

World Literature: Classics

Coursebook



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Table of Contents

Introduction	vii
Course Materials	
What to Expect in This Course	
Academic Expectations	
A Note About the Workload	
Lesson 1: Personal Essay	1
Lesson 2: <i>The Metamorphosis</i>	3
Lesson 3: <i>The Metamorphosis</i>	5
Lesson 4: <i>The Metamorphosis</i>	9
Lesson 5: Biographical Research Paper	11
Lesson 6: Biographical Research Paper	15
Lesson 7: <i>The Ramayana</i>	17
Lesson 8: <i>The Ramayana</i>	21
Lesson 9: <i>The Ramayana</i>	25
Lesson 10: <i>The Ramayana</i>	29
Lesson 11: <i>The Ramayana</i>	33
Lesson 12: Japanese Haiku	35
Lesson 13: Introductions and Conclusions	39

Lesson 14: Comparative Essay	43
Lesson 15: Writing a Movie Review	47
Lesson 16: English Romantic Poetry	51
Lesson 17: John Keats	57
Lesson 18: Dylan Thomas	61
Lesson 19: Composition Nuts and Bolts	65
Lesson 20: “Taking a Stand” Essay	71
Lesson 21: <i>The Kreutzer Sonata</i>	75
Lesson 22: <i>The Kreutzer Sonata</i>	77
Lesson 23: Personal Essay	81
Lesson 24: Published Essays	83
Lesson 25: Writing a News Article	85
Lesson 26: <i>A Doll’s House</i>	89
Lesson 27: <i>A Doll’s House</i>	93
Lesson 28: <i>A Doll’s House</i>	97
Lesson 29: Figurative Language	101
Lesson 30: Writing a One-Act Play	105
Lesson 31: Writing in the Workplace	109
Lesson 32: <i>Don Quixote</i>	113
Lesson 33: <i>Don Quixote</i>	117
Lesson 34: <i>Don Quixote</i>	121

Lesson 35: *Don Quixote* 125

Lesson 36: Comparative Essay 129

Appendix

Student Research Paper: “Albert Einstein”	132
“Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey” by William Wordsworth	136
“Ode on a Grecian Urn” by John Keats	142
“Ode to a Nightingale” by John Keats	144
“Fern Hill” by Dylan Thomas.....	147
<i>The Kreutzer Sonata</i> by Leo Tolstoy	149
Academic Expectations	201
Original Work Guidelines	201
Finding Reputable Sources.....	202
Citing Your Sources	203
Elements of Good Writing.....	206
The Writing Process	209



Introduction

Welcome to *World Literature: Classics!* In this course, we will be reading great literature from around the world. In the process, we will learn about some of the thoughts and feelings of human beings throughout history. In addition, you will have an opportunity to further develop your grammar and composition skills by writing a variety of papers on different topics.

At first, you may feel that reading what someone wrote hundreds of years ago in another country isn't important to you today. But as you read what these people have said, you may find that although we live in a different time and place than these authors, many of the questions you think about today have always been a part of the human experience. People have been thinking and writing about these very same questions for thousands of years, and some of what they've discovered can be very meaningful to us today.

This coursebook gives you the instructions and the assignments that you need to complete the course.

Content warning: The classic texts in this course describe events that portray danger, sorrow, and trauma in an accurate, realistic way. You will encounter disturbing material. As with all material in this course, please approach the topic with sensitivity and kindness, both to the people you are studying and to yourself. If you are struggling emotionally with topics in this course, please contact your teacher or another trusted adult.

Course Materials

The following materials are used in this course:

- *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka
- *The Ramayana* by R. K. Narayan
- *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen
- *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes

You will also be reading a variety of other texts that are included in this coursebook.

What to Expect in This Course

In each lesson, you will find reading and writing assignments. For writing assignments, include examples and direct references from the text to support your observations and opinions.

When you begin each lesson, scan the entire lesson first so you have an idea of what you will be doing. Take a quick look at the number of assignments and amount of reading. Having a sense of the whole lesson before you begin will help you manage your time effectively. Use the assignment checklist to keep track of your progress.

This full-year course is divided into 36 lessons, and each lesson is designed to take about one week to complete. In the lessons, you will find the following sections:

An **Assignment Checklist** is included at the beginning of each lesson. Assignments are fully explained in the lesson.

Learning Objectives outline the main goals of the lesson and give you an idea of what to expect.

Lesson Introductions provide background information or questions to guide your learning.

Reading Assignments include a wide range of classical texts.

Vocabulary Exercises help you develop a wider vocabulary and gain a better understanding of the texts.

Writing Assignments highlight important literary elements, develop your analytical skills, and help you gain deeper insight into the literature. You will find different types of writing assignments, including **Comprehension Questions** and **Critical Thinking Questions**.

Share Your Work provides reminders for students who are submitting work to a teacher. You are not necessarily required to complete all the assignments for each lesson. Be sure to check with your teacher at the beginning of each lesson to make sure you understand what you are required to do.

This course is designed for independent learning, so hopefully you will find it easy to navigate. However, it is assumed you will have an adult (such as a parent, tutor, or school-based teacher) supervising your work and providing support and feedback. We will refer to this person as “your teacher” in this course. If you have a question about the work, ask them for help.

Academic Expectations

The appendix contains important information that you will need to read and incorporate into your work throughout the year. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the resources in the appendix. You will find information about original work guidelines, tips on how to avoid accidental plagiarism, and details on citing sources and images.

You will also find a detailed section on the writing process that gives information on outlining, writing a rough draft, revising, editing, and proofreading. You are expected to follow the writing process in all your longer assignments and essays.

A Note About the Workload

Students vary greatly in terms of reading speed, reading comprehension, and writing ability. Some may find the reading in this course takes longer than expected; others may find the writing assignments take a great deal of time. In general, you can expect to spend about five hours on each weekly lesson. If you need more time to complete the work, you can modify some lessons to focus on fewer assignments or forgo the reading assignments in order to focus on your composition skills.

Modifications like these will allow you to produce work of a higher quality. With your teacher's help, each lesson in this course can be customized to suit your needs.

Keep an eye on the workload as you progress through the course. Make adjustments so you have time for meaningful learning experiences rather than rushing to try to get everything done. Always consult with your teacher when making adjustments to the workload.

Lesson

1

Personal Essay

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Present your reflections on reading, and your experience of reading literature from other countries, in a personal essay.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Read the lesson introduction.
- Complete the writing assignment.

Lesson Introduction

To begin our study of world literature, we want to start with *you*. What do you enjoy reading most? What do you like about this kind of literature? What literature have you read? Have you read any literature from other cultures around the world? What are your attitudes about reading in general, and about reading literature from other countries in particular? Finally, what do you hope to gain from this course?

Writing Assignments

1. Write a two- or three-page essay in which you discuss the questions above. Don't just list the questions and then answer them. Instead, combine your responses in a way that will flow smoothly and be enjoyable to read. This doesn't have to be a formal paper, but it should be grammatically correct and represent your best composition skills.

Write a rough draft first, then proofread your essay, correct any errors, and write your final draft.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback. You are not necessarily required to complete all the assignments for each lesson. Be sure to check with your teacher at the beginning of each lesson to make sure you understand what you are required to do.

Your teacher will let you know the best way to submit your work. If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.

Lesson

2

The Metamorphosis

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Practice active reading skills by asking questions and taking notes.

Lesson Introduction

The first book you will read is Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. Although this is a short novel, it is complex and evocative, rich with nuance and symbolism. Therefore, it demands close, attentive reading.

One of the ways to ensure a close reading of the novel is to take notes. As you read, mark the sentences and scenes that are of interest to you. After reading, write notes on a separate piece of paper. These notes may be excerpts, questions, or thoughts you have. Be sure to write down the page number that corresponds to the note. (If you would like help with note-taking skills, ask your teacher.)

Taking notes in this manner is extremely useful. Not only does it ensure a close read of the text, but it is extremely helpful when it comes to essay writing.

Active Reading

Have you ever thought about your own reading style? After all, how you read is critical in determining what you receive from literature.

There is a major difference between active and passive reading. Passive reading is a little like watching television—the reader moves through the story or poem superficially. Perhaps they are entertained, but the depth of their understanding is minimal. An active reader, on the other hand, is engaged with the material. The active reader asks questions, looks deeply into the material, and makes discoveries.

What are the specifics of active reading? What should a reader look for? Here are some suggestions you might find helpful.

- Plot: What happens in the book? How is the story structured?
- Setting: Where does the story take place? How does the setting affect the characters?

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Read the lesson introduction.
- Read *The Metamorphosis*.
- Complete the vocabulary exercises.

- Character development: How does the main character change? What causes these changes to occur?
- Point of view: Who is telling the story? How would the story be different if it was told from another point of view?
- Language and tone: How would you describe the author's writing style? Is the language formal or informal? Are the sentences long or short? Can you find a rhythm in the writing? What about the paragraphs? What is the tone of the language? Is it humorous, serious, emotional, or matter-of-fact?
- Meaning: Is there a moral or message to the story? What has the main character learned from their experiences? What have you learned from reading the book?

Keep these suggestions in mind as you read. If you are not accustomed to active reading, it may be demanding at first. Ultimately, though, approaching literature this way will make reading more meaningful and pleasurable.

Reading

Read *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. It is a short book, so plan to complete it this week.

Take notes on your reading. You will be sharing your notes with your teacher.

In the next lesson, you will answer questions about the reading. You should begin responding to the questions as soon as you complete the novel, while it is still fresh in your mind.

Vocabulary Exercises

1. Find ten words from the reading that are unfamiliar to you. Define each word. Make sure to include the part of speech.
2. Use your ten vocabulary words in one or more sentences.
3. Define *metamorphosis*. Be sure to include all its meanings.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback.

If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.

Lesson

6

Biographical Research Paper

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Demonstrate revision skills in completing a biographical research paper.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Complete the writing assignments.

Writing Assignments

1. Using your outline, write a rough draft of the research paper that you started in the previous lesson. Revise, edit, and proofread your paper to strengthen your writing, correct errors, and produce your best work. (See “The Writing Process” in the appendix for writing tips.)

The final paper should be 6–7 pages in length, including a title page, the body of the paper (3–4 pages), an endnote page, and a bibliography page.

2. Submit your note cards, bibliography cards, outline, and the final draft of your research paper to your teacher.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback.

If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.

Lesson

17

John Keats

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Demonstrate understanding of poetic form and structure.
- Demonstrate explication skills.
- Write a poem in the style of an ode.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Read the lesson introduction.
- Read two poems by John Keats.
- Complete the writing assignments.

Lesson Introduction

John Keats, a contemporary of Wordsworth, was a leading romantic poet of his time. In his short life, he composed some of the most enduring verses in all of poetry. “Ode on a Grecian Urn” and “Ode to a Nightingale” are two of Keats’s masterpieces.

The origin of the ode can be traced back to the Greek poet Pindar in the fifth century BCE. Emotional and ceremonious, the ode is a lyrical poem of exalted praise. Through the years, it has claimed many different forms. Earlier odes, including the Pindaric Ode, were unpredictable in their prosody. As if to mirror the exalted state of the poet, the stanzas featured unpatterned rhyme schemes and line lengths. Later, the Horatian Ode took on a more regular form.

Assignments

Read the following poems by John Keats, which are found in the appendix:

- “Ode on a Grecian Urn”
- “Ode to a Nightingale”

Note: “Ode to a Nightingale” will require several readings. Since the poem contains mythological and biblical references, keep a resource book handy. Some anthologies contain notes explaining these references.

Writing Assignments

Answer the following questions about “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” citing specific lines from the poem to support your responses.

1. What is the form and structure of the poem? (Refer to “A Note on Prosody” in lesson 16.) Given the information above, is “Ode on a Grecian Urn” more Pindaric or Horatian in its prosody?
2. Compare Keats’s language to the language of Wordsworth. How are they similar? How are they different?
3. The urn is decorated with many scenes. What is the background setting of these scenes? What is the season?
4. Why is the urn able to “express / A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme”?
5. What does Keats mean when he says that “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter”? Whom or what is he addressing in these lines?
6. Describe the young lovers on the urn. What does Keats have to say about their situation? How does it contribute to the theme of the poem?
7. Explain why the “little town . . . for evermore will silent be.”
8. Why is Keats so worshipful toward the urn? Why does Keats consider the urn “a friend to man”? What is it about the urn that merits such praise and inspires such wonder in him?
9. Discuss the importance of time/timelessness in the ode. Be sure to use specific lines to support your response.
10. These are two of Keats’s most famous lines:

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,”—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Whose words are being quoted in the first line? What do they mean? Why is this truth “all ye need to know”? Why does the urn evoke such a profound utterance?

11. For Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale,” rather than respond to a series of questions, you will explicate the poem, which means you will explain it in detail. In addition to attending to the prosody, you should uncover as much of the poem’s depth and meaning as possible. Use direct quotes to support your assertions about the poem’s meaning.

Of course, there are many approaches to this assignment. You might want to move through the poem linearly, analyzing it stanza by stanza; you might choose to explain how the poem amplifies a certain theme. The key here is to be thorough. Particularly, pay attention to evocative phrasing and imagery, and discuss how these give the poem its power.

12. Compose an ode. Remember to maintain a tone of exaltation and praise. It is best if you choose a topic you feel is praiseworthy! You may follow one of Keats's forms; otherwise, feel free to write a free-verse ode. The poem should be at least 16 lines long.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback.

If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.

Lesson

23

Personal Essay

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Incorporate elements of interpretative and expository writing in a personal essay.
- Explore first-person writing from experience.
- Reflect on the significance of one’s own story.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Read the lesson introduction.
- Complete the writing assignment.

Lesson Introduction

Although *The Kreutzer Sonata* is a work of fiction, it is born of Tolstoy’s personal experience and his convictions about issues of love, marriage, and family. In fact, Tolstoy, doubting the sincerity of his own motives and ideals, withdrew from marriage. His distaste for high society and superficiality is well documented.

The Kreutzer Sonata is revealing because, like most stories, it moves from innocence to experience. However, in this case Pózdnyshév’s experience leads to bitterness and madness, and what he considers a rare awareness: “I know what most other people will not soon learn.” Of course, one would hope that experience would lead to peace of mind and a degree of happiness. For Pózdnyshév, it is not so.

Writing Assignments

1. Focusing on an event or relationship in your life that has deep significance to you, write a four- or five-page personal essay. There are countless possibilities: a summer vacation, a favorite aunt or uncle, or a memorable experience. Your account should focus on what you have gained or learned from the experience or relationship. How did it contribute to shaping the person you are today?

Personal essays are acts of discovery. By looking intimately into a passage of life, a deeper appreciation and understanding of yourself will be born. Be sure to keep a copy of your essay—you may find it interesting in years to come!

Note: Although the essay is personal, it shares the demands of an interpretive or expository essay. Therefore, your account should be outlined and well written. It should flow smoothly from one idea to another and contain a lot of details.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback.

If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.



Appendix

Student Research Paper: “Albert Einstein”	132
“Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey” by William Wordsworth	136
“Ode on a Grecian Urn” by John Keats	142
“Ode to a Nightingale” by John Keats	144
“Fern Hill” by Dylan Thomas	147
<i>The Kreutzer Sonata</i> by Leo Tolstoy	149
Academic Expectations	201
Original Work Guidelines	201
Finding Reputable Sources	202
Citing Your Sources	203
Elements of Good Writing	206
The Writing Process	209

Ode on a Grecian Urn

by John Keats

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
Forever piping songs forever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
Forever warm and still to be enjoyed,
Forever panting, and forever young;
All breathing human passion far above,

That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Ode to a Nightingale

by John Keats

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thy happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singing of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sun-burnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;

Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!

Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?