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ABSTRACT

One of a series, the guide explores a special approach to the study of literature for gifted highschool students. Curriculum objectives are stated based on the course framework: the types of literary criticism most prevalent in the twentieth century. Three sequences are discussed: looking at literature through the eyes of the new critics, the probe of the psychological critic, and a mythic approach to literary criticism. Suggestions for evaluation are included. A companion volume for teaching children in grades 1 through 3 is available as EC 031 962. (RJ)

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CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR TEACHING GIFTED CHILDREN LITERATURE IN GRADES NINE THROUGH TWELVE

Prepared for the
DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
California State Department of Education

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FOREWORD

California public schools should provide equal opportunity for every girl and boy of school age to become knowledgeable in the basic subjects and proficient in using the basic skills of learning. And the educational programs offered by the schools should be of sufficient scope and depth to permit each girl and boy to secure the special preparation needed for entering college or for beginning employment in occupational fields in which no more than high school graduation is required.

In conducting their educational programs, the schools must employ practices that are sufficiently flexible to permit the adjustments required to meet each pupil's need of special education. The talented are among those for whom such adjustments will be necessary. Recently the State Department of Education directed and coordinated a federally funded project for the development of curriculum materials of the type needed for this program. The materials reflect the best thinking of people who are well qualified both by education and by experience. They are both innovative and professional.

This curriculum guide, one of a series, is concerned with the teaching of literature to mentally gifted high school students. The concepts and suggestions contained in it merit thoughtful attention, appropriate interpretation, and wise application.



Superintendent of Public Instruction

PREFACE

This curriculum guide, which was planned and completed as part of a project under provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title V, is designed to be used by teachers of mentally gifted girls and boys whose general mental ability is in the top 2 percent of all girls and boys.

Curriculum Guide for Teaching Gifted Children Literature in Grades Nine Through Twelve is one of a series of curriculum guides that are designed for the following educational levels: grades one through three, four through six, seven and eight, and nine through twelve. The guides were prepared under the direction of John C. Gowan, Professor of Education, and his assistant, Joyce Sonntag, Assistant Professor of Education, both of San Fernando Valley State College.

A goal of this curriculum guide and of the *English Language Framework for California Public Schools* (1968) is to develop "students' capacities for continuing engagement with literature as a significant and rewarding human activity." This guide suggests one approach that may be followed in teaching literature to gifted youth.

A curriculum framework that is designed for use in developing programs for mentally gifted minors was also developed in the project. This framework was prepared under the direction of Mary N. Meeker, Associate Professor of Education, University of Southern California, and James Magary, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Southern California.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This curriculum guide is designed to provide gifted students in high school literature classes with a special approach to the study of literature. This approach uses as its framework the types of literary criticism most prevalent in the twentieth century.

Rationale

In the older cultural milieu, or in what Riesman calls the “tradition-directed society,”¹ criticism was an alien process; in other words, the story was enough. But over the years the art of criticism has become increasingly important. In the present age it implies sophistication, objectivity, self-awareness. Maturity is now defined in these terms, and the age demands this kind of rational approach.

In a period of severe cultural dislocation such as that which we are experiencing today, literary criticism offers us “seemingly endless possibilities for the discrimination of values, the sharing of insights, the defense of a living culture.”²

For the gifted student, approaching literature through literary criticism provides opportunity (1) to analyze and synthesize ideas and problems; (2) to communicate his ideas and solutions to others through both oral and written expression; (3) to work with others in groups to generate and explore ideas; (4) to develop independence through creative thinking and to experience constructive nonconformity by defending a critical position; (5) to discover a method of ordering his world of literary experience; (6) to explore process, function, and evolution as ways of looking at life; and (7) to become motivated to achievement, creativity, and productivity. In short, the literature curriculum proposed by this guide is derived from literary

¹ David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950, p. 9.

² Irving Howe, *Modern Literary Criticism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1959, p. 37.

criticism and is intended to meet the objectives of education for the ablest as listed by Gowan and Demos.³

This curriculum guide is based on Bruner's assumption that the learning of structure is more important than the learning of details, because a knowledge of structure can be transferred from one problem-solving situation to another.⁴ If Bruner's assumption is correct and if criticism has a discoverable structure, then it should be possible to teach that structure. Such instruction should provide the student with an invaluable tool for the continuation of his literary education beyond his formal school experiences.

Overview

The twentieth century is termed by many observers "an age of criticism." The upsurge of interest in criticism of literature in this century seems to have developed from several factors, which Howe identifies as:

... the need for an intermediary between the *avant-garde* writers and their audiences gave the critics a crucial job from the start of the present century until the mid-fifties; the threat of commercialized mass culture made people turn to the critics for definitions of quality in literature; the awareness that literary criticism seemed one of the few areas of discourse in which it is still possible for the human intelligence to move freely and disinterestedly.⁵

The English teacher, having been exposed to many methods of criticism in college literature courses, should recognize, with R. S. Crane, the existence of a number of significant critical approaches, "each of which exhibits the literary object in a different light, and each of which has its characteristic powers and limitations."⁶

Choosing from the maze of twentieth century critical approaches, this curriculum guide focuses on the three structural areas or trends that are currently in widest use. Brief descriptions follow:

- *New criticism.* What is generally called the "new criticism" explores the direct relationship of the reader to the particular literary work itself. In this approach the critic is concerned with

³John C. Gowan and George D. Demos, *The Education and Guidance of the Ablest*. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1964, pp. 64-65.

⁴Jerome S. Bruner, *The Process of Education*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960, p. 18.

⁵Howe, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁶*Critics and Criticism: Essays in Method* (Abridged edition). Edited by Ronald S. Crane. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. iv.

form and structure and with patterns of imagery and symbolism.

- *Psychological criticism.* Psychological criticism explores the relationships which the reader sees among the characters in the work and between the author and his work. In this approach the critic is concerned with the relationship of literature to common experience and with literature as a product of mental activity.
- *Myth criticism.* Myth criticism explores the relationship between the reader and the work to the extent that the literary product has certain symbols and myths in common with all mankind. In this approach the critic shifts his emphasis on image and symbol to a quest for myth via comparative anthropology and folkloristic materials. This type of criticism ultimately focuses on the universally unifying elements in literature.

Most high school English teachers have used certain or all of these theories to assist their students in explicating the literature which they have studied. With the help of this curriculum guide and a graduate course in literary criticism, teachers of English can now teach the theories of these critical structures to gifted high school students. That the study of literary criticism should be a requirement in every English teacher's preparation is explained by Northrop Frye: "It is not possible to teach or learn literature; what one teaches and learns is criticism."⁷

These structures of criticism – or the students' own adaptations of them – can help gifted high school students toward a deeper understanding of, and a more sensitive appreciation for, the artistry and truth in the literature which they read. As the students work toward this twofold objective, they can heighten their enjoyment of literature without becoming hypercritical of what they read.

This curriculum sequence can be taught as a three-year nongraded series of classes; can be presented during three semesters of elective literature classes; or can be structured to fit into the typical frameworks of grades ten, eleven, and twelve. Teachers of ninth-grade English classes may also make use of some of this material for certain gifted students at that level who may be deemed ready for advanced work of this nature.

⁷Northrop Frye, "Criticism, Visible and Invisible," *College English*, XXVI (October, 1964), 4.

To implement the curriculum suggested in this guide, no special literary works are required for the student. Literature of all genres, periods, and locales currently available for honors classes or college preparatory classes in the field of English can be used. It would be highly desirable (1) to acquire a class set of copies of one novel and ten copies each of six novels; and (2) to make available for the use of the gifted students in these classes a large number of different novels which can be borrowed on an extended loan basis.

The teacher will need to have on hand many examples of literary criticism written by professional critics who represent the three types of criticism to be studied. Some of these examples should explicate literary works to be explored by the students. Other materials, such as articles, essays, and books cited in this guide, will also serve as excellent professional references for the teacher.

The English teacher is urged to view this suggested curriculum as a point of departure for his own teaching, which he can adapt through study guides and course outlines to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of his own students.

The *course content* suggested by this guide is presented in sequence, with each step built upon the preceding content. Each step in the course sequence provides an *objective*, which, in turn, specifies the type of behavior the learner is to exhibit, or the goal he is to reach, in relation to the specific content stated; and each objective is to be achieved before another objective is attempted. The objectives are to be attained through *learning opportunities* such as those suggested in the guide.

CHAPTER 2

Curriculum Objectives

At the completion of the three-course sequence in literature offered in this guide – a sequence based on twentieth century literary criticism – the learner should be capable of doing the following:

- Identifies and defines the three major structures in twentieth century literary criticism – the new criticism, psychological criticism, and myth criticism. In so doing, the learner moves from a simple awareness of different types of literary criticism to developing a preference for one of them.
- Recognizes the type of literary criticism which a given critic has used in critiquing a literary work. Here the learner progresses from simple recognition of the type of criticism to feelings of satisfaction and even enjoyment in the recognitions he can now make.
- Critiques literary works of a variety of genres and from a variety of times and places. In so doing, the learner uses each of the three major structures in twentieth century literary criticism.
- Analyzes the three structures of literary criticism and demonstrates the strengths and limitations of each one as he sees them. Thus the learner accepts increasing responsibility for his own value choices by justifying the decisions he reaches about the strengths and limitations of each structure.
- Synthesizes two or three of the structures of literary criticism studied, or develops his own hypothesis about what the structure of literary criticism in the future will be like. By so doing, the learner examines his previous learnings and then integrates or originates his own approach to literary criticism – an approach which he can use to advantage in critiquing literary works in the future.

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- Evaluates his own thinking and his own critical sense to see how these intellectual elements have matured during his study of literature based on literary criticism. In this process of self-evaluation, the learner reviews his previous standards for judging a literary work; weighs these standards against what he has learned about literary criticism; and produces his own complex of critical values, which he can then utilize to judge literary works he reads after completing these courses.

Course I: A Look at Literature Through the Eyes of the New Critics

Observing the modern critical scene, teachers of English can see that close textual reading and concern with form have been the chief critical obsessions of our time. For the past 40 years, the “new criticism” has focused its attention on such means of literary art as tension, ambiguity, tone, structure, diction, imagery, wit, irony, and paradox.

Some Major Concepts

In spite of the length of time the new critics have been influencing criticism and regardless of the variety of personalities who have been attracted to this type of criticism, Oldsey and Lewis have been able to list several major principles with which the new critics generally agree:

- (1) the work of art must be treated as an object in itself, independent of the author’s intention and of the facts of his life and environment;
- (2) the language of poetry is a special language, distinguished from the language of science and ordinary discourse by its ordering of words and images to create a whole greater than its parts;
- (3) literary genres, though recognized, are unimportant;
- (4) criticism is itself an art on a par with other creative forms such as poetry or painting.¹

To this list M. H. Abrams, in his *Glossary of Literary Terms*, adds one more area of general agreement among the new critics:

... the practical criticism of the new critics makes large use of explication, or the detailed analysis of the meanings, ambiguities, and interactions of the individual words, images, and passages are said to combine to make up the “total meaning” of a poem.²

¹Bernard S. Oldsey and Arthur O. Lewis, Jr., *Visions and Revisions in Modern American Literary Criticism*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1962, p. xxx.

²M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1964, p. 22.

Although their objective examination of literature has been a penetrating one, and one that has deeply affected modern criticism, the work of the new critics is limited in that it does not acknowledge or fully explore the social and historical dimensions of literary products. However, it appears that the influence of the contributions that these new critics have made will be felt for some time to come; therefore, the study of their techniques will be valuable to both the student and the teacher of literature.

Instructional Guide

The following sequence of steps – each of which is concerned with content, one or more objectives, and suggested learning experiences – is presented as an instructional guide for Course I.

Step One

Course content: The student selects three novels which he is interested in reading.

Objective: to demonstrate what his current interests in reading are and what his current criteria for selecting novels are.

Learning opportunities: Through individual conferences with the teacher and through the writing of a brief essay, the student identifies his current interests in reading and defines the criteria which he now uses in selecting novels.

Step Two

Course content: The student reviews his own criteria and other students' criteria for selecting novels.

Objective: to recognize some of the tools of literary criticism which the student and his classmates are already using, and to note that he and they already possess somewhat of a critical sense.

Learning opportunities: Through group discussions and a total class discussion, a list of the tools of literary criticism which are being used in the class is compiled. This list is then duplicated for the students' future reference.

Step Three

Course content: The student practices rapid-reading skills.

Objective: to increase his ability to read literature rapidly and yet thoroughly and critically.

Learning opportunities: Each student uses the novel he has selected to practice techniques of rapid reading.

1. Prereading: The student notes the title and the name of the author and then looks through the book for any pictures, maps, diagrams, or charts that might be included. He glances over the contents and scans the chapter titles, if given. Next, he reads all of the first chapter to grasp the status quo, perceive the major problem that is introduced, and meet some of the key characters, as well as to get acquainted with the author's style. Then the student moves quickly through the rest of the book; in so doing, he may wish to read only the beginning and end of some of the chapters. He should begin to formulate questions which he will answer when he reads the book in its entirety.
2. First reading: Now the student reads the whole novel rapidly for structure and plot in the literal sense of those terms.
3. Second reading: The student then rereads the book at a slower pace and with critical intent. He looks for literary devices, character portrayal, and other elements.

The student who is skilled in rapid reading and rereading develops a depth of perception of both the parts and the whole of the book, whereas the student who reads the book only once can hardly hope to duplicate such in-depth response. In addition, the student skilled in rapid reading can preread, read, and reread a selection in the same amount of time as, or even less than, that which an average student would spend in reading the same selection once. Students will need practice and encouragement if they are to acquire the skills of rapid reading; teachers can make sure that these acquisitional ingredients are provided periodically during the course.

Step Four

Course content: After reading one of the books he has selected, the student reacts to it critically.

Objective: to apply his own techniques of literary criticism to a work which he has chosen to read.

Learning opportunities: Each student writes a critical essay (*not* a summary) about the book he has read, using his own techniques of literary criticism to state the strengths and limitations of the book. The teacher reads these essays, looking for the consistent application of the students' criteria to their evaluations of the books. The essays are returned to the students for clarification and editing as needed and are then filed for comparison at the end of the course.

Step Five

Course content: The student develops a definition of literary criticism.

Objectives: to define literary criticism and thereby establish a frame of reference for further discussion of literary criticism.

Learning opportunities: The student writes his own definition of literary criticism and compares it with his classmates' definitions, as well as with the definition the teacher has chosen to use. The teacher may find useful the general definition found in *A Handbook to Literature* :

Criticism is a term which has been applied since the seventeenth century to the description, justification, analysis, or judgment of works of art.³

Step Six

Course content: The student explores reasons why we in our society criticize literature.

Objective: to discover why literary criticism is especially necessary in the mid-twentieth century.

Learning opportunities: Through class discussion, students make their own observations about why the tools of literary criticism can be of value to them; then they compare their discussion with what some of the professional literary critics have said about the need for literary criticism today.

Step Seven

Course content: The student gains some historical perspective on literary criticism.

Objective: to see the panorama of literary criticism from a historical viewpoint.

Learning opportunities: The teacher provides a quick overview of the history of literary criticism by reading the four broad types or categories of critical theories as listed by Abrams⁴; he uses a time line to show when each type was in use. Students in the class then discuss why the objective theory has developed as the dominant critical theory of the twentieth century. If possible, the students view slides of outstanding art work from various historical periods to understand more clearly how critical standards were similar in creative forms other than that of literature. They write a brief essay on why this similarity has existed and discuss their essays later in class.

³William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, *A Handbook to Literature*. Revised by C. H. Holman. New York: Odyssey Press, 1960, p. 127.

⁴Meyr H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1953, pp. 3-29.

Step Eight

Course content: The student identifies the new criticism, psychological criticism, and myth criticism as the three major critical trends of the twentieth century.

Objective: to identify and define the three major trends in literary criticism in the twentieth century.

Learning opportunities: The students are given the names of the three critical trends and a brief definition of each. They are asked to “place” these trends in the order in which they think they occurred and to explain briefly (either in oral or in written form) why they feel these trends occurred in this order. The teacher then explains the actual order in which the trends occurred, talks briefly about the impact of each on criticism in the twentieth century, and explains that the type of criticism to be explored in this class will be the new criticism, since it has exercised the most influence on twentieth century literary criticism.

Step Nine

Course content: The student recognizes the first major concern of the new critics: the relationship between the reader and the work itself.

Objective: to recognize the new critics’ concern with exploring the direct relationship between the reader and the work itself (independent of the author’s intention and of his life and environment).

Learning opportunities: The students read several examples of criticism by the new critics, such as Cleanth Brooks and Robert Stallman. In small groups the students discuss how these critics have focused only on the work itself, rather than on the life, environment, and intent of the author. They note any tools of criticism which the critics have used and which the students themselves may have used and listed earlier in the course.

Step Ten

Course content: The student recognizes that literary works may have a variety of forms and structures.

Objective: to distinguish between various forms and structures of literary works.

Learning opportunities: The students read widely in all genres. In so doing, they note the variety of forms and structures of literary works which they encounter. They also observe how form and structure contribute to, and yet are subordinate to, the impact which a given work as a whole makes.

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Step Eleven

Course content: The student critiques the form and structure in several literary works.

Objective: to analyze several literary works according to their form and structure.

Learning opportunities: All students read certain literary works of different genres and write brief analyses of the form and structure of these works. In small groups the students compare the form and structure they have found in these works, each group discussing a different work. Similarities and differences are noted, and each group attempts to reach a consensus about what constitutes the form and structure of the product examined. The group consensus is then presented to the total class for further discussion.

Step Twelve

Course content: The student compares his criticism of these works with that of professional new critics.

Objective: to compare his criticism of the form and structure of several literary works with that of professional new critics.

Learning opportunities: The students read several examples of new criticism, preferably having to do with the literary works they have just read, to note similarities and differences between their criticisms of form and structure and those of the new critics. In a brief essay each student lists the similarities and differences he has found and explains what he has learned in the process of making this comparison. A class discussion based on these essays demonstrates additional critical tools which the students might use in their next critique.

Step Thirteen

Course content: The student evaluates the form and structure of a literary work.

Objective: to analyze a literary work's form and structure.

Learning opportunities: Using all that they have learned from class discussion and from their reading of professional criticism, the students write individual critical essays of a literary work. Preferably, each student will choose a different work to critique. The teacher evaluates each essay, noting how well the student is using the tools of the new critics and how sensitive he is to the purposes of literary criticism.

Step Fourteen

Course content: The student recognizes two other major concerns of the new critics: imagery and symbolism.

Objective: to distinguish between various patterns of imagery and symbolism which authors use to create different effects.

Learning opportunities: Reading widely in all genres, the students (1) note the variety of patterns of imagery and symbolism which the authors have used in evoking desired responses from the reader; and (2) observe how these patterns contribute to, and yet are subordinate to, the total impact of the work.

Step Fifteen

Course content: The student analyzes several literary works to determine which author uses patterns of imagery and symbolism with the most effectiveness.

Objective: to compare the effectiveness of patterns of imagery and symbolism.

Learning opportunities: The students read several literary works of different genres and compare the ways in which the authors of these works use patterns of imagery and symbolism for effect. To make this comparison and to justify his own preference, each student selects the author which he feels makes the most effective use of imagery and symbolism and contrasts this writer's technique with that of other writers. Students expressing contrasting viewpoints are then selected by the teacher to debate their decisions. The rest of the class might then vote to show which of the viewpoints they now agree with.

Step Sixteen

Course content: The student acquires additional tools of literary criticism directly from the new critics.

Objective: to compare his critical reaction to the imagery and symbolism in a literary work with the evaluations expressed by several of the new critics.

Learning opportunities: The students read a literary work and analyze in a brief critical essay how effectively the author has used patterns of imagery and symbolism. Then they read critiques of this same literary work by several of the new critics, such as Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren. Next, the students write a short paper discussing what additional critical tools these critics have utilized – tools that might be used to advantage in another critique to be written later. Finally, each member of the class, verbally or in

writing, names the critic who has helped him the most to develop a greater appreciation or understanding of the literary work and explains why this critic has been more helpful to him than the others.

Step Seventeen

Course content: The student evaluates the form and structure of a literary work, as well as its patterns of imagery and symbolism.

Objective: to analyze the form and structure and the patterns of imagery and symbolism contained in a literary work.

Learning opportunities: The students each read a literary work and analyze it in a brief critical essay according to the effectiveness of (1) the form and structure; and (2) the patterns of imagery and symbolism. The teacher evaluates the essays according to the evidence each student shows of his understanding of the methods and purposes of the new critics.

Step Eighteen

Course content: The student refines his ability to critique a novel in the style of the new critics.

Objective: to evaluate his own ability and other students' abilities to critique a novel, using the techniques of the new critics.

Learning opportunities: The class is divided into six groups, each of which is assigned a different novel to read and supplied with a sufficient number of copies. Within each of these groups, each student writes a critical essay on the novel assigned to his group. He notes the effectiveness with which the author uses form and structure and patterns of imagery and symbolism. Then each member of the group reads all the essays of the other students in his group. Next, each student rates each of the essays on (1) how well his fellow critics use the tools of literary criticism developed by the new critics; and (2) how much each essay contributes to his own understanding and appreciation of the literary work. The ratings and essays are then given to the teacher, who evaluates them and discusses them with each group.

Step Nineteen

Course content: The student recognizes additional elements of new criticism.

Objective: to recognize elements of new criticism in current book reviews.

Learning opportunities: The students read in current periodicals several reviews of books which they would like to read. In a brief

paper they discuss how the critics have appraised the author's use of form and style and his patterns of imagery and symbolism. The students also indicate which of the critics have contributed most to their understanding or appreciation of the work. (Elements of psychological criticism or of myth criticism may appear in the writing of some of these critics. Such manifestations can serve to remind the students of the other twentieth century critical trends, as well as to demonstrate some of the limitations of the new criticism. Class discussion of the student papers can help to raise this issue.)

Step Twenty

Course content: The student applies new criticism techniques to his own writing.

Objective: to analyze his own writing by using the techniques of the new critics.

Learning opportunities: The students bring in a short story or poem they have written and critique their own work, using the techniques of the new critics. Then they write a brief paper describing how they would want to change their story or poem to improve its effectiveness. At the end of the paper, they indicate what effect they believe a critic has on an author's work and why they feel that this effect is desirable or undesirable.

Step Twenty-one

Course content: The student demonstrates his understanding of the new critics' conviction that criticism is an art on a par with other creative forms, such as poetry and painting.

Objective: to interpret one of the key ideas of the new critics – that criticism is itself an art.

Learning opportunities: The students write a brief paper discussing whether or not they believe as the new critics do – that literary criticism is itself an art on a par with other creative forms, such as poetry and painting. In a class discussion the students explain why they agree or disagree with the new critics' attitude toward criticism as a form of creative expression.

Step Twenty-two

Course content: The student analyzes the new critics' techniques.

Objective: to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the new critics and their critical techniques.

Learning opportunities: The students are reminded by the teacher that the new criticism is but one type of literary criticism. The students are asked to consider what they feel are the strengths and

limitations of the new criticism. They are also asked: "Should not a critic be concerned about other aspects of a literary work besides its form and structure and its patterns of imagery and symbolism?" The short paper which each student writes on this twofold topic is then used as a basis for class discussion.

Step Twenty-three

Course content: The student develops his own criteria for critiquing a literary work.

Objective: to synthesize the new criticism and his own critical standards in order to develop his own criteria for critiquing a literary work.

Learning opportunities: Taking into consideration the strengths and limitations of the new criticism and drawing from his own critical sense, the student develops his own synthesis of techniques and criteria for literary criticism, and he explains his rationale for this synthesis.

Step Twenty-four

Course content: The student critiques a literary work and uses his own criteria in so doing.

Objective: to apply his own critical criteria in appraising a literary work.

Learning opportunities: The student reads a novel of his own choice and writes a criticism of it on the basis of his own critical criteria. The teacher evaluates (1) the logic of the student's criteria; and (2) the consistency with which the student has applied his criteria in evaluating the novel. This paper and the first critical essay the student wrote in the course are then returned to the student.

Step Twenty-five

Course content: The student evaluates how his own critical ability has developed during this course.

Objectives: to evaluate how his own thinking, his enjoyment of literature, and his critical sense have matured during this intensive study of literature within a framework of the new criticism.

Learning opportunities: The student reads the first critical essay he wrote at the beginning of the course and compares it with the essay he wrote most recently. Then he writes a brief paper evaluating how these two essays portray the maturation of his independent thinking, his enjoyment of literature, and his critical sense.

CHAPTER 4

Course II: The Psychological Critic's Literary Probe

The psychological critics endeavor to explain motive and plot in literature in terms of Freudian theory. Moreover, they are interested in examining why an author produces a particular literary work in a certain manner or style.

Values of Psychological Criticism

A basic contribution which psychology has made to literary criticism is discussed by Walter Sutton:

Whether Freudian or Jungian, psychological theory has been most useful as it has supported criticism focused upon literature and its relations to common experience, rather than upon religious formulas.¹

Sir Herbert Read, English psychologist-critic, warns, however, that one must remember the difference in the subject matter of "our two sciences: psychology is concerned with the *processes* of mental activity; literary criticism is concerned with the *product* of mental activity."²

Gifted students have a particular interest in and curiosity about psychology. The psychological approach to literary criticism gives them an opportunity to see how literature, as well as psychology, is concerned with the workings of men's minds. These students can also observe how criticism has been greatly influenced by psychology, directly or indirectly, and that in the future psychological theory will no doubt further influence criticism as knowledge in the field of psychology grows and as this knowledge increases man's ability to understand himself and others. The gifted learners may note, too, some of the limitations of this approach to criticism, with its great

¹Walter Sutton, *Modern American Criticism*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963, p. 176.

²Herbert Read, *The Nature of Literature*. New York: Horizon Press, 1956, pp. 125-26.

concern for character and plot and its accompanying limited interest in setting and in the techniques which the author uses to achieve the effects he wishes to produce.

Instructional Guide

The following sequence of steps – each of which is concerned with content, one or more objectives, and suggested learning experiences – is presented as an instructional guide for Course II.

Step One

Course content: The student indicates his current attitudes toward literature and criticism.

Objective: to define his current attitudes toward literature and criticism.

Learning opportunities: Each student in the class completes an open-ended questionnaire, which includes such items as the following:

1. When I read literature, I . . .
2. I think a good book is one which . . .
3. I will want my own children to think of literature as . . .
4. The new critics' approach to literary criticism is . . .
5. For me, literary criticism is . . .

The teacher uses these questionnaires to assess the students' attitudes toward literature, the new critics, and literary criticism in general. A follow-up class discussion can point up the variety of attitudes and can also be used to review the strengths and limitations of the new criticism.

Step Two

Course content: The student uses his own criteria to critique a literary work.

Objectives: to establish his own standards of literary criticism and to use them in analyzing a literary work.

Learning opportunities: Each student lists his own criteria for what constitutes good literature; he may use elements of the new criticism as well as his own standards. Then each learner selects a literary work from those writings to be studied during the course. He reviews the techniques of prereading, rapid reading, and rereading a novel. After reading the work, he writes a critical essay. First he states his reasons for selecting this particular work; then he critiques

it, using the criteria he has established. The teacher evaluates each student's paper, observing the degree to which it is consistent with the criteria the student has developed. The papers are then edited by the students and discussed in class. After the discussion, the critiques are filed for future reference.

Step Three

Course content: The student recognizes elements of psychological criticism in his own criteria.

Objective: to identify elements of psychological criticism in his own critique.

Learning opportunities: The teacher asks all the students to look over their own critiques to determine whether they can identify any items in their criteria which might also be concerns of psychological criticism. The students will need to make assumptions about what psychological criticism is. As the members of the class name items which they feel might suitably belong to a psychological critic's set of criteria, a student or the teacher lists these items on the board. This list is then divided by the students into the broad categories which appear to be represented. Next, the categories are compared to the four major concerns of the psychological critics: (1) the relationship the reader sees among the characters in a work; (2) the relationship the reader sees between the author and his work; (3) literature as a product of mental activity; and (4) the relationship of literature to common experience.

Step Four

Course content: The students explore the relationship the reader sees among the characters in a work.

Objective: to recognize the variety of relationships that can exist among characters in a literary work.

Learning opportunities: The students all read the same literary work. They are asked to consider the relationships, obvious and subtle, which they find among the characters in the work; to determine whether or not each person in the work acts consistently with his or her character; to search for evidence of development or metamorphosis of character; and to gauge the precision, originality, and authenticity of character portrayal. Then the students discuss their reactions and their appraisals in a class discussion. This experience should be repeated with several literary works, preferably of different genres and from different historical periods, so that the broad applications of this approach can be noted.

Step Five

Course content: The student applies what he has learned from these discussions to his own critique of a literary work.

Objective: to apply his understanding of the relationships among characters in a literary work to his own critique of a literary work.

Learning opportunities: Each student selects a literary work, reads it, and writes a critical review of it, examining the relationships he sees among the characters in the work. All the critiques are then evaluated by the teacher, who notes how well each student uses the methods of the psychological critics to analyze the relationships among the characters in the work chosen. The reviews are then returned to the students for whatever editing is needed.

Step Six

Course content: The student observes his classmates in the process of interacting in groups.

Objective: to refine his understanding of how people interact.

Learning opportunities: The members of the class participate in small-group discussions and task-oriented activities to learn how people interact in groups. The purpose of this participation is to help students understand better how characters in a literary work relate to one another by becoming aware, firsthand, of the roles people play in groups; by noting how people communicate their feelings and thoughts through actions as well as through words; by recognizing how people react to others; and by gaining some insight as to why people react in certain ways. The school counselor, the school psychologist, or a psychology teacher can be of invaluable assistance to the English teacher in planning and presenting this part of the curriculum. If no such resource person is available, the teacher will want to consult resource books related to group interaction. Excellent material for group discussion on this topic can be found in Everett Shostrom's *Man, the Manipulator*.³

The students conclude this experience by writing a short paper explaining how this activity has aided them in achieving a better understanding of the relationships among people as reflected in a literary work.

Step Seven

Course content: The student recognizes techniques which the psychological critics use to analyze the relationships they see among the characters in a literary work.

³Everett L. Shostrom, *Man, the Manipulator: The Inner Journey from Manipulation to Actualization*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1967.

Objectives: to identify certain techniques that are used by the psychological critics when these critics analyze the relationships they see among the characters in a literary work.

Learning opportunities: The students read a variety of reviews by professional psychological critics, such as Herbert Read, and note the techniques which these persons use to critique the relationships they see among the characters in literary works. For their own reference, the students make a list of those techniques which they believe they will be able to use in future critical essays.

Step Eight

Course content: Each student critiques the relationships among the characters in a literary work.

Objective: to apply the tools of literary criticism which professional psychological critics use, as well as the student's own experiences in group interaction, to a critique of the relationships among the characters in a literary work.

Learning opportunities: Each student selects a novel to critique. After reading it thoroughly, he writes a review in which he evaluates how effectively the author has handled the relationships among the characters, comments on whether or not the actions of the people in the work are consistent with their characters and personalities, and notes how well the author has treated the development or metamorphosis of a character during the development of the plot. The teacher evaluates each student's critical essay according to the effectiveness with which he uses the tools of psychological criticism and demonstrates his own insights in regard to the characters and their interrelationships in the work selected.

Step Nine

Course content: The students explore the relationships between the author and his work.

Objective: to identify relationships between the author and his work.

Learning opportunities: All the students are encouraged to read widely and to look for certain influences and events in the author's life and environment which perhaps contributed to the particular style and mood in which the work was written. This experience can begin by having the entire class read several works by the same author, so that the many ways in which an author's life and environment might affect his writing might be clearly demonstrated. Then through extensive reading of short works by many authors, students recognize many ways in which an author's life and environment can affect his creative work.

Step Ten

Course content: The student sees that the psychological critics view literature as a product of mental activity.

Objective: to recognize literature as the product of mental activity.

Learning opportunities: The class is asked to consider how much of literature is the result of the uncontrollable force of man's creativity and how much is the result of man's higher mental processes, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. After discussing this twofold problem, the students read accounts of the creative process by various authors. A useful resource is *The Creative Process*, edited by Brewster Ghiselin, which presents essays by and analyses of creative geniuses throughout history.⁴ Each student then writes a brief paper on whether he feels literature is mainly the result of an uncontrollable creative force or the result of the author's higher mental processes. Next, the teacher can select various students to discuss the issue in front of the rest of the class. Following this discussion, the students review what they now know about the psychological critics and discuss which viewpoint they feel the psychological critics would prefer. To substantiate their arguments, students can look for evidence in the writings of the psychological critics.

Step Eleven

Course content: The student critiques a literary work by noting how the author's life and environment have affected his writing -- its content, purpose, style.

Objective: to analyze a literary product by evaluating the effect of a writer's life and environment on his creative work.

Learning opportunities: Six different novels are made available for the class. Each of six groups selects one of the novels to critique, and the students in each group comment only on how the author's life and environment have affected the content, purpose, and style of his writing. The students give the teacher the original of this critical essay and retain a copy for their own use in the next assignment.

Step Twelve

Course content: The student acquires additional critical tools related to exploring the relationship between the author and his

⁴*The Creative Process: A Symposium*. Edited by Brewster Ghiselin. New York: New American Library (Mentor paperback). Reprint of hardback edition published by the University of California Press, 1952.

work with tools of this type used by professional psychological critics.

Objective: to compare the critical tools which he uses with those used by professional critics in critiquing the relationship between the author and his work.

Learning opportunities: Each student uses the critique which he has just written and compares it with articles written by professional psychological critics. The students evaluate their own critiques in view of what they have observed as to the ways in which practicing critics handle a discussion of this same relationship between an author and his work. Then they rewrite their own critiques, incorporating some of the tools which they have discovered from reading the professional critics. This second version of the critique is then submitted to the teacher, who compares the two critiques and evaluates the learning which has occurred.

Each group of students now discusses the tools of psychological criticism which the group has used in evaluating the novel of its choice. Lists of critical techniques used by the members of each group are then compared and contrasted in a class discussion.

Step Thirteen

Course content: The student combines the critical techniques used in analyzing the relationships among the characters in a work with those used in analyzing the relationship between the author and his work by critiquing a literary work using this combination of techniques.

Objective: to evaluate a literary work by synthesizing both the critical techniques of analyzing the relationships among the characters in a work and those of analyzing the relationship between the author and his work.

Learning opportunities: In a critique of a literary work which he has selected, each student synthesizes techniques which he has observed and used in examining both the relationships among the characters in a work and the relationship between the author and his work. These critical essays are then evaluated by the teacher, who analyzes how successfully each student has demonstrated understanding of the techniques and purposes of the psychological critics.

Step Fourteen

Course content: The student recognizes the relationship of literature to common experience.

Objective: to recognize the fact that the psychological critics take the stand that literature needs to be based on common experience.

Learning opportunities: The class is divided into small groups. Each group is given a topic and is asked to discuss it and then to resolve disagreements within the group until a consensus is reached. The discussion in each group should focus on the common experiences shared by nearly all members of one of the following categories: (1) high-school-age teenagers in the United States; (2) high-school-age teenagers elsewhere in the world; (3) young adults in the United States; (4) young adults elsewhere in the world; (5) middle-aged adults in the United States; (6) middle-aged adults elsewhere in the world; (7) elderly people in the United States; and (8) elderly people elsewhere in the world.

The results of the group discussions are written down, and copies are run off for the class. A comparison is made of the similarities and differences among the lists, and reasons for the results are discussed. The teacher asks the question, "What does this composite list of common experiences have to do with literary criticism?" The students can then perceive, with the psychological critics, the relationship which literature must have to common experience. From their previous reading, the students cite examples of literary works which have shown varying degrees of relationship with common experience and discuss how the degree of relationship might affect the success of the literary work.

Step Fifteen

Course content: The student recognizes how his critical reaction to a work changes when the medium in which the story is presented is changed.

Objective: to contrast the effect a change in medium has on his critical reaction to a literary work.

Learning opportunities: All the students read the same drama and critique the way in which the author portrays the relationships among characters in the work. They also examine the relationship between the author and his work and analyze what relationship the events in this work have with common experience. Then they view a film, videotape, or live production of this same drama. The class discusses what new critical insights they have gained by examining this literary work through a different medium. Next, they write a brief paper contrasting the effect which a change in medium has had on their individual critical reactions to the work and noting, moreover, the similarities and differences between the critical tools and techniques needed by a literary critic and those needed by a movie or drama critic.

Step Sixteen

Course content: The student critiques a literary work; in so doing, he uses the techniques of the psychological critics.

Objective: to analyze a literary work on the basis of the techniques of the psychological critics.

Learning opportunities: Each student critiques a literary work. In this exercise he uses the techniques of the psychological critics to help him make the analysis. The teacher evaluates this critical essay on the basis of (1) how well and how appropriately the student uses the tools of the psychological critics; and (2) the degree to which the student's observations about the work are insightful.

Step Seventeen

Course content: Synthesizing the approaches of the new critics and the psychological critics to literary criticism with his own critical sense, each student produces a set of critical standards for critiquing a literary work.

Objective: to develop his own criteria for critiquing a literary work by synthesizing his own critical sense with the major approaches to literary criticism studied to date.

Learning opportunities: In class discussion the students review the criteria for judging literature which the new critics and psychological critics use. During this discussion the students try to determine the strengths and limitations of each approach as they themselves perceive them. Then they write individual syntheses as to what they believe their own criteria for judging literature are at the present time.

Step Eighteen

Course content: In a critique of a literary work, the student makes use of the critical standards he has developed.

Objective: to apply his own criteria to the analysis of a literary work.

Learning opportunities: Each student in the class selects another novel and critiques it. In this exercise he uses his own criteria for judging the value of the literary work. As this point it would be most valuable for the teacher to ask a professional critic to evaluate the student-written critiques. The critic could then be invited to visit the class and discuss these critiques with the students, as well as to answer questions they might want to raise about his work as a critic. (If a professional critic is unavailable, the teacher should talk with the class about the critiques submitted. The teacher should comment

on the degree and effectiveness with which certain factors have been evidenced in the papers; for example, logical thinking, consistency of application of criteria, and a basic understanding of the major purposes and concerns of the literary critic.)

Step Nineteen

Course content: The student compares the critical essays he has written during the course.

Objective: to evaluate his own growth as a literary critic.

Learning opportunities: In reviewing the major critiques he has written during this course, the student looks for evidence of his own maturing critical sense. Then he writes a brief paper in which he discusses (1) the progress which he feels he has made as a literary critic since he began this course; and (2) how this progress has affected his own appreciation, enjoyment, and selection of the literature which he is now reading.

CHAPTER 5

Course III: A Mythic Approach to Literary Criticism

Myth critics can be characterized by their quest for patterns of archetypal symbols and myths, the use of comparative anthropology and folkloristic materials, and a notable emphasis on image and symbol.

Backgrounds and Concerns

Myth criticism apparently evolved from the Jungian school of psychology. In the statement that follows, F. A. Pottle describes the theory on which mythic criticism is based:

Jung's particular theory . . . concerns what he calls archetypes and the Group Unconscious. He insists that a part of the unconscious is common to all men, and that some symbols are not merely private; they are primordial and universal. We are not exactly born with certain images in our brains, but we are born with a brain structure that inevitably precipitates our experience into certain images. The archetypes are not confined to isolated images either, but may extend into patterns of considerable complexity. We do not have to explain the world-wide occurrence of the Oedipus myth or the Orestes myth as due to cultural dissemination: these myths are archetypes, and human minds were capable of inventing them independently at different times and in different cultures.¹

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell presents parallels among different myth systems existing both in Eastern and in Western cultures and spanning all periods of history. He identifies the monomyth, elements of which appear throughout all of mankind's literature, as the one unifying rebirth myth of the hero. He describes this monomyth in three stages:

¹Frederick A. Pottle, "Modern Criticism of *The Ancient Mariner*," in *Essays on the Teaching of English*. Edited by Edward J. Gordon and Edward S. Noyes. Publication of the National Council of Teachers of English. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960. p. 266.

Separation: The mythological hero, setting forth from his common-day hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon-battle; offering, charm), or be slain by the opponent and descend in death (dismemberment, crucifixion).

Initiation: Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. The triumph may be represented as the hero's sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world (sacred marriage), his recognition by the father-creator (father atonement), his own divinization (apotheosis), or again - if the powers have remained unfriendly to him - his theft of the boon he came to gain (bride-theft, fire-theft); intrinsically it is an expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom).

Return: The final work is that of the return. If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection (emissary); if not, he flees and is pursued (transformation flight, obstacle flight). At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread (return, resurrection). The boon that he brings restores the world (elixir).²

This mythic approach to criticism holds particular interest for gifted students. Through their quest for elements of the monomyth in their reading, they come to realize that these elements represent universally unifying elements in literature.

Northrop Frye states that his central principle concerning myth criticism is that "myth is a structural element in literature because literature as a whole is a 'displaced' mythology."³ Frye sees a single pattern of significance in the solar cycle of the day, the seasonal cycle of the year, and the organic cycle of human life, out of which myth constructs a central narrative around a figure who is partly the sun, partly vegetative fertility, and partly a god or archetypal human

²Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing Co., 1949, pp. 245-46. (See also the revised edition, Bollingen Series No. 17. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968.)

³Northrop Frye, *Fables of Identity*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963, p. 1.

being. Phases of this mythic pattern are discussed in detail by Frye in his *Fables of Identity*, which should prove interesting reading for the teacher who wishes to go beyond Campbell's monomythic approach.

Because of the present bankruptcy of the myth, the myth critics today see the job of the writer as one of rebuilding myth-consciousness in Americans. Much needed, perhaps, are vital modern myths, such as ones that relate to progress — an idea the ancients hardly dreamed of.

The framework of myth criticism provides, also, a unique view of the nature of the modern hero; it offers the great mythic hero in contrast to the typical modern literary hero.

Perhaps the weakest feature of the mythic approach is its claim to being a scientific approach to the study of literature; it does, however, help the reader to see a remarkable complex of meanings in the literary work he is encountering.

The myth critics have helped to produce a synthesis of Abrams' four critical theories by bringing the artist back to a central pattern in terms of the audience values of the truths which he conveys through his archetypal patterns and images.

Instructional Guide

The following sequence of steps — each of which is concerned with content, one or more objectives, and suggested learning experiences — is presented as an instructional guide for Course III.

Step One

Course content: The student delineates his present criteria for selecting a literary work.

Objective: to define the criteria he now uses in selecting a literary work.

Learning opportunities: The class is given books to be used in the course. The students select any three works of interest and read them. They list briefly their reasons for selecting those particular works. The lists drawn up are then discussed in class and are classified according to whether they represent the criteria of the new critics, the criteria of the psychological critics, or the personal standards of the students.

Step Two

Course content: The student critiques a novel; in so doing, he uses his own standards of literary criticism.

Objective: to analyze a novel on the basis of his own criteria for literary criticism.

Learning opportunities: Each student in the class reads the same novel and writes a critical essay about it; he uses his own standards of literary criticism. The teacher evaluates each essay, looking for criticism consistent with the personal criteria which the student has established, as well as for insight into and understanding of the work itself. After it has been edited by the student, the paper is filed for future reference.

Step Three

Course content: The student identifies in various examples of literary criticism some of the techniques of the new critics and the psychological critics, as well as any techniques that might be typical of myth criticism.

Objective: to be able to recognize, from examples of professional criticism, the three types of literary criticism most prevalent in the twentieth century.

Learning opportunities: The students read a variety of examples of criticism written by professional critics and identify techniques and tools of criticism that are typical of the new critics and the psychological critics. The students tentatively identify any critical techniques which, in their judgment, may exemplify myth criticism. The members of the class will need to make some educated guesses about what myth criticism might include.

In small groups the students compare notes and develop group definitions of myth criticism. These definitions are then compared for the benefit of the total class, and elements of similarity and dissimilarity are examined and discussed.

At this point the teacher explains that the myth critics ultimately focus on the universally unifying elements in literature, primary to which is the archetype. (The teacher will need to define "archetype" and "monomyth.") Abrams defines the "archetype" in literary criticism as that term which is applied to:

... a character type or plot pattern or description which recurs frequently in literature and folklore and is thought to evoke profound emotional responses in the reader because it resonates with an image already existing in his unconscious mind.⁴

⁴M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1964, p. 5.

The basic archetype or monomyth is the death-rebirth theme, explained in detail by Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.⁵

Step Four

Course content: The student reviews a literary work, this time looking for elements of the monomyth and archetypes.

Objective: to identify archetypes and elements of the monomyth in a literary work.

Learning opportunities: All the members of the class review the novel they explored in the first assignment of this course to identify the archetypes and elements of the monomyth in that work. A class discussion is held regarding these elements. A panel of students can lead the discussion, and the teacher can ask opportune questions that would lead to a clearer understanding of the elements involved.

Step Five

Course content: The student reads widely, identifying elements of the monomyth in the literary selections he has chosen.

Objective: to recognize elements of the monomyth in the literary selections the student is reading.

Learning opportunities: Pursuing a plan of independent study, each student reads many literary works of various genres, periods in time, and geographic areas. He keeps a log of his reactions and findings; in this log he notes the elements of the monomyth that are apparent to him in the works he is reading. During individual conferences with the teacher, the student indicates the level of his comprehension of the myth critics' key terms. The teacher can remind the class about using rapid reading techniques to pre-read, read, and reread these literary selections.

At the end of his reading log, the student makes generalizations about the appearance of the elements of the monomyth in literature found in various times and places and written by various authors. These generalizations are discussed and debated in class.

Step Six

Course content: The student critiques a literary work by evaluating the work's relationship to the monomyth.

Objective: to analyze a literary work by evaluating the work's relationship to the monomyth.

⁵Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing Co., 1949.

Learning opportunities: Each student selects a literary work to analyze and evaluates its relationship to the monomyth. The critical essay he writes is evaluated by the teacher, who looks for evidence of the student's understanding of the major concerns of the myth critics.

Step Seven

Course content: The student searches for an explanation for the existence of the monomyth.

Objective: to determine why the monomyth exists.

Learning opportunities: A sociologist, a psychologist, and an anthropologist are invited to speak to the class. Either separately or as members of a panel, these persons explore the reasons which their disciplines offer for the existence of the monomyth. Ample opportunity should be provided for the students to discuss with the visitors their own theories on why the monomyth exists, as well as to quiz these experts about statements they made during their presentations. Each student then writes a brief paper stating (1) which theory he thinks best explains the existence of the monomyth and why; and (2) whether he thinks the monomyth will continue to have validity in the future and why. (In the event "live experts" are not available to visit a school, arrangements might be made through the school and the telephone company for the students to hear, and interact with, such experts by means of telephone communication.)

Step Eight

Course content: The student identifies archetypal images and symbols.

Objective: to recognize archetypal images and symbols in a literary work.

Learning opportunities: The class is divided into six groups, each group reading a different novel. After the novel has been pre-read and read quickly for plot, it is reread for the purpose of identifying archetypal symbols. The students look for a controlling symbol in the book and note how the author suggests symbolic meaning through the interplay of various elements in his work. They also observe how archetypal symbols depend for their meaning on their universal recurrence in the cycles of time and in the lives of all men.

Step Nine

Course content: The student reads widely, noting the archetypal images and symbols in what he is reading.

Objective: to recognize archetypal images and symbols in literary works.

Learning opportunities: The class reads many literary works of varying periods, genres, locales, and authors. In a log each student keeps a record of his reading, as before. He notes the controlling symbol and other archetypal images and symbols; he notes also how they affect the quality of each literary work. While the students are reading, the teacher circulates among them and provides whatever assistance is needed.

The students then write a brief paper in which they discuss why they feel that the imagery and symbolism of a myth can be translated into another language without losing its impact, while the imagery and symbolism of a poem can rarely be translated successfully. To assist them in defending their arguments, some of the students may want to use examples from literature which they are studying in foreign language classes. These papers are then discussed in class.

Step Ten

Course content: The student critiques a literary work by analyzing its elements of the monomyth and its archetypal symbols and imagery.

Objective: to evaluate a literary work by analyzing the elements of the monomyth and the archetypal symbols and imagery present in the work.

Learning opportunities: Each student selects a literary work to read and critique on the basis of analyzing the elements of the monomyth and the archetypal symbols and images found in it. After evaluating the student's ability to analyze the elements of the monomyth and the patterns of archetypal symbols and images in the work, the teacher returns the essay to the student for editing.

Step Eleven

Course content: The student learns to recognize the theme in a literary work.

Objective: to recognize the myth critic's concern for the theme in a literary work.

Learning opportunities: The class as a whole reads several literary works. In each one the students look for the theme of the work, perceiving the theme as an outgrowth of the interaction between plot, tone, characters, symbol, and archetype, as well as a reference to the entire context of the work.

Step Twelve

Course content: The student critiques a literary work; in so doing, he uses the tools of the myth critic.

Objective: to analyze a literary work from the standpoint of the myth critic.

Learning opportunities: Each student reads samples of literary criticism produced by myth critics and takes note of those tools of myth criticism which he might be able to use in the future. Then he reads a literary work and evaluates its mythic elements (imagery and symbolism, theme, monomythic elements, and the like). The critique which he submits is evaluated by the teacher, who looks for evidence of the student's understanding of the tools and purposes of the myth critics.

Step Thirteen

Course content: The student compares new criticism, psychological criticism, and myth criticism.

Objective: to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the three major trends in literary criticism in the twentieth century.

Learning opportunities: Each student reviews what he has learned of the critical techniques and concerns of the new critics, the psychological critics, and the myth critics. Then, in a brief paper, he identifies what he believes are the strengths and limitations of each approach. The students' papers are compared and discussed in class.

Step Fourteen

Course content: The student synthesizes the three major critical trends of the twentieth century, describes what he feels will be a prevalent trend in the future, and develops his own theory.

Objective: to develop his own eclectic or original theory of literary criticism.

Learning opportunities: The student reviews what he has learned about each of the three major critical trends of the twentieth century. He weighs this information against his own critical sense. He describes, orally or in written form, what kind or kinds of literary criticism he feels will prevail in the future. Then he develops his own eclectic or original critical theory. The students' written theories might be sent to several professional critics for evaluation, or these same critics might be asked for their hypotheses on the nature of the next trend in literary criticism. If such hypotheses are obtained, it should be interesting to note how these critics vary in their predictions.

Step Fifteen

Course content: The student applies his own critical theory to the analysis of a novel.

Objective: to apply his own eclectic or original theory of literary criticism to the analysis of a novel.

Learning opportunities: The student critiques a novel of his choice and uses his own eclectic or original critical theory in making the analysis. The teacher evaluates the logic, consistency, and effectiveness with which the student has applied his own approach in the critique he has written.

Step Sixteen

Course content: The student evaluates his own progress in the course.

Objective: to evaluate how his own critical sense and literary appreciation have developed during this course.

Learning opportunities: The student compares the first critique he wrote in this course with others he wrote subsequently during the course, and he tries to determine his own strengths and limitations as a literary critic. He comments on the critical values he now holds; he also comments on those values and criteria which he feels he may use in the future to judge literary works. Still further, he evaluates how his own critical sense and appreciation of literature have developed during this course.

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

The road to wisdom? – Well, it's plain
and simple to express:

Err
and err
and err again
but less
and less
and less.

– Piet Hein, from *Grooks*.¹

¹Piet Hein. *Grooks*. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966, p. 34.

CHAPTER 6

Evaluation

Suggestions for evaluating the student critiques have been provided in the instructional guides for each course, both for the teacher and for the student. There are, in addition, other considerations of evaluation related to this curriculum which need to be expressed.

Ideally, because of the nature of the courses and the abilities of the students who will be taking them, all students should receive a grade of A in each of the three courses presented in this guide. If a student's level of performance in the course is significantly below the level of other students in the class, and if individual conferences with that student fail to result in a satisfactory change in his behavior, he should be transferred to a different section of English.

Perhaps the most significant evaluations of these courses will be (1) that accomplished by the teacher as he takes stock, continuously throughout each course, of how well his students' thinking, critical sense, understanding, and appreciation of literature are maturing; and (2) that accomplished by the student as he sees evidence of his own growth through the self-evaluations he does during each course. Both teacher and student, then, effect the implementation and development of this curriculum from year to year.

In addition, a need exists for formal research related to this type of curriculum. In his essay, "Methods of Inquiry," Morris Finder sees as a much-needed kind of research suited to the field of English education the "discovering of ways to adapt systems of criticism and other investigative methods to the capacities of pupils."¹ Research is also needed to investigate how various curricular approaches affect students' appreciation of literature. Still another research project might test the hypothesis that knowledge of the techniques of

¹Morris Finder, "Methods of Inquiry," in *The Changing Role of English Education*. Edited by Stanley B. Kegler. Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965, p. 44.

literary criticism improves students' compositions and other forms of written expression. A longitudinal study of students who had completed this sequence of courses five years earlier would reveal what long-range effects on literary taste this curriculum has had.

Whatever methods of evaluating this curriculum are used, it is essential that the evaluation of it at a particular school be an ongoing process, so that the courses of study derived from a curriculum such as this can truly reflect the needs, interests, and abilities of the gifted students in that school.

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