

Mrs. Lyke

AP Literature and Composition/ Hour 2

Quarter 4 Reader's Journal Evaluation

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### My Growth is a Typewriter

“Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic./ In memory everything seems to happen to music. That explains the fiddle in the wings./ I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it” (Williams 5). I am in fact one of hundreds of characters in my Reader's Journal, as I have interacted with texts and grown as a dynamic character throughout the school year. I am also the first person narrator of my Reader's Journal, commenting on each novel and play as if I could alter the outcomes by voicing my opinions. As AP Lit is drawing to a close and I look back over my Reader's Journal as a non-fiction text saturated with personal opinions and bias, my progress as a reader, writer, and thinker is very tangible. Looking back at my Reader's Journal as a memory of past thoughts and analyses, I can see that it is comparable to the typewriter in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* in that it was an instrumental tool for my success in AP Lit, as it aided me in organization, big picture thinking, and independence in this class.

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: MY ORGANIZATION IS A DYNAMIC BEING]

Throughout the year, my organization has become a dynamic being, changing with each novel and play we have read. Early on, in my *Grendel* notes, I organized my thoughts into boxes based on the literary techniques, definitions of words, and allusions I found in each chapter. Although this worked well, it was very time consuming, which made me take less notes with

each chapter, as can be seen in the *Grendel* section of my Reader's Journal (██████████ *Grendel*). I then started using charts in my *A Midsummer Night's Dream* notes (██████████ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), which was slightly less time consuming, but still wasted more time than was necessary. *Pride and Prejudice* was the first novel that I used a character tree with, an organizational technique which I subsequently used with almost every other play or novel I read because it worked so well (██████████ *Pride and Prejudice*). Moving on to *Death of a Salesman*, I was able to annotate the text itself which was very helpful in that I was able to look back and see the exact place in the play where I had a thought or feeling towards the story (██████████ *Death of a Salesman*). Although this technique worked well for me, I was not able to continue using it in subsequent novels and plays since I did not have copies in which I could write. In my *Their Eyes Were Watching God* notes, I did not start the novel with any particular structure to my notes in mind, which turned out to be a mistake, as I only took a page and a half of personal notes for the entire novel (██████████ *Their Eyes Were Watching God*). I then organized my notes for *As I Lay Dying* into separate pages for each character, in order to keep everyone straight (██████████ *As I Lay Dying*), and although it worked well for this novel, I do not think I would use the same method for other novels that were structured with a single narrator. Lastly, I structured my *A Prayer for Owen Meany* notes in such a way that they combined many of the techniques I had liked from my previous notes. First, I created a character tree to keep everyone straight, which really helped when John jumped back and forth between time periods in his narration. I also allotted half of a page for each Reader's Journal question so that I could make progress on them as I read, as I had been doing since my *Oedipus Rex* notes. Finally, I organized my chapter notes into areas such as "Christ symbolism," "foreshadowing," and "class differences" (██████████ *A Prayer for Owen Meany*), using bullet points instead of

boxes in order to save on time. Tom, in *The Glass Menagerie*, uses the typewriter in a similar way to how I used my Reader's Journal, as an organizational tool. Early on in the play, "an upright typewriter" is described with a "wild disarray of manuscripts" (Williams 13) nearby. Tom's work is described as "creative labor" (Williams 13), showing the controlled chaos that is Tom's poetry. Later, it is clear that Tom is still searching for organization in his poetry which the typewriter could provide when he is "fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoebox" (Williams 38) and later draws a comparison between his imaginative and vibrant poetry and "leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches" (Williams 38). Typing and binding his works together would provide the organization and order that Tom craves, much like my Reader's Journal has done for me.

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: TAKE A STEP BACK]

My Reader's Journal has also aided me in establishing and cultivating my big picture thinking. My Reader's Journal allows me to take a step back and look at the author's choices concerning imagery, diction, characterization, and so forth, rather than simply following the plot. I am able to make connections based on my notes and thoughts which then combine to create a theme or overall message. Early on in my Reader's Journal notes, I took very general notes which did not lend themselves to establishing a theme. For example, in my *Pride and Prejudice* notes, I wrote that "Mr. Darcy is described as being so proud that no one likes him in ch 3 at the ball" (Wojcik's *Pride and Prejudice*). Although this connects to the pride motif of the novel, it does little to explain or expand beyond plot observations. Much later in my Reader's Journal, I learned to utilize my notes in order to draft a theme, such as when I write "Irving uses capitalization in order to convey Owen's conflicts with societal norms. The capitalization of Owen's speech serves to set him apart from and illustrate conflict between him and society"

(██████████ *A Prayer for Owen Meany*). I then go on to connect this conflict to my projected theme that “one cannot accomplish great and spectacular things in life without first challenging everything that one encounters” (██████████ *A Prayer for Owen Meany*). In *The Glass Menagerie*, the typewriter allows both Amanda and Tom to take a step back and analyze their lives through a wider lens. Amanda’s biggest fear is “eating the crust of humility all their life!” (Williams 11), and she looks at Tom’s use of, and Laura’s disuse of the typewriter as failures at their respective career paths, ultimately leading to humility. Tom also sees failure at his job when he looks at the typewriter, but he sees that this failure is the result of unhappiness rather than laziness. He uses the typewriter to compose his poetry manuscripts, initiating his future career as a poet. Both the typewriter and my Reader’s Journal allow Amanda, Tom, and I to focus on the larger picture rather than concentrating on small, insignificant details.

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: INDEPENDENT CONNECTIONS]

My Reader’s Journal has also aided me in my growing independence in AP Lit. Rather than reading a novel or play and listening to the analysis in class, my Reader’s Journal allows me to make observations on my own and make connections which I would not otherwise think of. This way, I come to class prepared to actively discuss each novel or play. Although I sometimes resist this independence, and am tempted to wait until class to discover connections, my Reader’s Journal forces me to consider things beforehand which often make the connections easier. My Reader’s Journal shows growth in this area in that at the beginning of the year I was not independent and simply recorded literary techniques such as “similes: ‘silent as an owl’” (██████████ *Grendel*). This has improved, however, as shown by my *A Prayer for Owen Meany* notes in which I write “comparing John vs Vardaman’s reaction to their mothers’ deaths, John seems very numb and muted” (██████████ *A Prayer for Owen Meany*). This reference to

intertextuality, as well as references to allusions and symbols, shows my progress as a reader and thinker. In *The Glass Menagerie*, the typewriter is for Amanda a tool for independence, despite her reluctance to utilize it. Amanda's lack of enthusiasm towards the typewriter and her business career causes her mother to complain "We won't have a business career-we've given that up because it gave us nervous indigestion!...What is there left but dependency all our lives?" (Williams 11). By using "we" instead of "you," Amanda shows that Laura's business career is something which is being forced upon her for her mother's satisfaction rather than her own. Although I felt the same way about my Reader's Journal, I realize now that it was a necessary tool for my success. Amanda is attempting to force independence on Laura by creating a business career on her, however Laura does not believe that the typewriter is worth future success in this career, and thus never embraces it as a tool.

Overall, my Reader's Journal has aided my growth as a reader, writer, and thinker, specifically concerning my organization, big picture thinking, and independence in AP Lit. It can be compared to the symbolic typewriter in *The Glass Menagerie*, in that it also aided various characters in these areas.

Works Cited

- ██████████, Niall. "Reader's Journal." Interview. *Reader's Journal* 25 May 2015. Print.
- Williams, Tennessee. *The Glass Menagerie*. New York: New Directions, 1999. Print.