

Reading Response #1

Due: Wednesday, March 7th at the beginning of class.

Choose one or two of the authors we have read thus far and formulate your ideas regarding one of the following options. This response should be between 2 and 4 typed (12 font) pages, with a one inch margin. The idea here is to engage with the ideas of those we have read thus far, and to begin to understand your own positions regarding socio-historical representations of gender inequality (see further guidelines below).

- 1) Using two different authors we have read thus far, discuss the role of class as helping to construct and maintain gender inequality. Are circumstances different today than when these authors were alive? If so, explain. If not, why do you think we haven't changed?
- 2) Articulate the difference (if any) between male and female depictions of gender inequality in the works we have read. What does Mill say that is different than what Wollstonecraft and Woolf claim? Do these differences change the way you receive their ideas?
- 3) Wollstonecraft, Mill, and Woolf all reject society's claims that the subordination of women is "natural." Choosing one or two of the authors we have read, articulate their arguments on women's subordination. Then describe your own thoughts on their arguments, and/or on why women are still often considered subordinate to men.
- 4) Myths and story help construct and maintain ideologies of inequality. How do Hesiod's stories, the Bible, and Sappho's poetry maintain or disrupt the idea that men are superior to women? Can you name any contemporary myths and stories that still maintain this gender inequality?
- 5) Using an author that you will introduce (the writer must be a contemporary with the author that you will be comparing, who we have read) make a comparison between their discourses around gender inequality. Which argument, in your opinion, is most successful? Why?
- 6) What themes and concepts discussed by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* are present in *Orlando*? How are Woolf's theoretical arguments represented in her fiction (made into film by Sally Potter)? What, if any, criticisms do you have of them?
- 7) In the Introduction from *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir claims that, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Reader 14). What does she mean by this? Do you agree?
- 8) Discuss Hélène Cixous' act of redefining specific metaphors and symbols found in the male imaginary in "The Laugh of the Medusa." What do they signify in the male imaginary? How does she change them? What do they signify in the female imaginary?
- 9) Using John Berger's ideas in "Chapter Three" of *Ways of Seeing*, analyze an artwork or advertisement that portrays a woman or a man. Do his ideas apply to your chosen work? If so,

how? If not, how? If you cannot hand in the image of your art, you will have to describe it in your response.

10) You can write about another topic/personal reaction that you have had to one or more of these authors, but you must “okay” your idea with me before turning your response in.

Guidelines for a Successful Reading Response

Here are the requirements, guidelines and grading rubric for your reading responses. Please also refer to the Purdue website for help regarding structure, content and format of your paper: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

Length. Each reading response should be between 2-4 pages (Times New Roman #12, double spaced). It should have a solid argument (thesis statement), analysis, and conclusion, all of which reflect your analysis and critical thinking.

Structure. Your paper should be structured in the following way (the headings are for the guidelines and should not be written into your paper):

- **Title:** make it catchy and relevant (make sure it includes key words of topic)!
- **Introduction:** What is your topic all about? Go straight to your topic without generalizations. Introduce your argument/thesis statement (topic, plus your own opinion on the topic). What will you demonstrate in your paper? What is its focus? Be clear, assertive and specific.
- **Development/Illustration/Substantiation:** More specific background information (characters, themes, terminology, etc.), critical discussion of sources and ideas, (i.e. comparisons, contrasts, arguments and counter arguments demonstrating your own synthesizing thoughts); proper citations and clear references to sources. Here is where you illustrate your argument with examples.
- **Substantiation/Explanation:** Analysis of how your examples work, or why they are relevant .
- **Conclusion:** What is the significance of your findings? What further implications might they have?

Formatting and Style. Follow the MLA formatting guidelines (or another style as long as it is consistent and you let me know which one). **Proofread carefully, avoid spelling errors and make sure that the sentences are complete, clear and well connected.**

Rating Scale. Your response will be graded with a total possible points of :100