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Faculty of Arts and Humanities How To Club

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Some of What You Might Want to Know about Literature

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*“The Life so short, the craft so long to learn.”*

# Warm up discussion:

1. Literature as a major
2. Literature: likes and dislikes
3. Diversity and confusion of literature
4. Genres of literature

# Key points for discussion:

* Appreciation of what you are studying
* Understanding literature is relating to it. Know your artist and read about him/her and the time they lived in. This will help direct you to the path you should read in.
* If you think reading literature stops at the end of the last page of the work, then think again. That is only the beginning. Shakespeare will lead you to Freud (Psychology); Orwell will lead you to Socialism and Communism (Politics); and Wordsworth will lead you to Romanticism (Era).[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Best works are those which defy the norm because they are new in history of writing:
  + Novels: Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952)
  + Dramas: Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion* (1912)
  + Poems: Willaim Butler Yeats’s *The Tower* (1928)[[2]](#footnote-2)
  + Non-fiction: Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African* (1789) voyage from Africa to Americas and England and Anna Frank’s *Het Achterhuis The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947)
* Reading works of other nations (French Guy de Maupassant, Colombian Gabriel Márquez, Russian Fyodor Dostoevsky, Arabic Najib Mahfouz) adds to the understanding of Comparative Literature
* Classical references: hardest but the most fun, for example Greek Mythology – Biblical and Eastern references

# List of DON’TS:

* Do not forget or misspell:
  + Writer’s name
  + Work’s name
  + Characters’ names
* Do not not know:
  + Era (time of when work is written)
  + Genre (type of work you are reading)[[3]](#footnote-3)
* Do not not read the writer’s biography.
* Do not not read more about what relates to the works:
  + Criticism: scholarly journals criticizing the work
  + History
  + Movement: style in art with a common philosophy or goal (e.g. Romanticism, Realism)
* Do not forget devices and techniques you learned previously, e.g. STILTS (structure, theme, imagery, language, tone, structure).[[4]](#footnote-4)
* Do not read summaries of the works you are supposed to read.
* Do not watch the film adaptation of the written work before reading.
* Do not read the work once.

# The Do’s in answering effective literary exam questions and literary analysis:

* Narrow the topic
* Formulate a title that expresses the topic
* Formulate a good topic sentence to control the line of thoughts
* Formulate a good outline the supports the topic sentence
* Be selective in choosing ONLY the examples that support the topic sentence
* Formulate a good conclusion that sums up the analysis
* Use ONLY the simple present in writing
* Answer as much as the question asks for
* Be familiar not only with the literary terms, but also ‘how’ and ‘why’ they are used
* Be familiar with the rules of quotation, citation, and documentation
* Demonstrate a good use of the English writing skills (spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.)
* Present an academic paper that reflects a good formatting (margin, space, font, etc.)

# The Don’ts in answering effective literary exam questions and literary analysis:

* Do not give general interpretation or information
* Do not retell the story
* Do not add irrelevant information
* Do not repeat the same idea
* Do not use these pronouns: I, you, we
* Eliminate the use of ‘he’ and ‘she’
* Eliminate the use of ‘it’
* Eliminate the use of ‘say’ and ‘describe’
* Eliminate the use of transitional words
* Eliminate the use of ‘first’, ‘second’, ‘third’ etc. in listing the order of
* Do not use general vocabularies such as ‘very good’, ‘very bad’, ‘like’, ‘hate’, ‘thing’, ‘something’, ‘as you know’, ‘it is clear’, etc.

# Conclusion (Advices):

* Literature is a link to life. It teaches you through a story, a poem, or a play the lessons learned by those who write the work.
* Trying to enjoy what you read is not easy because sometimes you will read works you do not like or understand.
* Must read list: make a list of the works you know you must read and make sure you read them before graduating. Ask your instructors for suggestions.
* Writing is the by-product your education in the English Language Department: Experience is the best way to start – write about your experiences – if you feel you do not have anything worthwhile to write about, you are wrong!! Think deeper, for there is always more to the story than what you think.

# Useful Websites:

* <http://www.socsdteachers.org/tzenglish/literature_timeline.htm>
* <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Lit/>
* <http://www.bartelby.com/cambridge/index.html>
* <http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page>
* <http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=181>

1. *Pygmalion* (1912) by Bernard Shaw will lead you to the world of Linguistics. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *The Tower* is a collection of poems, entailing “Sailing to Byzantium” and “Leda and the Swan,” two of Yeats’s well-known poems. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “I Wandered Lonely” is not a novel; *Pride and Prejudice* is not a play; and *Macbeth* is not a poem! [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Techniques and devices are used in all genres of literature. Some are used in more than one genre. For example, symbols can be found in novels, plays, and poems. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)