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Lying to Tell the Truth: Archetypes, Art, and Imagery

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Introduction (Departure)

Overview (The Call to Adventure)

Pablo Picasso once stated, "Art is the lie that tells the truth." This quote not only encompasses the power of a visual medium, but also evokes the power of symbols, and their role not only in art but also in literature. The study of archetypes is an integral part of the eighth grade standard course of study for language arts. When reduced to their most basic parts, archetypes are nothing more than symbols recurring again and again throughout literature and culture, manifesting themselves on the written page as well as on the canvas of history. Archetypes are everywhere. They represent the transcendence of the human condition and the mystery of the collective unconscious, forces inherent within the plots and characters of every story, verbal or visual, ever created. According to Nancy Clasby "No story is unique, standing alone, nor does it stand entirely outside of the mind of the reader. An internal dimension is already in place; the psyche is prepared, etched with the patterns of myth. The infinitely varied poetic images of beauty and danger mesh with these imprinted designs to form a lens through which readers see their own situation in a larger perspective." [1] What better means to introduce students to the primordial and universal understanding of character motivation they unwittingly already possess than through the lens of a paired introduction of archetypes––"the etched patterns of myth," and the study of art and ekphrastic poetry? As a result of this union, students can access the "internal dimension" of their "prepared psyches," exploring the symbolic and "poetic images of beauty and danger" as a catalyst for enhanced comprehension. [2] Rather than simply presenting archetypes as a list of repeated symbols for students to memorize and apply in isolated literary examples, a unification of artistic analysis, poetry study, and the writing of ekphrastic poetry affords students a broader and more extensive study of archetypes.

As an eighth grade teacher, I am required to introduce students to archetypes for the first time and present them with the basic framework of "the hero's journey." This introduction takes place in conjunction with a larger, semester–long unit titled "The Challenge of Heroism," during which different types and examples of the heroic are explored in a variety of texts. The premise behind this curriculum unit, occurring concurrently with the unit on heroism, involves a several week study of the most common character, setting, and theme archetypes in literature. Lessons center on strategies and curriculum designed for eighth grade language arts students in a high performing middle school in Charlotte, NC. The school is an honors school of excellence,

meeting both high growth and 27 out of 27 AYP standards. The school population consists of 1,054 students in sixth through eighth grade with a racial and socioeconomic diversification resulting in 72.2 percent Caucasian, 13.8 percent African-American, 7.6 percent Asian, 4.1 percent Hispanic, 2.1 percent multiracial, .3 percent Native American and 12.6 percent of students participating in the free and reduced lunch program. 7.3 percent of students have disabilities and 5.4 percent have limited English proficiency (LEP). The majority of the school population enjoys wealth, involved and well-educated parents, and average to high intellectual abilities. Driven by "rigor and relevance," the goal of the administration and teachers remains to create an academic environment designed to challenge the most gifted students while simultaneously stretching and growing all students to reach new academic heights. A strategy employed to accomplish this goal is the heterogeneous grouping of all language arts classes. This grouping creates a classroom of multiple ability levels and challenges the instructor to differentiate education in order to facilitate the needs of lower-level students without introducing frustration, while simultaneously driving high-level students to greater academic and intellectual engagement. The instruction exists within the premise of teaching entirely whole group lessons to the highest level of student and then addressing the needs of lower level students through small groups and on an individual basis as need arises. Intellectually stimulating, challenging, and rigorous instruction aligned to the NC standard course of study, and designed to teach students curriculum as well as application, guides the instructional focus of this school. This curriculum unit's design applies these principles to create a unit of study both challenging and accessible as students engage with an interdisciplinary exploration of archetypal symbolism, art analysis, and ekphrastic poetry.

Rationale: Why Ekphrasis and Archetypes (The Refusal of the Call)?

Ekphrasis, the verbal description of a visual object, has appeared as a literary genre from as early as the writings of Homer and Hesoid, their respective descriptions of the shield of Achilles recounting in precise detail the scenes upon its surface. [3] Ekphrasis and— the form most commonly explored in this unit-- ekphrastic poetry, focus on an ironic interplay of imagery as artists manipulate visual symbols while writers view and interpret these creations, and, in turn, describe them in verbal metaphor. The dialogue between the two seemingly variant texts and the identification of meaning through both visual and verbal symbolism create a nexus by which students might view the power of archetypal images and the subsequent use of symbols as a type of textual translation, telling, synchronously, a general and universal verbal and visual narrative. According to Mircea Eliade, as quoted by David Leeming in the introduction of *The Oxford Companion* to World Mythology, "It is through symbol that man finds his way out of his particular situation and opens himself to the general and universal." [4] In analyzing both the general narrative of the artist through the medium of visual representation and the poet in his verbal response, students gain an understanding of the power of perspective in interpretation. However, in their analysis of the individual perspectives of both artist and poet, it is impossible to ignore the intriguing uniformities that arise. With this consideration, the meaning and power of archetypes and their study, " a study involving the way in which literature contains pre-literary categories such as ritual, myth and folktale," allowing one to "arrive at the centrality of the quest-myth and its archetypal significance for literature" [5] is better understood.

Ultimately, this unit will generate lessons on examples of art and ekphrastic poetry symbolizing each stage and significant character archetype explored in the phases of a hero's journey. The decision to focus on ekphrastic poetry arises from Northrop Frye's assertion "that every poet has his private mythology, his own spectroscopic band or peculiar formation of symbols, of much of which he is quite unconscious." [6] If a poet has a private mythology of symbols, then how does a poet respond when viewing the private symbols of an artist? How does a poet interpret the artists' symbolism through the paradigm of his individual mythology? Is this

individual mythology at all compatible with the artists' mythology, and, if so, why? Examining poetic ekphrasis and the imagery of art concomitantly allows students to explore these representative conundrums and the idea of a personal versus a universal symbolism. Impossible to ignore in this examination, as students begin to recognize parallel symbols in poetry and art, is the archetype. "These archetypes to be discovered and assimilated are precisely those that have inspired, throughout the annals of human culture, the basic images of ritual, mythology, and vision." [7] The examination of art and poetry in a series of classroom activities will allow students to view archetypes across an extensive historical and cultural timeline and analyze how and why archetypes endure. For this unit to succeed, and for students to fully grasp the visual and verbal significance of archetypes, students must learn to read the figurative language of literature and art simultaneously and express that in their personal writing. A familiarity with the ekphrastic literary tradition and a cross cultural as well as cross time study of artists and poets will provide the foundation of resources essential for this unit's success. Each archetype studied will be accompanied by a variety of art and poetry to enhance student understanding and application of archetypes and allow them to personally discuss how "art [and its manipulation of archetypes as symbols] is the lie that tells the truth."

Each stage of the hero's journey and its relevant character archetypes is introduced through the use of examples of art and poetry from different periods and cultures visually and verbally expressing the archetype studied, often incorporating student creation of ekphrastic poems demonstrating individual understanding and manipulation of archetypal ideas. For example, when being introduced to archetypes, students are shown the painting *St. George and the Dragon* c. 1506 by Raphael. Students analyze the painting and write an ekphrastic poem about the events occurring in the artwork. When students discuss and share their poems they should find that many of their pieces deal with the same types of characters and events, which they will later identify and define as archetypes. During this discussion, students will examine the questions Joseph Campbell presents to readers in his chapter on the "monomyth:" "What is the secret of timeless vision? From what profundity of the mind does it derive? Why [and is] is mythology everywhere the same beneath its variety of costume? And what does it teach" [8] This initial lesson guides students in the introduction of archetypes as they begin to analyze why they are able to understand and write about a piece of artwork created over 500 years ago as well as why they created many similar poetic responses. This will set the stage for one of the unit's goals, exploration of the idea of literary transcendence and the enduring power of story in all cultures and historical periods. This lesson also introduces an important instructional method, student creation of ekphrastic poetry, to aid in the understanding of the archetypal patterns and characters students are required to apprehend. Students will return to this piece of art and their ekphrastic responses again at the end of the unit to identify all the archetypal symbols used by Raphael in this painting and how and why they effectively convey the "plot" of the painting and give the art transcendent value. Following this introduction to archetypes, extensive analysis of poetry and the archetypes it explores will be added to the artistic analysis. Each stage of the hero's journey, and concomitantly significant character archetypes, will be represented by an example of art or poetry from a different culture and time period for students to examine. Many of these artworks will also be accompanied by an example of ekphrastic poetry for students to analyze. Within each heroic episode, attention will be paid to the other character archetypes announcing themselves amidst the different stages of the hero's journey. These analyses will be accompanied by art and ekphrastic poetry as well.

The Hero's Journey as a Framework of Study (The Beginning of Adventure)

The hero's journey will provide the framework by which students will examine not only the archetypal stages of departure, initiation, and return, but will be the basis for the introduction and examination of several pertinent character archetypes as well. "The heroic stance, to begin with, is a matter of relationships– with the

supernatural, with society or 'the group,' with the self." [9] Students begin the unit with the painting, *St. George and the Dragon*, which portrays a hero engaged in each of the relationships Brombert mentions. St. George battles a "supernatural" dragon, rescues society, represented here by the helpless maiden he chivalrously saves from peril; and defines selfhood, as struggling to overcome his limited humanity, his fear, his inadequacies, he wields his sword, his symbol of self, and slays the beast. As Raphael's painting demonstrates, a hero is not a hero outside the context of societal interactions or summons. The "hero," students will discover, exists because the archetypes of the helpless princess, the wise old man, the helpful animal, and the villain or transgressor exist. It is therefore necessary to incorporate the study of influential archetypal forces congruent with a study of the hero's journey, for, ultimately, it is a journey of relational development and societal preservation as much as it is a journey of heroic tasks and deeds. It is the journey of a hero, but it is the story of his culture and their atavistic manifestations as well.

The Birth of A Hero (Initiation)

Supernatural Birth (The Road of Trial Lesson Implementation)

A common feature of almost every hero story is a birth resulting from a number of unusual or supernatural circumstances. Often heroes are conceived by one divine and one human parent, entering society as "larger than life" figures or, if not divine, are in any case born into abnormal or remarkable circumstances. It is interesting how so many heroes from so many cultures share this common "birth mark." According to C.M. Bowra, "whatever a hero's birth may be… he is recognized from the start as an extraordinary being whose physical development and characteristics are not those of other men. There is about him something foreordained, and omens of glory accompany his birth." [10] From Perseus of Greek mythology, conceived as Zeus enveloped the imprisoned Danae in a shower of gold; to the Christian tradition of Moses, born to a natural mother who, in an attempt to prevent his murder by the Pharaoh, placed Moses in the bulrushes and ironically led him to the Pharaoh's daughter and a life of royalty, and Jesus, conceived by the virgin Mary as the divine holy spirit descended upon her; to the medieval King Arthur, conceived as a result of magical deception; to the Asiatic heroes Nart Uryzmagt, born at the bottom of the sea, and Batrazd, born from a virgin woman locked in a high tower; to the Armenian Bagdasar and Sanasr, born when their mother drinks from a magical spring; [11] to the modern Luke Skywalker, born unbeknownst to him to a powerful Jedi and heir to a kingdom, living a life of simplicity unawares [12] ––each hero began life amidst a convergence of preternatural events. In order to illustrate this commonality, students will be introduced to the Greek hero, Perseus. Perseus, and his heroic journey, will be the model by which students learn the stages of a hero's journey and will provide points of contrast as they analyze heroic versions of this journey from other cultures and time periods. Students will be given this myth as a homework assignment and will be required to read the myth and analyze the stages of Perseus' heroic journey on a three–column chart. The first column will already be listed and will give students the phases of the traditional journey divided into three stages (Departure: call to adventure, refusal of the call, the beginning of adventure; Initiation: the road of trials, the experience with unconditional love, the ultimate boon; Return: refusal of the return, the magic flight, rescue from without, the crossing or return threshold). [13] The second column will ask students to quote or paraphrase examples from the text that demonstrate each stage of Perseus' journey. It will also allow students to identify any stages they may believe to be absent in this myth. The third column asks students to explain why they think the textual evidence they selected supports its correspondent phase of the hero's journey or why they feel that stage is missing. This chart will be a reference point throughout the study and students will return to the story of Perseus as a reference point for discussion and understanding of the other poems and works of art representing the phases and archetypes of this journey as recreated across time and culture.

On the day following this assignment, class will begin with the study of Perseus' divine and unusual genesis as students are introduced to the concept of the "supernatural origins" of the hero. Students will generate examples of heroes that meet this criterion and will discuss the significance in a whole class setting. They will then view the painting *Danae* by Jan Gossaert (1527). Of all the artistic representations of this event in the Perseus mythology, I selected Gossaert's painting for the way he depicted Zeus as a shower of gold descending upon Danae in her prison. This image is an excellent parallel to the image of "Gabriel disembodied/ pure column of light" [14] as described by Elizabeth Alexander in her poem, *Tanner's Annunciation*, and as seen illuminating the left hand side of Henry Tanner's *Annunciation* (1898). In both paintings a woman sits alone, overtaken by supernatural light and its consequences. Students will first be shown the Gossaert painting of Danae and asked to respond ekphrastically by describing the methods the painter chose to represent this mythological event. They will also identify whether or not they believe Gossaert effectively portrayed this scene, citing specific examples from both the mythological text and the painting. Finally, they will respond to the character of Danae in this painting and analyze how the painter has chosen to depict her. They will identify what they believe the painter felt her emotions and response to this event to be, and why they feel the picture shows this. Students will individually respond to this painting and these questions and then share those answers with a group or partner and, finally, in a whole class discussion. Following this discussion they will be shown Tanner's *Annunciation* and asked to respond to the same set of questions they answered about the Gossaert painting. After we have discussed these responses as a class, I will explain how the students have actually been involved in an ekphrastic exercise, and then explain how Elizabeth Alexander responded to this painting ekphrastically in poetry. Students will then read, analyze and discuss her poetic response to this painting, comparing and contrasting it with their own. As a final form of engagement, students will write a several paragraph response comparing and contrasting the two paintings and explaining what they show about the archetypal and mythical universality we have been discussing in class.

The Hero (The Experience with Unconditional Love?)

Following the discussion and activities involving the birth of a hero, students will spend time examining a variety of heroes and their literary and artistic representations. This lesson will begin with the introduction of several of the most common definitions of an archetypal hero. Students will be presented with Campbell's idea that "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man;" [15] C.M. Bowra's theory that "Heroes awake not only interest in their doings, but admiration and even awe for themselves... a hero differs from other men in the degree of his powers...these are specifically human, even though they are carried beyond the ordinary limitations of humanity. Even when the hero has supernatural powers and is all the more formidable because of them, they do little more than supplement his essentially human gifts. He awakes admiration because he has in rich abundance qualities which other men have to a much less extent;" [16] and two more familiar dictionary definitions of a hero as "a man of distinguished courage or ability, admired for his brave deeds and noble qualities, a person who, in the opinion of others, has heroic qualities or has performed a heroic act and is regarded as a model or ideal;" [17] "a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability, an illustrious warrior, a man admired for his achievements and noble qualities, one that shows great courage." [18]

After a whole class discussion of these definitions of a hero in comparison to the characteristics defining Perseus, our model for this study, as heroic, students will engage in their first "independent" analysis of

archetypes, art, and ekphrasis as they are assigned a particular piece of heroic art and a corresponding ekphrastic response. With the definition of the archetypal hero as their guide, students will complete an analysis of a specific text in literature circles, each group examining a different piece of art and poetry. Within these literature circles, students will be divided according to ability level in order to differentiate the learning process based on difficulty level of content selections. The selections used for this study are "To the Fragment of a Statue of Hercules" by Samuel Rogers (1802) in response to *The Belvedere Torso*, "The Bronze David of Donatello" by Randall Jarrell in response to Donatello's 1430 statue, Facing It by Yusef Komunyakaa (1988), The Vietnam Wall by Alberto Rios (1988), *Reflection on the Vietnam WarMemorial* by Jeffrey Harrison (1987)––all in response to the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial in Washington D.C. and the engraving of Shaka Zulu, the great African hero, by James Saunders King with the article Shaka Zulu, A Living Legend – Great Epics, Heroic Tales of Man and Superman by Kalame Iyamuse Bosco.While each group will engage with a different selection, they will all relate to the same idea, the archetypal hero, and all groups will complete the same set of guided notes based on their individual texts. Students will also complete a set of questions and activities based specifically on their text and specific to their group needs. Following the analysis process, students from each group will present their texts and information to the whole class. During this time, all class members will keep a log, uniform to all students, that they must fill out during presentations. While each group presents, students are responsible for gathering the following information on their logs: the name of the texts discussed and the dates they were produced, the culture or country the texts originated from, the character(s) explored and why, the overall theme of the text, and what judgments or information the text provided specific to the archetype being studied. Following the presentation of all groups, students will complete a writing assignment during which time they discuss what they learned about the hero archetype as a result of the combined presentations, emphasizing the similarities they discovered in each text analyzed.

The Call to Adventure (The Ultimate Boon?)

For a hero, whether marked by supernatural birth or abilities, the next logical stage in the journey of adventure involves receiving a "call," as it is not enough to merely possess attributes of the heroic; to truly be a hero, one must accept the heroic summons. "This first stage of the mythological journey– which [has been] designated the 'call to adventure'– signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of society to a zone unknown." [19] This call establishes the events by which the hero might demonstrate the superiority of his birth and qualities and sets in motion a transition from the realm of "others," the unheroic humanity for which this call would be too much, to the realm of greatness. The hero is, however, afforded a choice in this process. Will he experience a kind of death and resurrection as he abandons the everyday world and embraces the challenges and experiences beyond the capacities of his fellow man? For, "whether small or great, and no matter what stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on the mystery of transfiguration– a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth." [20]

The two literary examples I have selected to demonstrate the "call to adventure" is the story of Noah in Genesis and the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Both of the central, or heroic characters, Noah and Gilgamesh, are faced with a series of choices that lead them down paths of adventure and test their heroism. Noah is "called," almost literally, by the voice of God, who, interestingly, also functions in the role of the "wise old man" or "herald" archetype, informing Noah of the disaster about to assail mankind and offers a blueprint of escape and salvation from disaster through the construction of an ark. The epic of Gilgamesh provides a wonderful counter story as Gilgamesh, two–thirds God and one–third man, struggles with the one–third of himself dooming him to mortality and goes in search of his own "wise old man" in the figure of Utnapishtim, the Babylonian Noah, a man who has survived the flood and been granted immortality and, with it, wisdom

that will enable Gilgamesh to end his life heroically rather than wistfully in search of an unattainable immortality. Noah's "call to adventure" comes in the task of building the ark and escaping the flood, while Gilgamesh's "call to adventure" asserts itself as an opportunity to heroically embrace his fate. While the calls are slightly different, the similarities in these texts reinforce the ideas of universality this unit is teaching and afford students an opportunity to explore not only this stage of the hero's journey, but the "wise old man" archetype as well. Prior to introducing these texts, I will again return to the myth of Perseus and review his "call to adventure" with students. Once they have demonstrated an understanding of this stage of the hero's journey, I will then divide students into eight small groups. Four of these groups will engage with the story of Noah, reading the text taken from Genesis chapters six through nine in conjunction with Marc Chagall's *The Flood* and *Noah's Ark* and the ekphrasis on these paintings by Elizabeth Lemke and Thomas David in their book, *What Color is Paradise*. The other four groups will read an excerpt from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and view carvings made in response to this epic. Two of the four "Noah" and "Gilgamesh" groups will focus on the hero archetypes in this story and the remaining two groups for each story will focus on the wise old man archetype. All four "Noah" and "Gilgamesh" groups will answer questions specific to their respective texts and all eight groups will complete the same set of guided notes. When this analysis is complete, students will jigsaw their information with the rest of the class. Each group will summarize their text and the focus of their analysis, reporting back in a whole class setting, and this information will be recorded on large chart paper. On one side will be the story of Noah and the other *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. As each corresponding group of students records their information, a visual representation of comparisons and contrasts between these texts will be generated. Students will use this visual as a discussion catalyst to explore the significance of these two texts in the context of the study of archetypes and the stages of a heroic journey.

Refusal of the Call and The Beginning of the Adventure

While the above heading generally forms two separate stages within the traditional journey of the hero, to keep within time limits they will be addressed together in my unit, and most of the attention will be focused on "the beginning of the adventure." In a hero's journey, a hero often, but not always, initially refuses the quest or adventure that presents itself. "The myths and folk tales of the whole world make clear that the refusal [if it occurs] is essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one's own interest." [21] Many times a hero does so as a result of a sense of duty: Odysseus feels tied to Penelope and his home and is not interested in fighting in the Trojan War (a fear of a loss of an advantage); King Minos retains the divine bull, (a fear of economic disadvantage). The call may also be refused owing to a general sense of insecurity and disbelief in one's abilities. However, the moment of refusal is generally short lived and, ultimately, the hero finds himself accepting the inevitable beginning of adventure. In the case of Perseus, the refusal of the call seems nonexistent. He has spent his youth hearing tales of Medusa and the gorgons and when faced with the shame of arriving at Polydectes' celebration without a gift in hand, he immediately falls into the trap of Polydectes, the beginning of the adventure, and boldly proclaims to the entire assembly that his gift will be the head of Medusa. This episode forms the foundation of a class discussion of these two phases of the heroic journey, as students discuss Perseus' reenactment of these stages and then turn to an analysis of particular ekphrastic examples of "the beginning of adventure."

The beginning of the adventure is "the point where the hero actually begins the adventure, leaving the known limits of his or her world and venturing into an unknown and dangerous realm where the rules and limits are unknown." [22] The text I selected to portray this stage of the hero's journey, chapter one of the ekphrastic novel, Girl With a Pearl Earring written by Tracey Chevalier and inspired by Vermeer's painting of the same name, diverges from the study of ekphrastic poetry as well as from the analysis of the hero archetype as male. In this example students engage with prose ekphrasis and a female heroine. In this study, students are

given the first chapter of this novel to read as a homework assignment. They are also given the definitions and examples of the stages of refusal and beginning of adventure. Students must read the first chapter and identify how and why it illustrates these two stages of the hero's journey. They then must compare and contrast this chapter with the portrayal of these two stages in the Perseus myth. Finally, they must decide, based on the research and work completed on the hero archetype, whether or not they believe the protagonist, Griet, fits the archetypal definition of a hero in spite of her femininity. Students should notice that Griet resists her call to adventure subtly, with a suppressed look, "'You are to start tomorrow as their maid. If you do well, you will be paid eight stuivers a day. You will live with them. 'I pressed my lips together. 'Don't look at me like that, Griet,' my mother said. 'We have to, now your father has lost his trade.'" [23] and when Griet discovers the man to whom she is to be a maid is Catholic: "'Papists' Corner? They're Catholic?'" [24] indicating her interests in her family home and religion create resistance that is only overcome when her mother reminds her of her father's accident and lack of a trade. Ironically, the interest that tied her to her family drives her from them as Griet sacrifices her comfort to begin the adventure of working for the famous painter Vermeer. In this moment, the very beginning of the journey, Griet can see only the trials ahead, and is yet to discover the boon that might be gained from her experience in a master painter's home and studio.

Initiation by Experience: The Road of Trials, The Experience With Unconditional Love, and The Ultimate Boon

Immediately upon completion of the three stages of departure– the call to adventure, refusal of the call, and the beginning of adventure– a hero encounters an initiatory period commencing with a journey along "the road of trials." This initiation phase tests the hero's call and sets before the adventurer a second threshold that must be crossed to attain fulfillment of the archetypal pattern. "Once having traversed the threshold [completing the steps of departure], the hero moves in a... landscape... where he must survive a succession of trials. This is a favorite place of the myth–adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals." [25] At this point, the hero has recognized a "supernatural" or unrelenting call to "greatness" and now must prove that he is indeed made of a material strong enough to overcome the trials and tests of heroic initiation. "The road of trials is a series of tests, tasks, or challenges that the hero must undergo as part of [his heroic] transformation." [26] These tests not only validate the hero, but also drive him along the path of initiation, incorporating the stages of "the experience with unconditional love" and "the ultimate boon." Again, to preserve time in this study, students will view the phase of initiation in one lesson incorporating the three sub–stages mentioned above. As the myth of Perseus has provided the frame of reference for student analysis, the initiation phase of the hero's journey will be examined through this context. Students will analyze the road of trials in conjunction with the mythological Perseus text, and then, in more detail, through the study of the ekphrastic poems "The Head of Medusa on a Rotella of Michelangelo da Caravaggio, in the Gallery of the Grand Duke of Tuscany" by Giambattista Marino along with William Drummond of Hawthornden's notional ekphrasis, "The Statue of Medusa." Students will also view the unascribed painting, *The Head of Medusa*, employing this visual representation as an inspiration for original ekphrastic responses to the Medusa episode. In the analysis of the experience with unconditional love, students will examine Perseus' relationship with both his mother, for whom he wields the "ultimate boon" of Medusa's disembodied head to "stone" Polydectes and prevent the unwanted marriage, and his rescue of, and marriage to, Andromeda. The ultimate boon will be examined in terms of the beheaded Medusa trophy, at which time students will again revisit Drummond's poem.

Initiation by Character: Archetypes the Hero Might Encounter

Supernatural Helper

The supernatural helper appears along a hero's road of trials offering gifts of wisdom or magical tools that ensure a hero has within his power the means necessary to overcome the trials he will face. This supernatural helper may appear in the form of "the wise old man," as students have examined in the form of God in the Noah story, instructing Noah in the ways of ark construction and flood evasion, and Utnapishtim in the Epic of Gilgamesh, providing the psychological support needed for Gilgamesh to overcome his struggle with mortality; or *Melchizedek* in Paulo Coelho's novel, *The Alchemist*, bestowing the Urim and Thummim and the secret of one's personal legend on Santiago; or even in J.K. Rowling's Dumbledore, training and guiding Harry Potter to the point where, finally comprehending the meaning of Dumbledore's gift inside the snitch, he faces Voldemort and triumphs. Supernatural helpers have also appeared as mother goddesses, helpful animals, and mysterious forces guiding the hero to victory at the very point where they seem helpless to overcome their trials. For the purpose of this unit, two types of supernatural helpers will be examined, the wise old man and the mother goddess. The wise old man archetype will be reviewed as an introduction to this lesson as students revisit God and Utnapishtim from the Noah and Gilgamesh texts. They will then discuss examples of supernatural helpers in literature and film and generate a list of these helpers, describing their attributes and role in the heroic story in which they appear. Finally, students will return to the myth of Perseus, identifying the supernatural helpers Hermes and Athena while examining the pivotal role these immortals play in Perseus' heroic journey.

The Temptress

The temptation a hero faces in encountering an archetypal temptress, whether immoral or amoral, often becomes one of the most challenging, and difficult to overcome, obstacles a hero faces on his journey. It materializes along his "road of trials," a ubiquitous impediment in the journey of multitudinous heroes. At a certain point in the hero story the female figure transforms from a life–giving source of comfort, a wise old woman or mother goddess symbol, into an evil enchantress, the temptress. At the crux of this metamorphosis "the world, the body, and woman above all, become the symbols no longer of victory but of defeat… No longer can the hero rest in innocence with the goddess of the flesh; for she is become the queen of sin," [27] barring the path of the hero as he struggles within the confines of an unfamiliar feminine entrapment. "The seeker of the life beyond life [the true archetypal hero] must press beyond her, surpass the temptations of her call, and soar to the immaculate ether beyond." [28]

In order to examine the role of the temptress in literature, students will be focusing on a variety of temptresses faced by Odysseus in *The Odyssey*. The temptresses within *The Odyssey* provide a clear instance of the danger of this archetype to the hero when "the ongoing narrative [of *The Odyssey*] is threatened, and sometimes even stops, when Ulysses [Odysseus] enters spaces occupied by seductive women. In the first of these, sirens menace him and his crew; in the second, Scylla and Charybdis endanger the ship; in the third and fourth, Calypso and Circe keep him prisoner on their islands. All of these women impede Ulysses' [Odysseus'] movement, for when he enters their spheres his voyage–narrative [and the fulfillment of the linear stages of his heroic journey] halts, and he has no story to tell." [29] This threat not only to Odysseus as a hero, but to the narrative of an entire epic at the hands of a temptress, reinforces the definition, and danger, of the archetypal temptress and creates a platform of study by which students can examine this literary figure. Before beginning group discussions and analysis of the primary temptresses found in *The Odyssey*––Circe, the sirens, and Calypso––students will participate in a whole class discussion about this archetype. Students will review the plot of *The Odyssey* with particular attention paid to the points at which Odysseus encounters each of the three temptresses mentioned above. Students will be presented with Daly's theory that these temptresses not only threaten Odysseus individually, but the completion of his epic narrative as a whole. Students will discuss how and why that is possible and brainstorm what symbolic implications this has for the

definition of a temptress. Students will also examine the question it raises about the relationship of the hero and his quest. Students will then complete a short writing assignment on the prompt: are a hero and his quest inextricable? Explain why or why not citing examples from the texts studied thus far in the unit. Think about when and why a protagonist becomes a hero. After students have written and shared their responses to the prompt, a group analysis of poems written about or from the perspective of each of these temptresses will be completed. While there is not an example of ekphrastic poetry for students to read in this section, students will finish this study by writing original ekphrastic poems based on one of Romare Bearden's collages from his "A Black Odyssey" series. Students will respond to a collage featuring the temptress studied in their literature circles. These literature circles will be divided into gender-specific groups. I decided to put students in all male or female groups in order to encourage an analysis and discussion of the temptress archetype from a feminine and masculine perspective and to briefly introduce the idea of feminist criticism into the discussions following literary analysis. Both a male and female group will study the same temptress and poem. Following the homogeneous gender analysis, the male and female students will be divided into heterogeneous gender groups and discuss their responses, comparing and contrasting the differences of interpretation that may or may not have arisen in the homogeneous study of the text. Based on this method of analysis, there will be a group of three males and another group of three females studying "Siren Song" by Margaret Atwood. Within their literature circles, both groups will complete a "TPCASTT" of the poem and answer the same set of questions about the poem and the sirens' role as temptress. Following completion of this activity, the groups will be combined, and, as a mixed gender group, responses will be shared and discussed. Students will then complete a series of questions analyzing the difference in perspective, if any, when the temptress was viewed through a masculine versus a feminine paradigm. The group will then be shown a copy of Romare Bearden's *The Siren Song*. Students will spend several minutes viewing this collage and free writing all of their responses to Bearden's artwork. They will then take their free writing and visual impressions and create an ekphrastic poem in response to Bearden's work. By this time in the unit, students should be very familiar with the ekphrastic tradition, having analyzed a number of poets' ekphrases of paintings. These poems will be referenced as a point of context and guidance as students create their own ekphrastic poems for homework. All of the literature circles (there will be a total of 5 sets of male and female groups of three) will follow this same process. The remaining four sets of group will analyze and respond to "Ulysses and the Siren" by Samuel Daniel in conjunction with Bearden's *The Siren Song*, "Circe's Power" by Louise Gluck with *Circe Turns a Companion of Odysseus into a Swine* by Romare Bearden, "Circe" by Olga Broumas paired with Romare Bearden's Circe's Domain, and "Calypso" by Cleopatra Mathis with *Calypso*'s *Sacred Grove* by Romare Bearden.

The Villain

Is it possible to have a hero without a villain? If a hero must prove himself heroic in response to his trials, must he also define his heroism through opposition to a villainous force? In the case of most heroic journeys, the answer is yes. The villain, "the wicked character in a story, and in an important and special sense, the evil machinator or plotter" [30] provides a foil by which a hero is defined, the villain himself often becoming the final obstacle the hero must overcome on his road of trials and initiatory stage of his journey. Interestingly, the villain has evolved and in modern literature has become an object of sympathy in the eyes of many readers. John Gardner's novel, *Grendel*, exemplifies this evolution. However, the origins of this archetype exist within religious interpretations of the evil that threatened a spiritual system and its followers. Villains prevented not only the hero from completing his quest, but society from finding, vicariously through the hero, redemption and transcendence: "The pairs of opposites (being and not being, life and death, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, and all the other polarities that bind the faculties to hope and fear, and link the organs of action to deeds of defense and acquisition) are the clashing rocks…that crush the traveler, but between which the

heroes always pass. This is a motif known throughout the world." [31] In light of the villainous archetypes' genesis in the contrast of good and evil, students will study a text presenting a very traditional, and pervasive manifestation of the villain in literature: the devil. "The devil consistently exhibits a fluidity, an elasticity, that allows him to bleed over into overlapping regions of time and space, of heart and world, of history and allegory. The contested grounds debated by saint and demon are the paradoxes of the devil's simultaneous binding and liberty, his strength and impotence, his omnipresence and his nothingness." [32] It is the battle over these "contested grounds," and the effect of that battle on humanity, that makes "the devil" in all his manifestations a vibrant literary villain. From Satan in *Paradise Lost* to Mephistopheles in Goethes' Faust, convincing Dr. Faust to sign, with a drop of his own blood, a pact that transfers ownership of his soul to Mephistopheles, the devil, and introducing an experience with evil that wrecks havoc on the innocent; to evil materialized in the 1997 movie, *The Devil Incarnate*, "Satan," in all his incarnations, has been a fascinating villain. These examples demonstrate the transcendent power of the devil as a villain; this symbol of evil and destruction abounding as a villainous force. Albrecht Durer's engraving, *The Knight, Death, and the Devil*, visually embodies this iconographic figure of villainy in such a profound manner that it has inspired a number of ekphrastic responses scrutinizing this character. This engraving, and its ekphrasis, engages students in a detailed study of the devil as a villainous archetype. For the purpose of this unit, students will engage with Randall Jarrell's poetic ekphrasis, "The Knight, Death, and the Devil" as well as John Ruskin and Erwin Panofsky's prose explications, using these texts to analyze the devil as a powerful and pervasive villain in literature.

The Transgressor

The transgressor archetype plays an interesting role in the epic and mythological traditions. Part hero and part villain, the transgressor defines himself by pushing the limits of "the gods," or society, and defying the accepted systems of morality and ethics that religion or civilization dictate. The transgressor defies religious and societal mores by attempting a feat that has never been accomplished, thus thwarting the norms of his society that a hero, functioning in his archetypal role, protects and defends. This disregard for the limits of human knowledge often results in the downfall of the transgressor, leaving him an intriguing figure caught between the heroic and villainous. [33] Examples of this figure appear in the form of Prometheus, whose theft of fire from the Gods made him a hero to mankind and a villain to the Gods from whom he stole wisdom not intended for humanity. Like most transgressors, Prometheus did not end his story heroically. Instead, arrested as a villain, he is chained to a rock and punished for his rebellion, his liver eaten by an eagle only to regenerate daily and the process be repeated, reminding him of the long term effect his transgression has had on mankind and the Gods. Tantalus, who stole ambrosia from the table of the Gods and brought it to humanity, Sisyphus, who tried to outwit the Gods and overcome death, and Dr. Frankenstein, who "became God" and created life are other famous transgressors caught within this ironic duality. In order to illustrate this archetype through the use of ekphrasis, students will examine Daedalus and Icarus as embodiments of the transgressor archetype. Interestingly, the two show the heroic and villainous sides of transgression in very different manners; however, they both clearly represent a character pushing the limits of the gods and suffering as a result. The texts students will read and view during this analysis are the painting, *The Fall of Icarus* by Peter Bruegel the Elder, and two ekphrastic poems in response to this painting, "Musee de Beaux Arts" by W.H. Auden and William Carlos Williams' "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus." By examining both Auden's and Williams' decision to illustrate the ignorance of humanity concerning the suffering of Icarus, we can see that the poets allow for a juxtaposition of the idea of societal norms versus transgression. In these poems, societal norm–– again, the ideas that a hero upholds and maintains––are the dominant force in the visual and verbal representations of this myth. Both Auden's lines "...and the expensive delicate ship that

must have seen/ Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,/ Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on" and Williams' "a splash quite unnoticed/ this was/ Icarus drowning" [34] spotlight the norms of society as superior to Icarus' amazing, and overtly defiant, feat of flight. When viewed in conjunction with Breugel's painting, where " the foregrounding of the ploughman and the distant, kicking fragmentary feet of the over–reaching Icarus expound an immediately grasped parable in which– as one scholar has put it–'the realist with both feet planted firmly on the ground fails to recognize the dreamer,'" [35] the archetype of the "over–reaching" transgressor, pushing humanity's limits through flight, manifests the negative, or villainous, facet of transgression: the transgressor defies the standards of a superior society and therefore is punished. Icarus, who not only transgressed by flying, but by challenging nature itself and the power of the sun, is utterly destroyed. Daedalus, while on one level successful in his transgression, must suffer the loss of his son, a perpetual reminder of the futility of defying either the Gods or societal standards. The painting and the ekphrastic poetry reinforce the concurrent suffering transgression inevitably produces.

These examples pose an interesting contrast to the original episode as portrayed by Ovid, where "…all look up, in absolute amazement/At those air–borne above. They must be gods!" [36] In this depiction the focus rests on the positive aspect of transgression, humanity's ability to become like god, portraying a society appreciative of the transgressor's "violation," viewed as a means of possible advancement– humans as gods? However, in spite of the initial impression in Ovid's text, Icarus still drowns and Daedalus suffers. Essentially, the underlying theme, and definitive characteristic of the transgressor archetype remain that to challenge knowledge or the Gods, in spite of conceivable positive benefits, is to suffer. In order for students to understand the complexity of this archetype, and to fully grasp both Icarus and Daedalus as symbols of transgression, they will begin the study of this archetype by examining its definition and the examples of Prometheus, Tantalus, Sisyphus, and Dr. Frankenstein. Following a guided class discussion on these transgressors, their acts of transgression, and the subsequent suffering experienced, students will begin an individual analysis of Icarus and Daedalus. Students will be given the myth "Daedalus" as written in Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*, and asked to make a two–column chart. One side will be titled Daedalus, the other Icarus. On this chart students will be asked to write down all the reasons why each of these characters fits the definition of a transgressor. Following this activity, students will share their results in small groups and then a whole class list will be generated on chart paper. At this point students will be shown *The Fall of Icarus* by Peter Bruegel the Elder, and asked to respond to the painting. They will identify the characters in the painting, specifically focusing on where Icarus and the Ploughman are on the canvas while noting and analyzing Daedalus' absence, the plot of the painting, explaining the action occurring and why, and the overall theme of the painting. When they have completed this response, they will be asked to complete a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the painting to the myth they read. These responses will be discussed in small groups and then as a whole class. Following discussion, students will read and analyze Auden's and Williams's ekphrases of this scene.

The Return: The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Refusal of the Return, and The Crossing, or Return Threshold

"When the hero's quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life–transmuting trophy. The full round… requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom…back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or ten thousand worlds." [37] In order to examine the final stage of the hero's journey, the return, students will return to Perseus and the myth they have used as a guide throughout this

unit, and examine his experience with the sub–stages refusal of the return, the magic flight, rescue from without, and the crossing or return threshold. Students need to be aware that every single sub–stage does not necessarily occur within every phase of the heroic journey, and that there are variations of this heroic pattern that differ from the one based on Campbell that is part of their curriculum. Students need to recognize, however, that in all of these journey patterns and heroic tales, the three phases of departure, initiation, and return, whether by these names or slightly variant ones, are always present. With this in mind, student focus will be on "the return" and Perseus' enactment of this phase.

"If the hero in his triumph wins the blessing of the goddess or the god and is then explicitly commissioned to return to the world with some elixir for the restoration of society, the final stage of his adventure is supported by all the powers of his supernatural patron. On the other hand, if the trophy has been attained against the opposition of its guardian, or if the hero's wish to return to the world has been resented by the gods or demons, then [this]...stage of the mythological round becomes a lively, often comical, pursuit. This flight may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion." [38] Whether aided or obstructed almost every hero, including Perseus, undergoes a "magic flight" on their journey of return. In the Perseus myth this flight begins as Pegasus is born from Medusa's bleeding neck. This winged horse, the offspring of Medusa and Poseidon, becomes Perseus' vehicle of escape from Medusa's sisters, the remaining immortal gorgons ready to avenge Medusa's murder. The rescue from without plays a minimal role in the return phase of Perseus' quest. Pegasus is Perseus' greatest aid in his departure from the gorgons' lair and, along with the wallet attained from the nymphs, affords him a relatively smooth escape, emphasizing the role Athena's blessing has played in the completion of this quest. Athena's aid during all the stages of Perseus' journey culminated in his successful beheading of Medusa, making Athena both a supernatural helper and rescuer from without. Perseus must return Medusa's severed head to Athena and in order to do so, must return from his quest. "Just as a hero may need guides and assistants on the quest [in the case of Perseus, Athena and Hermes] oftentimes he or she must have powerful guides and rescuers to bring him back to everyday life..." [39] Subsequently, a case might be made for Andromeda, in addition to Athena, as a "rescuer from without." While Athena provides Perseus with the implements necessary to destroy and escape Medusa, Andromeda proffers an enticement for Perseus to return to "the everyday" by marrying and settling into a life of "normalcy." Andromeda is the "rescuer [that] bring[s] him back to everyday life." [40] "When the goal of the adventure has been accomplished, the hero may refuse to return with the boon or gift." [41] Perseus demonstrates this refusal when he fails to immediately return to Argos to rescue Danae from Polydectes, but instead, stops to heroically rescue Andromeda, who awaits sacrifice to the old man of the sea as a result of her mother's boasting. Ironically, Perseus' initial refusal to return leads to a rescuer from without, Andromeda. After Perseus saves Andromeda from the sea monster the two marry and she helps guide Perseus back to a normal life. However, this transition is not immediate. Perseus refuses return as he battles Phineus and Polydectes using the head of Medusa as his weapon, prior to "returning" to an unheroic existence. Integral to the idea of return is the hero's separation from the rest of society: "The two worlds, the divine and the human, can be pictured only as distinct from each other– different as life and death, as day and night. The hero adventures out of the land we know into darkness; there he accomplishes his adventure...and his return is described as coming back out of that yonder zone." [42] Perseus finally leaves behind the "yonder zone" and heroic quest when he relinquishes Medusa's head to Athena who inserts it in her shield. Emphasizing his transformation from the heroic to the commonplace is Perseus' participation in a community disc throwing competition. During this athletic event, Perseus' disc flies into the crowd of spectators and kills his grandfather, Acrisius. Though an accidental murder, this act fulfills the oracle's prophecy and proves Perseus now a member of humanity, powerless to defy the will and fate of gods. His quest is complete and he has crossed the return threshold.

To examine the return, students will revisit the Perseus myth and in a whole class discussion, briefly analyze Perseus' experience in each of the sub–stages. Students will then be divided into small groups and each group will be assigned the task of interpreting Perseus' experience with the refusal of the return, the magic flight, the rescue from without, and the crossing or return threshold in detail. Each group will be given the definition of the sub–stage they are examining and a copy of the Perseus myth. Students will then examine the myth with their literary group peers and determine whether or not Perseus experienced this aspect of the hero's journey. Textual support for or against his encounter must be cited. Each group will then present this information to the whole class. During these presentations, students not analyzing this stage will take guided notes on each group's presentation. Following a complete understanding of Perseus' role in the return phase, students will review each stage of Perseus' heroic journey. This review will prepare students for their final unit assignment. In culmination, students will revisit Raphael's painting, *Saint George and The Dragon*. Students will view this poem a second time and analyze the characters and visual representations in greater detail. Following this analysis, students will be required to write an ekphrastic poem inspired by this painting, but going beyond the one scene the artist has captured (truly engaging with the ekphrastic tradition as their pen rivals what the brush painted), creating a story including each stage of the journey explored in this unit. Students will have one week to write, revise, and hand in this assignment. It will be their final grade for this unit and will count as a test grade. Each student's poem must be accompanied by an essay explaining how the poem effectively demonstrated the hero's journey, as well as how it utilized poetry techniques examined during the study of ekphrastic poetry.

Strategies (The Return)

Flexible Grouping

Differentiation, in the form of flexible grouping, is employed in almost all of my lessons for this unit. "Differentiated instruction, also called differentiation, is a process through which teachers enhance learning by matching student characteristics to instruction and assessment. Differentiated instruction allows all students to access the same classroom curriculum by providing different entry points, learning tasks, and outcomes that are tailored to students' needs." [43] As a teacher in a heterogeneously grouped classroom, it is almost impossible to meet the needs of the multiple ability levels within a single classroom setting without differentiating content, process, or product. Students need individualized activities and content specific to their learning styles and level. As a teacher of heterogeneous classes in an eighty to ninety minute block period, I have found that breaking my class into "chunks" of teaching time, and transitioning between direct, whole class instruction and flexible grouping, has produced the most positive results. I introduce concepts, in this case the concept of ekphhrasis, archetypes and the hero's journey, in a whole class setting. Following direct instruction, flexibility grouping allows me to individualize assignments and content, remediating, reinforcing, and challenging as appropriate. As "teachers can differentiate content, process, and/or product for students," [44] it is important to note that the groups used to cover curriculum in this unit are based around differentiated content and product. However, the process remains uniform for all students. Also within the context of this unit, there will be several methods of grouping. The first method places students in groups of peers of similar ability levels. Students in these groups will receive texts and activities that connect to the overall skills and concepts being explored––archetypes, imagery, poetry analysis–– but that are appropriate for their level of reading comprehension and focused on the skills these students need to strengthen. Later in the

unit flexible grouping will be designed around student interest and groups will be multi–leveled with representatives from the highest skill levels to the lowest equally present in all groups. In one case students will be given the opportunity to self–select a group based on the activity the group will perform. Using three different methods of organizing groups ensures that students not only receive differentiated instruction on the basis of readiness and skill level, but interact with a wide variety of their peers in a cooperative setting, benefiting from exposure to a variety of points of view as well as the avoidance of stigmatizing themselves or others as perpetually relegated to a "high," "low," or "average" group setting. "Randomly" grouping students in this manner produces the best results for differentiation and cooperative learning. The wonderful part about this grouping as it relates to this unit in particular, is that it allows students a much broader exposure to art and ekphrasis as student groups share the content knowledge learned in these small settings with the rest of their peers.

Literature Circles, Expert Group Presentations, and Guided Notes

Information will be shared among students through the use of literature circles, or "expert groups." Once divided into groups, students within each group are given different texts to respond to and interpret. Each student in the group is assigned a role and will perform a specific task. The roles I traditionally assign are Discussion Leader, Textmaster, Creative Director and Connector. I do not place students in groups larger than four students and I have found that groups of three, whenever possible, create environments of better interaction and discussion between peers. In these literature circles, students interact with a piece of art, ekphrastic poetry or prose, or both resources simultaneously in order to gain an understanding of an archetype or stage of the hero's journey. After completing interpretive activities, the students in each literary circle become "experts" on their text or texts and create a five to ten minute mini lesson on their completed analysis, presenting this information to the whole class. Students whose groups are not presenting information will be taking guided notes on the information each group shares. These notes are the same for each student and are designed to explore the idea of universality in the study of archetypes. They contain a section of information and questions for students to answer as each group presents.

Jigsaw

The jigsaw strategy is designed to present students with a multitude of texts, or one very large text, without making it necessary for students to read an entire work, or every resource material provided by a teacher, while still being exposed to relevant information and material in an engaging and instructional manner. During a jigsaw, students are presented with different texts, or different passages of texts, and read these works individually or in a small group in order to form an "expert" opinion on the text and report findings. As students take on the role of an "expert" they analyze their section of text in detail and then share their new knowledge within a small group or whole class setting. Students are responsible for an assigned text in such a degree that they can summarize and present this information to classmates in a manner that facilitates the understanding of the basic themes and concepts inherent within the text. [45]

TP-CASTT

TP–CASTT is a method of poetry analysis that encourages students to read a poem multiple times and analyze in specific detail a variety of its features. TP-CASTT is an acronym that stands for Title, Paraphrase, Connotation, Attitude, Shift, Theme, and Title again. Students use this tool and apply the following questions in order to engage in an analytical process of reading poetry. The questions that correspond to each letter of this acronym are as follows: Title– Without having read the poem, look at the title and make a prediction about

the poem's meaning; Paraphrase– translate each stanza of the poem in your own words; Connotation– Look beyond the literal meaning. Identify the figurative language used by the author and explain its significance; Attitude– What is the speaker's attitude? What is the author's attitude? Are they the same or different; Shift– Are there shifts in tone, setting, voice etc. and what are their meanings; Theme– Think of the literal and metaphorical layers of the poem and determine its overall main idea; Title– Reexamine the title. What do you think it means within the context of the poem. [46]

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