 'On the Education of Children'—was based both on closeness to the ancient classics, and on practice—learning through doing. The practical side of this pedagogy was in place from early in Montaigne's life, when he was sent to live with a peasant family, so that he would know how the world works and how things are done. As Montaigne developed, his father exposed him, through travel, personal contacts, and techniques of self-examination, to a keen psychological self-awareness. As for the 'higher culture' exposure of Michel, to the classics, to literature and the arts, and to languages, no son has been more specially trained. For education the young man was turned over to a tutor who spoke only German—so that Michel learned perforce, and, in the same vein, all the servants in the Montaigne household spoke only Latin with the young man—with the expected quick learning curve. The young man was waked every morning to the sound of a different instrument—so that he would grow instrumentally sensitive—and was given a rigorous physical training program, to keep body in sync with mind.

The career and work of Montaigne. In 1539, when he was six, Montaigne was sent for formal education to the College de Guyenne, where he began his studies with the foremost Hellenist of his age, George Buchanan. Upon graduation he pursued legal studies, served as a courtier in the court of Charles IX, and entered into a pre-arranged marriage—common among the elite of his culture—in which he had little interest, though enough to father six children, all girls. (Throughout his writing he looks down on marriage as a necessary social invention, nothing more.) In 1568 his active writing career assumed form, opening with the extraordinary complex *Apology for Raymond de Sebonde*, a philosophically subtle work, laying the stamp of skepticism firmly on his work and thought. (His famous query, *que-sais je*, *what do I know*, is first enunciated in the *Apology*, and will become a leitfmotif of his thinking, as it grows. In the vast body of essays which Montaigne will establish, until his death, he will write—often both skeptically and humanely—of a diverse array of matters: the *noble savage* in the new worlds being discovered at the time; the education of small children, marriage and its uses; the power (and weakness) of memory; the infinite variety of human types on the globe (as Montaigne knew it); the elements of problem solving and of diplomatic objectivity. In dealing with all such themes Montaigne brings to bear his uniquely direct, accessible, modest but strong personality.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Complete Essays of Montaigne, trans. Frame, 1989.

Secondary source reading.

Hoffman, G., *Montaigne's Career,* l998.

Further reading

Original language reading

Hollier, Denis, *A New History of French Literature*, l995.

Suggested paper topics

Jama, Sophie, *L'histoire juive de Montaigne*, 2001.

Montaigne wishes to write directly about himself, as a distinct but representative human being. That is the foundation of his essay project.
Does he come off as in some sense a 'universal human being?' Or is he a highly distinct, time bound perceiver of the world?

What do you think of Montaigne's pedagogy, based as it is on a strict and extensive use of Latin? Are there merits to that kind of teaching and learning? Is the classical tradition in education solidly founded? Or has it properly yielded to much more pragmatic and psychologically complex views of the way young people learn?

Excerpts http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne

> We are, I know not how, double in ourselves, so that what we believe we disbelieve, and cannot rid ourselves of what we condemn.

> Without straining or artifice; for it is myself that I portray...I am myself the matter of my book.

> As for extraordinary things, all the provision in the world would not suffice.

> In my opinion, every rich man is a miser.

> How many we know who have fled the sweetness of a tranquil life in their homes, among the friends, to seek the horror of uninhabitable deserts; who have flung themselves into humiliation, degradation, and the contempt of the world, and have enjoyed these and even sought them out.

> Things are not bad in themselves, but our cowardice makes them so.

> The thing I fear most is fear.

> Whatever can be done another day can be done today.

17TH CENTURY

Overview

At the beginning of the century, and in anticipation of the sharp classicism of the l7th century, there was at this time considerable literary scourging of the attitudes of the late Renaissance. The poet Malherbe (1555-1628) violently attacked the mannerisms, affectation, and exaggeration of the later poets of the Baroque period. His emphasis on impersonality, clarity, sobriety and purity and precision of diction virtually killed lyricism, and substituted eloquence in its place.

The destructive criticism of Malherbe, the rationalism of Descartes, the absolutism of the court, the elegance and refinement of the salons, and the stabilizing influence of the Academy—all these combined to clear the way for French classicism, which was triumphant in the last half of the century. Boileau (1636-1711), who succeeded Malherbe as literary dictator, continued the work of purifying diction, and propounded the literary dogma of French classicism: Truth alone is beautiful. The poet should imitate nature, which is true. Reason should dominate the poet's work. Poetical expression should conform to good taste. Imitation of the ancients should be cultivated. Originality is not novelty of idea but the perfect expression of an idea. These ideas of Boileau were immensely influential, and he summed them up in a brilliant *Art Poétique*, which was of immense importance in both England and France.

During the last decades of the seventeenth century literary discussion revolved around the Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes (1687-1715), the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, over whether the ancient authors were superior to the modern ones. At stake was one's view of whether the arts were progressive, and, in a wider sense, of whether human cultural life is progressive.

Discussion questions

To what factors would you point, in trying to explain the explosion of great drama in mid-seventeenth century France? Do you think the social milieu created by the grand monarch, Louis XIV, was an important factor?

What conception of the tragic does Racine extract from ancient Greek drama? Does Racine view the human as a helpless victim of 'divine plans'?

In what way is middle class society the essential target of Moliere's comedy? What is it that he 'pokes fun' at most?

Does *La Princesse de Cleves* qualify as a novel, or is it more nearly an historical memoir? Do you see novels, or the novel tendency, in French literature before the work of Mme. de Lafayette?

How does Corneille implicitly evaluate the culture of his own time, in his works which regularly draw on older and more honor-bound traditional cultures?

Drama

Corneille, Pierre

Pierre Corneille, man and works. Pierre de Corneille (1606-1684) was born and grew up in Rouen. His father was a distinguished lawyer (and his younger brother a well known playwright, like Corneille himself.) He received a thorough Jesuit education at the College de Bourbon, and at eighteen began to study for a career in the law, following his father. This plan failing, and Corneille losing interest in law, his father got him two successive posts with the Rouen Department of Forests and Rivers but by that time Corneille had convinced himself that the stage was his destiny. (Already in 1629 he had drawn attention to his first play; he offered it to a troupe of traveling actors, who carried it all the way to a small audience in Paris.) In 1634 he produced his first so-called tragic-comic drama, *Médée*, and in the next year his tragedy, *Le Cid*, brought him fame and attention after the successes of a single night's performance.

Corneille and Le Cid. *Le Cid* was a fruit of Corneille's long time preoccupation with Spanish drama and chiefly with the stage of Calderon (1600-1681). This play deals like its predecessors with those questions of honor, fate, and destiny which belong to the Spanish tradition. For several reasons, among which was the tribute to the Spanish tradition—the Spaniards being the greatest foreign rivals of France at the time—*Le Cid* aroused huge controversy, and though the newly formed Académie Francaise objected strongly to many violations of the Aristotelian unities, and to the play's 'primitive' addictions to dueling and honor, the play won enormous approval from the French public, and Corneille was from then on the principal father of French classical drama. In retrospect it is easy to see why *Le Cid* scored so strongly with the French public. The play intertwines several passions: lust, honor, glory on the battlefield, and although the tale ends as what was at the time called a "romantic comedy," it had spilled much blood and evoked much heroism before it concluded. In literary historical terms, this play will remind you of the world setting of the twelfth century *Song of Roland*, where honor and chivalry join. The element of Romance—Rodrigue and Chimene are "destined for one another"—marks the modernity of this quasi mediaeval tale. In *Cinna* (1643), a few years later, we expect bloodshed to come out of the hero's hostility to the Emperor Augustus. But what happens? To our surprise, and pleasure, the Emperor's benign and guileless attitude wins over his enemies. The "sentimentality" of the modern stage remodels the starker world presentations of older literature. Corneille went on from dramas like these to a prolific dramatic career, comedies as well as tragedies, and it is generally felt that the four tragedies he created between l636 and 1643—*Le Cid, Horace, Cinna, Polyeucte*—were not only his finest work but one of the triumphs of the French tragic drama, which was establishing the l7th century as one of the world's most fertile, in skilled and wise portrayals of human fate.

The themes of Corneille's work. The general themes of these works turn repeatedly around issues of honor and the dignity with which the tragic hero, representing a summit of human virtue, can survive the most dreadful events with his tragic endurance. Many of Corneille's finest plays were based on ancient Roman history, though not from a desire to be historically accurate, rather, to use the Roman event as background for staging eternally valid truths about human nature and its destiny. It is worth noting that for Corneille it was essential at least broadly to follow the dramatic rules of the three unities, which were at that time enshrined in the value system of the French Academy. The unities of place, time, and action, as Aristotle was interpreted to have meant them, in his *Poetics*, held firm sway over French dramatic creation throughout the l7th century.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Cid, Cinna, tr. Cairncross, l976.

Secondary source reading

Moriarty, M. *Fallen Nature, Fallen Selves*, 2003.

Further reading

Benichou, Paul, *Morale du grand siècle,* l949.

Original language reading

Bonnet, Jean-Claude, *Essai sur le culte des grands hommes,* 1998.

Suggested paper topics

In what ways did Corneille rethink and rework the Spanish tradition of heroic drama, from which he took much inspiration? Did he deepen that drama, by converting it from histrionics to fundamental human issues? Or don't you find Corneille's drama that 'human'?

How do you evaluate the role of the 'three unities' both as it plays out in Corneille's work, and in its overall contribution to theatricality? Do those 'unities' add to the value of a work like Le Cid? How do they strengthen the work?

Excerpt http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14954/14954-h/14954-h.htm#

Chimène. Elvira, have you given me a really true report? Do you conceal nothing that my father has said?

Elvira. All my feelings within me are still delighted with it. He esteems Rodrigo as much as you love him; and if I do not misread his mind, he will command you to respond to his passion.

Chimène. Tell me then, I beseech you, a second time, what makes you believe that he approves of my choice; tell me anew what hope I ought to entertain from it. A discourse so charming cannot be too often heard; you cannot too forcibly promise to the fervor of our love the sweet liberty of manifesting itself to the light of day. What answer has he given regarding the secret suit which Don Sancho and Don Rodrigo are paying to you? Have you not too clearly shown the disparity between the two lovers which inclines me to the one side?

Elvira. No; I have depicted your heart as filled with an indifference which elates not either of them nor destroys hope, and, without regarding them with too stern or too gentle an aspect, awaits the commands of a father to choose a spouse. This respect has delighted him—his lips and his countenance gave me at once a worthy testimony of it; and, since I must again tell you the tale, this is what he hastened to say to me of them and of you: 'She is in the right. Both are worthy of her; both are sprung from a noble, valiant, and faithful lineage; young but yet who show by their mien the brilliant valor of their brave ancestors. Don Rodrigo, above all, has no feature in his face which is not the noble representative of a man of courage and descends from a house so prolific in warriors, that they enter into life in the midst of laurels.

Racine, Jean

Racine the man and the early work. Jean Racine (1639-1699) Racine was born in Aisnes, in the province of Picardy, in the north of France. Orphaned at the age of four, by the death of both his parents, his grandmother moved, with him, to the Convent of Port-Royal, the stronghold of Jansenist faith and culture. (The Jansenists constituted an influential and highly controversial group within the Catholic Church, insisting on predestination, original sin, and man's incapacity to form his own destiny. Racine remained under the influence of this perspective all his life.) Brought up, like Molière, in the center of Paris--which is where the Port Royal convent was located--Racine however was of high middle class background, and at an early age, in the schools of Port Royal, he received the most thorough classical education available, coming especially into a mastery of Greek, which was to be a major source of inspiration throughout his dramatic career. (The Greeks, rather than the Romans, were becoming the inspiration of choice in the French theater of the time.) After an unsuccessful attempt to study theology, which did not interest him, Racine returned from seminary to Paris, and once more embraced the excitement of urban life, making influential and agreeable friendships, with the fable writer La Fontaine, and soon with Molière and Boileau. Racine's first tragedy was published in l664.

Racine in full career. There followed a period of pain and growth for Racine, as his masters of religious instruction, from whom he had learned so much at seminary, published their strong disapproval of his devotion to the stage, a slur which brought sharp response from Racine, and a firm new decision to commit his life to the theater. Already his first efforts on the Parisian stage were met with strong approval from the critic par excellence, Boileau, the author of the doctrinal masterpiece *L'Art Poetique,* with its brilliantly expressed obeisance to Aristotle. With the superb play *Andromaque* (1667) Racine initiated a series of masterpieces—*Britannicus*, *Iphigénie*, *Phèdre*—which would establish for French tragedy, as Molière did for comedy, a world wide pre eminence. It comes to us as a shock that at the height of his powers and fame, with *Phèdre* in l677, Racine virtually abandons the theater, marries a woman who has never read a line of his work, reconciles with his Port Royal masters, and devotes himself henceforth to God, king, and family.

The remaking of the ancient Classics. Montaigne and Rabelais were both steeped in the texts of Ancient Greece and Rome. Racine, creating a century later, reinterprets those same ancient texts for the stage, and in so doing must bring his new vision to a living audience with its own contemporary tastes. Take a small example of the new sensibility Racine introduces. In the play of Euripides, from which Racine's *Phedre* derives, Phedre herself is not on stage when she receives the tragic news of the death of Hippolytus. In Racine's play Phèdre remains on stage, to absorb the full brunt of the news. Can you see the sensational vivacity Racine is driving at, which contrasts with the reticence of the Greek playwright?

The nature of Racinian tragedy. Racine is a psychologist, at his best dissecting the intense emotions of passionate, vengeful, and introspective women. His sense of structure is faultless in his finest plays, like *Phèdre,* and mounts to a purifyingly tragic climax, handled with infinite verbal subtlety, in the consummate French classical blend.

Reading

Primary source reading

Racine, *Phedre,* trans. Wilson, l987.

Secondary source reading

Butler, Philip, *Racine: A Study*, l974.

Further reading

Moriarty, M., *Early modern French Thought,* 2003.

Original language reading

Forster, Georges, *Jean Racine*, 2006.

Suggested paper topics

It is roughly true that Racine takes his greatest inspiration from the ancient Greeks, while Corneille takes his from the Romans. Evaluate that perception. Do, say, Britannicus and Iphigenie provide good examples of the point? What kind of inspiration does the Greek matrix provide?

Does Racine, at his best, provide the kind of shock and awe that the greatest of Greek dramas, like *Oedipus the King*, provide? Or does the modern, courtly setting, of Racine limit its fundamental power?

Excerpt http://archive.org/stream/phaedra01977gut/phrdr10.txt

HIPPOLYTUS My mind is settled, dear Theramenes, And I can stay no more in lovely Troezen. In doubt that racks my soul with mortal anguish, I grow ashamed of such long idleness. Six months and more my father has been gone, And what may have befallen one so dear I know not, nor what corner of the earth Hides him. THERAMENES And where, prince, will you look for him? Already, to content your just alarm, Have I not cross'd the seas on either side of Corinth, ask'd if aught were known of Theseus where Acheron is lost among the Shades, visited Elis, doubled Toenarus, and sail'd into the sea that saw the fall Of Icarus? Inspired with what new hope, under what favour'd skies think you to trace His footsteps? Who knows if the King, your father, wishes the secret of his absence known? Perchance, while we are trembling for his life, The hero calmly plots some fresh intrigue, And only waits till the deluded fair-- HIPPOLYTUS Cease, dear Theramenes, respect the name Of Theseus. Youthful errors have been left behind, and no unworthy obstacle Detains him. Phaedra long has fix'd a heart Inconstant once, nor need she fear a rival. In seeking him I shall but do my duty, And leave a place I dare no longer see. THERAMENES Indeed! When, prince, did you begin to dread these peaceful haunts, so dear to happy childhood, Where I have seen you oft prefer to stay, rather than meet the tumult and the pomp of Athens and the court? What danger shun you, Or shall I say what grief? HIPPOLYTUS That happy time is gone, and all is changed, since to these shores The gods sent Phaedra. THERAMENES I perceive the cause of your distress. It is the queen whose sight offends you. With a step-dame's spite she schemed your exile soon as she set eyes on you. But if her hatred is not wholly vanish'd, It has at least taken a milder aspect. Besides, what danger can a dying woman, one too who longs for death, bring on your head? Can Phaedra, sick'ning of a dire disease of which she will not speak, weary of life And of herself, form any plots against you? HIPPOLYTUS It is not her vain enmity I fear, Another foe alarms Hippolytus. I fly, it must be own'd, from young Aricia, The sole survivor of an impious race…

Molière

Molière the man; the early career. Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière (1622-1673) was raised in the heart of Paris, son of an upholsterer, who became valet de chamber to King Louis XIV. He was educated by the Jesuits, in whose College he became active in Latin learning and in acting of Roman comedy. The following years found Moliere gradually making his way into the world of street theaters—he spent thirteen years on the road as an itinerant actor--and getting a sense of the whole dramatic territory. His confidence at last well established, after the favorable reception of certain of his youthful efforts, he returned to Paris in l658, and had the perfect luck to catch the favorable attention of King Louis XIV. (Acquiring a stage and theater in which to perform was of top importance, and Moliere skillfully ingratiated himself with royalty, never touching that target in his wide ranging career as a dramatic satirist. Even so, he spent considerable time in deep poverty, and had at one point to be rescued from debtor's prison by his father.) In 1668 he returned to Paris from a barnstorming tour of the provinces—with a number of high successes to his credit—*Le Medecin malgre lui* (*The Doctor in spite of himself)* 1666; *Tartuffe* 1664; *The Misanthrope* 1666-- and the final fifteen years of his life were spent in a high creative mode. He created nineteen plays during this period, many of them among the highest achievements of French literature.

The nature of Moliere's plays. In the highest, and most universal of his comedies, Moliere comes close to portraying universal types, characters who act out, indeed almost become, traitsof what is 'always and everywhere valid.' *The Doctor in spite of Himself*, *The Would be Middle Class Gentleman*, *The Miser*, *The Misanthrope*; all these characters are known to all at all times. Underneath this level of broad humanity, in many of Molière's satirical dramas, lies a level of farce and slapstick, which was always part of the French dramatic tradition, from the times of the rough and tumble streets dramas of mediaeval times. Moliere himself was used to the street performance, and the local country farce.

Middle Class Society and its Foibles. Racine and Corneille are tragic or tragic-comic dramatists, but Moliere introduces us to a new register in French literature, irony or satire. (Rabelais seems to write a mixture of caricature and fantasy.) For that, French literature needed an analytic genius as playwright; in return French culture served up, to Moliere, a new phenomenon, the middle class. This class was starting to make prominent appearance throughout Europe, by the mid-17th century. Once again, many factors—economic, political, military-- contributed to that social phenomenon, which was sure to generate all those foibles that assert themselves when what we might call "family values" are called to perform like the chivalric values of old. Moliere had an ample field for satire in the pretentious or self-deluded individuals who surrounded him in the court and streets of Paris. It was only when Moliere attacked the clergy, physicians, courtiers, bores and *precieuses* that the critics closed in savagely on Moliere. At such times only the protection and patronage of the king saved him. It comes as a supreme irony that Moliere met his death while playing the lead role in *Le Malade Imaginaire* (*The Imaginary Invalid);* while playing that character he was seized by a hemorrhage and died a few hours later.

Reading

Primary source reading
Tartuffe, tr, Richard Wilbur, l992.

Secondary source reading
Scott, V., *Moliere, a Theatrical Life*, 2000.

Further reading
Riggs, L., *Moliere and Modernity,* 2005.

Original language reading

Simon, Alfred, *Moliere, une vie,* l988.

Suggested paper topics

Is the growth of Middle Class society essential for the development of comedy like Moliere's? What is it about Middle Class society that generates the character types Moliere needs for his process of ridiculing? Is American society today oriented around the Middle Class? Is it comic?

Is it a healthy sign, when a society, through its drama or fiction or tv, it able to make fun of itself? Is it a sign of self-confidence? Are we in the West able to make fun of ourselves? Do we enjoy the portrayal of stock types of 'losers,' such as the character types Moliere pillories?

Excerpt http://moliere-in-english.com/doctorinspiteof.html
GERONTE That's my baby's wetnurse.
SGANARELLE (*Aside)* A juicy bit of crumpet, I must say

(*Aloud.*) Ah, nurse, my doctorship is but the clay
To which your nurseship gives a shape and form.
Ah, would I were the tot, all snug and warm,
(*Putting his hand on her breast.*)
Who tastes here at the font of your good graces.
At such abundance, my small art abases.
Would that my skills might by you yet be known ...
LUCAS
Your pardon, sir, please leave my wife alone.
SGANARELLE
What! Is this girl your wife?

SGANARELLE (*Going as if to embrace LUCAS, he embraces JACQUELINE instead.*)
Oh such a wondrous joy that is to me!
I celebrate your mutual affection.
LUCAS (*Drawing SGANARELLE away.*)
That's fine, sir, please, not quite such strong inflection.
SGANARELLE
I do delight to see you so well matched,
I do commend you two, so well attached.
I thrill for her, and risking some redundance,
Salute you, finding wife of such abundance.
(*Makes, again, as if to embrace LUCAS, but passes under his arm to throw himself on JACQUELINE.*)
LUCAS (*Pulling him off again.*)
Good Lord, sir! Not so many compliments!
I beg you --
SGANARELLE You'd not place impediments

To celebration of how your rare hearts
Should join in blessed union of fair parts.
LUCAS
Ay, celebrate unto your hearts content,
With me, but not my wife to such extent.

SGANARELLE
I share the joy of both; know, if I clasp
You in such honor, that I also grasp
(*Repeating business.*) Your lovely wife for such respectful aim,
To fully know the breadth of --

Fiction

Lafayette, Mme. de

Mme. de Lafayette the person. Mme. de Lafayette (1634-1693) was the daughter of a doctor working in the service of King Louis XIV, and was thus a member of the minor nobility, a fact of great importance for the kind of exposure she was later to have to affairs of high society, literary salons, and court. At sixteen, the future Mme. de Lafayatte was appointed Maid of Honor to Queen Anne of Austria, and in that capacity qualified for an exceptional education, especially in Latin and Italian. Not only was she gaining formal education, but was gradually being drawn inward up toward the social and cultural life of the court. A number of favoring personal relations enhanced her position in the milieu of upper class social life. Her mother was in close relation with a distinguished man around court, Renaud de Sévigné, whom she married at the death of her own husband, in l649. This was an important development for the daughter, both because her step father was to remain one of her closest friends, and because Monsieur de Sévigné was the uncle of the Mme de Sévigné who was the doyenne of the most flourishing literary salon in Paris. The period was one where literary opinion and taste setting trends were largely generated by the power of literary salons, typically under the direction of women of class and fashion. Mme. de Sévigné and Mme. de Lafayette was soon to form a literary salon of their own, at which Mme. de Lafayette met and exchanged ideas with luminaries of the period, like Artaud, Henrietta of England, and the incomparably prolific and influential Mlle de Scudery, whose approval was decisive for success on the salon scene. Contacts of the highest level were important to bringing Mme. de Lafayette to wide public attention, but her own work was at the same time growing in maturity. From her novel, *La Princesse de Montpensier* ((1662) to her summit achievement, La *Princesse de Cleves*, Mme. de Lafayette shows a brilliant upward curve.

La Princesse de Cleves. *La Princesses de Cleves* (1678) was Mme. de Lafayette's masterpiece, and an overnight success in France. It is often considered the first novel by a woman, and however one feels about that, no doubt exists that the fictional landscape is jumpstarted with this work. The reason for the success of this tale of love in a court setting, temptation and prudence at war, and ultimate abnegation, surely has to do with the way it replicates both history and the author's own life. The short novel is set in the court of Henry II of France, about a century before Mme. de Lafayette's time, and is in all essentials—except the character of the heroine, La Princesse de Cleves—true to the facts. A young provincial lady is taken to Paris in search of a good match, finds the market shrunken, settles for a decent man twenty years her elder, then meets a dashing nobleman to whom love immediately draws her. She comes to suspect the honorable nature of that gentleman, but is then reassured and deepened in love, while all the time her husband's suspicions have been growing, until eventually La Princesse confesses her weakness, and leaves her husband heading for an early grave, while remorse leads the Princesse, now at last free, to retire to a convent, and to reflect on her life. The tale, which bears a subtle but continual relation to Mme. de Lafayette's own life, is told with a chastity of narrative and rhetoric which takes the breath away; only the dramatist Racine rivals Mme. de Lafayette, in the ability to compress, understate, and select with awesome relevance.

Reading

Primary source reading

Mme. de Lafayette, *The Princess of Cleves*, tr. Mitford, 2008.

Secondary source reading

Beasley, Faith, *Women's Fiction and Memoirs in l7th century France*, l990.

Further reading

Showalter, English, *The Evolution of the French Novel, 1641-1782*, 1972.

Original language reading

Coulet, Henri, *Du roman jusqu'a la revolution*, 2 vols., 1967-68.

Suggested paper topics

Does *La Princesse de Cleves* seem clearly modeled on the court life and experience of Mme. de Lafayette? How has the author tweaked her own life, in order to create this fiction? What is the mystery that transforms life into art?

Does Mme. de Lafayettte adopt an attitude, finally, toward the desires of the flesh? Is she a penitent and confessional personality type, or a cool observer? How does her imagination work, in comparison to that of Marguerite de Navarre in the *Heptameron*?

Excerpt
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/467/467.txt

Grandeur and gallantry never appeared with more lustre in France, than in the last years of Henry the Second's reign. This Prince was amorous and handsome, and though his passion for Diana of Poitiers Duchess of Valentinois, was of above twenty years standing, it was not the less violent, nor did he give less distinguishing proofs of it. As he was happily turned to excel in bodily exercises, he took a particular delight in them, such as hunting, tennis, running at the ring, and the like diversions. Madam de Valentinois gave spirit to all entertainments of this sort, and appeared at them with grace and beauty equal to that of her grand-daughter, Madam de la Marke, who was then unmarried; the Queen's presence seemed to authorise hers. The Queen was handsome, though not young; she loved grandeur, magnificence and pleasure; she was married to the King while he was Duke of Orleans, during the life of his elder brother the Dauphin, a prince whose great qualities promised in him a worthy successor of his father Francis the First. The Queen's ambitious temper made her taste the sweets of reigning, and she seemed to bear with perfect ease the King's passion for the Duchess of Valentinois, nor did she express the least jealousy of it; but she was so skilful a dissembler, that it was hard to judge of her real sentiments, and policy obliged her to keep the duchess about her person, that she might draw the King to her at the same time. This Prince took great delight in the conversation of women, even of such as he had no passion for; for he was every day at the Queen's court, when she held her assembly, which was a concourse of all that was beautiful and excellent in either sex. Never were finer women or more accomplished men seen in any Court, and Nature seemed to have taken pleasure in lavishing her greatest graces on the greatest persons. The Princess Elizabeth, since Queen of Spain, began now to manifest an uncommon wit, and to display those beauties, which proved afterwards so fatal to her. Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, who had just married the Dauphin, and was called the Queen-Dauphin, had all the perfections of mind and body; she had been educated in the Court of France, and had imbibed all the politeness of it; she was by nature so well formed to shine in everything that was polite, that notwithstanding her youth, none surpassed her in the most refined accomplishments. The Queen, her mother-in-law, and the King's sister, were also extreme lovers of music, plays and poetry; for the taste which Francis the First had for the Belles Lettres was not yet extinguished in France; and as his son was addicted to exercises, no kind of pleasure was wanting at Court. But what rendered this Court so splendid, was the presence of so many great Princes, and persons of the highest quality and merit: those I shall name, in their different characters, were the admiration and ornament of their age. The King

of Navarre drew to himself the respect of all the world both by the greatness of his birth, and by the dignity that appeared in his person; he was remarkable for his skill and courage in war. The Duke of Guise had also given proofs of extraordinary valour, and had, been so successful, that there was not a general who did not look upon him with envy; to his valour he added a most exquisite genius and understanding, grandeur of mind, and a capacity equally turned for military or civil affairs. His brother, the Cardinal of Loraine, was a man of boundless ambition, and of extraordinary wit and eloquence, and had besides acquired a vast variety of learning, which enabled him to make himself very considerable by defending the Catholic religion, which began to be attacked at that time.

Larochefoucauld, Duc de la

Duc de Larochefoucauld, man and public figure. Francois VI, duc de la Rochefoucauld, Prince de Marillac (1613-1680), was a nobleman of military expertise, social sophistication, and high literary skill, who has left us, in his *Maxims,* memoirs, and letters, an unsurpassed characterization of the world of the *honnete homme,* the commendably generous and self-aware gentleman, who became the admirable human norm for cultured society in seventeenth century France, and who was the correction from against which Moliere proceeded to portray the multiple distorted figures who are the stock of his brilliant satirical drama. De la Rochefoucauld chiseled in his maxims with sharp edged accuracy, neither sentimental nor judgmental, and set a standard we still look up to.

Public life of de la Rochefoucauld. De la Rochefoucauld was born into the higher nobility, at a time when there was major royal conflict, in France, concerning the attitude of the King toward the nobility; some wanting a rapprochment, others feeling that the Monarchy should remains strictly for the people as a whole, and not for the nobility. It was in the light of this conflict, especially, that de la Rochfoucauld appeared on the national scene as an exemplar of the finest nobleman. He was well educated, highly trained in military tactic and warfare—which was in fact for much of his life a career—an expert at hunting, the etiquette of life at court, and in the arts of public converse, especially in high society. We must think that from this matrix of ;public exposures and skills, de la Rochefoucauld sharpened his eye for human nature and its limitations.

The Duke as power player. Apart from service in a number of military campaigns—against Spain, with his monarchy in Flanders, and in several internal French conflicts—de la Rochfoucauld found himself drawn into the vortex of French social politics, which in this period involved the jockeying for power of competing Ministers of State, like the Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin, who deployed their own armies, and competed in openly secular contravention of their churchly roles. Larochefoucauld's tough and impartial views, of such conflicts, were clearly the breeding ground for his 'honnete homme' perspective onto human nature. His work of greatest importance to us is the *Maximes* (1665)

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The Maxims of Larochefoucauld. The perspective from which Moliere satirizes, and toward which the elite of seventeenth century France strove, is perfectly crystallized in the views of man deployed in the *Maxims* of Larochfoucauld.

Our virtues are most frequently but vices in disguise.
What we term virtues are often but a mass of various actions and divers interests, which fortune or our own industry manage to arrange; and it is not always from valour or from chastity that men are brave, and women chaste.
Self-love is the greatest of all flatterers.

Reading

Primary source reading

Maxims, de la Rochefoucauld, tr. Tancock, l959.

Secondary source reading

Moriary, M. *Early Modern French Thought: The Age of Suspicion,* 2003.

Further reading

Viala, A., *La naissance de l'écrivain sociologue de la litérature à l'age classique,* 1985.

Original language reading

Bury, Emmanuel, *Literature et politique, l'invention de l'honnte homme, 1580-1750,* 1996.

Suggested paper topics

Is de la Rochefoucauld an original thinker or simply a sharp observer with a sense of literary style? What is involved in social observation which leads to maxims? Is the writing of de la Rochefoucauld reminiscent of that of Moliere, or even Montaigne?

Do you find de la Rochefoucauld cynical, or just 'accurate'? Is the intention of his 'maximes' to inspire us or teach us? Or is it to make us take pleasure in looking down on ourselves? What is the psychology at work in this kind of writing?

Excerpt http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_de_La_Rochefoucauld

> Our virtues are most frequently but vices in disguise.
> What we term virtues are often but a mass of various actions and divers interests, which fortune or our own industry manage to arrange; and it is not always from valour or from chastity that men are brave, and women chaste.
> Self-love is the greatest of all flatterers.
> Passion often renders the most clever man a fool, and even sometimes renders the most foolish man clever**.**
> The passions are the only advocates which always persuade. They are a natural art, the rules of which are infallible; and the simplest man with passion will be more persuasive than the most eloquent without.
> In the human heart there is a perpetual generation of passions, such that the ruin of one is almost always the foundation of another
> We should not be upset that others hide the truth from us, when we hide it so often from ourselves.

18th century

Unlike the literary productions of the seventeenth century, the literature of the Age of Enlightenment was more concerned with content than with form and technique. Much of it was utilitarian, purposive, and didactic. "It was dominated by a skeptical philosophy, a hatred of any form of tradition or authority, and a desire for political and social reform…" The watchwords of the age were reform, freedom of thought, and tolerance. Seventeenth century authors superseded the ancients as models, but classical forms and genres were still employed, and the rules of Boileau's *Art Poetique* were not questioned. Wit and cosmopolitanism were frequent ingredients, and, after the middle of the century, "sensibility" became popular.

Quite understandably, all eighteenth century French literature is prose. Voltaire, it is true, wrote many types of poetry, and at the end of the century Andre Chénier (1762-1794) wrote interesting lyrical and philosophical poems.

In the field of the essay, Montesquieu (1689-1755) was one of the leaders. His *Persian Letter*s (1721) were satires on Parisian culture. Of more importance was his *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), an analysis of various governments which demonstrates that they are the results of moral, economic, and physical conditions, and that human laws are relative. Another distinguished essayist was the Comte de Buffon, who wrote a thirty-six volume *Natural History* (1749-1788). The most famous and influential undertaking of the eighteenth century was the *Encyclopedie* (1750-1777), of which the principal editor was Denis Diderot, and to which most of the leading intellectuals of the time contributed. The *Encyclopédie* attempted to gather and systematize all knowledge about the sciences, arts, and trades. Its contributors, however, used it for attacking tyranny in all its forms, and for championing individual liberty and human reason in all their forms. The work played a large part in the development of ideas which would be influential in the French Revolution.

While stage drama was weak in this period, the French novel reached its maturity at this period. Marivaux began two novels of which the main feature was psychological analysis, the Abbé Prévost (1697-1763) wrote one now famous novel, *Manon Lescaut* (1731), and Bernardin de Saint Pierre (1737-1814) wrote *Paul et Virgine*, a sentimental novel deeply involved with nature, which proved an important precursor of Romanticism.

Discussion questions

Is Beaumarchais basically a political playwright? Does the figure of Figaro represent the little man of his time? The vox populi?

What is Rousseau's view of mankind? What kind of childhood education does he advocate, in *Emile*? Is the child to be left free to develop as it wishes? Or are there boundaries and guidelines in childhood education?

What is Voltaire's view of human nature, as he works it out in *Candide*? Does Voltaire believe that society is destined to provide a satisfying home for mankind? What does it mean to 'cultivate your own garden'?

Does Choderlos de Laclos evaluate, as well as anatomize, the cynical sexual games of the high elite? What is, or would be, his evaluation?

Drama

Beaumarchais, Pierre-Augustin de

Pierre-Augustin de Beaumarchais (1732-1799) was a watchmaker, playwright, inventor, musician, diplomat, fugitive, spy, arms dealer, satirist, revolutionary, who lived the intense years of the American and French revolutions, at century's end, as well as the inscape of high court politics under Louis XIV. Born in Paris, the son of a watchmaker, Beaumarchais enjoyed the blessings of a comfortable middle class childhood. At ten he was sent to 'country school' where he learned some Latin, and incidentally, in the same years, pursued his interest in the craft of watchmaking. (By researching closely into the mountings of pocket watches, he invented an escapement that made those watches both more compact and more accurate. For Mme. de Pompidou, the mistress of King, Louis, Beaumarchais created a brilliant watch mounted on a ring.) As a skilled musician, Beaumarchais used this ability to get himself employed as harp instructor for the daughters of King Louis XIV. Having proven himself witty, vitriolic, and articulate, Beaumarchais, who wrote a number of better forgotten plays, found his way into the creation of the three plays which made his fame, to this day: *Le Barbier de Seville* (1775) *Le Mariage de Figaro* (1784), and *La Mère Coupable* (1792). Nor, though, was this major literary achievement all Beaumarchais undertook at court. For one thing he was deeply involved in financial investments, in partner with a highly placed business person—Beaumarchais saw moments of high poverty and high wealth in these years—for another he served the French government as a spy on England, and as the period of the American Revolution approached he found himself engaged increasingly in somewhat covert, and high level effectual, dealings to support both the American and French Revolutions. His sympathy for the 'common man' was not only a driver for his political stance, but the mainspring of his viewpoint in his greatest dramatic achievments.

The major plays. All three of his major plays revolve around the mischief of Figaro, a man of all trades, educated and quick, who ends up as a Barber. In the first of these plays Figaro acts out the role of a witty partner in a love triangle, but in the second pl*ay, Le Mariage de Figaro*, Figaro takes on the role of a critic of the aristocracy, an embittered victim of a privileged society with no respect for the common man; and he expresses these feelings with an incendiary vigor which, in looking back, we may feel part of the spirit that impelled Beaumarchais toward a revolutionary position at century's end. The final address of Figaro to the monarchy, in the last act of *Le Mariage de Figaro*, brought down the ire of establishment France, and is seen, by many, as among the many clarion calls being sounded throughout late eighteenth century Europe, to remind the powers on high that their time was limited. Figaro speaks:

A tirade of Figaro. 'I throw myself full-force into the theatre. Alas, I might as well have put a stone round my neck! I fudge up a play about the manners of the Seraglio; a Spanish author, I imagined, could attack Mahomet without scruple; but immediately some envoy from goodness-knows-where complains that some of my lines offend the Sublime Porte, Persia, some part or other of the East Indies, the whole of Egypt, the kingdoms of Cyrenaica, Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers and Morocco. Behold my comedy scuppered to please a set of Mohammedan princes—not one of whom I believe can read—who habitually beat a tattoo on our shoulders to the tune of "Down with the Christian dogs!" Unable to break my spirit, they decided to take it out on my body. My cheeks grew hollowed: my time was out. I saw in the distance the approach of the fell sergeant, his quill stuck into his wig.'

Reading

Primary source reading,

The Figaro Trilogy, tr. David Coward, 2008.

Secondary source reading

Lever, M. *Beaumarchais: A Biography,* 2009.

Further reading

Paul, J.R., *Unlikely Allies: How a Merchant, a Playwright, and a Spy saved the American Revolution*, 2011.

Original language reading

Dussert, Gilles*, La machinerie Beaumarchais,* 2012.

Suggested paper topics

What connection do you see between Beaumarchais' political underground activities and the view of life and society he develops in *The Marriage of Figaro*? Is he in some sense a 'political writer'?

What significance do you see in Beaumarchais' technical skill as a watchmaker? How does that skill, in your opinion, play out into his genius as musician, director, playwright? Give some thought to the escapement he invented for improving watch performance. What kind of intelligence was required for a discovery of that sort?

Excerpt http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Pierre_Beaumarchais

Ce qui ne vaut pas la peine d'être dit, on le chante.
That which is not worth speaking they sing.
Que les gens d'esprit sont bêtes.
What silly people wits are!
Aujourd'hui, ce qui ne vaut pas la peine d'être dit, on le chante.
Nowadays what isn't worth saying is sung.
Je me presse de rire de tout, de peur d'être obligé d'en pleurer.
I hasten to laugh at everything, for fear of being obliged to weep.
Médiocre et rampant, et l'on arrive à tout.
Be commonplace and creeping, and you attain all things.
Calomniez, calomniez; il en reste toujours quelque chose.
Calumniate, calumniate; there will always be something which sticks.
Il n'est pas nécessaire de tenir les choses pour en raisonner.
It is not necessary to retain facts that we may reason concerning them.
De toutes les choses sérieuses, le mariage étant la plus bouffonne.
Of all serious things, marriage is the most ludicrous.
Boire sans soif et faire l'amour en tout temps, madame, il n'y a que ça qui nous distingue des autres bêtes.
Drinking when not thirsty and making love all the time, madam, is all that distinguishes us from other animals.
Parce que vous êtes un grand seigneur, vous vous croyez un grand génie! … vous vous êtes donné la peine de naître, et rien de plus. Du reste homme assez ordinaire!
Because you are a great lord, you believe that you are a great genius! You took the trouble to be born, no more. You remain an ordinary enough man!
Sans la liberté de blâmer, il n'est point d'éloge flatteur; et qu'il n'y a que les petits hommes qui redoutent les petits écrits.
If censorship reigns, there cannot be sincere flattery, and only small men are afraid of small writings.

Fiction

Voltaire, Francois-Marie Arouet

The importance of Voltaire. Francois Marie Arouet (Voltaire) (1694-1778) was a French philosopher, playwright, poet, letter writer, and political activist, who left a mark on all genres of wiiting and thinking in l8th century France. By many he is considered the epitome of the Enlightenment and the forerunner of the French Revolution, whose ideas of liberty and equality he championed throughout his life.

The Early Life of Voltaire. Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire was born in Paris, the youngest of five children. His father was a lawyer and his mother hailed from a noble family in Poitou. The young Voltaire was educated by the Jesuits, at the renowned lycée of Louis le Grand, where Voltaire learned Latin and Greek. (He was later to add on a good working knowledge of French, English, and Spanish.) While studying and learning Voltaire spent a lot of his time—on the sly—writing poetry, although it was his father's desire that his should study law. Plans were made to send Voltaire to Caen, for law studies, but the young man rebelled, and was instead posted—by his father's arrangement—as a Secretary to the French Ambassador in the Netherlands. (There he fell in love with a French Huguenot émigrée, planned elopement with her, and was quickly sent back to his father in Paris.) In subsequent years, Voltaire continued to work and behave as an irritant to settled bourgeois society, which he thought complicit with all the oppressive forces of top downward monarchical economy. Not long after returning from the Netherlands he was found guilty of composing a satirical verse about the Monarch himself; a crime for which Voltaire paid with eleven months in the Bastille. (Where, incidentally, he wrote his first presentable play, *Oedipe.)* On release from prison he proliferated satires and a couple of light comedies; freed from prison a second time he was sent to the Bastille, and, finding himself faced with the prospect of life in prison, proposed exile to England. The proposal being accepted, Voltaire went to England, where he was to spend the next three years of his life, and to make the acquaintance of many of the influential English intelligentsia: Swift, Congreve, Young, Bolingbroke. (His lifelong respect for British social justice and freedom springs from this experience.)

Return from England. In l734 his *Lettres philosophiques* was published, and with the frank expression of bitter criticism of his own country, he became once again an endangered species, and retreated quietly to a country house in Champagne, where he was to spend the next fifteen years—not quietly but out of sight, and writing most of his best dramas , and the first of his prose tales, *Zadig* (1747). The remainder of Voltaire's long life was spent largely in Switzerland, close to France but not dangerously so, and saw him in constant literary and cultural activity, corresponding voluminously with many of the literati and intelligentsia of his time, and in every work attempting to speak out for tolerance, freedom, good sense, and justice. Though a conservative in all matters but religion—which he considered pure bigotry—he was relentless in his Enlightenment pursuit of the kind of mature monarchical/democratic society he encountered in England.

The Legacy of Voltaire. Voltaire wrote voluminously, histories (of France in the l8th century), satires (superb satire on Leibnizian optimism in *Candide)*, neo classical dramas, a couple of epic poems no longer read, 20,000 letters, and went so far as to carry out and write up a vast number of scientific experiments, especially on the nature of fire. He was, in short, a Renaissance man for the Enlightenment, and as well an activist, a foe of social or legal injustice wherever he found it, and on important legal occasions an effective defender of the innocent and weak.

Reading

Primary source reading

Candide, Voltaire, tr. Ware, 2005.

Secondary source reading

Davidson, Ian, *Voltaire, a Life*, 2010.

Further reading

Cronk, Nicholas, *Cambridge Companion to Voltaire,* 2009.

Original language reading

Lilti, Antoine, *Le monde des salons: sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au xviii siècle,* 2005.

Suggested paper topics

Do you think Voltaire is the perfect embodiment of the Enlightenment? What did Voltaire think of the dictatorial monarchy that ruled France? How do you explain his great admiration for British culture and the British government? Did he admire the pomp and circumstance of that government?

At the end of *Candide*, Voltaire recommends the ideal of cultivating one's own garden, and keeping your nose clean. But was not Voltaire himself a lifetime activist, and a striver for justice whenever it was abused? And what about Voltaire's strenuous love life, epistolary life, and scientific experiments? Did he not belong powerfully to this world?

Excerpt http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19942/19942-h/19942-h.htm

Candide, driven from terrestrial paradise, walked a long while without knowing where, weeping, raising his eyes to heaven, turning them often towards the most magnificent of castles which imprisoned the purest of noble young ladies. He lay down to sleep without supper, in the middle of a field between two furrows. The snow fell in large flakes. Next day Candide, all benumbed, dragged himself towards the neighbouring town which was called Waldberghofftrarbk-dikdorff, having no money, dying of hunger and fatigue, he stopped sorrowfully at the door of an inn. Two men dressed in blue observed him.
"Comrade," said one, "here is a well-built young fellow, and of proper height."
They went up to Candide and very civilly invited him to dinner.
"Gentlemen," replied Candide, with a most engaging modesty, "you do me great honour, but I have not wherewithal to pay my share."
"Oh, sir," said one of the blues to him, "people of your appearance and of your merit never pay anything: are you not five feet five inches high?"
"Yes, sir, that is my height," answered he, making a low bow.
"Come, sir, seat yourself; not only will we pay your reckoning, but we will never suffer such a man as you to want money; men are only born to assist one another."
"You are right," said Candide; "this is what I was always taught by Mr. Pangloss, and I see plainly that all is for the best."
They begged of him to accept a few crowns. He took them, and wished to give them his note; they refused; they seated themselves at table.
"Love you not deeply?"
"Oh yes," answered he; "I deeply love Miss Cunegonde."
"No," said one of the gentlemen, "we ask you if you do not deeply love the King of the Bulgarians?"
"Not at all," said he; "for I have never seen him."
"What! he is the best of kings, and we must drink his health."
"Oh! very willingly, gentlemen," and he drank.
"That is enough," they tell him. "Now you are the help, the support, the defender, the hero of the Bulgarians. Your fortune is made, and your glory is assured."

Instantly they fettered him, and carried him away to the regiment. There he was made to wheel about to the right, and to the left, to draw his rammer, to return his rammer, to present, to fire, to march, and they gave him thirty blows with a cudgel. The next day he did his exercise a little less badly, and he received but twenty blows. The day following they gave him only ten, and he was regarded by his comrades as a prodigy.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques

Jean Jacques Rousseau. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was a French philosopher, essayist, composer, and political and educational theorist whose ideas were the most influential expression of the Enlightenment world view, and at the same time rich harbingers of the thought of early Romanticism.

Rousseau's Life. Rousseau was born in Geneva, in 1712, and throughout his life, which involved a tremendous amount of wandering, exile, flight, changes of residence, he was proud to consider himself a citizen of the Free Republic of Geneva. of a Genevan watchmaker and descended from a long Huguenot line, with its strong Calvinist morality. His mother was raised by an upper class family in the city, and his father was—as were all the ancestor males in Rousseau's family—a watchmaker. His father was also a romantic and impractical dreamer, who raised Rousseau—whose mother died when he was born. (At night, sometimes all through the night, the young Rousseau and his father would read to each other, sharing in the thrill of fiction and imagination.) In l722 his father got embroiled in a dispute with a fellow citizen, and had to flee the city; Rousseau himself being sent off to school with a Calvinist minister. A couple of years later the young boy ran away from home, and began a wandering existence, blessed by some guardian angel who directed him from neighbor to friend and finally out into the large world, serving as tutor, handyman, music teacher, until eventually in l744 he made his way to Paris. He was at that time assailed by a variety of inspirations, which enabled him to see what seemed to him the true character of human existence. He formed acquaintances, with such as Diderot, and gradually embedded himself in the turbulent intellectual milieu of Paris. It was there, and later in Geneva, to which he returned, that he began the writing life that would impose his lasting influence.

The works of Rousseau. The first work to bring widespread attention to Rousseau was his *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* (1750); there he developed ideas which, in more elaborated form in his *Le Contrat Social* (1762), were to make him both famous and of exceptional influence on his entire century. These ideas were rich, both n strengthening beliefs fermenting in his time—belief in the natural goodness of man, and in the potential evil of social institutions, which corrupt us—and in original directions, contrary to the mode of his time—such as a deep distrust of the power of reason, which was widely viewed at the time, by the intellectuals, as the supreme gift to man from his creator. (It was in fact Rousseau's belief in the natural goodness of man which, though moving to many, deeply alienated the authorities in Geneva who, with their Calvinist convictions that man is a degraded being, ever after made Geneva an unwelcoming home to Rousseau.) Already in his theory of education, *Emile* (1750), he had promoted a liberal view of the learning process, and stressed the importance of the experience of nature in education. In his epistolary novel, *Julie, or the Nouvelle Heloise* (1761), Rousseau writes a long sentimental love tale the evil behaviors of which he blames on society, and not on the self-enthralled lovers. In his *Confessions* (1765-1770) Rousseau surveys the first fifty three years of his life, largely defends himself against the various charges that had been leveled against him in a long and controversial career, and gives a model of the art of self-analysis, which is surpassed perhaps only by Saint Augustine in his Confessions.

Reading

Primary source reading

Emile, or on Education, tr. Allan Bloom, l979.

Secondary source reading

Dent, Nicholas, *Rousseau*, 2005.

Further reading

Cranston, Maurice, *The Noble Savage*, 1991**.**

Original language reading

Kitsikis, Dimitri, *Jean-Jacaques Rousseau et les origines francaises du fascisme*, 2006.

Suggested paper topics

What was Rousseau's view of human nature? Did he believe in essential goodness, or was his viewpoint more nuanced than that? What kind of pedagogy for children did Rousseau promote? Does Rousseau remind you of Montaigne, in his general view of human nature?

Of what lasting influence on Rousseau is it, that he was so deeply rooted in Geneva, and in the Calvinist culture that flourished there? What lasting values, for his own thought, did Rousseau inherit from Calvinism?

Excerpt http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Jean-Jacques_Rousseau

> An honest man nearly always thinks justly.
> A country cannot subsist well without liberty, nor liberty without virtue.
> Virtue is a state of war, and to live in it means one always has some battle to wage against oneself.
> What good is it be to possess the whole universe if one were its only survivor?
> I have entered on an enterprise which is without precedent, and will have no imitator. I propose to show my fellows a man as nature made him, and this man shall be myself**.**
> I know my heart, and have studied mankind; I am not made like any one I have been acquainted with, perhaps like no one in existence; if not better, I at least claim originality, and whether Nature did wisely in breaking the mould with which she formed me, can only be determined after having read this work.
> When the last trumpet shall sound, I will present myself before the sovereign judge with this book in my hand, and loudly proclaim, thus have I acted; these were my thoughts; such was I.

Laclos Choderlos de

Choderlos de Laclos and his fame. Choderlos de Laclos (1741-1803) a French novelist, official, military man and general, and novelist, was best known for his *Les Liasison Dangereuses* (1782), *Dangerous Liaisons,* which has enjoyed two centuries of censure and ultimately fame, having entered today's ordinary life in cinema, television, and even as a tweet novel.

Life of Choderlos de Laclos. Laclos was born to a bourgeois family in the northern French city of Amiens. He was trained from youth for a military career, and sent for his education to the *Ecole Royale d'Artillerie*. He served in action in the last year of the Seven Years War, and until 1776 was regularly posted to different garrisons. In l771 he was promoted to captain, and somewhat later saw sporadic battle action during the early stages of the Napoleonic Wars. (He was ultimately, after a promotion to general, able to make the acquaintance of Napoleon, with whose Republican ideas he sympathized, and whom he served.) The reason we know these details is that, during an extensive career in the military, the cynical and experienced Laclos managed to find time for writing, which increasingly took over his interest and attention. Though he began by

writing poetry, and even an opéra comique, it was not until he started to work on *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, ultimately published in 1782, that he found his true artistic voice. He was by no means through with his active military and public career, when this novel was published. In l786 he was busy, as a military official, with the job of numbering the streets of Paris. In l788 he left the army, and entered the service of Louis Philippe, duc d'Orleans, then went off, as we have noted, to fight with the Republican armies in the Napoleonic Wars. (He found time, in this latter capacity, to invent the modern artillery shell). It was however the novel, *Les Liaisons,* on which he had been working for years, which was the burning concern of Choderlos de Laclos. At its publication this novel enjoyed overnight success, speaking as it did to the self-awareness of the sophisticated reading public of late eighteenth-century France.

Les Liaisons Dangereuses. was the subject of much moral reprobation during its time, for the text, highlighting as it did the last corrupt years of an ancien régime which was soon to give way to the Napoleonic era, and after that to a new l9th century world in which the intricacies of court corruption were no longer fashionable, was offensive to many. (Highlighting, at the same time, some fascinating strategies of depravity among privileged nobility, for whom the game between the sexes took on the ever interesting charms of humiliation and oppression.) The novel itself involves two separate but intertwined themes in which figures of aristocratic background, the Viscomte de Valmont and the Marquise de Merteuil, who were formerly lovers, conspire to seduce and corrupt two relative innocents at court. (The Marquise assigns Valmont the job of seducing a young lovely destined for marriage with the Marquise's ex lover—out of revenge. Valmost refuses, finding the challenge too easy, and prefers to attempt the seduction of a certain high born lady at court—beautiful because 'inaccessible.' The drama plays on forward from this wily seduction plot, with eventual tragic results, expected to be sure, and in the end less fascinating than the machinations of the super sophisticated aristocrats. The novel continues to fascinate, and begs juxtaposition with the other earliest and most brilliant of French novels, Mme. de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Cleves*, written roughly a century earlier.

Reading

Primary source reading

Dangerous Liaisons, tr. Constantine, 2007.

Secondary source reading

Brooks, Peter, *The Novel of Worldliness*, 1969.

Further reading

Davis, N.Z. *Society and Culture in Early modern France,* 1975.

Original language reading

Bertaud Jean-Paul, *Choderlos de Laclos, l'auteur des Liaisons dangereuses*, 2003.

Suggested paper topics

Does the cynicism of Laclos reflect a basic respect for humanity, for which he feels compassion? Does he is that sense resemble, say, de la Rochefoucauld? Or is he more deeply hostile to the human project?

Do the *Liaisons Dangereuses* seem to you a new departure in the development of the French novel? Does de Laclos seem to have taken the novel form farther than it went in the work of his brilliant predecessor, Mme. de Lafayette, in *La Princesse de Cleves.*

Excerpt http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Pierre_Choderlos_de_Laclos

Le succès, qui ne prouve pas toujours le mérite, tient souvent davantage au choix du sujet qu'à son exécution.

Success, which is not always a proof of merit, depends more often on the choice of a subject than on its execution.

On peut citer de mauvais vers, quand ils sont d'un grand poète.

One may quote bad poetry if it is by a great poet.

L'amour est, comme la médecine, seulement l'art d'aider à la nature.

Love, like medicine, is only the art of encouraging nature.

J'ai été étonné du plaisir qu'on éprouve en faisant le bien.

I was astonished at the pleasure to be derived from doing good.

- *Le scélérat a ses vertus, comme l'honnête homme a ses faiblesses.*

The scoundrel has his good qualities, and the good man his weaknesses.

Une occasion manquée se retrouve, tandis qu'on ne revient jamais d'une démarche précipitée.

An opportunity missed once will present itself again, whereas a too hasty action can never be recalled.

On a toujours assez vécu, quand on a eu le temps d'acquérir l'amour des femmes et l'estime des hommes.

One has lived long enough if one has had time to win the love of women and the esteem of men.

Une main occupée pour la force, l'autre pour l'amour, quel orateur pourrait prétendre à la grâce en pareille situation?

One hand was needed for power, the other for love: where is the orator that could aspire to grace in such a position?

Le luxe absorbe tout: on le blâme, mais il faut l'imiter; et le superflu finit par priver du nécessaire.

Luxury, nowadays, is ruinous. We criticize, but must conform, and superfluities in the end deprive us of necessities.

19th century

Overview French literature of the nineteenth century can be roughly divided into two sections.

The first half of the century can be called by the term Romantic, for it picks up on tendencies evident in the French literature of the late l8th century, like the *Querelle des anciens des modernes*, which reflected a growing interest in the expression of feelings, and in independence from the past, which had the germs of the Romantic in it. But that is just a literary beginning, to the change in sensibility the Romantic heralds in. The first half of the l9th century in France also explodes with political and social energies, in which were released many of the open feelings and freed thoughts which became part of the Romantic perspective in literature and the other arts, as well as in morals and philosophy. The declaration of Napoleon as consul, in 1799, and Emperor in l804, was the launching pad first for great French optimism, that a new era of growth and justice was at hand, and then for growing dismay at the abuses and humiliations of Napoleon. After Waterloo, in l815, a despotic monarch was chosen to lead the nation, then replaced by a revolution, then a second (constitutional) monarchy was called in, headed by Louis Philippe, who was again replaced in l848, by Louis Napoleon, a nephew of Napoleon I. As a result of these many changes, and the uncertainties accompanying them, creative forces, as well as hindrances, were freed in the society, and took expression in new literarry voices which seem to come from a different world from that of Malherbe and Boileau, in the preceding century.

A survey of French literature of the last half of the nineteenth century consists in large measure of a discussion of four i*sms*: realism, naturalism, Parnassianism, and Symbolism.

By 1842 the old forms of Romanticism that had been triumphant during the fourth decade of the century were already on their way out, although Hugo and a few others continued to write some Romantic verse for many years thereafter. Realism, of which there had been distinct traces since l830, now received a powerful boost from several sources: first, the large number of eccentric—and usually indigent—writers and artists who lead a “Bohemian” life in the Latin Quarter of Paris, and who scoffed both at the ugly mediocrity of the bourgeoisie, and at the egoistic pessimism of some of the Romantics; and second, the caricaturists and painters of the Barbizon school (especially Corot and Millet) who reacted against the violence and unreality of the Romantic school of painting; the Barbizon artists turned to French landscapes and simple life for their subjects.

After l850 two kinds of realism became discernible: first, artistic realism promoted by the proponents of “art for art’s sake,” a school of which Théophile Gautier was a prominent member, and in which we might well want to include Flaubert and the Parnassians; second, the schools of realism or naturalism, which Emile Zola, the founder of naturalism, defined as “the formula of modern science applied to literature.” Naturalism actually went a step beyond the earlier realism in targeting the sordid and unsavory for particular attention.

Discussion questions
Can you see a case for considering Alfred de Musset and Alphone de Lamartine as the quintessential Romantic poets? If so, what traits do they share? If not, what authors seem to you to epitomize the Romantic spirit in France?

Compare Hugo to Balzac as a novelist of vast panoramic ambitions. Which writer seems to you better able to grasp the whole spirit of a time?

The lyrics of Mallarmé and Rimbaud are profoundly different, the one condensed and pure, the other expansive and visionary. Do you see something in common to the work of these two writers?

De Maupassant's great literary model was Gustave Flaubert. What did de Maupassant learn from Flaubert? Did he learn style, viewpoint, or philosophy from his master?

How do you explain the extraordinary political canniness of Benjamin Constant? Is that canniness related to the view of human nature expressed in *Adolphe*?

Poetry

Lamartine, Alphonse de

Alphonse de Lamartine; life and Works. Allphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869) was born in Macon in Burgundy, of an old aristocratic family. After a happy childhood, be went to school at the Jesuit Seminary in Belley. Then he spent four years of leisure and reading at Milly. In 181, while traveling in Italy, he became infatuated with a young cigarette maker in Naples, whom he later idealized in the book *Graziella*. Returning to France, he served first as a member of the royal guard of Louis XVIII and later as an attaché to the diplomatic corps at Naples. In l8l6 he fell in love with Mme. Julie Charles, who died the following year; she inspired many of his poems. The publication of *The Poetic Meditations,* in 1820, assured his fame. In 1829 he was elected a member of the *Académie Francaise*. After the fall of Charles X, he gave up his diplomatic career and campaigned for a seat in the Assembly. At first unsuccessful, he was eventually elected (1833), and from then until l848 played an increasingly important role in national politics. He opposed the bourgeois government of Louis Philippe. Directly after the Revolution of l848 he was the virtual dictator of France—for about three months. Then the fickle and radical mob abandoned him for the glamorous Louis Napoleon, and Lamartine retired permanently from politics. Always extravagant and generous, he now fell into financial difficulties and spent the last years of his life writing continually, principally hackwork for periodicals.

The poetry of Lamartine. The chief literary influences on Lamartine were the Bible, Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, Petrarch, Tasso, Milton, Ossian and Young. Whereas Chateaubriand wrote about religion, nature, and himself, Lamartine wrote about religion, nature, and women; and, like Chateaubriand, he often associated two or perhaps all three of the topics in one work. His religious is vaguer and less orthodox than that of Chateaubriand, but it is also deeper and more idealistic, sometimes inclining toward pantheism. Lamartine's imagination is audial rather than visual; his descriptions are usually lacking in color—done principally in blacks and whites and grays. He prefers to describe floating or soaring things—clouds winds and waves—it being, as a critic observed, his nature to dematerialize everything he touches. Much of his love poetry is idealistic and Platonic, and, like that of Petrarch, tends to identify the physical with the spiritual. It often displays a note of melancholy.

Some individual works. Some of Lamartine's best individual lyrics are 'The Lake,' which combines melancholy, love, and appreciation for nature; the 'Crucifix,' in which he associates his love for Elvire (Julie Charles) with his religious beliefs; and 'Song of Love,' a poem to his wife. *Jocelyn* is a long narrative poem which tells of then pure love of a priest for a young girl, and of his renunciation. The 'Fall of an Angel' is a long (11,000 lines) epic about an angel who, through love for a human woman, becomes human himself. Lamartine also wrote several prose works. *Raphae*l (1849) and *Graziella* (1852) are semiautobiographical novels. The first is partially based on his love for Mme. Charles; the other on his affair with the Neapolitan cigarette maker. The *History of the Girondins* (1847) is an inspirational but untrustworthy account of one portion of the French Revolution; the book helped to foment the Revolution of l848.

Reading

Primary source reading

http://poemsintranslation.blogspot.com/2010/04/lamartine-lake-from-french.html

Secondary source reading

Fortescue, William, *Alphonse de Lamartine: A Political Biography*, 1983.

Further reading

Mackay, John, *Inscription and Modernity: From Wordsworth to Mandelstam*, 2010.

Original language reading

Benichou, Paul, *Le Sacre de l'ecrivain,,* l985.

Suggested paper topics

Do you see a bond between Lamartine's Romantic poetic creativity, and his political prominence? Was it his belief that the individual should express and promote all his skills and talents? In whatever realm?

Does Lamartine's poetry mark a sharp break from the French lyric of the century that preceded him? Where, in French poetry before Lamartine, would you have to go to find the deep expression of lyric emotion? Would it be Ronsard?

Excerpt http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Alphonse_de_Lamartine

If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astonishing results are the three criteria of a human genius, who could dare compare any great man in history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws, and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples, dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls. Philosopher, Orator, Apostle, Legislator, Conqueror of Ideas, Restorer of Rational beliefs... The founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire — that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?

Sometimes, only one person is missing, and the whole world seems depopulated.

Time, arrest your flight! and you, propitious hours, arrest your course! Let us savor the fleeting delights of our most beautiful days!

I say to this night: "Pass more slowly"; and the dawn will come to dispel the night.

Let us love the passing hour, let us hurry up and enjoy our time.

Love alone was left, as a great image of a dream that was erased.

Limited in his nature, infinite in his desires, man is a fallen god who remembers the heavens.

What is our life but a succession of preludes to that unknown song whose first solemn note is sounded by death?

Musset, Alfred de

Musset, Alfred de; his significance for his time. Alfred de Musset (1810-1857) was a French poet, dramatist, moralist, and arguably one of the first French Romantic poets, who fit many of the stereotypes frequently attached to that breed of creator: susceptibility to intense and idealistic amour, vanity, powerful imagination, and, interestingly enough, an interest and involvement with the public sphere. He is especially remembered for his *Confession d'un Enfant du Siecle* (1836) , *Confession of a Child of the Century*.

Musset, Alfred de: life and career. De Musset was born in Paris. His family was upper class but poor, in the sense that de Musset's father was stingy and refused any money for his son. De Musset's mother was a society hostess. Between the two not very nurturing parents, Alfred de Musset carved out a private world, in which as a youngster he created and acted out mini-plays, and told poems and stories to himself. At the age of nine de Musset was sent to the distinguished Lycée Henry IV, where he displayed his brilliance and won the highly competitive Latin Prize. At the age of seventeen he was invited to join the prestigious literary salon of the poet Charles Nodier, but he was surrounded by voices telling him it was time to 'get a job.' In search of a congenial job, Alfred de Musset tried medicine, law, drawing, tutoring English, giving piano lessons. None of these professions caught his commitment, but fortunately he was about to score a public success with a piece of writing that was engaging him, the *Contes d'Espagne et d'Itali*e (1829), *Tales of Spain and Italy*. By the age of twenty he was a popular literary figure in Paris and a dandy around town. Soon afterwards he, like Lord Byron in England, began to poke fun at some of the absurdities of the foppish or spaced out Romantics. Nor was Alfred de Musset living off the air all this time, for like many of the supposedly dreamy Romantics he was involved in political social affairs. He was appointed Librarian of the Ministry of the Interior during the July Monarchy, and played a substantive role in the Rhine crisis which developed between France and Germany in 1840. The burning drama of de Musset's life, his two year love affair with the writer Georges Sand, was just in the offing (1833-35), and was to form the substance of much of de Musset's best poetry. The later years of de Musset's life were to open him to welcome honors—in 1853 he was made Minister of Public Instruction, in 1845 he was awarded the Legion d'honneur, and in `1852, on the third try, he was inducted into the *Académie francaise.*

Alfred de Musset works. All of de Musset's poems are contained in two volumes: *Premieres poésies* (1829-1835) and *Poesies nouvelles* (1836-1852). *The Tales of Spain and Italy* are youthful effusions full of Byronic swagger and cynicism. The affair with Georges Sand sobered and matured de Musset, and transformed his swagger into despair. The four "Night poems," perhaps his best efforts, reflect that despair. In "Memory," 1841, de Musset finds consolation in the thought that beautiful memories can live on even after love is dead. With the possible exception of Vigny, he is the most introspective of the French romantic poets, and he is about the only one who gives us genuine and intimate descriptions of the joys and pains of love.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Confession of a child of the Century, Alfred de Musset, tr. David Coward, 2014.

Secondary source reading

Levin, Susan, *The Romantic Art of Confession*, 1998.

Further reading

Alfred de Musset, *Historical Dramas*, tr. Sices, 1987.

Original language reading

Barnell, Rex*, Etude analytique de l'influence de Shakespeare sur le theatre d'Alfred de Musset,* 1988.

Suggested paper topics

What do you think of the public prominence of Alfred de Musset? Does it play a similar role in his life, to that played in the life of Lamartine, who also served in high office while writing passionate poetry?

Look closely into some of de Musset's love poetry. What kind of passions does he express there? Is there 'sensuous material,' as we might expect it today, or is the level of discourse somewhat formulaic and idealistic?

Excerpt http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/224009.Alfred_de_Musset

"How glorious it is – and also how painful – to be an exception. "

"You're like a lighthouse shining beside the sea of humanity, motionless: all you can see is your own reflection in the water. You're alone, so you think it's a vast, magnificent panorama. You haven't sounded the depths. You simply believe in the beauty of God's creation. But I have spent all this time in the water, diving deep into the howling ocean of life, deeper than anyone. While you were admiring the surface, I saw the shipwrecks, the drowned bodies, the monsters of the deep"

"Romanticism is the abuse of adjectives."

"Man is a pupil, pain is his teacher."

"Alas, everything that men say to one another is alike; the ideas they exchange are almost always the same, in their conversation. But inside all those isolated machines, what hidden recesses, what secret compartments! It is an entire world that each one carries within him, an unknown world that is born and dies in silence! What solitudes all these human bodies are!"

"Life is a deep sleep of which love is the dream"

"What I need is a woman who is something, anything: either very beautiful or very kind or in the last resort very wicked; very witty or very stupid, but something."

Hugo, Victor

Victor Hugo, the general profile. Victor Hugo (1802-1885) was a French poet, novelist, dramatist, and political activist, who lived through and responded to the tumultuous passages from Empire to Monarchy to Republicanism back to Regency, passages which marked the l9th century in France. He was two years old when Napoleon declared himself Emperor, and only eighteen when Napoleon fell.

Victor Hugo the life. Victor Hugo was born in Besancon to a father who held a high position in the French army, and was a freethinking Republican, and to a mother who was a Catholic Royalist; a blend of ideologies which could have been invigorating but in the end drove the two partners apart. While living with his father, as a youngster, Victor Hugo was taken on a six month trip to Spain, the Alps, and Italy, and kept a vivid memory of that experience, which was one of many travel exposures he was to enjoy in his earlier years. For some time afterwards he stayed with his father in Spain, but after Waterloo Victor returned to Paris. His formal education was neglected by both his parents, but during this time he read a great deal (especially the works of Rousseau and Chateaubriand, who was to be Victor Hugo's lifelong idol) and while in his early teens became devoted to the idea of being a writer. He wrote a tragedy when he was fourteen, and three years later edited a newspaper, the *Literary Conservator*. In 1822, the year in which he married Adele Foucher, he published his first volume of poetry. In the early twenties he was a conservative and royalist, but by 1830 he had become an ardent liberal and democrat. His numerous novels, plays, and volumes of poetry, published between l822 and l840, his self-confidence and his vociferous advocacy, of the romantic theories of life and literature, made him the recognized leader of the French romantics during the fourth decade of the century. In l841 he was elected to membership in the *Académie francaise.* Between l843 and l848 he forsook literature for politics; he soon became one of the leaders of the democratic party. His opposition to Napoleon III and the Second Empire led to his being exiled. He remained abroad from l852 til l870—at Brussels, in Jersey, and mainly in Guernsey. His last fifteen years were spent in Paris, where he enjoyed the role of grand old man of French letters.

Victor Hugo the poet and novelist. He believed that the poet sees truth more intuitively and more clearly than other men, and feeling that the poet's mission is to lead those other men to the light. Two of Hugo's greatest poetic gifts are imagination and rhetorical dexterity. He also wrote romantic novels of adventure and social novels, and for both of those achievements he is best known outside of France. (While his *Odes et Ballades,* 1824, are perhaps the most known achievements of his vast poetic oeuvre, his best known prose eminences are *Notre Dame de Paris*, l831—in English *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*—and *Les Miserables,* l862, which celebrates and commiserates with the life of the truly poor of Paris.

Evaluation of Hugo'work. As a classic monument of French literature, Hugo has engendered praises of every kind. Perhaps the flip side of the case is more instructive. He was immensely egotistical, believing that the city of Paris should be named for him. His novels are misshapen and extravagant. His poetry is often empty and rhetorical. Yet for all that flip side, the immensity of this man's achievement, and the breadth of his spirit, continue to lead and inspire world wide readers.

Reading

Primary source reading

Les Miserables, tr. Fahnenstock, 2013.

Secondary source reading

Barnett, Marva, *Victor Hugo on Things that Matter: A Reader*, 2009.

Further reading

Halsall, A.W., et. al. *Victor Hugo and the Romantic Drama,* 1998.

Original language reading

Viala, Alain, et al, *Le Theatre en France des origines à nos jours*, 1997.

Suggested paper topics

The musical, *Les Miserables*, has scored a tremendous success in North America, and elsewhere. Check into that musical, if you don't know it, and see what magic of Hugo it captures? Is there in Hugo a powerful sympathy for humanity and its tumultuous history?

Investigate the writing practices of Victor Hugo, who was an immensely prolific writer—like Voltaire before him, and Balzac later--but who at the same time as writing played a vigorous role in the politics of his time and country. How was this achievement possible? What was his secret?

Excerpt
http://journals.lww.com/academicmedicine/fulltext/2006/04000/les_miserables___excerpt_.11.aspx

Come in," said the Bishop.
The door opened. A singular and violent group made its appearance on the threshold. Three men were holding a fourth man by the collar. The three men were gendarmes; the other was Jean Valjean.
A brigadier of gendarmes, who seemed to be in command of the group, was standing near the door. He entered and advanced to the Bishop, making a military salute.
"Monseigneur—" he said.
At this word, Jean Valjean, who was dejected and seemed overwhelmed, raised his head with an air of stupefaction.
"Monseigneur," he murmured. "So he is not the curé?"
"Silence!" said the gendarme. "He is Monseigneur the Bishop."
In the meantime, Monseigneur Bienvenu had advanced as quickly as his great age permitted.
"Ah! here you are!" he exclaimed, looking at Jean Valjean. "I am glad to see you. Well, but how is this? I gave you the candlesticks too, which are of silver like the rest, and for which you can certainly get two hundred francs. Why did you not carry them away with your forks and spoons?"
Jean Valjean opened his eyes wide, and stared at the venerable Bishop with an expression which no human tongue can render any account of.
"Monseigneur," said the brigadier of gendarmes, "so what this man said is true, then? We came across him. He was walking like a man who is running away. We stopped him to look into the matter. He had this silver—"
"And he told you," interposed the Bishop with a smile, "that it had been given to him by a kind old fellow of a priest with whom he had passed the night? I see how the matter stands. And you have brought him back here? It is a mistake."
"In that case," replied the brigadier, "we can let him go?"
"Certainly," replied the Bishop.
The gendarmes released Jean Valjean, who recoiled.
"Is it true that I am to be released?" he said, in an almost inarticulate voice, and as if speaking in his sleep.
"Yes, thou art released; dost thou not understand?" said one of the gendarmes.
"My friend," resumed the Bishop, "before you go, here are your candlesticks. Take them."
He stepped to the chimney-piece, took the two silver candlesticks, and brought them to Jean Valjean. The two women looked on without uttering a word, without a gesture, without a look which could disconcert the Bishop.

Jean Valjean was trembling in every limb. He took the two candlesticks mechanically, and with a bewildered air.
"Now," said the Bishop, "go in peace. By the way, when you return, my friend, it is not necessary to pass through the garden. You can always enter and depart through the street door. It is never fastened with anything but a latch, either by day or by night."

Vigny, Alfred de

Vigny, Alfred de: Life and Letters. Alfred de Vigny (1797-1865) was born at Loches, in Touraine—a city to which he never returned. He was of an aristocratic family, which suffered considerable loss of prominence and assets during the Napoleonic Revolution. His father was an aged veteran of the Seven Years War, who died before Alfred's twentieth birthday; his mother was a devout follower of the philosophy of Rousseau, and the primary supervisor of her son's education. After serving about fourteen years in the army, and rising only from the rank of lieutenant to that of captain, de Vigny resigned (1827), married an Englishwoman, enrolled in an aristocratic club which conferred on him membership in the *Maison du Roi* (*The King's House)* , and decided to devote himself entirely to literature. (Already active as a writer, de Vigny had published two of his finest works before his marriage: *Poemes antiques et modernes*, 1826, and a fine historical novel, *Cinq-Mars*, 1826.) Thereafter he wrote volumes of poems, two plays, some journals, and stories. (Marcel Proust considered de Vigny the best French poet of the nineteenth century.) As life wore on, and his marriage declined in joy—his wife was not well, nor did she wish to adapt to French culture—he fell violently in love with an actress, Marie Dorval, whose infidelity and lack of honor embittered him. In l845 he was received into the French Academy. Twice he tried to win an election to the National Assembly. In l848 he retired to his chateau in Angouleme, where, after a protracted and stoical battle with stomach cancer, he died.

The thought of Alfred de Vigny. De Vigny, unlike most of the other French Romantic poets, was a deep and original thinker. He was a pessimist, a solitary, and a stoic. He said that he was born "serious to the point of sadness," and his disappointments in the army, in love, and in politics did nothing toward improving this mindset. He was a disillusioned idealist who had decided that in a world composed of good and evil the evil had far the upper hand, that all was for the worst in the worst of all possible worlds. He decided that no person or thing is trustworthy or benevolent. The human throng is either stupid or dishonest; women are always more or less unreliable. Nature is more like a tomb than a mothering womb. Even God is ill intentioned, or deaf, dumb, and blind. The poet, the man of genius, is therefore condemned to silence, loneliness, and suffering. De Vigny is, however, anything but a whiner. He believed that it is the obligation of each man to "suffer and die without speaking." This is a resignation made up of pride plus an awareness of the futility of resisting. There is one ray of hope breaking through the dark sky of his pessimism. There is a true God, the God of the eternal realm of ideas, where noble souls may find impalpable and immortal treasures.

An evaluation of de Vigny's life and work. As a novelist, storyteller, and dramatist, de Vigny is barely remembered; and his poetry has never been widely popular. But he will never be forgotten by the few who refuse to be repelled by his austerity and his pessimism, and who value classical restraint, vivid imagery, original thought, and intellectual honesty.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Servitude and Grandeur of Arms, tr. Roger Gard, 1997.

Secondary source reading

Broome and Chesters, *The appreciation of Modern French Poetry (1850-1950),* 1976.

Further reading

Duncan, Phillip, ‘Alfred de Vigny’s “La Colere de Samson” and Solar Myth,’ *Nineteenth Century French Studies,* XX, 1992, 478-481.

Original language reading

Gouvard, Jean-Michel, ed. *De la langue au style*, 2005.

Suggested paper topics

Alfred de Vigny was a pessimist, but also a Romantic. That is, he believed strongly in human ideals, but found himself in a world where, as he saw it, mankind was a victimized puppet, never able to realize the ideal. Were other Romantic poets in France ‘optimists,’ in contrast to this view point of de Vigny?

One of de Vigny’s finest poems is ‘La Mort du Loup,’ the ‘Death of the Wolf.’ Read and master this poem, and evaluate it as an expression of the ancient Roman Stoicism Vigny admired. Do you see the presence of the classical tradition in other poems of de Vigny?

Excerpt http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Alfred_de_Vigny

L'existence du Soldat est (après la peine de mort) la trace la plus douloureuse de barbarie qui subsiste parmi les hommes.

The soldier's lot is the most melancholy relic of barbarism (next to capital punishment) that lingers on among mankind.

Tout homme a vu le mur qui borne son esprit.

Every man has seen the wall that limits his mind.

L'histoire est un roman dont le peuple est l'auteur.

History is a novel whose author is the people.

On étouffe les clameurs, mais comment se venger du silence?

Clamour can be stifled, but how avenge oneself on silence?

Un désespoir paisible, sans convulsions de colère et sans reproches au ciel est la sagesse même.

A calm despair, without angry convulsions or reproaches directed at heaven, is the essence of wisdom.

Les acteurs sont bien heureux, ils ont une gloire sans responsabilité.

Actors are lucky, they have glory without responsibility.

La presse est une bouche forcée d'être toujours ouverte et de parler toujours. De là vient qu'elle dit mille fois qu'elle n'a rien à dire.

The press is a mouth forced to be forever open and forever talking. Consequently it says a thousand times that it has nothing to say.

Un livre est une bouteille jetée en pleine mer sur laquelle il faut coller cette étiquette: attrape qui peut.

A book is a bottle thrown into the sea on which this label should be attached: Catch as catch can.

Le théâtre n'a jamais été en Angleterre qu'une mode des hautes classes ou une débauche du bas peuple.

In England the theatre has never been anything but a fashion for the upper classes or a debauch for the common people.

Baudelaire, Charles

Charles Baudelaire's achievement. Charles Baudelaire (1821-1868) was a French Romantic poet, critic, and translator (especially of Edgar Allen Poe) who assimilated the spirit of early Romantic poetry—de Vigny, de Musset, Victor Hugo--and who carried it into more innovative directions which would eventually prove formative for the whole of twentieth century poetry.

Baudelaire, life and works. Charles Baudelaire, whom some have called the father of all subsequent modern poetry in France, was born in Paris in 1821. His father, a senior civil servant, was thirty four years older than his mother, and died when Charles was a youngster, leaving the mother to remarry—to the lifelong displeasure of Charles, who adored his mother. Charles was given a conventional education, and eventually sent to the Lycée Louis le Grand, where he proved to be a restless and inconstant student, with a taste for rebellion. While at school he ran after prostitutes—contracting syphilis and gonorrhea-- and ran through a small fortune, coming out on the other side into heavy debt. He was even sent on a trip to Calcutta at this time, l841; an effort by Charles' stepfather to 'bring him down to earth.' But in fact the sights and scenes of India only served as raw material for the sights and scenes that Baudelaire was to make of them in poetry. (The strains and abuses of this period, added to what was going to be a life filled with laudanum and excess alcohol, contributed to his early death, and to the massive stroke which ultimately left him aphasic for the last year of his life.) A fellow writer to the Parnassians, he was during his early years vigorously engaged with the writing of lyric, and with the formulating of the 'modernist' aesthetic, for which he is deeply remembered today. His greatest poetic work, which goes to the heart of his lifetime of writing, is *Les Fleurs du Mal, The Flowers of Evil* (1857), in which Baudelaire fully develops his basic themes—the essential power of symbols to move the soul, the richness of combined sense impressions as we take them in from nature, and ultimately the boredom, or 'ennui' resident in the human condition, which links to our susceptibility to evil. addictions, and a taste for the darkness of the occult. All of these basic themes echo out in other works: *L'Art romantique* (1868), *Petits Poèmes en prose* (1868) in which Baudelaire creates the new genre of the prose poem, and a brilliant translation of Poe's short stories; and, indirectly, in the writing and engagement of Baudelaire with his own cultural moment, defending the art of the painter Delacroix and the opera creator Wagner, and figuring prominently in the Parisian art scene, most notably in the reviews published in his *Salon* of l845.

Evaluation of Baudelaire's work. It is hard to overstate the breakthrough of Baudelaire into a new poetic atmosphere. In addition to the 'modernist' traits mentioned above, he excelled at a sense of the meaning of the city, that new expanding, polluting, thrilling sensibility-shaper that was looming over the citizens of Paris as the nineteenth century took shape. It was in this matrix that Baudelaire saw the interesting evil of mankind, the ways in which nature is less interesting than human society, and the complexities of the moral compass. His chaste but sensuous formal verse, and his highly original prose poems, openly totally new vistas into the creation of the aesthetic.

Reading

Primary source reading
Baudelaire*, Selected Writings on Art and Artists,* tr. Charvet, 1981.

Secondary source reading
Wilson, Edmund, A*zel's Castle*, 1962.

Further reading
Hyslop, Lois, *Baudelaire, Man of his Time*, 1980.

Original language reading
Kristeva, Julia, *La rèvolution du langage poetique*, 1974.

Suggested paper topics

Review what we know of Baudelaire's youth. What kind of a rebeller was he? Was the imagination, from the start, the site of his true inner life? Does Baudelaire's taste for evil seem to you imaginative evil or 'real evil'? What drives him to his kind of concern with the 'diabolic?'

What is the meaning of the city, for Baudelaire? Was the city itself, the real living city, a new phenomenon in Western society? How old and big was a city like Paris, when Balzac walked its streets? What parts of Paris were dear and meaningful to Baudelaire, the flaneur?

Excerpt http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/039250.html

To the Reader
Folly, depravity, greed, mortal sin
Invade our souls and rack our flesh; we feed
Our gentle guilt, gracious regrets, that breed
Like vermin glutting on foul beggars' skin.
Our sins are stubborn; our repentance, faint.
We take a handsome price for our confession,
Happy once more to wallow in transgression,
Thinking vile tears will cleanse us of all taint.
On evil's cushion poised, His Majesty,
Satan Thrice-Great, lulls our charmed soul, until
He turns to vapor what was once our will:
Rich ore, transmuted by his alchemy.
He holds the strings that move us, limb by limb!
We yield, enthralled, to things repugnant, base;
Each day, towards Hell, with slow, unhurried pace,
We sink, uncowed, through shadows, stinking, grim.
Like some lewd rake with his old worn-out whore,
Nibbling her suffering teats, we seize our sly
delight, that, like an orange—withered, dry—
We squeeze and press for juice that is no more.
Our brains teem with a race of Fiends, who frolic
thick as a million gut-worms; with each breath,
Our lungs drink deep, suck down a stream of Death—
Dim-lit—to low-moaned whimpers melancholic.
If poison, fire, blade, rape do not succeed
In sewing on that dull embroidery
Of our pathetic lives their artistry,
It's that our soul, alas, shrinks from the deed.
And yet, among the beasts and creatures all—
Panther, snake, scorpion, jackal, ape, hound, hawk—
Monsters that crawl, and shriek, and grunt, and squawk,
In our vice-filled menagerie's caterwaul,
One worse is there, fit to heap scorn upon—
More ugly, rank! Though noiseless, calm and still,
yet would he turn the earth to scraps and swill,
swallow it whole in one great, gaping yawn:
Ennui! That monster frail!—With eye wherein
A chance tear gleams, he dreams of gibbets, while
Smoking his hookah, with a dainty smile. . .
—You know him, reader,—hypocrite,—my twin!

Mallarmé, Stéphane

Stephane Mallarme and his importance. Stephane Mallarmé (1842-1898) was a French Symbolist poet, deeply influenced by Charles Baudelaire, who carried the abstract and futurist possibilities of lyric poetry to a a new level, where they anticipate many currents of thought and art which will dominate French literature in the twentieth century.

Mallarmé, Life and Works. Mallarme was born in Paris, son of a civil servant. He was an excellent student, excelling in languages and writing, and showing from childhood remarkable promise. He got his baccalaureat degree in 1860, and had his first poem published two years later. From that point on we would say that he led a relatively quiet life. In l883, when he was forty one, he married a German governess, with whom he had one daughter. The career element of Mallarme's life consisted of teaching English—or rather teaching French in England, which he had visited and where he had studied, and English in France, which was his primary bread winning activity. He began his teaching in Tournon, to which he ultimately returned, after spending the bulk of his work life in Paris. It was in Paris that he became known for his remarkable literary salon, which met on Tuesdays—hence acquiring for its members the name 'les Mardistes', those who 'Meet on Tuesday." That gathering point became an attractive venue for many of the finest writers of the time—Andre Gide, W. B. Yeats, Rainer Maria Rilke, Paul Valéry—and it was in this setting, as well as in his writings, that Mallarme began to impose himself as the leader of the Symbolist Movement.

The Work of Mallarmé. Mallarmé was deeply influenced by the works of the Pre-Raphaelites in England, of Baudelaire, of Verlaine, and of Edgar Allen Poe, some of whose works he (like Baudelaire) translated into French. (The power of sonority, in Poe's mesmerizing poetry, attracted both of these Frenchmen, and led, through them, into 20 th century adventures if verse which could not have been imagined fifty years earlier, among the first generation of Romantics.) But Mallarmé had an elliptical mind which placed him in a category of his own; he deliberately encouraged obscurity in his writing, and he virtually ignored expected patterns of syntax. He wrote that "a poem must be an enigma for the vulgar, chamber music for the initiated." (These same sentiments had been formulated in spades by Baudelaire, for whom, as he said, 'copulation is the poetry of the masses.') Mallarmé's desire to "free poetry from matter and to suggest , by means of sounds and images, our subconscious thoughts and feelings,, accounts for the obscurity of his prose and verse." Almost every one of his poems is built around a single image or metaphor, around which is grouped a cluster of subordinate images which help to develop the central idea. Mallarmé's most important volumes are *The Afternoon of a Faun* (1876), *Verse and Prose* (1893), a collection of some of his earlier pieces, and *Divagations* (1897), a book of prose containing many of his aesthetic theories. In *The Afternoon of a Faun* (to accompany which Debussy composed his tone poem of the same name) a faun gives voice to his amorous longings—"a dream of desire told at length"; and in "The Swan" Mallarmé symbolizes the "cold and sterile poet." We are very far, now, from the softness, passion, and romance of the poetry of the early Romantics like de Musset and Alphonse de Lamartine.
r

Reading

Primary source reading

Collected Poems, tr. Weinfield, 1996.

Secondary source reading

Lloyd, R., *Mallarmé: The Poet and his Circle*, 1999.

Further reading

Johnson, Barbara, *A World of Difference,* l982.

Original language reading

Richard, Jean-Pierre, *L'univers imaginaire de Mallarmé,* 1961.

Suggested paper topics

What seems to drive Mallarmés poetry toward the absolutely pure? When you review the poetry of Lamartine, Hugo, or de Musset you find much repetition, much rhetoric. Was Mallarmé pressing to free poetry of such verbal baggage?

Does Mallarmé's poetry provide a natural cross over point into music? Listen to Debussy. Can you hear some search for the kind of purity that haunts Mallarmé? Is it more than a metaphor, to speak of the music of poetry?

Excerpt http://www.qotd.org/search/search.html?aid=6410

A throw of the dice will never abolish chance.

Dreams have as much influence as actions

Every soul is a melody which needs renewing.

In a museum in London there is an exhibit called "The Value of Man": a long coffinlike box with lots of compartments where they've put starch — phosphorus — flour — bottles of water and alcohol — and big pieces of gelatin. I am a man like that.

In reading, a lonely quiet concert is given to our minds; all our mental faculties will be present in this symphonic exaltation

It is in front of the paper that the artist creates himself.

That virgin, vital, beautiful day: today.

The flesh is sorrowful, alas! And I've read all the books

The poetic act consists in suddenly seeing that an idea splits into a number of motives of equal value and in grouping them; they rhyme.

The work of pure poetry implies the elocutionary disappearance of the poet, who yields the initiative to words.

The world was made in order to result in a beautiful book.

We do not write poems with ideas, but with words.

Yes, I know, we are merely empty forms of matter, but we are indeed sublime in having invented God and our soul. So sublime, my friend, that I want to gaze upon matter, fully conscious that it exists, and yet launching itself madly into Dream, despite its knowledge that Dream has no existence, extolling the Soul and all the divine impressions of that kind which have collected within us from the beginning of time and proclaiming, in the face of the Void which is truth, these glorious lies!

Rimbaud, Arthur

Arthur Rimbaud, life. Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) was a precocious French poet, whose visionary work, completed before he was 21, made an indelible mark on the development of later French poetry, and whose personal destiny has haunted the imaginations of subsequent generations of writers worldwide.

Arthur Rimbaud; a portrait of his career. Rimbaud was born in Charleville, in the province of the Ardennes. His father, a military captain cited for bravery in the Conquest of Algeria, was almost never at home—postings, then disinclination, kept him away, until he had no presence at all in the family. Rimbaud's mother dominated the family—there were five children—and won from her precocious Arthur, who already as a pre schooler was writing poems, the sobriquet 'bouche d'ombre,' 'mouth of darkness,' for her sullen and stern ways and her omnipresent control over her children. Nothing stopped Rimbaud's youthful activity as a poet, and, given his generally rebellious style, his Mother's brooding insistence on education was probably beneficial; she oversaw young Arthur's intense memorization of Latin poetry, and gave him youthful freedom only to continue his schooling at the Collège de Charleville. At that school, and with the tutelage of a couple of understanding intellectuals, Arthur became a stunning academic success, top of his class except in math and science. He was, however, not destined to an academic career, nor was this teen ager patient after graduation from Charleville. With the advent of the Franco-Prussian War, in 1870, Rimbaud began a series of attempts to run away and seek his freedom. In the course of these efforts at liberation he took the liberty of writing to the poet Paul Verlaine, who invited Rimbaud to stay with him in Paris in 1871; the two rebels became lovers, traveled together to and lived in England, and eventually—after stormy times, during which the teen age Rimbaud wrote constantly—broke up, but not before Verlaine, drunken and wild, had shot and seriously wounded Rimbaud. In the midst of such scenes Rimbaud truly decided upon escape from all that he had known, and in 1876 enlisted with the Dutch Colonial Army—only to desert not long after, and to make his way exhaustedly back to Paris. By this stage Rimbaud is just over twenty, and has virtually finished his writing career. The remaining years of his life—as a businessman in Harar, Ethiopia, and the first major coffee trader in that country, as well as jack of all trades working his way from port to port along the East African coast—remain outside our scope in this entry, except as living materials of an improbably brilliant poetic career. Rimbaud died of cancer at the age of thirty seven.

Arthur Rimbaud, works. Rimbaud's best known works are *A Season in Hell*, *Une Saison en Enfer*, and the *Illuminations*, 1874. These works of visionary poetry and prose poetry take their springboard in Baudelaire's own addled eye for contemporary society, but move far out toward the kinds of acid-inspired envisionings we may find among the American Beats of the mid-twentieth century. Rimbaud's own formulation of his quest is the last word on the matter:

I say that one must be a seer, make oneself a seer. The poet makes himself a seer by a long, prodigious, and rational disordering of all the senses. Every form of love, of suffering, of madness; he searches himself, he consumes all the poisons in him, and keeps only their quintessences. This is an unspeakable torture during which he needs all his faith and superhuman strength, and during which he becomes the great patient, the great criminal, the great accursed – and the great learned one! – among men. – For he arrives at the unknown!

Reading

Primary source reading

Arthur Rimbaud, *Complete Works,* tr. ed. Wallace Fowlie, Jean Nicolas, 2005.

Secondary source reading

Wilson, Edmund, *Rimbaud: the Double Life of a Rebel*, 2000.

Further reading

Nicholl, Charles, *Somebody Else: Arthur Rimbaud in Africa (1882-91),* 1999.

Original language reading

Jeancolas, Claude, *Passion Rimbaud: L'Album d'une vie*, 1998.

Suggested paper topics

Rethink the scandalous relation between Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine. Would we not still today, after we have 'seen everything,' be startled by such a public relationship? (Or would we?) What kind of contempt for settled social norms was driving these writers? Did it lie in 'hatred of the bourgeoisie'?

Look into Rimbaud's career as a coffee trader, after he stopped writing at the age of twenty. Was Rimbaud successful as a businessman? What kind of trading operations did he supervise in Harar? Was the poet-visionary still at work in him there?

Excerpt http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/childhood-70/

That idol, black eyes and yellow mop, without parents or court,
nobler than Mexican and Flemish fables;
his domain, insolent azure and verdure,
runs over beaches called by the shipless waves,
names ferociously Greek, Slav, Celt.

At the border of the forest-- dream flowers tinkle, flash, and flare,--
the girl with orange lips, knees
crossed in the clear flood that gushes from the fields,
nakedness shaded, traversed, dressed by rainbow, flora, sea.

Ladies who stroll on terraces adjacent to the sea;
baby girls and giantesses,
superb blacks in the verdigris moss,
jewels upright on the rich ground
of groves and little thawed gardens,--
young mothers and big sisters with eyes full of pilgrimages,
sultanas, princesses tyrannical of costume and carriage,
little foreign misses and young ladies gently unhappy.
What boredom, the hour of the 'dear body' and 'dear heart.'

II.
It is she, the little girl, dead behind the rosebushes. --
The young mamma, deceased, comes down the stoop.--
The cousin's carriage creaks on the sand.--
The little brother (he is in India!) there,
before the western sky in the meadow of pinks.

The old men who have been buried upright
in the rampart overgrown with gillyflowers.
Swarms of golden leaves surround the general's house.
They are in the south.--

You follow the red road to reach the empty inn.

The chateau is for sale; the shutters are coming off.
The priest must have taken away the key of the church.
Around the park the keepers' cottages are uninhabited.

The enclosures are so high that nothing
can be seen but the rustling tree tops.
Besides, there is nothing to be seen within.
The meadows go up to the hamlets without anvils or cocks.

The sluice gate is open.
O the Calvaries and the windmills of the desert,
the islands and the haystacks!
Magic flowers droned.

The slopes cradled him.
Beasts of a fabulous elegance moved about.
The clouds gathered over the high sea,
formed of an eternity of hot tears.

Fiction

Stael, Mme. de

Mme. Stael: an appreciation. Anne Marie Germaine Necker,(1766-1817), commonly known as Mme. de Stael, was a distinguished French woman of letters, novelist, salon presider, and lifetime enemy of Napoleon. She left her mark on many aspects of French literature and culture in the l9th century.

Mme. de Stael: life and works. Mme. de Stael was born in Paris, daughter of the prominent French-Swiss banker, Jacques Necker, who was at the time Prime Minister of France under Louis XVI. During her childhood she spent much time in the salon of her mother—a salon frequented by such luminaries as Buffon, Marmontel, and Edward Gibbon, who were charmed by the brilliant youngster. Her mother devoted much attention to Germaine's education, which was consciously modeled on the pedagogy of Jean Jacques Rousseau, blended with a strong dose of Calvinist discipline. In l792 the Reign of Terror led to the dismissl of Necker as Prime Minister; whereupon the family moved to Switzerland; from which Mme. de Stael returned to Paris in 1797, setting up her own salon. (in l785 she had been married to a legate of the Swedish Embassy in France, but this relationship appears to have been tepid at best, and Mme. de Stael continued to engage intimately with the most distinguished literary men of the time, in particularly Benjamin Constant, the author of *Adolphe*. Mme. de Stael maintained a stout opposition to Napoleon, throughout this time, and in l803 that opposition led to her second banishment from Paris. For the next ten years she traveled in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Italy. Especially drawn to German Romanticism, she wrote *De l'Allemagne* (1813), On Germany, which was an eye opener for the French, who had long been unacquainted with developments in their neighboring country across the Rhein. As a result of this widely read publication Mme. de Stael earned herself banishment from all of France—Napoleon had come out badly in the text. In l815 she was once more allowed to return to Paris, where she spent the last two years of her life entertaining in her salon, and editing her works.

Mme. de Stael's work. Mme. de Stael created both novels and extensive books of literary and cultural criticism. Her sentimental novels, *Delphine* (1802) and *Corinne* (1807) were great hits, not least because they drew attention to the intense actual inner life of the women conventionally treated, in literature, as mothers and window dressing for their husbands. Far more important than these novels are her two critical treatises. On *Literature considered In its relation to Social Institutions* (1800) she suggests that one must not judge a work by an absolute and objective standard, but must take into consideration the social, political, religious, and philosophical

environment in which it was written. In *On Germany* (1813) she examines German customs,literature, philosophy, ethics, and religion. She introduces the French reading public to such prominent but in France little known thinkers as Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and Schiller. She urges a closer intellectual relationship between France and Germany. Her enthusiasm popularized German Romanticism in France, and in other countries of Europe and was a most potent force in bringing about the triumph of French Romanticism.

Reading

Primary source reading

Delphine, tr. Goldberger, 1995.

Secondary Source Reading

Fairweather, M., *Mme. de Stael*, 2006.

Further Reading

Herold, J., *Mistress to an Age: A Life of Mme. de Stael*, 2002.

Original language reading

Bredin, Jean-Denis: *Une singuliere famille: Jacques Necker, Suzanne Necker, Germaine de Stael,* 1999.

Suggested paper topics

What caused the remarkable influence of Mme. de Stael's *De l'allemagne?* To answer this, look into the geopolitics of the time, which created an almost total break between the French and German cultures which met at the Rhine.

Look into Mme. de Stael's fiction. Try *Delphine,* to see how de Stael viewed the inner sentiments of women in her society. Is it easy for you to imagine a culture in which literature of this sort was all the rage? (It was.)

Excerpt http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Anne_Louise_Germaine_de_Sta%C3%ABl

. We cease loving ourselves if no one loves us.

Love is the whole history of a woman's life; it is an episode in a man's.

The evil arising from mental improvement can be corrected only by a still further progress in that very improvement. Either morality is affable, or the more enlightened we are, the more attached to it we become.

If we would succeed in works of the imagination, we must offer a mild morality in the midst of rigid manners; but where the manners arecorrupt, we must consistently hold up to view an austere morality.

One must, in one's life, make a choice between boredom and suffering.

A man must know how to fly in the face of opinion; a woman to submit to it

*I*t seems to me that life's circumstances, being ephemeral, teach us less about durable truths than the fictions based on those truths; and that the best lessons of delicacy

and self-respect are to be found in novels where the feelings are so naturally portrayed that you fancy you are witnessing real life as you read.

> In matters of the heart, nothing is true except the improbable.
> Superstition attaches to this life, and religion to the next; superstition is allied to fatality, and religion to virtue; it is from the vivacity of earthly desires that we become superstitious, and it is, on the contrary, by the sacrifice of these same desires that we are religious.
>
> Life often seems like a long shipwreck, of which the débris are friendship, fame, and love.

Sand, Georges

Georges Sand and French literature. Georges Sand (1804-1876) was a widely read and discussed French novelist, memoirist, and challenger of social mores. Her flamboyant affairs with literary and artistic figures were widely known, as was a fling with Lesbianism—for all these 'dubious behaviors' of the time were heralding a significant new freedom for women.

Georges Sand, the Life. George Sand was born in Paris. Her mother was a commoner, but her father, a grandson of the Marshal General of France, loomed like a beacon of distinction over the family. Georges Sand was raised by her grandmother, primarily at the family estate near Nohant, in the province of Berry. (There she was raised in the spirit of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a lover of nature, a lover of the natural in the human, and no adulator of social structures.) From l817-1820 she removed to a convent, where her education continued, and she became for a time fervently religious. In l820 she returned to Nohant, where her fervor began to decline. Two years later she married Baron Dudevant, a coarse but well meaning squire, whom she left in l831, and whom she later divorced. (She often voiced her scorn for him—scorning his claim to nobility, and mocking his bourgeois habits.) She went back to Paris, where she indulged in what was to be a wide range of affairs with literary, artistic, and musical figures of the day—including Alfred de Musset, Prosper Mérimée, Frédéric Chopin, Franz Liszt, and in the end (though perhaps as friend and not lover) with Gustave Flaubert, who greatly admired her. (We speak here of full fledged affairs, not one night stands; for example she spent the winter of 1838-9 on Majorca with Frédéric Chopin, and her own children; until internal squabbling broke the pair apart. She had a good dozen serious affairs, all of which, given her prominence as a writer, at the same time, brought sustained attention onto her; as did a probably Lesbian affair with the for a time extremely popular stage actress, Marie Dorval, with whom Georges Sand collaborated.) To all of these prominent 'scandalous' situations Georges Sand added the component of fairly permanent social rebellion. She dressed in men's clothing, smoked in public—quite a daring act at the time—and engaged actively in politics and social movements. (One of her areas of commitment was to the Fouriériste commune system advocated by many free thinkers in the Paris of the time.) In l860 she retired to Nohant, where she lived and wrote for the remainder of her life.

Georges Sand, the written work. George Sand's novels, which are rarely read for pleasure today, fall into four more or less distinct categories: novels of love; novels of political and sociological reform; novels of country life; novels of manners. Although these novels are not popular today, and are too 'local' for our tastes, Sand was of considerable importance in her day. She did much to spread the doctrines of social justice and the equality of women, and her novels had a great effect on Russian thought in the last part of the nineteenth century. Although her ideas were generally borrowed ideas, she wrote in her own style—clear and fluid—and lived a life which was considered liberated and liberating.

Reading

Primary source reading

My Life, Georges Sand, tr. Hofstadter, 1979.

Secondary source reading

Szulc, Tad, *Chopin in Paris: the Life and Times of the Romantic Composer,* 1995.

Further reading

Travers, Martin, *European Literature from Romanticism to Postmodernism*, 2006.

Original language reading

Maurois, Andre, *Lelia ou la vie de Georges Sand*, 1985.

Suggested paper topics

Georges Sand may strike us today, more for her lifestyle—which was liberated to the max—than for her fiction, but in her time she was widely read. Read a novel like *Indiana* (1832), and see what you think of the new liberated social world, of her time, as presented by a Romantic woman's discourse.

In your mind pair Mme. de Stael, as a bridge builder but liberated woman, with Georges Sand. What do you see in common between the two women, as inner revolutionaries? What drove both of them to write extensive interior fictions? Are they precursors of the liberated woman of our day? Or of a special kind of modern femme fatale?

Excerpt http://en.proverbia.net/citasautor.asp?autor=16419

There is only one happiness in life -- to love and to be loved.

Faith is an excitement and an enthusiasm: it is a condition of intellectual magnificence to which we must cling as to a treasure, and not squander on our way through life in the small coin of empty words, or in exact and priggish argument.

I regard as a mortal sin not only the lying of the senses in matters of love, but also the illusion which the senses seek to create where love is only partial. I say, I believe, that one must love with all of one's being, or else live, come what may, a life of complete chastity.

Once my heart was captured, reason was out the door, deliberately and with a sort of frantic joy. I accepted everything, I believed everything, without struggle, without suffering, without regret, without false shame. How can one blush for what one adores?

Work is not man's punishment! It is his reward and his strength, his glory and his pleasure.

If they are ignorant, they are despised, if learned, mocked. In love they are reduced to the status of courtesans. As wives they are treated more as servants than as companions. Men do not love them: they make use of them, they exploit them, and expect, in that way, to make them subject to the law of fidelity.

It is sad, no doubt, to exhaust one's strength and one's days in cleaving the bosom of this jealous earth, which compels us to wring from it the treasures of its fertility, when a bit of the blackest and coarsest bread is, at the end of the day's work, the sole recompense and the sole profit attaching to so arduous a toil.

Constant, Benjamin

Benjamin Constant, his importance for his time. Benjamin Constant (1767-1830) was a distinguished novelist (of one novel) and a committed and influential Liberal in the early Revolutionary sense. He has left a firm mark on many aspects of literary/social thought in France.

Benjamin Constant, the life. Constant was born in Lausanne, Switzerland, of French Huguenots who left France as dissidents as early as the sixteenth century. His father—like his grandfather and uncle—was a high ranking officer in the French Army, and Constant himself was soon to sign up with the Dutch States Army. Prior to that he had been carefully trained and educated by both his grandmothers, and was a zealous student under private tutoring in Brussels (1779), in the Netherlands (1780), and in Erlangen (1783), the Protestant University. Drawing on family connections, he moved from France to Scotland. There he accumulated sizeable gambling debts, which at his departure he promised to return and pay. In l787 Constant returned to Scotland—traveling by horseback through England--and paid off his debts. (He was all this time writing fervently, but not publishing his work.) In 1792 he moved to the Court of Charles William Ferdinand, and then in l795 made the acquaintance of Mme. De Stael, with whom he was to live and have a highly public affair, which lasted until 1811. After his separation from Mme. de Stael Constant devoted himself not only to the writing of his novel *Adolphe*, which he started in 1816, but to fervent political activity, becoming a member of the Council of State, and achieving election to the Chamber of Deputies.

Constant's political philosophy. Constant was familiar with much of Europe, and like many Frenchmen of his Revolutionary period, particularly admired the Constitutional Monarchy of England. In developing, and expounding, this opinion, Constant wrote and thought innovatively about the nature of government, which he firmly believed exists only to serve the people. The modern state, he believed, was too extensive and impersonal to –proceed like the ancient classical democracies, on the basis of direct representation, and needed to adopt a new kind of democracy, fitted to mass culture and accepting commerce as its driving force. Constant's exposition of his political ideology drew wide attention, and was consulted and put into practice by a wide variety of new governments. The list, in its breadth, shows the extent of influence of Constant's liberalism: Spain, Portugal, Greece, Belgium, and social developments taking place in Brasil and Mexico.

Constant's fiction. *Adolphe*, 1816, Constant's one major work of fiction, shows with brilliant clarity the kind of Romantic ideology that pervaded European literature from the time of Goethe's *Werther*. The story is simple, but emblematic for the social/emotional world of Romanticism. The narrator is an introverted son of a government minister, who is of melancholy disposition, and has fallen under the influence of a rather cynical older friend. Under the spell of this viewpoint he devises a plan to seduce a beautiful Polish woman, ten years his senior. The seduction is successful, the pair fall in love, and lose all awareness of the world around them. Unfortunately, however, Alophe's father, and many aiding voices, feel Adolphe is wasting his life. Much is done to break up the pair, and a final blow—a letter discovered by Ellenore, revealing Adolphe's decision to leave her—leads to her death, and his even deeper alienation from the world than he had been drowned in as a young man.

Reading

Primary source reading

Adolphe, trans. Tancock, l990.

Secondary source reading

Wood, Dennis, *Benjamin Constant: A Biography*, 1993.

Further reading

Biancamaria, F., *Benjamin Constant and the Post-Revolutionary Mind,* 1991.

Original language reading

Todorov, T., *Benjamin Constant: La Passion démocratique,* 1991,

Suggested paper topics

Read and think about *Adolphe*, and then compare its message to the political activism of Constant, which appears based on a profound faith in mankind's democratic possibilities. Do you see any conflict between the novel and the political position?

Give some thought to the remarkable influence of Constant on political ideologies and rulers in post-Revolutionary Europe. Does Constant appear to you to have relevance and meaning for political developments in our own time?

Excerpt http://quotes.liberty-tree.ca/quotes_by/benjamin+constant

First ask yourselves, Gentlemen, what an Englishman, a Frenchman, and a citizen of the United States of America understand today by the word 'liberty'. For each of them it is the right to be subjected only to the laws, and to be neither arrested, detained, put to death nor maltreated in any way by the arbitrary will of one or more individuals. It is the right of everyone to express their opinion, choose a profession and practice it, to dispose of property, and even to abuse it; to come and go without permission, and without having to account for their motives or undertakings. It is everyone's right to associate with other individuals, either to discuss their interests, or to profess the religion which they or their associates prefer, or even simply to occupy their days or hours in a way which is more compatible with their inclinations or whims. Finally, it is everyone's right to exercise some influence on the administration of the government, either by electing all or particular officials, or through representations, petitions, demands to which the authorities are more or less compelled to pay heed. Now compare this liberty with that of the ancients. The latter consisted in exercising collectively, but directly, several parts of the complete sovereignty; in deliberating, in the public square, over war and peace; in forming alliances with foreign governments; in voting laws, in pronouncing judgments; in examining the accounts, the acts, the stewardship of the magistrates; in calling them to appear in front of the assembled people, in accusing, condemning or absolving them. But if this was what the ancients called liberty, they admitted as compatible with this collective freedom the complete subjection of the individual to the authority of the community.

Balzac, Honoré de

Balzac, Honoré de: importance for French literature. Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850) was a French novelist, playwright, and author of a long sequence of short stories and novels, *La Comédie humaine*, *The Human Comedy*, in which he left the world a fascinating and influential portrait of many aspects of French society in the year following l815 and the fall of Napoleon.

The life of Balzac. Honore de Balzac was born at Tarn, in the south of France. His family was rather poor, and his father eager to teach Honore a frugal life style; the results were a pinched youth for the young man, who got used to being laughed at in school, for the litmited spending money he had available. The College to which he was sent was the College de Vendome in his native city, but while there he was indifferent to his studies—except when it came to voracious reading, which he devoured during his prolonged and regular periods of detention. After graduation he was sent to Tours, where he became an apprentice in a law office. (This effort bored Balzac, who found himself exhausted by the experience of the ups and downs of ordinary human existence, but who learned vastly for his future literary work.) After this venture he gave up law, and several other unsuccessful business ventures, for a life in literature, though not without having paid his dues to the educational system. He studied at the Sorbonne, where he had distinguished and stimulating Professors, and by l845 he was beginning to make a considerable living from his books. He plunged into the writing life with an amazing fervor, than which nothing else could have driven him to the vast achievement of his fictional world. In l850 he married a wealthy Polish countess, but died of a heart disease a few months after the wedding.

Balzac's work and style. The masterpiece of Balzac's life was the *Comédie Humaine.* It was not until l830-1834 that he clearly formulated a plan to write a comprehensive and detailed sketch of all French life. Just as Dante's *Divine Comedy* had portrayed the denizens of all the regions of hell, purgatory, and paradise, so *The Human Comedy* would depict every sort of person on earth, or at least in France. He planned to fit all his novels—those already written as well as those to come—into one great cycle. Into this framework he poured ninety five titles, and planned approximately fifty five more , which he did not live to write. The amount he did write, however, was overwhelming—more than four million words, containing over two thousand characters, of whom about five hundred appear in more than one story. Some of the stories are merely short tales; some novelettes; others full length novels. In an effort to reproduce the real, Balzac often begins his fictions with long and tedious expositions. Often he inserts digressions for the purpose of expounding his pet theories or of convincing the reader of the authenticity of his account. Frequently his narration is in the first person. In the novels dealing with social groups he uses complex plots. In the novels of character, however, the plots are simple, and the details of characterization are sometimes accumulated til a caricature results. Often there is one trait which dominates a person, and so drives him to distraction. For example, Father Goriot's paternal devotion almost turns into criminal indulgence; Grandet's love for gold becomes a mania; and Cousin Bette's envy and jealousy are her undoing.

Reading

Primary source reading

Old Man Goriot, tr. McCannon and Robb, 2011.

Secondary source reading

Brook, Peter, *Realist Vision,* 2005.

Further reading

Lehan, Richard, *Realism and Naturalism*, 2005.

Original language reading

Maurois, A*., Prométhée ou la vie de Balzac*, 1965.

Suggested paper topics

You are aware of the huge fictional universe Balzac created around him. Do you suppose this kind of capacious imagination, which has rarely been equaled—in France the only rivals might be Victor Hugo or Emile Zola—blots out the real world, so that the author substitutes fictive values for real, in his work? Would that apply to Balzac?

Does Balzac in his fiction display the kind of large hearted sympathy for the poor, the losers, of his society which we associated with the work of Victor Hugo? Is there a tone in Balzac such as that we hear in Hugo's *Les Miserables*?

Excerpt http://racheltapley.wordpress.com/2012/11/09/translation-excerpt-from-balzacs-the-unknown-masterpiece/

Strictly speaking, drawing does not exist! Don't laugh, young man! However strange this idea might seem to you, one day you'll understand the reasons behind it. The line is the way man realizes the effect of light on objects; but there are no lines in nature, where everything is full: it's by modeling that we draw, that is to say, we detach things from the environment where they are, only the distribution of light gives the body its appearance! So I have not fixed the lines, I have spread over the contours a cloud of blond, warm middle tints which makes it so that you cannot put a finger on where exactly the contours meet the background. From close, this work seems cloudy and appears to lack precision, but from two steps back, everything becomes firm, fixed and detached; the body turns, the forms begin to stand out, you feel the air circulate all around. And yet I am still not content, I have doubts.

Zola, Emile

Emile Zola, life and works. Emile Zola (1840-1902), who was to become known as the Father of French Naturalism, and who has left a powerful mark on the French fictional tradition, as well as on liberal politics in France, was born in Paris, son of an Italian engineer. After moving to the south of France, as a youngster, he returned to Paris in l858, at the age of eighteen. He worked for some time, unsuccessfully, as a sales clerk, then as a journalist. At that point he decided to devote his attention to literature. He began his literary career, as did Balzac, by writing popular horror and mystery stories. (An early autobiography, found sordid by the public, showed what was to be his lifelong talent for probing the dark side of human social nature.) From early on, however, he began conceiving the ideas of an extensive series of fictions in which the novel would become a kind of sociology, recording the growth of industrialization and the new middle class in France. His novel *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) heralded this large systematic vision—one thinks in this connection of Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine*—which was the first step toward the novel of Naturalism, and toward the series, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, of which twenty volumes were eventually to be written. It should be added that the cultural climate into which Zola wrote this work supported the idea of society, and its members, as parts of a vast evolving organism: the ideas of Darwin, of Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893), who formulated the notion of *race*, *moment*, and *milieu* as the determining shapers of society, and even the first texts of 'social science' were creating a new climate of social analysis. As it happened Zola chose to exemplify his vision/theory by a single family and its many members, all of whom were socially limited and even

physiologically broken; good examples, therefore, of the broadly scornful view Zola had, of the human animal. Despite the limitations theory imposed on his vision, however, Zola has left us with three wonderfully powerful novels, on the level with the work of Dreiser, in America: *L'Assommoir* (1877), a brutal attack on the damages done by drink; *Germinal* (1885) on the conflict between capital and labor in a miner's strike; and *La Débacle* (1892) a study of politics and war.

Zola's literary theories and methods. In many senses, Zola is most remembered for his startlingly new conception of the role and nature of the novel. The key term here is Naturalism, a word chosen by Zola himself, to indicate that his method is similar to that used in the natural sciences. This technique is a combination of minute and impersonal observation (derived from Balzac and Stendahl) and the experimental method used in science. This method was suggested to Zola by his reading of Claude Bernard's *Introduction to Experimental Medicine* (1865). Zola explains his theories in *The Experimental Novel* (1880).His own usual procedure is to begin not with a plot or some character, but with a cross section of life he wants to portray. Then he selects some suitable characters and endows each with a few elementary traits. (He regularly visited the real scenes of upcoming fictions—a strike, an industrial plant, a certain urban neighborhood, before starting to write.) The cross section he chose to portray is almost invariably sordid, and the portrait is nearly accompanied by the pessimism characteristic of the realists and naturalists.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Ladies' Paradise, tr. Brian Nelson, 2008.

Secondary source reading

Brown, Frederick, *Zola: A Life*, l995.

Further reading

Hemmings, F.W.J., *Emile Zola,* l966.

Original language reading

Mitterand, Henri, *Zola*, l999.

Suggested paper topics

What do you think of the kind of 'scientific perspective' onto society, with which Zola intends to guide us through his fictions? Is it truly scientific? Does it work artistically?

Does Zola emerge from his hugely ambitious work with a respect, even love, for humanity? Does he find the lovable in the human beings he portrays, or does he bring that love, if that is the right word, to his vision of the human whole?

Excerpt http://www.culinate.com/books/book_excerpts/the_belly_of_paris
Especially was this the case with the peaches, the blushing peaches of Montreuil, with skin as delicate and clear as that of northern maidens, and the yellow, sunburnt peaches from the south, brown like the damsels of Provence. The apricots, on their beds of moss, gleamed with the hue of amber or with that sunset glow which so warmly colors the necks of brunettes at the nape, just under the little wavy curls which fall below the chignon.
The cherries, ranged one by one, resembled the short lips of smiling Chinese girls; the Montmorencies suggested the dumpy mouths of buxom women; the English ones were longer and graver-looking; the common black ones seemed as though they had been bruised and

crushed by kisses; while the white-hearts, with their patches of rose and white, appeared to smile with mingled merriment and vexation.
Then piles of apples and pears, built up with architectural symmetry, often in pyramids, displayed the ruddy glow of budding breasts and the gleaming sheen of shoulders, quite a show of nudity, lurking modestly behind a screen of fern leaves. There were all sorts of varieties — little red ones so tiny that they seemed to be yet in the cradle, shapeless Tambours for baking, *calvilles* in light yellow gowns, sanguineous-looking Canadas, blotched *châtaignier* apples, fair, freckled rennets, and dusky russets. Then came the pears — the *blanquettes,* the British queens, the *beurrés,* the *messirejeans,* and the duchesses — some dumpy, some long and tapering, some with slender necks, and others with thick-set shoulders, their green and yellow bellies picked out at times with a splotch of carmine.
By the side of these the transparent plums resembled tender, chlorotic virgins; the greengages and the Orleans plums paled as with modest innocence, while the mirabelles lay like the golden beads of a rosary forgotten in a box among sticks of vanilla. And the strawberries exhaled a sweet perfume — a perfume of youth — especially those little ones which are gathered in the woods, and which are far more aromatic than the large ones grown in gardens, for these breathe an insipid odor suggestive of the watering pot.

Flaubert

Gustave Flaubert: his place in French Literature. Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) was the most artistic of the great realist novelists of nineteenth century France, and exercised extraordinary influence over such followers as de Maupassant, Edmond de Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet, and Emile Zola. He set benchmark standards for purity of prose expression and care for literary structure.

T**he Life and Writings of Gustave Flaubert**. Flaubert was born in Rouen, in Normandy, and except for a few years of travel, as a young man, he lived either in Rouen or in the nearby town of Croisset, where he died. By the age of eight he was immersed in his writing projects, which he carried with him to the Lycée Pierre Corneille. (He was also busy absorbing the ambience of the medical world, which he picked up from his father, a physician, and would apply generously to some of his best work in fiction.) An attempt by his father to make a lawyer of him (1840-45) was a failure, not least because toward the end of his legal studies he was assailed with an attack of epilepsy, one of a number of ailments that would plague him til his death.) From 1846-54 Flaubert was immersed in an intense, and much talked about, love affair with Louise Colette, and found himself spending considerable time in Paris, which he disliked, though while there he made significant acquaintances, with Victor Hugo, Daudet, Turgenev, and the Goncourt brothers. During the same period he took off time for an extensive trip—with his friend Maxime du Camp—to Greece, Egypt, and Istanbul, sites from which he took profuse mental and correspondence notes on every kind of local color—including, unfortunately prostitutes of both sexes, from whom he acquired the venereal diseases, which in the days before antibiotics persisted for a lifetime. During these years Flaubert was already actively writing, as he had been since childhood, and in 1856 came out with his first significant, and probably greatest novel, *Madame Bovary*, which penetrates the bitter and ultimately tragic life of provincial romance. Two years later Flaubert published a daring novel *(Salammbo*) of ancient Carthage, for which he prepared by a trip to Tunisia, and the site of the ancient Empire which stood up so boldly to Rome. In l869 Flaubert published a long worked on self-study, in which he investigated both the roots of the Romantic temper, and the way they exfoliated in his own life; it was called *L'Education sentimentale*. His later years were afflicted with the maladies mentioned above—epilepsy, neurasthenia, venereal disease—aggravated, perhaps, by the labor of writing, to which he relentlessly drove himself. He died suddenly of a stroke of apoplexy.

Theories and Methods of his writing. By temperament Flaubert was a Romantic. He loathed everything that was bourgeois and ordinary, and he loved the violent, the unusual, and the colorful. Furthermore, his literary tastes preferred Chateaubriand, Hugo, and Gautier; he thought Balzac second rate, because of his careless style. (Flaubert himself would occasionally spend up

to a week in the revision of a single page of prose.) He was a proponent of the theory of the 'mot juste,' the proper word, and claimed that in every instance there was just one word which precisely suited a writer's meaning. Consequently he was probably the most painstaking and self-critical novelist the world has known.

Reading

Primary source reading

Madame Bovary, tr. Davis, L., 2011.

Secondary source reading

Brown, Frederick, *Flaubert: A Biography*, 2006.

Further reading

Barnes, Julian, *Flaubert's Parrot,* l984.

Original language reading

Hennequin, E*., Quelques ecrivains francais*, 2004.

Suggested paper topics

Discuss the use Flaubert made of the medical experiences to which he was exposed in his youth, and, by observation, throughout his life. What is the role of the doctor's profession in M*adame Bovary*, and what is Flaubert's attitude toward it?

Flaubert was famous for his meticulous attention to style, and would sometimes spend a week writing and rewriting a page. Can you see the effects of this procedure in a text of his? Go for examples!

Excerpt http://theinkbrain.wordpress.com/2011/12/31/madame-bovary-gustave-flaubert-an-excerpt/

She gave up playing the piano. Why practice? Who would ever hear her? Since she would never play for an audience, in a short-sleeved velvet dress, on an Erard piano, skimming over the ivory keys with the lightest of fingers, never feel a murmur of ecstasy rising about her, what was the point of practicing any more? She left her sketch books and tapestry in the cupboard. What was the use? What was the use? Sewing made her nervous.
"I've read everything," she said to herself.
So she sat there idly, holding the tongs in the fire until they turned red, or watching the rain fall. How sad she felt on Sundays, when the church bell sounded for vespers! She stood in a kind of expectant daze, listening as each broken note rang out again, and again. A cat was stalking about the rooftops, arching its back in the last pale rays of sunshine. The wind blew trails of dust along the highroad. In the distance, a dog howled now and then, and the bell kept up its tolling, each monotonous note dying out over the countryside.
Meanwhile, people had begun to walk home from church.

Maupassant, Guy de

Guy de Maupassant: life and works. Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) was born in the Chateau de Miromesnil, near Dieppe, in the province of Seine-Maritime. His parents were prosperous middle class, and his family life stable and comfortable until the divorce of his parents, his mother having taken the unusual step of legal divorce from her husband. The young man's relation to this mother was close, and sponsored his intense interest in reading. (His mother was an avid reader of Shakespeare.) At the age of thirteen, de Maupassant was sent to a nearby seminary for classical studies, but found the religious atmosphere highly unappetizing. (He was much happier with sports like boating and fishing.) In 1868 de Maupassant entered the Lycée Pierre Corneille in Rouen, then from 1868-1871 he moved to Paris, where he worked as a clerk in the Ministère de la Marine. It was at this time that he made the acquaintance of Turgenev and Zola, and of course worked at his writing, which was beginning to be published but had not yet attracted significant attention. In 1880 his most popular work, *Boule de Suif,* (*Tallow Ball*) was published, and would usher in his most productive period of writing, 1880-1891. In those years he turned out several novels, and at least three hundred short stories. Incessant work, plus dissipation began then to ruin his good health, and after 1885 he became obsessed with a fear of death. His mind became more and more unbalanced, and by l892 he was insane. He died on the Riviera, in l893, of general paralysis.

Style and theories. Maupassant formulated no artistic theories, in the fashion of Zola, but he worked according to a firm set of principles. He subscribed to Flaubert's realism, without imitating his master's prolixity, his romantic tendencies, or his contempt for anything bourgeois. De Maupassant is the most purely realistic of French writers, not in the sense that he strives to portray the down side of life, like Zola and the Goncourt brothers, but that he maintains an impersonal and scientific distance from his material. In that spirit he totally concurs with Flaubert, about the importance of the mot juste; and his diction is not only precise but concise, natural, sober, and often caustic. Like the works of most of the realists and naturalists, his stories are pessimistic and morbid, and he is inclined to seek out the immoral—if not those depths of social loss which fascinated Zola. He does not seek the bizarre or the sensational; he prides himself on describing and relating only what he himself has witnessed.

A typical plot. *One Life* (*Une Vie*, l883) may give us an impression of an aspect of de Maupassant's work. This novel concerns Jeanne, a sensitive and idealistic Norman girl who whose friends crush her by their betrayal. Her husband, Julien, proves to be a faithless mate, having an affair first with Jeanne's maid, Rosalie, and then with Jeanne's close and trusted friend. Jeanne is further disillusioned by discovering that both her father and mother have had extracurricular affairs; and finally Jeanne's son, Paul, shows his lack of affection for her by leaving home to live with a prostitute, on whom he wastes the family fortunes. The title says it all.

An estimate of de Maupassant. Although his field is narrow, within in de Maupassant has never been surpassed. He has the careful artistry which Balzac lacks, and he has to an eminent degree Balzac's ability to render full characters and live social reality.

Reading

Primary source reading

Bel-Ami, tr. Vassiliev, 2012.

Secondary source reading

Gregorio, Laurence, *Maupassant's Fiction and the Darwinian View of Life,* 2005.

Further reading

Donaldson-Evans, M. *Woman's Revenge: The Chronology of Dispossession in Maupasant's Fiction,* 1986.

Suggested paper topics

De Maupassant is one of the world masters of the short story. Study one of his stories closely, and examine the narrative strategies he employs there. What are his devices and above all what are his viewpoints?

Have you encountered the French short story before the nineteenth century? Is there any sense in which the short story belongs to the modern period? Was there an equivalent to the short story in older, earlier French literature?

Excerpt http://www.online-literature.com/maupassant/bel-ami/1/

After changing his five-franc piece Georges Duroy left the restaurant. He twisted his mustache in military style and cast a rapid, sweeping glance upon the diners, among whom were three saleswomen, an untidy music-teacher of uncertain age, and two women with their husbands.

When he reached the sidewalk, he paused to consider what route he should take. It was the twenty-eighth of June and he had only three francs in his pocket to last him the remainder of the month. That meant two dinners and no lunches, or two lunches and no dinners, according to choice. As he pondered upon this unpleasant state of affairs, he sauntered down Rue Notre Dame de Lorette, preserving his military air and carriage, and rudely jostled the people upon the streets in order to clear a path for himself. He appeared to be hostile to the passers-by, and even to the houses, the entire city. Tall, well-built, fair, with blue eyes, a curled mustache, hair naturally wavy and parted in the middle, he recalled the hero of the popular romances.

It was one of those sultry, Parisian evenings when not a breath of air is stirring; the sewers exhaled poisonous gases and the restaurants the disagreeable odors of cooking and of kindred smells. Porters in their shirt-sleeves, astride their chairs, smoked their pipes at the carriage gates, and pedestrians strolled leisurely along, hats in hand.

When Georges Duroy reached the boulevard he halted again, undecided as to which road to choose. Finally he turned toward the Madeleine and followed the tide of people.

The large, well-patronized cafes tempted Duroy, but were he to drink only two glasses of beer in an evening, farewell to the meager supper the following night! Yet he said to himself: "I will take a glass at the Americain. By Jove, I am thirsty."

20TH CENTURY

Overview A new idealism and positive faith, which permeated French thinking toward the end of the l9th century—powered by faith in science, economic progress, exuberant forms of nationalism—found expression in the vitalist philosophies of such pan European thinkers as Bergson and Nietzsche. However intimations of upcoming political strife, of ominous force, were on the horizon.

The boiling conflicts within Germany came to the surface as early as 1905, when the Kaiser insulted France at Tangiers; there was more friction at Agadir in l911. Then in l914, came the First World War, and with it the destruction not only of the German Empire but virtually of France along with it. The era between the first and second world wars was one of disillusionment, frustration, and cynicism. Conflicting economic and political beliefs made for instability in governments, and pacifism met opposition from those who feared the resurgence of German militarism, especially after Hitler's rise to power in l933. The pragmatic philosophy of William James and the psychology of Sigmund Freud had deep effect on French thought during this interim period.

Like the period following World War I, the years since the end of the last conflict, were filled with insecurity, disillusionment and fear—especially, in the United States, the fear of Russia and communism.

In literature, many of the fin de siècle writers continued to produce into the twentieth century. Naturalism and symbolism were already on the decline, but no new school of significance took their place. Many minor schools had brief vogues—neoromanticism, vitalism, Dynamism, Paroxysm, Futurism, and others. Several general tendencies, however, can be noted. First, during the early years of the century, the optimism, nationalism, patriotism, and activism of the era determined the course of much of the literature. At the same time some writers were turning to mysticism and religion. During each world war some good war literature was written, and after each conflict the literature reflected the pessimism and frustration of the nation. During the twentieth century there have been other persistent trends, all of them inflected by the ominous Cold War which separated the Soviet Union from the rest of Europe and the United States, and which remained a reality almost to the end of the century. One of the trends is an increasing interest in the inner workings of the mind—a trend opened widely by the researches of Sigmund Freud. Another trend might be considered the exacerbation of social and racial tension—as new nations are formed in Africa, as civil rights movements manifest in powerful societies, and as the classical threats of World War between nations are replaced by civil and ideological conflicts. A third trend should be the widening of global communications through the internet, which was an operative force by the late eighties, and the resultant changes, still hard to explore, in the relationships among individuals and the operations of entertainment and world news itself.

Discussion questions

What do you see as the roots of the Surrealism sponsored by Aragon and Breton? What needs of the time were being met by the development of this ideology and poetic?

Does the view of mankind, which Sartre develops in his plays and philosophy, resemble at all the view of Racine, in his tragedies, toward man and the human condition? Would Beckett concur with Sartre's vision of the human condition?

How does Malraux, in his P*sychology of Art*, describe the new world of international, intercultural art experience? Has the advent of the internet dated the perceptions central to Malraux?

Marcel Proust takes us back into the tangled moral complexities of an earlier social culture. How does Proust's view of that 'older world' compare to the view taken by Mauriac, in a dark novel like T*he Nest of Vipers*?

How do you interpret the lengthy period of silence in which Paul Valery found himself unable to write poetry, and then the outburst of fine lyric that later came from him? Was he, this mathematician of the imagination, moving through a mystical period?

Poetry

Aragon, Louis: importance for French literature. Louis Aragon (1897-1982) was born and died in Paris. He left a noteworthy mark on French literature. He, along with Andre Breton, was at the foundation of the literary movement of Surrealism. In addition he was a devoted member of the French Communist party, during the dramatic Cold War Years in which intellectuals in the West were defining themselves in terms of extraordinary new political ideologies.

Louis Aragon; Life and Works. Louis Aragon was born and died in Paris. The story of his upraising is unparalleled in its complexity, and surely has a bearing on his work. Louis was raised by his mother and by his maternal grandmother. However—thanks to the manipulations of his mother and grandmother—he was convinced that these two women were, respectively, his sister and foster mother. His biological father, the senator Louis Andrieux, was thirty years older than his wife, and essentially refused to recognized Louis as his son. As a result, Louis was fobbed off as Louis's godfather. The truth of this entire ruse was revealed to Louis at age nineteen, but by then his father's refusal to recognize him had cut a deep wound, and Aragon lived his with this absence of an active father. Who can doubt that the backstory to his family tree played a role in the upside down syntax of poetry within Surrealism? From 1919 on, at the end of one all enveloping war, but at the start—as we would be forced to know—of a far worse, Aragon plunged into the center of his society, writing his poetry, joining fellow writers in the Dadaist movement (1919-1924), and from the early 20's on joining the Communist Party as a fellow-traveler. (It is for this wholehearted engagement with his time, that Aragon continues to fascinate us.) In l924 Louis Aragon became a founding member of the Surrealist Movement, along with his colleagues Andre Breton and Phillipe Soupault. By the same year, l924, he became a full member of the Communist Party, and began to work for the Communist newspaper, *L'Humanite*. In other words, Communism and Surrealism—two very different versions of status quo rebellion—coincided in the developing Aragon. From this point on, as he configured his world view, Aragon wrote fervently about the beliefs and styles he admired.

I demand that my books be judged with utmost severity, by knowledgeable people who know the rules of grammar and of logic, and who will seek beneath the footsteps of my commas the lice of my thought in the head of my style.

In other words, the refusal of bourgeois language went hand in hand, in Aragon, with his refusal of the bourgeois structure of society. His poetry on war, love, nature, and confidence in the future is memorable and assumes many forms, not simply the extreme surrealist form: his poems from the war years are collected in the volume *Aragon, Poet of the French Resistance* (1945). Even before that, though, he was known for his novels, among which the later attempt to portray the whole of French society. In other words Aragon is a flexible writer, deeply involved with own time and, like many writers, skilled at assuming contradictory guides in his expression.

Reading

Primary source reading

Paris Peasant, tr. Taylor, 2004.

Secondary source reading

Aragon: Poet of the Resistance, ed. Josephson and Cowley, 1945.

Further reading

Adereth, Max, *Elsa Triolet and Louis Aragon: An Introduction to their Interwoven Lives and Works,* l994

Foreign language reading

Sanouillet, M. D*ada a Paris,* 1993.

Suggested paper topics

What relation do you see, between Aragon's complex and insecure childhood, and the kinds of surreal verbal projects from which he made his literature? Would you like to generalize about the psychological origins of surrealism in general?

As you reflect on Aragon's life and work, consider the relation between literary surrealism and communism. Can you see how they can coexist? Do they share certain common values and perspectives?

Excerpt http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/l/louis_aragon.html

We know that the nature of genius is to provide idiots with ideas twenty years later.
Light is meaningful only in relation to darkness, and truth presupposes error. It is these mingled opposites which people our life, which make it pungent, intoxicating. We only exist in terms of this conflict, in the zone where black and white clash.
I demand that my books be judged with utmost severity, by knowledgeable people who know the rules of grammar and of logic, and who will seek beneath the footsteps of my commas the lice of my thought in the head of my style.
Love is made by two people, in different kinds of solitude. It can be in a crowd, but in an oblivious crowd.
Fear of error which everything recalls to me at every moment of the flight of my ideas, this mania for control, makes men prefer reason's imagination to the imagination of the senses. And yet it is always the imagination alone which is at work.
O reason, reason, abstract phantom of the waking state, I had already expelled you from my dreams, now I have reached a point where those dreams are about to become fused with apparent realities: now there is only room here for myself.
There are strange flowers of reason to match each error of the senses.

Valéry, Paul

Paul Valéry: Life and Works, first half. Paul Valéry (1871-1945) was born in Sete, on the Mediterannean, and throughout his lifetime he would fixate on seascapes which derive from his early experience of the Mediterranean. Valéry's father was Corsican, and his mother Italian, and the young man was raised in Montpellier. In 1900 he married, and had three children, and settled into what, for nineteenth century French writers, was a stable married life. His academic route was through the University of Montpellier, where he also wrote extensively. After graduation he was working for over a decade as a private secretary, and writing for an appreciative public, for by this time, 1920 and after, he had begun to publish widely. His *Album des vers anciens* (1920), *Album of ancient verses,* revealed him as a poet of exquisite finesse in orthodox prosody; his *Charmes* (1922), which included one of his greatest poems, 'Le Cimetière Marin,' 'The Seaside Cemetery,' in which the hard frost of light on the ocean mirrors the hard deaths at sea which bedaub the rough Mediterranean coast. And then there was the *Soirée avec M. Teste* (1897), *The Evening with Mr. Teste*, which though prose had the hard intellectual abstractness of the poetry of Valéry, or of Valéry's master, Stéphane Mallarmé, and had already before Valéry's volumes of poetry drawn attention to his extraordinary imaginative intellect. In the course of these high profile engagements with the public, Valéry found himself becoming a popular and honored public figure. In l925 he was inducted into the *Académie francaise*, and in that capacity

began to contribute to public causes, to lecture widely throughout France, and in effect to serve as an unofficial voice of the government on public matters. Inspired by the support of the public, Valéry went on to become a tireless speaker and presence in higher French culture. Valéry founded a noteworthy College in Cannes, in l932, a meeting place for the study and appreciation of French culture and values. The same Valéry gave the memorial lecture for the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Goethe. By this time, although he had published only some one hundred lyrics, he was widely viewed as the leader of the Symbolist movement, and as a worthy successor to his master, Stéphane Mallarmé.

Life and Works, Second Half. Oddly enough**,** there is a second half to all this. It is a half which begins before the first half, the public figure stage, ended. In 1892, in the aftermath of a violent thunderstorm, Valéry had an existential awareness which broke his will to write. (One might think of Jakob Boehme's vision of the inner meaning of the sunshine on a pewter bowl, in seventeenth century Germany.) As we have seen, Valéry had already written fine work by that time, but in the wake of this 'moment' he wrote nothing more for twenty years. (We have just seen how much else he accomplished, in public, but he could create no more 'literature.') Encouraged by André Gide, and by now interested primarily in the sciences, he began writing afresh in l916. This poetry is austere, mathematical. and pure, eliminating life in favor or an intellectualized geometry. (One can feel the constant presence of Mallarmé's poetry here.) This new poetry, with its conventions and mannerisms, leads to obscurity, but to a purity which has led some of his followers to consider his the best poetic work of the twentieth century. He was in this later period also prolific with brilliant aesthetic essays, and with notes on his time.

Reading

Primary source reading

Paul Valery's Cahiers/Notebooks, ed. Gifford, Stimpson, Pickering, 2000.

Secondary source reading

Baudry, Phillipe, *Valery Finder: Metaphysics and Literature,* 2011,

Further reading

Kristeva, J., *La Revolution du langage poétique,* 1974.

Original language reading

Cioran, Emile, *Valery face à ses idoles,* 2007.

Suggested paper topics

What practical interrelation do you see between Valery's scientific thought and his poetry? Does one enrich the other? What other writers do you know, for whom scientific study is important? Goethe? Zola?

How do you understand the moving experience which led to Valery's prolonged and silent absence from poetry? Was it a 'mystical experience'? Did he ever try to explain this experience?

Excerpt http://www.historyguide.org/europe/valery.html

We later civilizations . . . we too know that we are mortal.

We had long heard tell of whole worlds that had vanished, of empires sunk without a trace, gone down with all their men and all their machines into the unexplorable depths of the centuries, with

their gods and their laws, their academies and their sciences pure and applied, their grammars and their dictionaries, their Classics, their Romantics, and their Symbolists, their critics and the critics of their critics. . . . We were aware that the visible earth is made of ashes, and that ashes signify something. Through the obscure depths of history we could make out the phantoms of great ships laden with riches and intellect; we could not count them. But the disasters that had sent them down were, after all, none of our affair.

Elam, Ninevah, Babylon were but beautiful vague names, and the total ruin of those worlds had as little significance for us as their very existence. But France, England, Russia...these too would be beautiful names. *Lusitania* too, is a beautiful name. And we see now that the abyss of history is deep enough to hold us all. We are aware that a civilization has the same fragility as a life. The circumstances that could send the works of Keats and Baudelaire to join the works of Menander are no longer inconceivable; they are in the newspapers. That is not all. The searing lesson is more complete still. It was not enough for our generation to learn from its own experience how the most beautiful things and the most ancient, the most formidable and the best ordered, can perish *by accident*; in the realm of thought, feeling, and common sense, we witnessed extraordinary phenomena: paradox suddenly become fact, and obvious fact brutally believed.

I shall cite but one example: the great virtues of the German peoples have begotten more evils, than idleness ever bred vices. With our own eyes, we have seen conscientious labor, the most solid learning, the most serious discipline and application adapted to appalling ends.

So many horrors could not have been possible without so many virtues. Doubtless, much science was needed to kill so many, to waste so much property, annihilate so many cities in so short a time; but *moral qualities* in like number were also needed. Are Knowledge and Duty, then, suspect?

So the Persepolis of the spirit is no less ravaged than the Susa of material fact. Everything has not been lost, but everything has sensed that it might perish.

Breton, André

André Breton, Early Life. Andre Breton (1896-1966) was born in Normandy, of a working class family, a fact of importance for his subsequent solidarity with the working class through the mediation of the Communist party. As a young man he studied medicine and psychiatry, and took particular interest in mental illness and its symptoms. In WW I Breton worked in a neurological ward in Nantes. (It seems of note that while there Breton met a young man named Jacques Vache, whose natural rebelliousness and anarchism fascinated Andre, and helped accentuate what was to become Breton's mature life of resistance to middle class values. He took due note of the fact that Vache committed suicide at age twenty four.)

Breton, mature life and works. In l921, Breton moved back to Paris, and set up his apartment on the rue Fontaine. He began there the assembling of a collection of artifacts, photographs, books, painting, objets d'art, which was to grow to 53,000 in number, and to grow into a vast resource for such as cultural anthropologists. (There was a strong emphasis, throughout the collection, on materials relating to the Native Indians of Northwest America.) At the same time, Breton was immersing himself in the drama of the current literary world in Paris. In l919 Breton—along with two fellow writers, Philippe Soupault and Louis Aragon—founded the journal *Litérature*, in which the group devoted much attention to the phenomenon of automatic writing, and its ways of letting the subconscious out into expression. (Breton was to make the acquaintance of Sigmund Freud, in l920, and to remain true, throughout his writing life, to his desire to discover and display the meeting points between dream and ordinary language.) In l924 Breton served as editor of a widely distributed Parisian journal, *Les recherches surréalistes* (*Surrealist investigations)*, as well as of the prominent *Manifesto of Surrealism*, to which many of the outstanding 'liberated poets of the day' contributed. In the *Manifesto* Breton makes evident what he foresees as the achievement of a new kind of person, through surrealism; one to whom the

egalitarian social perspectives of Marxism are very congenial, who believes in the simple oneness of humanity, and who at the same time is devoted to the personal transformation of the individual, as it can be roadmapped in the work of a brilliant forbear like Rimbaud. It should be noted that Breton joined and remained in the Communist Party from 1927-33; maintaining to the Party the same kind of complex fidelity that shows in his colleague Louis Aragon and in many contemporary French intellectuals. (In l938 Breton met Trotsky in Mexico, and was inspired by some social prospects from within a revised Communism.) For these thinkers, as for many throughout Western Europe and the United States in the l930's and 40's, Communism seemed to offer a practical platform for a new organization of human society.

Breton in later life. In l940 Breton once again served in the Medical Corps of the French Army, but as he came under pursuit by the Vichy government—his Communism sufficed for that—he staged (with two American friends) a necessary escape from Europe. He located both in the United States, and in the Caribbean, where he made the acquaintance of Aime Césaire. In New York City he met his third wife; he also shared his valuable personal art collection in an extraordinary exhibit at Yale University in 1942. In l948 he returned to Paris, where he committed himself to new movements of Anarchism, and denounced French colonial occupation in Algeria. True to himself, he remained outside the system, right to his death.

Reading

Primary source reading

Nadja, tr. Richard Howard, 1994.

Secondary source reading

Raymond, Marcel, *From Baudelaire to Surrealism*, 1957.

Further reading

Broome and Chesters, *Anthology of Modern French Poetry, 1850-1950*, 1976.

Original language reading

Cauvin, Caws, *Poems of Andre Breton: A Bilingual Anthology*, 2006.

Suggested paper topics

How do you related Breton's poetry to his extensive career collecting primitive works of art? Was he an anthropologist/collector in his writing?

Does Andre Breton's experience in mental wards, and his knowledge of neurology, play a role in his finding of his poetic powers? How does Communism belong to this mix of poetry and science? Is Breton a lover of the people?

Excerpt http://www.tcf.ua.edu/Classes/Jbutler/T340/SurManifesto/ManifestoOfSurrealism.htm

So strong is the belief in life, in what is most fragile in life – *real* life, I mean – that in the end this belief is lost. Man, that inveterate dreamer, daily more discontent with his destiny, has trouble assessing the objects he has been led to use, objects that his nonchalance has brought his way, or that he has earned through his own efforts, almost always through his own efforts, for he has agreed to work, at least he has not refused to try his luck (or what he calls his luck!). At this point he feels extremely modest: he knows what women he has had, what silly affairs he has been involved in; he is unimpressed by his wealth or his poverty, in this respect he is still a newborn babe and, as for the approval of his conscience, I confess that he does very nicely without it. If he

still retains a certain lucidity, all he can do is turn back toward his childhood which, however his guides and mentors may have botched it, still strikes him as somehow charming. There, the absence of any known restrictions allows him the perspective of several lives lived at once; this illusion becomes firmly rooted within him; now he is only interested in the fleeting, the extreme facility of everything. Children set off each day without a worry in the world. Everything is near at hand, the worst material conditions are fine. The woods are white or black, one will never sleep.

But it is true that we would not dare venture so far, it is not merely a question of distance. Threat is piled upon threat, one yields, abandons a portion of the terrain to be conquered. This imagination which knows no bounds is henceforth allowed to be exercised only in strict accordance with the laws of an arbitrary utility; it is incapable of assuming this inferior role for very long and, in the vicinity of the twentieth year, generally prefers to abandon man to his lusterless fate.

Though he may later try to pull himself together on occasion, having felt that he is losing by slow degrees all reason for living, incapable as he has become of being able to rise to some exceptional situation such as love, he will hardly succeed. This is because he henceforth belongs body and soul to an imperative practical necessity which demands his constant attention. None of his gestures will be expansive, none of his ideas generous or far-reaching. In his mind's eye, events real or imagined will be seen only as they relate to a welter of similar events, events in which he has not participated, *abortive* events. What am I saying: he will judge them in relationship to one of these events whose consequences are more reassuring than the others. On no account will he view them as his salvation.

Beloved imagination, what I most like in you is your unsparing quality.

There remains madness, "the madness that one locks up," as it has aptly been described. That madness or another…. We all know, in fact, that the insane owe their incarceration to a tiny number of legally reprehensible acts and that, were it not for these acts their freedom (or what we see as their freedom) would not be threatened. I am willing to admit that they are, to some degree, victims of their imagination, in that it induces them not to pay attention to certain rules – outside of which the species feels threatened – which we are all supposed to know and respect.

Drama

Beckett, Samuel

Samuel Beckett: the imprint on his world. Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) was an Irish novelist, poet, theater director, and commentat**or** on the meaning of life, who left a deep mark on writing and thinking in English. He has been considered the last great master of Modernism, the greatest proponent of the so called Theater of the Absurd, and even one of the first of the Postmoderns. In other words a major literary figure at the crossroads of many of the artistic frontiers of his and our time.

Samuel Beckett, school and study. Samuel Beckett was born on Good Friday into a comfortable Dublin suburb. (His parents were devout members of the Anglican Church of Ireland.) His house, with its grounds and tennis court, gave the young Samuel a congenial venue for long walks with his father, as did the surrounding parks and roadways, which were green and inviting. His father was a surveyor, and in good relation with his son; there is little, in Beckett's childhood, to suggest the formation of a world class cynic and gallows humorist. He was educated first at a local playschool, then at Portora Royal School—where Oscar Wilde had also matriculated—and where Samuel began his serious career as an amateur cricketer. He was to become an outstanding player when he went up to Trinity College, Dublin, where he was a student from l923-1927, and where he acquired the formal underpinnings of his linguistic genius. At Trinity he studied French, Italian, and English literatures and language, working under such luminaries as A.B. Luce the distinguished student of Bishop Berkeley's philosophy.

Maturity and mature works. Upon graduation from Trinity, Dublin, Beckett was invited to work as a teacher of English at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. He was to remain in that city for much of his life, with occasional forays around the continent and home to Ireland. One important factor in his prolonged French residence was his early acquaintance, in Paris, with James Joyce, another transplanted Irishman. Upon arrival in Paris, Beckett had met the older man, and become his private secretary, doing research for *Finnegans Wake*. From the start this relation had been the great literary inspiration of Beckett's life, although he was later to discover that his own genius lay in a direction opposite to Joyce's, in the direction of contraction and simplification of language, rather than of exuberant and erudite growth. Language play and daring joined the two men, as they constructed very different kinds of verbal universe. (Their bond was threatened when Joyce's daughter, who was passing into schizophrenia, made advances to Beckett; the latter withdrew, bruising many feelings.) Beckett, meanwhile, was embedding himself in French culture, starting to write and publish actively in French—which was to remain his first language for writing, throughout his life—and participating actively in the French Resistance against German occupation. (Beckett fought throughout the war, served the French with high honors, and was rewarded at war's end with the French Croix de Guerre.) By this stage, Beckett was coming into mastery of his own minimalist, gallows humor drama. Starting with *En Attendant Godot* (1953), *Waiting for Godot*, he wrote a series of dark dramas which attained immediate success both in Europe and the United States. *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) and *Fin de Partie* (1957), (*Endgame*), deserve mention, among others. These plays faced human beings with the bleakness of themselves, of their histories and prospects, and with the looming meaningless of the universe. Human beings flocked to the theater, to hear this about themselves.

Reading

Primary source reading
Waiting for Godot, tr. Beckett, 2011.

Secondary source reading
Esslin, M., *The Theater of the Absurd*, 1969.

Further reading
Ricks, Christopher, *Beckett's Dying Words*, 1995.

Original language reading
Kamyabi Mask, A., *Les temps de l'attente,* l999.

Suggested paper topics

What seems to you, upon looking into it, to have been the major influence of James Joyce on Beckett? Did Beckett not write as a minimalist, while Joyce expanded his text to the limits of the world? Was the bond between the two men their common sense of language, or was it their view of the world?

Does Samuel Beckett belong in our French writers' syllabus? He did, after all, write a lot in English, and translate some of his own French work into English. Is his inclusion here owing to the special value of the work he did in his writing in French? Or, amazing possibility, did he come to write French better than English?

Excerpt www.english-literature.uni-bayreuth.de/en/teaching/.../Sur-20c-read.do

A country road. A tree. Evening.
Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again.

As before. Enter Vladimir.
ESTRAGON:
(*giving up again*). Nothing to be done.
VLADIMIR:
(*advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart*). I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. (*He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to Estragon.*) So there you are again.
ESTRAGON:
Am I?
VLADIMIR:
I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone forever.
ESTRAGON:
Me too.
VLADIMIR:
Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? (*He reflects.*) Get up till I embrace you.
ESTRAGON:
(*irritably*). Not now, not now.
VLADIMIR:
(*hurt, coldly*). May one inquire where His Highness spent the night?
ESTRAGON:
In a ditch.
VLADIMIR:
(*admiringly*). A ditch! Where?
ESTRAGON:
(*without gesture*). Over there.
VLADIMIR:
And they didn't beat you?
ESTRAGON:
Beat me? Certainly they beat me.
VLADIMIR:
The same lot as usual?
ESTRAGON:
The same? I don't know.
VLADIMIR:
When I think of it . . . all these years . . . but for me . . . where would you be . . . (*Decisively.*) You'd be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it.
ESTRAGON:
And what of it?
Fiction

Gide, André

André Gide, his importance. André Gide (1869 -1951) was a French novelist, autobiographer, social commentator, and a dramatic experimenter out at the limits of ethical behavior. He was one of the most influential of modern French novelists.

André Gide, the Life. Gide was born in Paris of a middle class Protestant family, which had recently converted to Catholicism; indication, right in the family, of the kind of religious querying that would be part of Gide's own temperament. His father was a Professor of Law in Paris; he died in l880. Young Andre was sent to the Ecole Alsacienne for his education, but due to frequent severe illness he often found himself taken to the south of France, for more benign weather. (In l895 he met Oscar Wilde in Algeria; the two discussed homosexuality, to which Gide was become increasingly drawn, though not yet publicly. Wilde later claimed, probably wrongly, to have had an effect on Gide's turn to the homosexual. In that regard, to note that Gide's novel, *Les nourritures terrestres*, 1897, *Terrestrial nourishment*, concerns a young man's recovery from a near fatal

disease, to find himself in love with this world, first of all with its sensual pleasures.) Gide began early to make fiction from his creative mind, that of a lover of the south and the senses, who was however brought up in a strictly moral religious environment, and who was destined to live the resultant conflict all his life. He published his first novel when he was twenty one, then married his cousin—the marriage was not consummated—then from l901-1907 he rented a home on an island near the Isle of Jersey, where he looked for peace, and gave some thought to the direction of his life. In l908 Gide became one of the founders of the influential *Nouvelle revue francaise;* while at the same time he fled to London with his fifteen year old lover, with whom he would later travel to Central Africa. (During his absence in London his wife burned all of Gide's correspondence, which he considered the most important part of his life.)

The crux of Gide's works. Andre Gide was prolific. His *Notebooks* and journals, which cover the period of 1889-1949, document his daily life, the life of Paris and his country, and the evolution of his values and views on the place of man in society. There is no more intense record of the character of modern life in our times. Gide'novels and travel memoirs reinforce the insights of his *Notebooks*. His *Voyage au Congo* (1927) recounts a boat trip up the Congo River with his young lover, and their encounters with Colonialism in action. Gide returns from the trip with insights, into the French colonial economic exploitation of the Central African Republic, and creates in this text one of his many persuasive documents protesting Colonial policy. The same critical social insights, which were pervasive throughout Gide's journals, percolate through the various texts in which he records his relationship with Communism. One of those texts is the *Return from the USSR* (1936) in which he recalls and then recants his former positions as a fellow traveler. The moral questions raised by these radical new political horizons, like Communism, are the same ones he presents to himself in a masterly novel like *La Porte Etroite* (1909), *Straight is the Gate,* which probes the question of moral fidelity and salvation—which was always of interest to Gide, the inheritor of a profoundly religious family tradition.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Immoralist, tr. Howard, 1996.

Secondary source reading

Sheridan, Alan, *Andre Gide: A Life in the Present,* 1999.

Further reading

Best, Victoria, *An Introduction to Twentieth Century French Literature,* 2002.

Original language reading

Felman, Shoshana, *La Folie et la chose litéraire,* 1978.

Suggested paper topics

Look into Gide's *Journals*, which provide a view into his thinking and feeling throughout his writing career. Does his private and personal life play a large role in his fiction and drama? Do themes like moral strictness, anti-colonialism, homosexuality bleed from his private life into his written work?

In the large sense, does Gide seem to you a Humanist, who is willing to live without God but believes that mankind will prevail? Or is the religious querying, which we experienced in his childhood, a preoccupation with him, even into morally 'open' middle years? Is there a complexity, to his blend of license with Calvinism, which adds a special interest to his work?

Excerpt http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/480721-l-immoraliste

“Envying another man's happiness is madness; you wouldn't know what to do with it if you had it.”

“You have to let other people be right' was his answer to their insults. 'It consoles them for not being anything else.”

“What would a narrative of happiness be like? All that can be described is what prepares it, and then what destroys it.”

“A man thinks he owns things, and it is he who is owned”

“Yet I'm sure there's something more to be read in a man. People dare not -- they dare not turn the page. The laws of mimicry -- I call them the laws of fear. People are afraid to find themselves alone, and don't find themselves at all. I hate this moral agoraphobia -- it's the worst kind of cowardice. You can't create something without being alone. But who's trying to create here? What seems different in yourself: that's the one rare thing you possess, the one thing which gives each of us his worth; and that's just what we try to suppress. We imitate. And we claim to love life.”

“The capacity to get free is nothing; the capacity to be free is the task.”

“The loveliest creations of men are persistently painful. What would be the description of happiness?”

“They establish distinctions and reserves which I cannot apply to myself, for I exist only as a whole; my only claim is to be natural, and the pleasure I feel in an action, I take as a sign that I ought to do it.”

Proust, Marcel

Marcel Proust: The Life. Marcel Proust (1871-1922) was born in Auteuil, at that time a quite rustic region of the sixteenth arrondissement of Paris. His father was a prominent physician and epidemiological researcher, who had contributed greatly to the fight against cholera in his time. His mother came from a well placed Jewish family in Alsace. (Marcel was baptized and brought up in the Catholic faith, but never practiced it.) The young Proust was born during the last two months of the Franco Prussian War, during the brutal suppression of the French Commune; an era which can be taken to mark the moment of decline of the French aristocracy, and the significant development of the new Middle Class. Marcel was hypersensitive to these surrounding events, which may well have contributed to the rapid development of his chronic asthma, and already in his teens was writing about his social and political world, work that would eventuate in his *Les Plaisirs et les jours* (1896), *Pleasures and the Day*, and his first real novel, *Jean Santeuil*, which he would later abandon, in 1899—and which would not be published until 1952. Meanwhile he was enriching his voracious interest in the upper class social milieux of Paris, profiting from several contacts he had made among the fading nobility, during his school days at the Lycée Condorcet and at University. He was also interacting increasingly with the debilitating asthmatic condition that would do much to shape his later life

Marcel Proust, the mature works. The social scene presented by the decline of the aristocracy, the growth of the middle class, and new money in the economy was of intense interest to Proust, from childhood on. (He was intimately fond of his mother, and through her of the world of finer sentiments, complex social ramifications, and emotional experimentation.) In other words this was the transition point of society that was to fascinate Marcel Proust throughout his life, and to form the material of the huge series of seven novels which was the fruit of his writing life, a life which saw little activity, but much reading, no marriage, a closeted homosexuality. Proust himself was fully prepared for this work; highly educated at the Lycée Condorcet, from early on a social climber with a fascination for the declining aristocracy, and with a suitable private income. He was able to devote his life attention to the sequence of novels making up *In Search of Times Past* (1913-1921), arguably the most powerful work of literary Modernism.

The gist of Proust's major work. *In Search of Times Past*, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, has as its theme the moral decadence of French society and the obliteration of class distinctions. Three strata of society are shown: the aristocracy (the Guermantes family), the bourgeoisie (Swann and his coterie), and the nouveaux riches (the Verdurin family). These strata, all interlinked by marriage, are blended in the novels by the presence of Marcel, the author and narrating persona of the novels, who moves from one scene to another. Worth noting: considerable portions of the novel are devoted to Marcel's love affairs, and his tastes in painting, music, and literature. The consequence of this narrative material and structure, is that Proust's novel is wide ranging, includes a vast material of testimony to his own age and its political/social condition, and is loose in construction. Many readers complain that the whole of this seven part fabric is too loose (and decadent) to keep their attention; others, and there are many, proclaim Proust the greatest novelist of all time.

Reading

Primary source reading

In Search of Lost Time, tr. Enright, 2003.

Secondary source reading

Green, F. C., *The Mind of Proust*, 1949.

Further reading

Deleuze, Gilles, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text,* 2004.

Original language reading

Chardin, Phillipe, *Proust ou le Bonheur du petit personage qui compare,* 2004.

Suggested paper topics

Compare Marcel Proust, as an analyst of society, with, say, Emile Zola or the Goncourt brothers. Has Proust, like the others, any interest in making a scientific survey of the society (even the upper class society) of his time? Or does he simply look for interesting studies and situations, to feed his narrative?

Certain great French novelists write in a style, and in a narrative structure, which their critics have called loose, not sharply focused. (Flaubert, for instance, scorns Balzac's style.) What do you think of the huge range of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*? Does it hold together? Does it keep making points? Does it hold your interest?

Excerpt http://www.fisheaters.com/proust.html
I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those whom we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object, and so effectively lost to us until the day (which to many never comes) when we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object which forms their prison. Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognised their voice the spell is broken. We have delivered them: they have overcome death and return to share our life.

And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not before we ourselves must die.

Many years had elapsed during which nothing of Combray, save what was comprised in the theatre and the drama of my going to bed there, had any existence for me, when one day in winter, as I came home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take. I declined at first, and then, for no particular reason, changed my mind. She sent out for one of those short, plump little cakes called 'petites madeleines,' which look as though they had been moulded in the fluted scallop of a pilgrim's shell. And soon, mechanically, weary after a dull day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate, a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory--this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was myself. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I was conscious that it was connected with the taste of tea and cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours, could not, indeed, be of the same nature as theirs. Whence did it come? What did it signify? How could I seize upon and define it?
I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the potion is losing its magic. It is plain that the object of my quest, the truth, lies not in the cup but in myself. The tea has called up in me, but does not itself understand, and can only repeat indefinitely with a gradual loss of strength, the same testimony; which I, too, cannot interpret, though I hope at least to be able to call upon the tea for it again and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment.

I put down my cup and examine my own mind. It is for it to discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty whenever the mind feels that some part of it has strayed beyond its own borders; when it, the seeker, is at once the dark region through which it must go seeking, where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not so far exist, to which it alone can give reality and substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day.

Mauriac, Francois

Francois Mauriac, the importance. Francois Mauriac (1885-1970) was a French novelist, essay writer, journalist, and defender of the Catholic Church, who lived through and recorded almost a century of change in French culture and society. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for fiction in 1952.

Francois Mauriac, the life and writings. Francois Mauriac was born in Bordeaux. His father was an upper middle class banker, who died when Francois was eighteen months old. That death left Francois' mother with five children, of whom Francois was the youngest. The atmosphere in the family of youngsters appears to have been exceptionally protective, and for Francois the protective mode was sustained when he went off to school with the Marianist sisters. In 1905 Francois went to the University of Bordeaux, where he studied literature, then moved to Paris, in preparation for study at the prestigious Ecole des Chartes. Instead of continuing with advanced research, however, Mauriac decided to throw in his lot with writing, and achieved his first limited attention with the publication of *Les Mains Jointes* (1909), *Joined Hands*, a volume of poetry. A novel, *Le Baiser aux Lépreux* (1922), *The Lepers' Kiss*, drew further attention to Mauriac's accomplishment. Later fictional work was to establish Mauriac as a major national figure; especially through *Le Désert de l'Amour* (1925), *The Desert of Love,* and *Le Noeud de Vipères* (1932), *The Nest of Vipers*. (It was on the basis of such works that Mauriac was elected to the *Académie francaise* (1933), awarded the Nobel Prize in 1952, and in 1958 awarded the Grand Croix of the Légion d'honneur.

Mauriac as Public Figure. Nor was it only through these writings that Mauriac was becoming a culture shaping figure in post War France. He was involved in a couple of high profile debates, which concerned issues of burning importance to French consciousness of the time. One of these debates was between Mauriac and the celebrated Resistance figure and novelist, Albert Camus. This debate, which was carried on in the press, Mauriac writing in *Le Figaro*, Camus in the newspaper *Combat*, concerned the policy of the French government, in post War time, toward former French Nazi collaborators or sympathizers—or at the extreme simply of those who went about their business under the Occupation, without protesting. (It was Mauriac's conviction that a complete purge was impossible and impractical, and that one should learn to live in a compromised and healing society.) A second equally conspicuous debate was carried on between Mauriac and Roger Peyrefitte; and like the earlier debate was carried on publically in the press. Peyrefitte, an aggressive critic of the Vatican, made serious allegations against that institution in a popular book of l953. Mauriac, whose roots and practice were Catholic, took up arms for the Church, and defended her in the pages of *L'Express*. Nor was this the last public intervention of his career, for in the spirit of many French intellectuals—Valéry, Sartre, Camus—Mauriac felt called on to adopt an active position toward the central events of the day. He was, for example, to write fiercely against French interventions in Viet Nam, and French torture in Algeria.

The religious tone in Mauriac. Mauriac is customarily thought of as a Catholic writer but, like his fellow Catholic Graham Greene, in England, he brings out the religious thematic through a portrait of the dark sides of life. In *The Desert of Love* he portrays a wasting love triangle among a women, her father, and her son. In *The Nest of Vipers* he lets an aging and bitter man, who has great insight into human failure, write a corrosive letter in which the rottenness of their family is rather inspiringly given prominence.

Reading

Primary source reading

Therese Desqueyroux, tr. M. and R. MacKenzie, 2006.

Secondary source reading

Sowerwine, Charles, F*rance since l870: Culture, Politics, and Society*, 2001.

Further reading

God and Mammon and What was Lost, tr. MacKenzie, 2003.

Original language reading

Mauriac, Francois, De Gaulle, 1964.

Suggested paper topics

Do you see a bond between Mauriac's public journalist life, with the high profile issues in which he engaged, and the themes of his fiction? Reflect on that relation in terms of *The Nest of Vipers*, which at first glance appears a darkly psychological text.

Does Mauriac seem to you to be a 'Catholic' writer? What role do 'Catholic' themes play in his writing? What 'Catholic' stances did he adopt as a public figure?

Excerpt

Excerpt http://www.wf-f.org/02-1-Mauriac.html

After the short Vespers of Holy Thursday, the officiating priests strip the altar of all ornaments and recite meanwhile the twenty-first* Psalm with the choir. It is the Psalm of which the first verse was cried out by the dying Christ: "O God, my God...why hast Thou forsaken me"?

The evangelists did not falter before this apparent acknowledgement of defeat, and no doubt it was necessary that the chalice be drunk to the dregs, even to this total abandonment. At that minute, nothing but vanquished humanity appeared any longer in Christ.

How could the Son of God have believed Himself to be forsaken? Had He not known and accepted His martyrdom beforehand? He knew it, without doubt, and He also knew that everything that was happening in that moment had been prophesied in that very twenty-first Psalm, the first verse of which He was crying out to His Father.

None of the scribes, who at the foot of the Cross were shaking their heads and scoffing at the dying victim, thought of drawing a parallel between the desperate appeal which opens this Psalm and what follows: "All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn; they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let him deliver him: let Him save him, seeing He delighteth in him".

But then was it not precisely the same mockery which the chief priests and rulers had just used against Jesus crucified? Were they not laughing at Him because, having saved others, He could not save Himself? Were they not challenging Him to come down from the Cross because He said He was the Son of God?

But, above all, they who knew the Scriptures should have remembered verses seventeen through nineteen, which were being confirmed at that very moment in an astonishing manner: "They have

pierced my hands and feet. They have numbered all my bones. They parted my garments amongst them and upon my vesture they cast lots."

And this twenty-first Psalm, which begins with a cry of doubt and distress, ends with the promise of a triumph that the Crucified alone was to achieve. "All the ends of the earth shall remember and shall be converted to the Lord: and all the kindred of the Gentiles shall adore in His sight. For the Kingdom is the Lord's; and He shall have dominion over the nations."

Malraux, André

André Malraux: his importance for French culture. Andre Malraux (1901-1976) was a French novelist, art theorist, and public cultural figure who was of great influence on the social policy and creative thinking of mid twentieth century France.

André Malraux: the life. André Malraux was born in Paris in l901. His parents separated when he was four years old, and divorced soon after; Andre was raised largely by three women—his mother, his maternal aunt, and his maternal grandmother, who had a small grocery store in a nearby village. (His father, who was a stockbroker, committed suicide in 1930, having lost all at the beginning of the Great Depression.) One result of this not completely stable childhood has been suggested (but is not certain); that Andre developed a case of nervous tics, bordering on Tourette's syndrome. It is certain that while the young man did not pursue a regular course of education, he was a voracious reader, and an intense visitor to the many glorious museums of Paris. In l922 Malraux married for the first time, and had one daughter. Divorce followed. For some time, then, he lived with the novelist Josette Clotie, with whom he had two children; wife and children all died in accidents. For the remainder of his life Malraux lived in loving but unmarried relations. Throughout these years he was also engaged with the literary milieux of Paris, making friends with many of the formative cultural creators of the moment: Jean Cocteau, Francois Mauriac, Max Jacob. In l923 he made a trip to Cambodia, with the intention of buying *objets d'art* from Khmer temples, and selling them to art collectors in the West; however he was arrested by the French on leaving the country, and had to surrender what he had collected. By this time, however, Malraux had begun to draw public attention with his writing. In the thirties and forties he was to publish his best known works—*La Condition Humaine* (1933), *Man's Fate*; *The Psychology of Art* (1947-1949)—and to begin to occupy an important public cultural function on the French scene. Already in the thirties Malraux was politically active, supporting the Republicans in Spain, the anti-Fascist Popular Front in France, and, during the Resistance, fighting courageously against the Occupation—an effort for which he received the Croix de Guerre. For his many patriotic efforts Malraux was significantly honored by President Charles de Gaulle. Malraux was made Minister of Information in 1945-46, and was appointed as the first Minister of Cultural Affairs, from 1959-69.

André Malraux: the work. Malraux's greatest novel, *Man's Fate*, deals with four fascinating and diverse characters caught up in a (failed) Communist rebellion in Shanghai, against the Chinese government of Chiang kai Shek. The interplay of vivid, risk taking, existentially diverse figures brings to a clarity Malraux's intense experience of the bruisingly international culture of his time. Malraux's *Psychology of Art* (1947-49) is only one of his many profound inquiries into the new aesthetics of his time. In the separately published first part of this work, entitled *Museums without Walls,* Malraux addressed the transtemporal, transcultural character of the global art scene, as it displays itself in the new art gallery of the later twentieth century. The new art world, Malraux points out—and actualizes in his distribution of support for Paris museums—is open to works of any kind from any culture, and takes particular interest in non western works, which force the West to reflect on itself.

Reading

Primary source reading

Man's Fate, tr. M. and H. Chevalier, 1990.

Secondary source reading

Alan, Derek, *Art and the Human Adventure: Andre Malraux' Theory of Art,* 2009.

Further reading

Cate, Curtis, *Andre Malraux: A Biography,* 1997.

Original language reading

Aubert, Raphael, *Malraux ou la lutte avec l'ange*, 2001.

Suggested paper topics

Malraux was perhaps the most officially important of the writers of 20th century France. Review the public contributions of Malraux' contemporary French writers. Is there in France of the last century a pronounced emphasis on the public role of the major literary figure?

Does Malraux'a major *Psychology of Art* reflect his international travels, and his active globalism? As a Minister of Culture he was faced with issues of support and development for France's museums. How did Malraux respond to that challenge?

Excerpt http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Malraux

No one can endure his own solitude.

The human mind invents its Puss-in-Boots and its coaches that change into pumpkins at midnight because neither the believer nor the atheist is completely satisfied with appearances.

What is man? A miserable little pile of secrets.

Our civilization … is not devaluing its awareness of the unknowable; nor is it deifying it. It is the first civilization that has severed it from religion and superstition. In order to question it.

Chanel, General De Gaulle and Picasso are the three most important figures of our time.

The artist is not the transcriber of the world, he is its rival.

On this earth of ours where everything is subject to the passing of time, one thing only is both subject to time and yet victorious over it: the work of art.

If a man is not ready to risk his life, where is his dignity?

The great mystery is not that we should have been thrown down here at random between the profusion of matter and that of the stars; it is that from our very prison we should draw, from our own selves, images powerful enough to deny our own nothingness.

The attempt to force human beings to despise themselves… is what I call hell.

"Why do you fight?" ... He kept his wife, his kid, from dying. That was nothing. Less than nothing. If he had had money, if he could have left it to them, he would have been free to go and get killed. As if the universe had not treated him all his life with kicks in the belly, it now despoiled him of the only dignity he could ever possess — his death.

The sons of torture victims make good terrorists.

One cannot create an art that speaks to me when one has nothing to say.

There are not fifty ways of fighting, there is only one, and that is to win**.** Neither revolution nor war consists in doing what one pleases.

Sartre, Jean Paul

Jean Paul Sartre, his influence and importance. Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was a French novelist, playwright, theater director, literary critic, and public activist. He exercised great influence on younger writers, and, through his very popular plays, on a wide sector of the French public.

Jean Paul Sartre, the Life. Sartre was born in Paris, son of an officer in the French navy. (His father died of a fever two years after Jean Paul's birth, and the young man was turned over to his mother's care. When Sartre was twelve years old his mother remarried, and moved to La Rochelle. (His mother's new marriage was to a cousin of the Nobel Laureate Albert Schweitzer.) Young Sartre, an avid but quirky reader, went on to study at the Ecole Normale Superieure, the premier center for philosophical thought in France. (The great inspiration for Sartre, and what led him into philosophy, was the thought of Henri Bergson, about the nature of time.) At the Ecole Normale Sartre formed a lasting, if volatile, relationship with the eminent political philosopher to be, Raymond Aron; Sartre also perfected his gifts for pranks, on everal occasions fooling the administration of the ENS into imagining impending disasters, against which they needed to protect themselves immediately. Subsequently he taught in Laon and Le Havre and then studied in Berlin. In France he became a professor at the Lycée Pasteur in Neuilly. In l929 he met the woman who was to be his lifetime companion, Simone de Beauvoir. By l946, at which time he founded the revue *Les Temps Modernes*, he had almost completely left teaching for journalism. He had begun writing full time. He had behind him the experience of having been arrested by the Gestapo, during the Occupation, and held for over a year, during which time he was able to read all of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, and to take many steps toward his own version of Existentialism.

Sartre's Works. Jean Paul Sartre was a prolific writer, who wrote in many genres. Arguably his most compelling novel is his first, *La Nausee*, *Nausea*, published in 1938. Returned after years of traveling to his home town of Bouville—which resembles the Le Havre where Sartre taught—Antoine Roquentin settles down to write a biography of an eighteenth century French gentleman. As time goes by, and he pursues his daily scholarly routine, Roquentin becomes growingly aware of the natural world around him. On one famous occasion he finds himself facing the roots of a gnarled tree in the park. He feels threatened by the inhuman knot of roots, then, in looking for a word to protect himself with, for *racines*, he finds he is on the other side of language, and this occasion becomes a revelation, to him, of the human unfriendly character of nature. That is not all he realizes. At the same time he makes this discovery about the roots he realizes that man is on his own, unsupported by nature or by anything other than his own will; this is essentially the foundation of existentialism, which Sartre will write out through all his major works, in the following years.The basic premises active in this novel will pervade Sartre's ambitious : *L'Etre et le neant,* 1943, *Being and Nothingness*, in which he lays out his philosophy formally.

Reading

Primary source reading

Existentialism is a Humanism, tr. Carol Macomber, 2007.

Secondary source reading

Hayman, Ronald, *Sartre: A Life,* 1987.

Further reading

Aronson, Ronald, *Camus and Sartre*, 2004.

Original language reading

Wittman, H., *L'esthetique de Sartre*, 2001.

Suggested paper topics

Look into the early relation of Sartre to his intellectual hero, Henri Bergson. What attracted Sartre to Bergson notions of time? Does Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, or his *Nausea*, reflect an ongoing preoccupation with the nature of time? Was the later influence of Martin Heidegger important for this same relationship?

Look into Sartre's drama and short fiction. Some think he is at his finest in those genres, where the inherent ambiguity of human existence is at its sharpest, as is the need to choose. Does Sartre's philosophy, in the formal sense, interface effectively with his fictions?

Excerpt http://www.anselm.edu/homepage/dbanach/nausea.htm

6.00 p.m.
I can't say I feel relieved or satisfied; just the opposite, I am crushed. Only my goal is reached: Iknow what I wanted to know; I have understood all that has happened to me since January. The Nausea has not left me and I don't believe it will leave me so soon; but I no longer have to bear it, it is no longer an illness or a passing fit: it is I.

So I was in the park just now. The roots of the chestnut tree were sunk in the ground just under my bench. I couldn't remember it was a root any more. The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their surface. I was sitting, stooping forward, head bowed, alone in front of this black, knotty mass, entirely beastly, which frightened me. Then I had this vision. It left me breathless. Never, until these last few days, had I understood the meaning of "existence." I was like the others, like the ones walking along the seashore, all dressed in their spring finery. I said, like them, "The ocean *is* green; that white speck up there *is* a seagull," but I didn't feel that it existed or that the seagull was an "existing seagull"; usually existence hides itself. It is there, around us, in us, it is *us,* you can't say two words without mentioning it, but you can never touch it. When I believed I was thinking about it, I must believe that I was thinking nothing, my head was empty, or there was just one word in my head, the word "to be." Or else I was thinking . . . how can I explain it? I was thinking of *belonging,* I was telling myself that the sea belonged to the class of green objects, or that the green was a part of the quality of the sea. Even when I looked at things, I was miles from dreaming that they existed: they looked like scenery to me. I picked them up in my hands, they served me as tools, 1 foresaw their resistance. But that all happened on the surface. If anyone had
asked me what existence was, I would have answered, in good faith, that it was nothing, simply an empty form which was added to external things without changing anything in their nature. And then all of a sudden, there it was, clear as day: existence had suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost the harmless look of an abstract category: it was the very paste of things, this root was kneaded into existence. Or rather the root, the park gates, the bench, the sparse grass, all that had vanished: the diversity of things, their individuality, were only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, all in disorder—naked, in a frightful, obscene nakedness. I kept myself from making the slightest movement, but I didn't need to move in order to see, behind the trees, the blue columns and the lamp posts of the bandstand and the Velleda, in the midst of a mountain of laurel. All these objects . . . how can I explain? They inconvenienced me; I would
have liked them to exist less strongly, more dryly, in a more abstract way, with more reserve. The chestnut tree pressed itself against my eyes. Green rust covered it half-way up; the bark, black and swollen, looked like boiled leather. The sound of the water in the Masqueret Fountain sounded in my ears, made a nest there, filled them with signs; my nostrils overflowed with a green, putrid odour.

Camus, Albert

Albert Camus, importance and influence. Albert Camus (1913-1960) was a French novelist, essayist, prominent political activist, and journalist. Through his own clear sighted and flexible responses to war and inequality, he made himself an internationally respected voice of contemporary thought. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in l957.

Albert Camus, the life. Albert Camus was born in French Algeria and died before the outbreak of the great conflict between France and Algeria, in which Algeria would break from her colonizer. His parents were *pieds noirs,* that is French colonial settlers who had remained to colonized country. His mother was of Spanish extraction, and was half deaf, His father was a very poor agricultural worker, who was killed at the Battle of the Marne, in WW I. Albert was educated at the University of Algiers, where he was an excellent goalkeeper for the University football team. He earned his baccalaureat degree in l935, then went on to advanced studies. (He wrote his Master's dissertation on the ancient Greek philosopher Plotinus, and the relation of his thought to early Christianity.) Further educated both in Algeria and France, Camus' deep involvement with Parisian culture began with his activist engagement in the French Resistance, during WWII. Already he had been deeply involved in public journalism, forming a group to combat the malign effects of technology. In 1933 he joined the Communist Party, but was soon booted out by Moscow, when he switched part of his allegiance to the Algerian Communist Party. During this period, when Resistance struggles and Communist intervention were swirling over France, Camus founded the journal, *Combat*, which was devoted to the Free French cause, but in the subsequent years he eventually broke from forms of Communism, as he discovered the tyrannical side of a movement initially intended to liberate the people. (That break with Communism was also Camus' break with his close friend and 'study partner' Jean-Paul Sartre, who felt Camus 'had gone soft.') Camus waged a lifelong battle on behalf of human individuality, and a lifelong quest for the meaning of life in what often seemed an absurd world. The Nobel Prize was awarded to him for his clear sightedness in analyzing the complex problems of his time. On only point, perhaps, did he sustain an unvarying determination.. He was an ardent and lifelong opponent of capital punishment.

The work of Albert Camus. As a journalist, Camus was from early in life active at the forefront of opinion making and political argument. The clear lines of his thought are evident in his most effective writing. *The Stranger* (*L'Etranger,* 1942) This powerful novel attests to Camus' abilities as a master of controlled art, and deliberately simple narration. *The Plague* (*La Peste*, 1947), a novel, is Camus' most anti-Christian work. It dwells on the injustice of Christianity, evidenced by the sacrifice of the innocents, as exemplified by the death of child victims of the plague. The chronicle testified to the violence and injustice imposed on the city of Oran, and to the belief that in times of tribulation man reveals more admirable than despicable traits. It is marked by constant understatement in descriptive style, the precise use of administrative terms and official language, the deliberate banality of words, and the use of irony to bring out the whole horror of a situation.

Reading

Primary source reading

The Stranger, tr. M. Ward, 1989.

Secondary source reading

Todd, Olivier, *Albert Camus: A Life,* 1997.

Further reading

Mumma, Howard, *Albert Camus and the Mind*, 2000.

Original language reading

Salas, Denis, *Albert Camus, la juste révolte,* 2002.

Suggested paper topics
One of Camus' lasting concerns was with the issue of capital punishment, which he considered nothing better than state sponsored murder. How does that viewpoint play out in Camus' writing, fictional and critical. Remember that Sartre believed Camus had 'gone soft,' when he backed out on Communism.

Although Camus is a lasting friend to human solidarity, and people's mutual fidelity, his perhaps finest novel, *The Stranger*, concerns a person who is essentially alien to human concerns. Is that character, Meursault, created by Camus for our admiration? Or our amazement?

Excerpt http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/3324245-la-chute

You know what charm is: a way of getting the answer yes without having asked any clear question."

"I used to advertise my loyalty and I don't believe there is a single person I loved that I didn't eventually betray."

"People hasten to judge in order not to be judged themselves."

"Men are never convinced of your reasons, of your sincerity, of the seriousness of your sufferings, except by your death. So long as you are alive, your case is doubtful; you have a right only to their skepticism."

"Friendship is less simple. It is long and hard to obtain but when one has it there's no getting rid of it; one simply has to cope with it. Don't think for a minute that your friends will telephone you every evening, as they ought to, in order to find out if this doesn't happen to be the evening when you are deciding to commit suicide, or simply whether you don't need company, whether you are not in the mood to go out. No, don't worry, they'll ring up the evening you are not alone, when life is beautiful. As for suicide, they would be more likely to push you to it, by virtue of what you owe to yourself, according to them. May heaven protect us, cher Monsieur, from being set upon a pedestal by our friends!"

"Don't lies eventually lead to the truth? And don't all my stories, true or false, tend toward the same conclusion? Don't they all have the same meaning? So what does it matter whether they are true or false if, in both cases, they are significant of what I have been and what I am? Sometimes it is easier to see clearly into the liar than into the man who tells the truth. Truth, like light, blinds. Falsehood, on the contrary, is a beautiful twilight that enhances every object."

"I love life - that's my real weakness. I love it so much that I am incapable of imagining what is not life."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Is the division of French literature into century units significant? Do the different centuries of French literature have their own character? If so, why might that be true?

Which genre of French literature seems to you to be 'strongest,' that is most deeply representative of a particular period? In which genre do French writers seem to excel? To be weakest?

Do women writers make a unique contribution to French literature, or is there no separate character to women's contribution? Who seem to you the greatest French women writers?

France has historically deep roots in Catholicism, and more generally in the religious sensibility. But in what writers does this trait of French culture most clearly manifest itself? When does 'freethinking' start to shape the national temperament? With what writers is freethinking most prominent?

Do you see a significant continuity between mediaeval French literature and the sixteenth century materials we read? Of do you think the mediaeval remains a pan European cultural condition, without ties to the more modern concept of the nation state?

Is French literature on the whole a politically/socially engaged literature? At what periods do you find this engagement most evident? Can you extend your response into our own century? Is French literature engaged today? Or was Jean Paul Sartre the last large example of French literary *engagement?*

Does the Greco Roman past play a significant role in the shaping of French literature? Where do you find that influence most evident? Is it still present today?