

Reading Journal

Due Dates

- **M Jun 1:** *Laura* journal
- **M Jun 8:** *Pale Fire* journal
- **F Jun 12:** *The Translation of Dr. Apelles* journal
Any revisions or extra credit entries

What to do

Keep a typewritten journal of your critical and emotional responses to each of the novels we read, exploring the relationship between your personal feelings about the texts and possible interpretative or theoretical approaches suggested by the critical readings and class discussion. If the text is the enigma, then you are the detective working to unravel it. You can think of these journal entries as the inner monologue—or voice-over—by a private eye in a black-and-white film noir. Work through the text, making personal and critical observations. Pose questions. Put forth hypotheses.

Your journal entries should move beyond mere paraphrase or plot summary toward progressively more *analytical* hunches and arguments about narrative technique, plot, character, theme, symbol, point of view, style, setting, tone, etc. Furthermore, the entries should develop progressively more specific textual, contextual, and ideological approaches to the fiction.

Length

2-3 pages per entry. That means **more than 2 full pages, but less than 4.**

Format

Journal entries must

- be typed in a 12-point, easy to read font (Times New Roman or something comparable),
- be double-spaced,
- have one-inch margins on each side,
- have page numbers,
- be stapled or paper-clipped,
- be submitted on time.

Guidelines

While these need not be polished essays, they should

- be as coherent and specific as possible;
- reflect your growing insights and analytical skills;
- and be intelligible to other readers.

Tips

I strongly recommend starting your journal entries immediately after reading each novel in order to take advantage of fresh responses and to avoid the procrastinator's problem of having to backtrack over forgotten territory. Begin sketching your ideas, hunches & gut reactions as you read, then hone your ideas by incorporating the critical readings and class discussions.

Extra Credit (Optional)

You can earn up to 25 points by writing a fourth journal entry on any of the films we watch in class. This extra credit entry can be turned in at any point during the term before Friday, June 8 at 4pm.

Revision (Optional)

You can revise one journal entry and resubmit it. Your new grade will override the previous one. In order to revise a journal entry you must write a 3-5 sentence revision plan and meet with me briefly for approval. This revision entry can be turned in at any point during the term before Friday, June 8 at 4pm.

Grading Criteria

an “A” reading journal entry responds to the text with fresh and persuasive insights.

- It balances emotional and analytical responses to the text, linking personal and critical approaches with compelling, original, and insightful arguments and observations.
- It is consistently directed at its audience (peer readers who are somewhat familiar with the text).
- Through concise and fluid writing, it demonstrates your sense of the text’s content (and flavor) and a sense of the author’s craft.
- The entry is sequenced around a central idea or ideas, rather than simply retelling the text.
- Appropriate examples & quotes from the text are woven in smoothly.
- The style is fluent throughout; sentences within paragraphs are logically sequenced, and transitions within and between paragraphs are smooth.
- There are no serious or distracting mechanical errors or flaws. The paper follows the designated formatting.
- The writer has thought hard about the text, examined it carefully, and has presented original ideas & observations in an engaging, creative way.

a “B” reading journal entry, like the “A” reading journal entry, is one that goes beyond a routine presentation of the text in description and the writer’s experience with it. The ideas are fresh and compelling, rather than fairly obvious. What keeps it from the “A” grade could be lack of adequate development or minor, but distracting stylistic elements.

a “C” reading journal entry is one that adequately fulfills this assignment’s objectives – it has all the pieces, but may develop them unevenly, giving the resulting journal entry a lopsided feel, reflecting inadequate or underdeveloped insight about the text.

- It may rely too much on plot summary.
- It may not balance subjective opinion with evidence from the text.
- The ideas may lack enough evidence from the text to become fully persuasive.
- The paper may lack focus, or the paragraphs may not transition into each other fluently.
- The lead and the wrap-up may be present, but are perhaps more perfunctory than memorable.
- This paper may contain some errors in grammar, punctuation and usage, but most of these mistakes do not seriously interfere with the reader’s understanding of the essay at large.

a “D” reading journal entry is one that responds to the text in an inadequate or general way.

- Its ideas may become obscured by serious mechanical/stylistic problems or it may be undeveloped to the point where the reader becomes disengaged.
- It may provide only a vague focus.
- It may start out with focus and lose it.

an “F” paper is one that fails to fulfill this assignment’s basic objectives.

- It may lack a clear thesis about the art.
- It may be so poorly organized that readers cannot decipher the important ideas presented in the art and cannot find the writer’s main points.
- It may reflect a failure to read or fully engage the text.
- It may contain so many spelling and grammatical errors that the reader has difficulty deciphering it.
- It may be that the writer has borrowed heavily, both in terms of wording and ideas, from the secondary sources.