

Thomas Foster Meets Kate Chopin: A Kinda Love Story*

As you know from your enthralling summer reading, Thomas Foster has examined every piece of literature ever written in any language and distilled the basics of what to look for down to us mere mortals. Now we, humble pilgrims on the road to ultimate self-knowledge, will use his road map of reading to form the basis of our studies year. For this exercise, read Kate Chopin's short (and I mean short) story, "The Story of an Hour" then find as many of Foster's ideas as you can. For example, Chapter One, "Every Trip Is a Quest (Except When It's Not)," gives us the basic outline for every story ever told:

- A. A Quester
- B. A Place to Go
- C. A Stated Reason to Go There
- D. Challenges and Trials En Route
- E. The Real Reason to Go There

Now your task is to see if Louise Mallard's trip to her room fits Foster's pattern! See? Isn't that fun? (Hint: it does, and, yes, it is fun). How many of Foster's other ideas can you find in Chopin's story?

After you find as many applications for Foster as you can, write at least four well structured paragraphs in which you:

1. Identify Foster's main idea.
2. Cite the sentence(s) in the story that prove the idea is really there.
3. Explain how your reading on an analytical level changed how you approached the story.
4. Your final paragraph should deal with your opinion of Foster's overall thesis: "If you learn to ask these questions, to see literary texts through these glasses, you will read and understand literature in a new light, and it'll become more rewarding and fun" (Foster xv). (See? He used the word "fun," too.)

There you go! You're off on your first bit of literary analysis...and the party is just beginning! A bit of a caution, though, before you get going: Don't try to make an idea fit if it doesn't. Stay away from the internet! Think your own thoughts, make your own assumptions, and for goodness sake, use your own words!! If the assignment makes your head hurt, then you're doing it right ☺.

Your papers should be neatly typed using a standard 12 pt. font (Georgia, Arial, Times New Roman; no fancy scripts, please) double spaced, have few to no major grammatical errors, and show careful thought. *Solve all your printer problems before class, please!*

* Assignment developed by Rebecca Mooring.