

Survey of ENG 2340 SLA Written Responses - Spring 2017

Notes:

1. No ENG 2340 respondent (student) is quoted here more than once.
2. Brackets indicate where the instructor has changed words to increase clarity.

Sample Responses, Item #1 – EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

a. Each of the texts we have covered this semester forces the reader to exercise thought and challenges the reader to take on a more objective, unbiased point of view.

Each text was pretty absurd, yet somehow relatable. With *Frankenstein*, the reader may have had a preassumed [sic] judgment as to the antagonist in the novel being the Creature. As the text continues, the reader has a revelation that the true monster is Victor Frankenstein. Victor's actions were the reason behind the actions of the Creature, and the outcome of the story would have been drastically different had Victor committed to his responsibility.

The reader may have a similar response to Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." At first, we can't identify with the absurdism that Gregor is experiencing, however, as he continues to progress in his bug-like form, the more we are capable of understanding his emotions. Both texts have an ugly subject, yet they are more human to us than their fellow characters.

--D.G.

b. Of all the books we read this semester, I don't believe there were any non-character driven stories. All of the novels we read allowed for introspection about how we conduct ourselves. Some examples would be the theme of toxic masculinity in *Things Fall Apart*, where we can see it being a detremant [sic] to personal relationships and the group at large. Another example would be the idea that we are all unreliable narrators of our own story. The texts we read were meant to be insightful about our own actions.

--L.P.

c. The literature provided this semester have all presented an anti-hero in their own subjective opinion of themselves. Frankenstein felt that he was applying the best of science and progressive technology to the world, and it was his own hand that created his eventual demise. In "The Metamorphosis," the main character was perfect in providing for his dependent family, and it was only until his transitioned state that his flaws were speculated and deemed unforgivable by himself and his family. Dostoyevsky provided a character who viewed everyone around him as more pitiful than himself, and sought to punish them for not accepting him as being as brilliant as he thought he was in his ideas

about the world around him. For Okonkwo, he was the archetypal masculine person, but it was his fatal flaw that caused destruction all around him, and then himself. Lastly, the main character and narrator of *Faces in the Crowd* lied to convince her editor that the self-created work was that of a literary author from the past because her work was that convincing, which ended up causing her to pay the price. All main characters met their demise as a result of their own hand.

--L.B.

Sample Responses, Item #1 – MEETS EXPECTATIONS

a. None of the literature we read this semester contained a “happy ending” in the classical sense. There were no “ever afters” for all involved in the story, no clear villain—only criticism towards oneself and the world around them. None of the works were satisfied with the old story-telling ways, instead taking new approaches and focusing on stories that interested them [sic] and told more than fairy tales.

--C.P.

b. Every literary piece this semester has had a character that has had trouble conforming and communicating with other people. In *Frankenstein*, the monster clearly stands out and is not accepted by people, which results in him living a life of hiding and loneliness. This also plays a strong role in “The Metamorphosis.” [Gregor Samsa] had trouble communicating before and after his transformation, but his body as a giant bug shows it more clearly. All the books that have been studied in this class revolve around the inability to conform and agree with other people.

--O.V.

c. One thing that connects all of the literary texts we have read would be the reoccurrence [sic] of cause and effect. In every book, the main character makes an / or many irrational decision(s), that looks fine then, and then the consequences weigh them down. In *Frankenstein*, Victor creates the monster then spends the rest of his life running to find or away from him. The monster also causes heartbreak in his town, and he pays for it. In [“The Metamorphosis”], [Gregor Samsa] turns into a cockroach because of his father’s choices. In *Things Fall Apart*, this is displayed many times. The best example is when [Okonkwo] chooses to disrespect the gods and beat his wife during peace week. These all show examples of choices and consequences.

--J.W.

Sample Responses, Item #1 – DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS

a. Each book that we have read is connected through what happens in the book. Each specific incident in the next book is read, there are concepts in that book that are related to the previous book, which helps us get a better understanding of the feelings and attitudes that are taking place.

--R.A.

b. Well one thing that made the book *Frankenstein* so interesting is *Frankenstein* is, one of those books, bedtime stories, & even movies that you grew up hearing about. So because we grew up hearing, reading about, it makes it more interesting to learn about.

--C.R.

c. In my opinion, all the literature we read this semester is connected by the weirdness of each text and are extremely unique in their own way. They are all translated to modernized times. They are all really classic and well-written novels.

--A.A.

Sample Responses, Item #2 – EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

a. *Faces in [the] Crowd* was by far my favorite novel I read this semester. The narrator's perspective and choices reflected some choices and feelings in my own life. Her individuality struck me, her non-judgmental disposition inspired me. I also hate to be alone and have been known to have a constant rotation of people in my life. She isn't afraid of being herself, something I strive for. When she decides to come clean about her translations, it showed strength of character. I understood her, I experienced her and I looked to her. She broadened my view so that I may make better choices while staying true to myself and others.

--M.W.

b. The *Underground Man* is weirdly a lot like me, or I'm like him. How he has this anger, and thinks he's smarter than everyone. I even push away someone that cares about me. After reading the text, and seeing someone just like me, made me think about trying to make a change, and not live in such a depressing manner. Yes, pain is part of life, but so [is] happiness, and love.

--M.L.

c. *Things Fall Apart* stood out to me the most when relating choices to consequences because the novel explains a story of a man who keeps making decisions that lead to his eventual downfall. The main character, Okonkwo, continues to make very traditional decisions that include violence, power, and selfishness, while his village undergoes modern changes. This specific theme taught me that sometimes it is necessary to be flexible with your thoughts and think about the consequences that might occur before making a decision. The same decisions you might have made before may not be appropriate again, especially when society is changing around you. You must be open-minded and think about choices before you make them.

---A.G.

Sample Responses, Item #2 – MEETS EXPECTATIONS

a. In *Frankenstein*, the main character creates a being, but isn't quite sure the extent of what he has created. Once he realized it, it was already too late. His monstrous creation couldn't be undone. Though he ran away from his problems, it didn't put an end to them. This book taught me a lot. I feel I could best relate [it] to my life when I become a parent. No matter what, what I have created and brought into this world is my responsibility. I don't get to run away when I get tired of being a mom.

--S.S.

b. [*Notes from the Underground*] taught me that it truly is my choice to keep my happiness, maybe at the expense of my knowledge. Underground Man said that his awareness or consciousness is his disease. I believe that now. The more awake I am [to] the political corruption and hurt in the world the harder it is for me to live happily. It is important to have consciousness enough to make decisions but not so much as to make you unhappy.

--C.M.

c. Underground Man's central ideas resonated with my own personal life. Being liable for my own misery that I ironically enjoy and perpetuate is a notion that I experience. I blame others for my condition, well aware of my control and responsibility.

--G.P.

Sample Responses, Item #2 – DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS

a. In *Frankenstein*, Dr. Frankenstein wanted to create a man of his own and once he accomplished that goal, his creation or “monster” turned out to be just that, a monster, who wond [sic] up terrorizing innocent people. Pretty much taught me don’t make stupid decisions and don’t have stupid ideas.

--D.T.

b. In *Things Fall Apart*, the main character is banished because he killed a member of the tribe on accident. I learned that even if there’s no ill intent you need to be punished for the good of the group.

--A.R.

c. “The Metamorphosis” does a really good job at showing how in an absurd situation we are still in a sense slaves to the social and physical constructs we surround ourselves with. Gregor turned into a massive vermin but no one really bothers with it because the bill’s gotta get paid and the house ain’t gonna clean itself.

--J.M.

Sample Responses, Item #3 – EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

a. The literary text *Things Fall Apart* gave me a very deep understanding of Igbo/ Nigerian culture. Throughout the novel, it explains Igbo words that are very important to them or used in everyday life. It explains concepts like “chi” and delves deeply into how their social structure works. I knew nothing about their religion prior to reading this novel, but now I feel as if I understand their culture because of this knowledge. This book really helped show that even though someone has a different culture than you, it does not make you any better. These people had an intricate judiciary system and long-standing traditions, while at the same time the people were content for the most part with their lives. However, when the Christian missionaries came in, they [disrupted] the system.

--K.B.

b. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe gave me a much broader understanding of precolonial West Africa. Too often we are told stories of African life that stereotype and generalize all Africans into one hegemonous [sic] culture, but Achebe demonstrates clearly that is not the case. It is even disingenuous to say that *Things* is an examination of “West Africa” pre-colonization, because Achebe focuses solely on the Igbo, and masterfully demonstrates the complexity inherent to even just this one culture. *Things* is a must-read for anyone who has an overly simplistic view of life in general. It teaches us that the stories we have been told are worth investigating further, and that truth is often

far more complex than it seems.

--S.Q.

c. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* showed me a community I didn't have much knowledge about. I'm African-American but I don't know a lot about African culture. After reading this novel I see how strong of a culture the Igbo tribe is. I learned how self-made and self-sustaining they are as a people. I learned how they are both similar and different to communities I'm used to. I gained more knowledge about European colonization through the eyes of the Nigerian people. It was interesting to learn about their culture, language, rules, and traditions.

Sample Responses, Item #3 – MEETS EXPECTATIONS

a. *Things Fall Apart* gave me a whole new outlook on African culture. They are truly strong, artistic and courageous people. Their ability to story tell is beautiful and I love its unique style. Often, we only hear about the oppression and sadness of Africa. They are portrayed as weak, poor and uneducated. When watching the TED video of [Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche], we were made aware that the media doesn't tell us the whole story. She talked about how when she came to the States, she was seen as less, but she was equal and very eloquent.

--D.H.

b. While reading *Things Fall Apart*, I felt like I learned more about the Igbo culture. I was very narrow-minded on the different African cultures. I never realized how different they were from each other or how those cultures functioned as a society. I think this book taught me to take the time to learn about other cultures, so that I can be aware. I also think that learning background information gives you a different perspective on the book.

--O.W.

c. Reading *Things Fall Apart* and *Faces in the Crowd* allowed me to become open to the positive lessons that can be taken from different people, cultures, and beliefs. While I have always loved to learn about other people, I had not thought about the similarities in lessons across cultures. It seems that human beings are not quite so different from one another. However, learning about different perspectives and experiences can bring greater understanding to life. It was the closed-mindedness of the main character in *Things Fall Apart* that led to his downfall. He could not see the value in other beliefs, cultures, communities, personalities, and gifts.

--A.K.

Sample Responses, Item #3 – DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS

a. Lastly, I choose *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe because culture really plays a part in everyone's daily life. Therefore it's helped me look at culture and community in a deeper understanding.

--H.R.

b. In this class there was a lot of different culture that appeared in these books. *Faces in the Crowd* talked about their culture and the things they had to face on a daily basis. I learned that it should not matter what culture you are from, but you should still be considered someone. She had a rough life with her culture and family, but she got it all worked out.

--W.N.

c. "In a Grove" was the piece of literature that opened my eyes most to cultural differences. One of the few differences I noticed was the acceptance & somewhat perceived preference of suicide when a Samurai is "dis-honored" [sic]. This would explain why the Ghost had motives to tell the judge he killed himself.

--S.B.

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