

English 301-902: Reading Literature

Fall 2021: Assignments: Weeks 1, 2, 3, 4 (24 August-16 September)

Dr. Mangum

I. Readings:

- A. Stories:** “Girl,” (Kincaid 757); "Hills Like White Elephants" (Hemingway 589); “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” (Carver 227); “The Lady with the Little Dog” (Chekhov 271); “The Girls in Their Summer Dresses” (Shaw, two versions available through Canvas); “Shiloh” (Mason 867)
B. Commentary: “Critical Thinking About Short Fiction” (1674-1675)

II. Schedule

NOTE: DATES BELOW INDICATE DAY BY WHICH THE WORK LISTED IS TO BE READ. Additional assignments due for each due date due to me by email will be announced through Canvas. For your reading of the works, use the schedule below for your guide. For your written assignments Canvas will be your guide. I will make assignments and due dates available both on the Announcement page and under the Schedule tab.

Week 1 (24, 26 August)

- Tuesday: Course Introduction
Thursday: “Girl” and “Hills Like White Elephants”

Week 2 (31 August, 2 September)

- Tuesday: The **Metropolitan** Version of “The Girls in Their Summer Dresses” (Shaw, available through Blackboard).
Thursday: The **Giants** Version of “The Girls in Their Summer Dresses” (Shaw, available through Blackboard).

Week 3 (7, 9 September)

- Tuesday: “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”
Thursday: “The Lady with the Little Dog”; Discussion of **Paper #1**

Week 4 (14, 16 September)

- Tuesday: “Shiloh”
Thursday: “Critical Thinking About Short Fiction” (1674-1675) (**Paper #1 (due Tuesday, 21 September)**)

III. Description of Paper #1 (Due Tuesday, 21 September)

“An analysis of a story is a result of the process of separating it into its parts in order to study the whole. . . . While explication deals with a specific section of the text [such as a central scene like the “turn”], analysis can range further, discussing details throughout the narrative that are related to your thesis.”

In this essay you are to form a narrow thesis (that is, your claim) about one of the stories and analyze the story in such a way that you support the thesis, finally “proving” or making a case for your thesis in an essay of approximately 3-4 pages: “Girl,” "Hills Like White Elephants," “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love,” “The Lady with

the Little Dog,” or “The Girls in Their Summer Dresses.” Because this short paper must have a sharp focus, make sure to narrow your thesis early in the paper (somewhere in the introductory paragraph) and support it in four or five well developed paragraphs (one of which should be a formal concluding paragraph). In other words, the paper should have an introductory paragraph that contains your thesis, a body of the paper (containing three or so fully developed paragraphs), and a concluding paragraph.

Suggestions for coming up with a thesis: Select one of the stories we have read and discussed. Ask yourself a series of questions about the story. Find the best (i.e., the richest of these questions) and answer it with your essay. The answer to the question would become your thesis. For example, you might ask this about “Hills Like White Elephants”: Does the girl finally decide to have the abortion? (Here you would analyze those parts of the story that subtly give hints about how her thinking evolves on this question.) Or you might ask whether the reader of “The Girls in Their Summer Dresses” is to believe that Michael “knows” that he will stray from Frances at some point in the future, or if he simply knows the answer to whether or not he will stray (which could mean he knows he won’t). Here you could ask this question in relation to either version (but not both since that would require a much longer paper). Another alternative would be to ask whether Mel in “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” seems to know what he is talking about when he talks about love. Does he finally give a clear idea and non-contradictory answer to what he believes true love is? Or you might ask yourself whether (and how) Gurov changes in “The Lady with Her Little Dog.” (This would probably lead you to examine important scenes in which his attitude toward women in general, Anna in particular, and life seem to, in fact, change from the beginning of the story to the end.) Of course you can come up with any question that leads you to an answer that your paper will provide through close analysis of the text.