Like Water for Chocolate

Laura Esquivel Biography:

- Born 30 September 1950 in Mexico City
- Kindergarten teacher – wrote plays for class, wrote children’s TV programs
- Explores relationship btwn men and women in Mexico
- Divorced from Alfonso Arau, who helped in the making of the film.
- Feminist writer
- Father was a telegraph operator
- Grandmother taught her about cooking

During an on-line Salon interview with Joan Smith, she said, "As a teacher I realize that what one learns in school doesn't serve for very much at all, that the only thing one can really learn is self understanding and this is something that can't be taught."
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<th>Author/Politics</th>
<th>Social/Political</th>
<th>Why MR vs. other style</th>
<th>Gender?</th>
<th>Race/Ethnic?</th>
<th>Decentered &quot;other&quot;-Anti-W?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Laura Esquivel</td>
<td>Birth Order/Minority</td>
<td>Birth Order (Marriage)</td>
<td>Women's Place = Kitchen?</td>
<td>&quot;Other&quot; - Anti-W?</td>
<td>Tender is the Mitchell - anti-racist</td>
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<td>Machismo culture</td>
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<td>Sept 30, 1958</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Kindergarten Teacher</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Father's TELEGRAPH</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Oral stories as a child</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Cooking &amp; Grandma</td>
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<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Author's Intentions</th>
<th>Memory - Remember?</th>
<th>Perceptions of Reality</th>
<th>Passages</th>
<th>Misc.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ghost stories</td>
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<td>Family History</td>
<td>Passed down recipes</td>
<td>107 - Small Memories</td>
<td>&quot;Mama vs. Mama&quot;</td>
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<td>Story better than just a cookbook</td>
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<td>49 - Not Pickled</td>
<td>Insomnia</td>
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<td>76 - Tito's Milk</td>
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<td>113 - Alt. Medicine</td>
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<td>115 - Matches</td>
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<td>125 - Soup Cuse</td>
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<td>129 - Retrospection</td>
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<td>138-149 - Moms voice in her Head</td>
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Discussion questions:

- Why is magic so related with the Mexican experience?
- Discuss smell and taste memories – pg. 9
- Alternative medicine – does homemade soup really have healing powers that other medicines don’t?  pg. 123  The power of the mind and childhood belief can really heal?
- De-centered “other” – the addition of a shower in the back yard was an innovative thing. But the idea was taken and improved to install in houses all over north America.  Pg. 54
- The concept of a soul mate – the book of matches each of us have inside that can be lit or left to rot. Showed up also in 100 years (pg. 69) as the life fire one has inside them. Tied to end when they die together after burning up the whole book.  Pg. 115 & 245
- The porcelain doll hidden in the bread – why do traditions like this still hold such a strong emotional sway over us as adults?  Tita believed that if she found it all her dreams would miraculously come true. As an adult, the sisters fought over it because it gave them a chance to show off hosting. What traditions like this do we have?  Pg. 168
- Gertrudis – as the only daughter with black blood, she is seen as the outsider, the immoral one who runs away to work in a brothel. But she also seems to be the happiest and most content with herself and the way she’s lived her life. While Tita and Rosaura are so repressed and unhappy.
- Being from two places means you belong to both and neither at the same time. Usually the one seen as “outcast” by traditional dominant society is the one that accepts a mixed person – Gertrudis again.
- Gender issues: masculine dominated society, but in this book, the women exert an enormous amount of power because they’ve learned to manipulate the system. Within the house, the men are “castrated” – why do the roosters taste better castrated?  Pg. 26
- Woman as nurturer – discuss the significance of a virgin being able to breast feed her nephew because his mother can’t produce milk.  Pg. 76
- The mother-daughter relationship: how do we deal with having our parents’ voices in our heads? Or in this case, appearing after their death to berate us. Is that your conscience?  Pg. 198-199.

Transition to “White Tigers”
- Responsibility to one’s parents – discuss the tradition of the youngest daughter serving her mother until she dies. Why might this be important culturally?
- Illicit love, loving in secret because a women in her (Tita or Fa Mulan) position is not allowed to.
- Women triumphing in a male dominated culture.
“White Tigers”

Maxine Hong Kingston Biography:

- Maxine Hong Kingston was born on October 27, 1940 in Stockton, California.
- Oldest of 6 american-born children
- Mother was a midwife in China
- Father was a trained calligrapher and poet
- Father worked in a laundry in the US
- Maxine named after lucky gambler in the gambling house her father worked at in Stockton
- First language was Say Yup, Cantonese dialect
- Wrote poetry in English at age 9
- Won 11 scholarships to go through college at UC Berkeley (engineering→ English)
- Moved to Hawaii with husband and taught for 10 years (English and math)
- Woman Warrior = first book
- “Me and Mom” genre – very prevalent in Chinese-American writing (Amy Tan)
- Doubt is a part of every story, not certainty, and that is part of what makes her writing unique.

Teaching the Chinese Immigrant's Story - Angel Island (1910-1940)

By Steven M. Baumann

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE CHINESE IMMIGRATION

- Historically, China has been self-sufficient, not wanting much trade with the west
- 1840s & 1850s about 46,000 Chinese immigrants came to Hawaii & 380,000 to the states – they came as Chinese laborers hoping to find work in a foreign country and return home in 3-5 years rich. — SO most left their wives and families in China.
- 1882 – Chinese Exclusion Act = no Chinese immigration for 10 years
- Sugar in Hawaii and railroad in California – basically slave labor with false promises of riches, but were paid very little
- Gold discovered in CA – many came to finish the railroad, but once it was done, they were considered unwanted extras. Women were not allowed in the mainland.
- 1906 = great earthquake. Records were destroyed, so many Chinese claimed to be relatives of immigrant workers to get into the country. Angel Island = Ellis Island of the west coast.
- Angel Island was more like a concentration camp. Many denied and sent back to China.
- Since 1940s, better relationship with China (WWII).
- Once in the U.S. many Chinese lived in homogenous communities and kept all of their native cultural habits: food, religion, language, etc.
- After Pearl Harbor, Chinese Americans were welcome, not-Japanese
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>① Author: Hsing-Hsueh Yuan</th>
<th>② Social/Political</th>
<th>③ Why MR vs. other style</th>
<th>④ Gender?</th>
<th>⑤ Race/Ethnic?</th>
<th>⑥ De-centered &quot;other&quot;: Anti-W?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- B. Oct 27, 1946</td>
<td>- Provincial wars in China</td>
<td>- Oral tradition in women's lives</td>
<td>- Better to raise girls than boys</td>
<td>- Chinese American immigrants have always brought their culture with them of it.</td>
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<td>- Both parents immigrated</td>
<td>- Chinese vs. Mongols</td>
<td>- Mother-daughter relationships</td>
<td>- Foot binding</td>
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<td>- Majored in English</td>
<td>- Niang was her name</td>
<td>- For the good of her husband?</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>- Worked in engineering</td>
<td>- Bad girl pg 40</td>
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<tr>
<td>⑦ Religion/Folklore</td>
<td>⑧ Author's Intention</td>
<td>⑨ Memory - Remember?</td>
<td>⑩ Perceptions of Reality</td>
<td>⑪ Passages</td>
<td>⑫ Misc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Original story: ballad</td>
<td>- Continue to preserve</td>
<td>- Following the list</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Name - Mulan -</td>
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<tr>
<td>- was left by her father</td>
<td>- the culture - oral</td>
<td>- Superstition</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>wood orchid</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The god of war</td>
<td>- written - oral</td>
<td>- grievances on her back</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Chinese for female</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Literature - how do these go together?</td>
<td>- lasting</td>
<td>- big part of</td>
<td>34-5</td>
<td>= slave pg 47</td>
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<td>- pg 38</td>
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<td>- Chinese belief</td>
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<td>- In MR ch 5 pg 85</td>
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<td>- pg 26</td>
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<td>- challenge dominant authority in order to tell her history</td>
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<td>- dowry sight</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- all non-Chinese = ghosts</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- anger at parents for lack of heritage understanding, MR pg 88</td>
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Discussion Questions:

- Discuss the importance of oral storytelling and how that is juxtaposed to our own society of written storytelling and media.
- After hearing the story of Fa Mulan, the narrator says she would have to grow up to be a warrior instead of a slave – does hearing stories instill in us a sense of responsibility to carry out those roles?
- Discuss the importance of the journey in finding one’s true calling/identity. Include Native American spirit journeys – what do we have in American culture that is similar to this? College? Any religious rites of passage? Personal stories?
- The sacrifice of the rabbit – why did it sacrifice itself? Had she earned it?
- Family honor – carving revenge on his daughter’s back – does this make him a good father/man? How do we hold family grudges?
- How would the god of war and literature be one and the same? Isn’t this kind of oppositional?
- “Girls are maggots in the rice” “It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters” – discuss the cultural, and personal implications – what does this do to a culture’s attitude? What does this do to an individual’s attitude about herself?
- “There is a Chinese word for the female I - which is ‘slave.’” – Why has the language evolved to be this? Can it continue to evolve so that women are treated more like equals? Language has such deep psychological effects – this causes Chinese women to think differently than American women – source for conflict?

Activity:

Compare this story to the Disney movie if everyone’s seen it. Is the feminine power sentiment the same or different?

Transition to Rushdie:

Eastern perspective on life. What kinds of assumptions are made about life? Religion? The de-centered Other – Chinese woman, Rushdie writing from position of censorship
“At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers” and “The Prophet’s Hair”

Salman Rushdie Biography:

- Born in Bombay, India 1947 to middle-class Muslim family
- Family moved to Pakistan while he was at rugby school in England.
- War between India and Pakistan – deeply affected Rushdie
- Went to Cambridge, worked in television in Pakistan
- February 14, 1989 he was condemned to death by Ayatollah Khomeini for the “Satanic Verses” – w/ a $million reward for his death
- Criticized and censored in many countries (India, South Africa banned it) because it portrayed the prophet Mohammed in a less than holy light
- Rushdie apologized, saying he is a Muslim, still under Fatwa.
- Married 4 times, divorced 4 times
- Knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 2007
- Honorary Professor of Humanities at MIT
- Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature

British Rule in India

- Queen Victoria became Empress of India in 1876, after Britain had already ruled under the East India Company since 1858.
- Before independence, India and Pakistan were the same territory
- 15 August 1947 midnight = Independence Day
- World’s biggest democracy
- Kite flying has become a tradition on independence day
- India split into India and Pakistan due to a rift in Congress between Hindu and Muslim leaders. In essence, India itself split into East and West.
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<td><strong>1. Author:</strong> Salman Rushdie</td>
<td><strong>2. Social/Political:</strong></td>
<td><strong>3. Why MR vs. other style:</strong></td>
<td><strong>4. Gender:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Birth:</strong> 1947, June 19</td>
<td><strong>Srinagar—real place?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Religious influence:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sister succeeded where I failed</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Condemned to death by Ayatollah Khomeni:</strong> 1989</td>
<td><strong>Shahman</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1989—two Sat. Vers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Money lending rules in moral society vs. Islamic rules</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sih broke am children's leap so they could earn $56</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Muslim</strong></td>
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<td><strong>been censored</strong></td>
<td><strong>Futuristic such tension amongst everyone</strong></td>
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<td><strong>married 4X</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sex of 1st cousin?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Not really religious</strong></td>
<td><strong>India's independence 1947</strong></td>
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| **5. Race/Ethnicity:** | **6. De-centered “other” Anti-W:** |
| | **Burndoo in general, etc. vs. British rule in India** |
| | **East vs. West—unexpected intimacies** |

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<tr>
<th><strong>7. Religion/Prophets:</strong></th>
<th><strong>8. Author's Intention:</strong></th>
<th><strong>9. Memory—Remember?</strong></th>
<th><strong>10. Perceptions of Reality:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Islamic folklore story of actual prophets, heir</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commentary on the culture's obsession w/ relics</strong></td>
<td><strong>Relics in place of religion</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pervasive cultural pg 44—Great Eva’s Miracles? Islam—totally different from Western Christianity</strong></td>
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<td><strong>What about normal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Perception of future—parsed pg 82</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Relics—cultural worship pg 88</strong></td>
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<td><strong>pg 97—priest canreg. Why ruin slip?</strong></td>
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<th><strong>11. Passages</strong></th>
<th><strong>12. Misc.</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>pg 89—main high ground—all diff groups coming to see Celebs + orphans</strong></td>
<td><strong>pg 92—we renew. “movie is”</strong></td>
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<td><strong>pg 98—auctioning, color—big deal for Western culture</strong></td>
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<td><strong>pg 93—concept of buildings + secrets</strong></td>
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<td><strong>pg 102—can you change a name?</strong></td>
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</table>
Discussion Questions:

Ruby Slippers:
- Is this a realistic/pessimistic future?
- What does “home” mean for each of us? Is it a location, people, feeling, food?
- Is it really the item/relic itself or the idea behind it that we’re after?
- Same stereotypes in the future – the Latino janitor cleans up our drool & security throws the Hobos out. Couldn’t Rushdie come up with something a bit more progressive than that?
- Pg. 92 – tolerance of the untolerant, but not of the poor

Prophet’s Hair:
- Change in behavior – really miracle or influence of hair?
- What’s significant about none of the principal characters being so secular and almost scornful of religion?
- Gender roles – hair turned them into patriarchal family, but it’s Huma, the daughter, not the son, that manages to hire the thief and not get beat up.
- What do you think about the idea of relic worship? – the shroud of Turin, pieces of the true cross etc. How do/can they add or detract from a religious/spiritual experience?

Censorship discussion questions:
- Do you think any piece of literature should be banned? Why?
- Is it really a problem that a character in a book insults a religious or respected leader? What makes Muhammad so special and “untouchable” by anyone?
- Does any insult merit capital punishment? Sticks and stones? Or does it go deeper?
The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven (selected stories)

Sherman Alexie Biography:

- Born October 1966
- Spokane and Coeur d’Alene Indian, grew up on Spokane Indiana Reservation in WA
- About 1,100 tribe members still live there
- Not expected to live due to water on the brain, had seizures throughout childhood
- Avid reader, nerdy kid
- Attended Reardan High to get a better education than that offered on the reservation
- Played HS basketball
- Went to Gonzaga University on scholarship, transferred to WSU
- Planned to be doctor, fainted in anatomy class, went to a poetry workshop at WSU
- Published two poetry collections a year after leaving WSU
- Had problem with alcohol in college, but has been sober since he was 23
- Has won various awards for his writing
- “This is what it means to say Phoenix, Arizona” was the basis for the movie Smoke Signals, 1998.
- Lives in Seattle with wife and two sons.
Spokane Background:

The Spokane Tribe of Indians is a sovereign government body led by the Spokane Tribal Business Council. The Council consists of the Tribal Chairman, Vice Chairman, Tribal Secretary and two Council members. The Spokane Tribal Business Council reports to the General Membership, meaning all enrolled Spokane Tribal members. A Spring and Fall General Council meeting is held each year so the Tribal Council can update the Membership of important Tribal issues.

Spokane Tribe's Vision Statement: Our vision is to achieve true sovereignty by attaining self-sufficiency. We will preserve and enhance our traditional values by living and teaching the inherent principles of respect, honor and integrity as embodied in our language and life-ways. We will develop strong leadership through education, accountability, experience and positive reinforcement.

In the early existence of the Spokane Tribe, over three million acres of land were lived upon, protected and respected by the Spokane Indians. The Spokane Indians fished the Spokane River and used the grand Spokane Falls as a gathering place of family and friends. The Spokanes lived along the river in three bands known as the Upper, Middle and Lower Spokane Indians. Depending upon the season of the year, traditional camp sites were lived in.

In January of 1881, President Rutherford B. Hayes, by executive order, formally declared the Spokane Indian Reservation the new and smaller home of the Spokane Indians. The tree bands of Indians were split up and some found new homes which are now known as the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation, the Flathead Indian Reservation, and the Colville Indian Reservation.

Current Reservation

Today, the Spokane Indian Reservation is 157,376 acres in size. Tribal membership as of January 2006 is 2441, strong and growing.

As in the past, national resources are protected by the Spokane Indians.

Today, the Spokane Indian Reservation has:

- 108,874 acres of forest land
- 8,552 acres of agricultural land
- 10,328 acres of lakes
- 25 maintained camp sites

Discussion Questions:
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<th>Column 1: Author/Alvin</th>
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<th>Column 5: Race/Ethnic?</th>
<th>Column 6: De-centered &quot;other&quot; &amp; Anti-W</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/8/1946</td>
<td>N/A trad &amp; trad. people been taken with alcohol</td>
<td>N/A trad. map Magic as part of life anyway</td>
<td>More egalitarian - 8 + 8 play football can use words - Lucy replaces Julius</td>
<td>N/A still defined by race &amp; culture but now, what % one still is</td>
<td>N/A against all that once was sexy N/A caught in mid part &amp; present</td>
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<td>Stories still using to some, others consider them as accessible to mainstream whites</td>
<td>N/A life</td>
<td>N/A life</td>
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<td>Build the Fire = drug &amp; alcohol</td>
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<td>N/A life</td>
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<td>Viagra &amp; penis</td>
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<td>N/A still defined by race &amp; culture but now, what % one still is</td>
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**Notes:**
- "A Drug Called Tradition" by Don, "The Tradition Signal" by Don, Jr. (1945)
“A Drug Called Tradition”

- Magic mushrooms – drugs are the magic, nothing supernatural, though they can make you experience supernatural things. Are drugs a legitimate magical/spiritual experience?
- Pg. 14 – “it’ll be very fucking Indian. Spiritual shit, you know?” – they trivialize their own heritage, or is it just resigned sarcasm? – same concept as Mexican magic – is the magic inherent to the culture? Why?
- Pg 14 – “looked around our world and then poked his head through some hole in the wall into another world. A better world” – for a lot of the native Americans, wouldn’t any other world be better than this one?
- First vision = stealing horse; second vision = ghost dance for dead from smallpox; third vision = singing about Crazy Horse; fourth story = present day, deciding to be real Indians – collective memory to draw on for visions.
- Drug – mock spiritual vision journey pg. 20 – “they have not eaten for days so they know their visions should arrive soon.”
- “Not to slow dance with our skeletons” ??
- “There are things you should learn. Your past is a skeleton walking one step behind you, and your future is a skeleton walking one step in front of you. Maybe you don’t wear a watch, but your skeletons do, and they always know what time it is....”

“The Only Traffic Signal on the Reservation Doesn’t Flash Red Anymore”

- Legends, heroes, and hopes – every culture needs a hero. Here we have a basketball hero – not so different from American culture. Who else do we have as heroes? Who else do they have?
- Magical realism – the realism part for them is that each hero always falls, usually to alcoholism, but they know that there will always be another.
- The power of the stories we tell about the heroes – “flew the length of the court, did a full spin in midair, and then dunked that fucking ball. And I don’t mean it looked like he flew, or it was so beautiful it was almost like he flew. I mean, he flew, period.”
- Pg. 49 – “it’s hard to be optimistic on the reservation. When a glass sits on a table here, people don’t wonder if it’s half filled or half empty. They just hope it’s good beer. Still, Indians have a way of surviving. But it’s almost like Indians can easily survive the big stuff. Mass murder, loss of language and land rights. It’s the small things that hurt the most. The white waitress who wouldn’t take an order, Tonto, the Washington Redskins.”
“Jesus Christ’s Half-Brother is Alive and Well on the Spokane Indian Reservation”
- Naming the baby – unpronounceable in English, but means “He who crawls silently through the grass with a small bow and one bad arrow hunting for enough deer to feed the whole tribe” but we call him James.
- Children are often seen as magical beings, kind of not totally tied to the earth. Indians respect their elders and babies. American culture seems to respect youth and adolescence, the most unwise time in a person’s life. What’s up with that?
- Pg. 114 – “This is my religion” = taking care of James
- The power of silence – the first word should be significant somehow = potato.
Beloved

Toni Morrison Biography:

- Chloe Anthony Wofford born 18 February, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio
- 2nd of 4 children
- Parents moved to Ohio to escape racism in the South
- Father worked three jobs, always well dressed and hard working
- Chloe didn't encounter discrimination till she started dating, very smart kid
- Distrusted whites, learned from her father
- Graduated with honors
- Attended Howard University in D.C., majored in English
- Changed her first name to Toni because people couldn't pronounce Chloe
- Taught introductory English at Texas Southern U
- Returned to Howard U and met Harold Morrison and got married in 1958
- Met and influenced many people who later became part of the Civil Rights movement
- Her marriage went south, so she joined a writer's group where she started the beginnings of "The Bluest Eye"
- Took her son on a trip to Europe before divorcing her husband
- Bluest Eye published in 1970
- Beloved published in 1987, won Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1988
- 1993 Morrison received the Nobel Prize in Literature – 8th woman, first black woman.
- Beloved was released as a movie in 1998 w/ Oprah as Sethe

Margaret Garner Biography:

- Fugitive slave from Kentucky
- Killed one of her children instead of letting them be returned to slavery
- Drowned in a shipwreck while she was being brought back to slavery
- January 1856, a party of 17 slaves arranged to escape together over the frozen Ohio River. Took a sled to the river and crossed on foot.
- Margaret Garner with her husband Robert, their four children, and his parents went to a man named Kite’s house
- They were easily traced to Kite’s house and surrounded. Slaves and masters fought, shots were fired on both sides. Robert was dragged off. Margaret took up a butcher knife and slit her young daughter’s throat. She tried to kill the others, but was overpowered. She went to jail
- Trial lasted two weeks. Judge determined they were still slaves and sent them back to Kentucky. They were a question of property, not human beings.
BELOVED

Author


Race/Ethnic

+ Centred

Gender?

+ Female

Why Mr?

+ Social / Political

Religion/Phil. / Faith

+ Religion

Memory / Remembered

+ Memory

Author's Intentions

+ Purpose

Perceptions of

+ Perception

Reality

+ Reality

Names

+ Names

BELIEVED

Go to giver

Additional notes:

- Names are every one
- History of slavery
- Violence and
- Belief in God
- Family lines
Discussion Questions:

Part I

- Love and the amount of love given by a person is an important topic in this book. Sethe is said to love too much. Paul D says that Sethe loves her children too much, that that could be the reason she killed Beloved. Slave mothers had to learn to detach themselves from their children because they were so often taken from them. Pg. 164 “Your love is too thick.” And Sethe’s response: “Love is or it ain’t. Thin love ain’t love at all.”

- Pg. 5 – payment with what she had to get seven letters to commemorate the daughter she loved best. Ironic cycle – sex = life on top of a gravestone for the child she just killed.

- Pg. 5 – Baby Suggs saying “Not a house in the country ain’t packed to its rafters with some dead Negro’s grief. We lucky this ghost is a baby.” – comparing one grief to another – whose is bigger? Who is more entitled to feel wronged?

- The arrival of Paul D – pg. 8 – walked straight into the pool of red light – the baby’s presence is real and will interact with anyone that comes into its space. Again the issue of a person’s spirit being tied to a place rather than a person. But in this case, it seems as if Beloved’s ghost and later her embodiment is tied to Sethe more so than to the house.

- Sethe’s milk is her most important gift that seemingly no one can take from her because she produces it from her own body to feed the children that also came from inside her. This is the last straw for her – they took her milk, the one thing that she could claim as inherently hers to do with as she thought was best. Pg. 16-17

- Pg. 35 – “It’s gonna hurt, now,’ said Amy. ‘Anything dead coming back to life hurts.’” – the theme of rebirth, a second passage through any type of birth canal.

- Sethe’s way of praying – pg. 35 – just talking. She stopped asking for things because she knew they would be denied to her. It’s better to have low expectations because they there’ll be no disappointment. Pg. 38 – talk-story, and talk-think being a way of communicating with the divine.

- Pg. 36 – being tied to place. Your memory of a place keeps that place alive in your mind even if the physical place itself is burnt to the ground. “Denver picked at her fingernails. ‘If it’s still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies.’” In a way nothing does ever die as long as its passed on. But once the place itself and all those who had a memory of the place die, will it cease to ever have existed?

- Baby Suggs’ obsession with color – what’s this about? Why would that be something to fixate on while you knew you were dying?

- Pg. 50 – Beloved’s rebirth. Images of birth: not having the strength to open her eyes or hold her neck up, and when Sethe sees her for the first time, her water breaks again. This way they are both physically involved and connected in her rebirth. Beloved’s new skin and the clothes of a rich woman.

- One theory of what or who Beloved is is that she was kept locked up by a white man “for his own purposes” and finally escaped, blocking out all of her own memories, and
so was like a newborn. But how would she have known about the earrings or the song? I think there’s something much more complex going on in Beloved. Pg. 63 – “Where your diamonds?”

- Pg. 57 – “Like a familiar, she hovered, never leaving the room Sethe was in unless required and told to.” – much like a small child being a mom wart.
- Pg. 58 – “It became a way to feed her. Just as Denver discovered and relied on the delightful effect sweet things had on Beloved, Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling.”
- Pg. 70 – “Other people went crazy, why couldn’t she? Other people’s brains stopped, turned around and went on to something new, which is what must have happened to Halle.” – Sethe couldn’t afford to go crazy – she had to get her milk to her baby and have another one. She didn’t have the luxury of going crazy, until she snapped in the shed.
- Baby Suggs in the clearing – her message was to rely on no one but yourself. “She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine.” Pg. 88 – You got to love it.
- The 28 days between Sethe’s escape and the murder of Beloved – one moon’s menstrual cycle before she aborted her baby/had her period. Pg. 95
- Denver has some issues of her own. “Solitude had made her secretive – self-manipulated. Years of haunting had dulled her in ways you wouldn’t believe and sharpened her in ways you wouldn’t believe either.” – what do you think is going to happen to Denver eventually?
- Beloved moves Paul D out of the house, rapes him, and forces him out of Sethe’s life. Why? Why do you think she wants him to touch her on the inside part and call her her name?
- The feast for 90 people that grew from a bucket of blackberries. People got angry, self-righteous anger towards Baby Suggs and her fortune at having her grandchildren with her. Even though the black population had to band together in order to survive and make a living, they were nonetheless jealous of those among them who seemed to have it too easy. Pg. 137
- Pg. 141 – Baby Suggs inspecting her hands, like in “Chocolate” – Tita discovers her own hands belong to her and not someone else.
- End of part I – Paul D counts Sethe’s feet and a forest springs up between them. Discuss. Remember Sethe was deeply impacted by what she heard the day that schoolteacher was teaching his pupils to describe her animal characteristics.
Part II

- Even after the dead baby comes back to live, the subject of what actually happened is taboo. Pg. 169 “How did information that had been in the newspaper become a secret that needed to be whispered in a pig yard?”
- Ice skating – mother and two daughters together, repeated “nobody saw them falling” – why? 4x how is this significant?
- Pg. 176 – the song Sethe made up and only she and her children know – she finally knows for sure that Beloved is her daughter.
- Community for blacks during this time was all they had to support one another. If someone needed to be taken in, they shouldn’t have to even ask. Kind of a communist idea – whenever someone needs help, the whole community comes together, assuming that the same would be done for them should they ever need it. Pg. 186
- Pg. 198 – comparison to the jungle. “But it wasn’t the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it...Made them bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be...the red gums were their own.”
- Pg. 200 – chapter in Sethe’s voice – all claim possession of one another – Sethe claims Beloved as hers. “She my daughter. She mine.”
- Pg. 205 – chapter in Devner’s voice – also claims Beloved as her own. “I swallowed her blood right along with my mother’s milk.” – she was most attuned to the baby ghost.
- Pg. 206 – another warning about loving too much.
- Pg. 210 – chapter in Beloved’s voice, very disjointed, her stream-of-consciousness about her journey through death and coming back to life.
- Pg. 214 – Beloved claims Sethe as her own. Pg. 217 “You are mine You are mine You are mine” – how could this strong of a bond be dangerous?
Part III

- Now begins the fighting. After the initial reunion, Beloved wants to know why her mother left her behind. Pg. 241
- The role is beginning to reverse—"It dawnded on Denver that if Sethe didn’t wake up on morning and pick up a knife, Beloved might." Pg. 242. Denver switches to protecting her mother rather than Beloved.
- Lady Jones, the schoolteacher for the black children helps anyone and everyone. She's mixed, and so is "indiscriminately polite, saving her real affection for the unpicked children of Cincinnati." Pg. 247. It wouldn’t matter to her who asked for help because she's been discriminated against from both sides of the race line.
- Pg. 248 — "Denver looked up at her. She did not know it then, but it was the word ‘baby,’ said softly and with such kindness, that inaugurated her life in the world as a woman." — Denver has ventured outside of 124 for the first time in years, and must now take on the responsibility of taking care of her mother and Beloved because they are incapable. Denver has, in a sense, become a mother now.
- Discuss these role reversals — Sethe becomes like a child, Beloved is pregnant, Denver has to be care-giver to both.
- Pg. 251 — "She might have to work the slaughterhouse yard, but not her daughter." — the next generation never quite understands the sacrifices and plans made to make their lives better than that of their parents.
- Why was Beloved seen running down to the stream as a naked woman with fish for hair?
- Last two pages — "Disremembered" — no longer a member of the community of someone's mind, or collective memory. Rememory — remembering.
- Not a story to pass on, but it has been passed on and needs to be read. What do you think Morrison's intentions were in telling this story?

Activity:

Most slaves didn’t know exactly who their family was, and this made it complicated to know where you’re going if you don’t know where you came from. Take a look at your own family members, and try to imagine what pieces of your knowledge of yourself would be missing had you never known your mother/father/grandparents?
**Whale Rider**

**Witi Ihimaera Biography:**

- Born in Gisborne in 1944
- First Maori to publish both short stories and a novel
- Born into a prominent Maori family that can trace its ancestry back to Rongowhakaata and Ngati Porou.
- His stories are primarily cultural, secondarily political
- Attended Auckland University but did not complete his degree
- Worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a writer about the Maori
- He’s won several awards for his writing and traveled extensively
- Whale Rider was written in New York in only three weeks, published in 1987
- His writing has shifted to openly portray his homosexuality

> His fiction’s initial purpose, ‘to establish and describe the emotional landscape of the Maori people’, suddenly seemed to him less important than describing the political and social reality.

**Maori Information:**

- Indigenous people of New Zealand – Polynesian
- Only about 10% of the country’s population
- Native language – Maoritanga: related to Tahitian and Hawaiian.
- Believed to have migrated from Polynesia in canoes during the 9th-13th cent.
- First European to “discover” the Maori was Abel Tasman (Dutch).
- British James Cooke was second.
- War and disease lowered the Maori population when Europeans came regularly
- 1840 – Britain and Maori leaders signed the Treaty of Waitangi – British rule, granted Maori British citizenship and land rights. (still disputed)
- Population has risen to about 600,000, primarily residing on the Northern Island
- Legend says that Maori came from “Hawaiki” 1000 years ago.
- Another theory says they migrated from China originally through the Pacific
- All literature, stories, etc. were passed down orally, including songs
- Haka = war dance
- Greeting is pressing noses together
- Tattoos are very important – full face tattoos (moko) are mostly worn by men
- Female tattoos are restricted to the chin, upper lip, and nostrils
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Social / Political</th>
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<td>Whaite</td>
<td>Colonialization</td>
<td>Religion + mystery</td>
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<td>Nairn</td>
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<th>Passages</th>
<th>Misc.</th>
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<td>Ancient traditions</td>
<td>Author's note for his daughter</td>
<td>Have to keep the traditions solidifying home in a life + teach children a love for the culture, a physical place + school ceremony</td>
<td>Burial of cord: + school ceremony</td>
<td>Pg 30-31: Spears give life + teach children Naming - Kahu</td>
<td>Film</td>
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<td>+ Hope for a Messiah</td>
<td>+ Author's note for his daughter</td>
<td>+ Have to keep the traditions: solidifying home in a life + teach children a love for the culture, a physical place + school ceremony</td>
<td>Pg 56-57: Flute, mele</td>
<td>Language games</td>
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<td>+ the unexpected</td>
<td>+ the unexpected</td>
<td>+ Burial of cord: + school ceremony</td>
<td>+ Flute, mele: + school ceremony</td>
<td>Naming - Kahu</td>
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<td>+ Fulfillment of tasks</td>
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<td>To prove one is worthy to lead</td>
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<td>Story of 1st man</td>
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<td>Talking of whales</td>
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"Whale Rider"
Discussion Questions:

Prologue:

The earth as a character, not just personified, but given a personality, cognition, emotions, and agency.

These four pages are a retelling of the Maori creation story – what elements can we pick out that are similar to other creation stories such as Adam and Eve, some Native American creation myths, Greek myths, etc.?

Spring:

Ph. 13 – “but when Kahu was born, well, we were looking the other way” – similar to when Jesus was born – messiahs are not often recognized at first – they must prove themselves. How do you think Kahu will be able to prove herself?

Gender – the eldest daughter. Biologically, it had to happen sometime that the firstborn would be a girl. Why do you suppose the cultural leadership system was built so insistently around always having a male be the firstborn?

Pg. 19 – “Now I shall make myself a man” – even strong females feel they have to call on their masculine side in order to really affect change and take charge of a dangerous situation.

Summer:

Italicized part – there has been a split between man and nature – similar to the fall from the garden of Eden, the great whale remembers a time when he played with, lived with, and loved a human being. The last spear will bring man and nature back together in harmony again.

Pg. 30 – “They taught oneness.”

Pg. 29 – again we see people’s characteristics and destinies being tied to their names and the geographic places to which they belong. Because Kahu has been named after her father’s tribe, and her birth cord is buried in that village, she is destined to return there.

Pg. 39-40 – What kinds of common elements can we draw from Maori religious tradition that seems to span across all religions?
Autumn:

Pg. 63 — “They weren’t embarrassed, but hiding the way they lived was one way of maintaining the respect.” – Traditional Maori ways are rather strict regarding gender roles and expectations for children’s futures. Holding onto the past can often impede progression and survival into the future.

Pg. 66 – “but sometimes love becomes a power game between the ambitions that parents have for their children and the ambitions that children have for themselves.” – going back to Beloved – it’s not about having control over your own destiny, it’s about trying to keep someone else from gaining control over you, or you gaining control over them first.

At the end of each chapter are the words “Haumi e, hui e, taiki e. Let it be done.” What significance does this have regarding the seeming sacred finality of the phrase? The events have happened, why does it need to be said? To recognize that it has happened, perhaps?

Pg. 88 – test as rite of passage – retrieving the stone. What kinds of rights of passage do we have in our culture? What purpose do they serve? Are they worthy of the effort that goes into completing these tasks?

Winter:

The last whale ride – pg. 96

Pg. 105 – “Talk to the whales. They understand. They understand.” Communication is no longer possible between man and whales, but perhaps understanding can still go one way?

Pg. – 116 ***  Maori believe in a Magically Realistic existence.
The Alchemist

Paolo Coelho Biography:

- Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1947, currently lives there.
- Catholic, and believes all religions point to the same light.
- Published first book when he was 37, always wanted to be a writer.
- Originally in law school, quit and travelled South America, North Africa, Mexico, & Europe.
- Also worked as a successful songwriter.
- Imprisoned and tortured in 1974 by military dictatorship.
- Alchemist was published in 1988. Blending story-telling into parables.
- Alchemist has been translated into 41 languages.

Urim and Thummim:

- Translated from Hebrew, they mean "lights and perfections" or "revelation and truth"
- One of three methods of divine communication mentioned in Samuel (dreams, prophets, and the stones)
- The stones were lost, and no legitimate record of them appears after the death of David.
- Kept in the breastplate of the high priest

Pilgrimage of Santiago de Compostela:

- The Way of St. James is a collection of routes coming from all over Europe to end at Santiago de Compostela in NW Spain.
- Marked with shells all along the way to let travelers know they were going the right way
- Some people have travelled it on their knees as an act of piety.
- Finisterre, near Santiago, was thought to be the end of the world in medieval times.
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<tr>
<td>Brought up Catholic</td>
<td>Everyone must remember what their purpose in life is &amp; fulfill that one obligation.</td>
<td>How are dreams related to reality? Pg. 21 - personal legend</td>
<td>Movie - 2009* Name: Santiago</td>
<td>Movie #</td>
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<td>Universal Soul</td>
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<td>Are they randomly assigned? Pg. 29 - beginner's luck.</td>
<td>Patron St. of Spain.</td>
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<td>Beginners luck =&gt;</td>
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<td>Processing life? or prophecy? Pg. 30 - story of wise man.</td>
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<td>Everything conspires in your favor</td>
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<td>&quot;Mahluko&quot; - it is so, let it be done. Pg. 98 - Desert woman</td>
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<td>Islam</td>
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<td>Omens as part of everyday life. Pg. 143 - Wind</td>
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<td>Universal Language</td>
<td>Expression of his own awakening</td>
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<td>Pg. 162 - other men of recurrent dreams</td>
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Discussion Questions:

Day One:
- Comment on the use of dreams in this part: do you think Santiago gives too little or too much importance to his dream? What do you think about recurring dreams?
- How does the dream work in this story as a motivating incident? Do you think it’s effective?
- What do you think about the old King? How does his character serve the story; what is magical about him?
- What qualities does Santiago possess that allows him to even start on his journey in the first place, and then to keep going?
- How do the convergence/clash of religions work in this story? Does it seem realistic to you? What do you think of Santiago’s own religious expression?
- This seems to me to be quite far removed from our own society regarding how we deal with dreams/religion/how we would handle looking for our personal legend. Let’s examine some of these differences. What’s magical about the book vs. our own realities?

Day Two:
- Discuss Santiago’s relationship with the Englishman. This is a coming together of East and West – what does the one learn from the other?
- How can we see from their interactions the vast differences in how the world is perceived in the east vs. west?
- Alchemy is brought up again and again in works of fantasy and journeys. Do you think alchemy should be taken as a legitimate science, or could it be a metaphor for something? What?
- In 100 Years of Solitude, Melquiades teaches José Arcadio Buendía the principles of alchemy, but José is unable to make gold. The alchemist Santiago meets does make gold – how does this lend itself to perhaps a more magical perspective than a realistic one?
- Do we have any omens that we pay attention to in our own lives? What about superstitions? Can they be considered one and the same? We create patterns that we believe in, but couldn’t some of those be the world trying to communicate with us?

Day Three:
- Discuss Santiago turning himself into the wind – what purpose does this serve? Santiago is finally learning how to communicate with the universe, therefore able to discover his personal treasure. – it is one of the last lessons he must learn.
- The ending – why send him on such a long journey, if the treasure was buried right under his head in the first place? Inertia would have made him ungrateful.
- Is the treasure really the gold in the chest, or is it Fatima? Would he have been unhappy with the merchant’s daughter and a chest of gold?
The Final Syllabus
*Magical Realism*

Honors 390V  Monday, Wednesday 4-4:50

Dr. Deborah Mix  
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Office Hours: T 1-2 in RB 295

Thiana Rarick  
tqrarick@gmail.com  
Office hours: M, W 3-4; by appt. in CA 204

Overview:
In this course we will concentrate on an exciting and relatively recent literary genre. Magical Realism, as we will come to find, has been defined and debated for many years, and is an immensely popular literary style throughout the world. We will collaboratively develop a working definition of magical realism, as well as its impacts on the people who write and read these works. We have drawn on literary traditions from many different cultural backgrounds, covering a broad spectrum of themes and issues. As in any literary genre, patterns have emerged, leading us to some overarching questions about magical realism. Such questions include, “how is the de-centered other in society portrayed?” “Is magical realism a genre of the third world?” “Does magical realism portray legitimate experiences of the author and his or her characters?” “How can this genre be used as a form of political protest?” These are just a few of the issues we will be tackling in this course.

Required materials:
- One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez
- Like Water for Chocolate by Laura Esquivel
- Beloved by Toni Morrison
- Whale Rider by Witi Ihimaera
- The Alchemist by Paolo Coelho
- In addition to these, we will be providing a packet of articles and short stories by Salman Rushdie, Sherman Alexie, and Maxine Hong Kingston

If you have a disability, medical condition, or other special needs, please see us within the first week of classes to let us know if you need special accommodations.
Classroom Expectations:
  - No cell phones, no texting etc.
  - No laptops.
  - No knitting.
  - Be on time and bring materials with you.
  - Check drama at the door.
  - Don’t be finishing the reading assignment in the lobby.
  - Uphold academic honestly policies.
  - This is a unique classroom situation, please be patient with us. We are doing our best to work out kinks and get it to run smoothly.
  - Respect us and your peers as you would like to be respected.

Attendance policy:
3 unexcused absences allowed to be used at your discretion. Use them wisely because once you reach three, we need documentation.

Participation:
Since this is going to be a discussion-based class, it will run much more smoothly if everyone shows up ready to participate. We expect everyone to have read the assignments and to be ready to discuss and participate in each and every class. To facilitate these discussions, we ask that everyone bring a quoted passage with page number to class and be ready to discuss why you found it significant and relevant. We hope that with such a small group we can manage some rather in depth discussions, so let’s try to get to know each other and be comfortable sharing our ideas. Participation counts for 25% of your grade, so it essential that you come and speak up!

Assignments:
Grading scale:
A 90%-100%
B 80%-89%
C 70%-79%
D 60%-69%
F 50%-59%

Your grade consists of:
Journals 15%
Participation 25%
Midterm project 30%
Final project 30%
Journals:
Once a week you will need to write a one-page double-spaced informal reflective journal over what we're reading/doing in class. This does have to be in complete sentences, but not a formal essay. I will give you an example of a good and bad journal. Think about the big topics we've talked about in class such as

- What makes this piece Magical Realism?
- How does MR add to this story where a strictly fantastical or realistic narrative would fall short?
- What sorts of gender issues are present and how are they dealt with?
- Do you sense any Anti-Western sentiments?
- Do you see anything that could be considered foreshadowing?
- What do you think the author's intentions were in writing this?
- Pick a poignant passage and expand on it in depth.
- How is this passage/work in dialogue with another one?

Pick out one to three of these or anything else you feel is relevant and write about it analytically. It is not enough to simply pull out an interesting quote and say you thought it was interesting. You need to be reading critically through your lenses to get at the underlying authorial intentions and themes of these works. To be turned in at the beginning of class each Wednesday. Will be returned the following Monday. These will be graded on a 20 point scale.

Midterm Project:
Select a short story that interests you from "Magical Realism: an Anthology" and read it carefully. You will then need to give a detailed report over:

- The story, basic plot summary, setting, characters, etc.
- The author: basic facts, race, ethnicity, political affiliations, religious beliefs, awards, etc. that is relevant to this story
- Visual aid is required: this can be a power point presentation, a handout (enough copies for everyone) or a poster. More details will follow when the times gets closer.

Final Project:
The final project is a creative project that you get to design yourself. Some examples might include:

- An original magical realist story (slightly longer than the midterm)
- Original song lyrics based on a novel we read
- A diorama of a poignant scene
- A painting or drawing of a novel/scene/character/etc.
- Draw or make little models of costumes/clothes for a set of characters
- Write and perform a skit (this can be done in small groups)
We do ask that you run ideas by us before starting, but you have a lot of freedom here. In addition to the creative part itself, you will have to write a two-page accompanying explanation or defense of your work. For instance, if you choose to paint or draw something, include such information as the symbols you used and why; and what makes your work a valid interpretation of the material. For something like an original story, we expect to see good character and plot development, as well as evidence of critical editing being done. Details can be worked out individually during our conferences.

Calendar:

12 January: Introductions, break assignment discussion  
HW: 100 pg. 1-37; Article “Rediscovering”

14 January: *100 Years of Solitude*, defining the genre  
HW: 100 pg. 38-144

19 January: No class – MLK day

21 January: *100 Years of Solitude*  
HW: 100 pg. 145-207

26 January: *100 Years of Solitude*  
HW: 100 pg. 208-273

28 January: *100 Years of Solitude*  
HW: 100 pg. 274-360

2 February: *100 Years of Solitude*  
HW: 100 finish

4 February: *100 Years of Solitude*  
HW: Chocolate January-April

9 February: *Like Water for Chocolate*  
HW: *Chocolate* May-September

11 February: *Like Water for Chocolate*  
HW: *Chocolate* October-December

16 February: *Like Water for Chocolate*  
HW: “White Tigers” by Kingston

18 February: “White Tigers”  
HW: “At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers,” and “The Prophet’s Hair” (Rushdie)
23 February: Salman Rushdie
   HW: Sherman Alexie short stories from *The Lone Ranger and Tonto*...

25 February: Sherman Alexie
   HW: Midterm project

2 March: Sherman Alexie, make up day, begin midterm presentations
   HW:

4 March: Midterm presentations, Intro to *Beloved*
   HW: Part I of *Beloved*

9-13 March: Spring Break!

16 March: *Beloved*
   HW: *Beloved* pg. 170-209

18 March: *Beloved*
   HW: *Beloved* pg. 210-235

23 March: *Beloved*
   HW: *Beloved* part III

25 March: *Beloved*
   HW: Article: “Cross-cultural Variants”

30 March: *Beloved*, article discussion
   HW:

1 April: *Beloved*
   HW: *Whale Rider*: Spring & Summer

6 April: *Whale Rider*
   HW: *Whale Rider*: finish

8 April: *Magical Realism in Art*
   HW: *Whale Rider*: finish

13 April: *Whale Rider*
   HW: *Alchemist* part One

15 April: *The Alchemist*
   HW: *Alchemist* pg. 51-104

20 April: *The Alchemist*
   HW: *Alchemist* finish
22 April: The Alchemist  
    HW: Final projects

27 April: Film  
    HW: Final projects

29 April: Film  
    HW: Final projects

Final Day: Final project presentations
Examples of Student Journals
Katie Pourcho
Honors 390V
Magical Realism
Journal 2

The character of Pilar Ternera greatly intrigues me. From this week's reading, I couldn't help but notice the complexities of mother and son relationships that I found linked to her character. I believe Sigmund Freud would have a hay day had he been given the opportunity to read this novel. Marquez incorporates Oedipal allusions, as one would add a pinch of salt to a bowl of stew. I first encountered with this interaction on page 30 from the first reading. After being "heaved about like a sack of potatoes" by Pilar Ternera, José Arcadio no longer smells the musty scent of his lover, "but of ammonia," as scent associated with his mother. His nose instantly conjures the "face of Ursula." "Maternal tenderness" is often associated with sex (74). When Aureliano lustfully retreats to Pilar Ternera, she comforts him by saying, "My poor child (78). Pilar Ternera later becomes an "irresistible obsession" (122) to her own son, Arcadio, whom she fought for (68) yet refused to raise. "As God as her witness," she refuses his request despite her desire to make her son happy (122).

It might be interesting to note the contrasting motifs of childhood innocence and adulthood worldliness concerning the novel's female characters. Pilar Ternera provides a harsh contrast to Aureliano's child-bride, Remedios. In a scene mentioned previously, the narrator reveals the disturbing age difference between the two females. On one hand, "her skin had become wrinkled, her breasts had withered," and, "the coals had gone out of her heart" (74). The other, still wet the bed (76), had not begun menstruation till a month before the wedding (87), and "preferred her dolls to the man" (81). I am interested to see where this character will go.
Fernanda del Carpio is a self-righteous woman who prides herself on propriety and wealth. While her family was wealthy for a time, that wealth has been lost. However, still believing herself to be a queen, she does not fit into the Buendía family. She immediately begins making changes to the lifestyles of the Buendía household attempting to instill her religious beliefs into the family and causing it to lose all life and joy. During this transition, Fernanda’s new husband is off with Petra Cotes, his former lover, who brings life and fertility to his livestock. Although Aureliano Segundo is now married, Petra has faith in his return stating, “the only candle that will make him come is always lighted” (220). While the reader should look down on Petra and feel sorry for Fernanda, he cannot because of the personalities each woman possesses. Through this love triangle, Marquez is playing with the roles of women by causing the reader to sympathize with Petra, when normally, a reader would not sympathize with a mistress. Marquez almost gives her pity by comparing her to the wretched, pious Fernanda. Perhaps it is just me, but I cannot stand people who think they are above others, as Fernanda does. Also, Petra’s mysterious ability to bring fertility to Aureliano Segundo’s farm separates her from Fernanda by showing her ties to nature and the earth, while as Fernanda is closely tied to wealth and material possessions. Here, Marquez is emphasizing the natural bond between women and nature through the process of conception. Petra promotes fertility and life; consequently, she is the ideal woman in comparison to Fernanda who refuses to share her body with her own husband.
The Anti-western sentiments are starting to become more and more apparent with the progression of the novel. During our first reading assignment I remember noticing how primitive and simple the village of Macondo seemed, where there were only a certain number of people and they all worked together. The occasional appearance of the gypsies with their "wonders" of modern technology only added to the idea that Macondo was not very technologically advanced, and thus adding to the simplicity of the village. When Father Nicanor Reyna comes into town he brings with him a significant enough sense of rules and twisted-ness that can be found with Western religion. To me the emphasis of conversion of gentiles is not surprising, but it would seem that legalization of concubinage would seem contradictory (81). His begging of alms for the creation of his elaborate church also represents the money-driven aspects of the Western Christianity, and the emphasis placed on Rebeca's being married in the church, delaying her wedding, also brings ultimate grief to the Buendia family. The war with the Liberal versus Conservative parties leads to the struggles of (Colonel) Aureliano Buendia, the death of Arcadio, the death of Moscote, and of course the grief and suffering of Ursula. The tragedies surrounding these events suggest that the introduction of Western ideas hinder optimal happiness.

Meanwhile I am fascinated by the contrasting lives of Ursula and José Arcadio Buendia. Even though they are husband and wife, which to me would suggest they are somewhere around the same age, it seems as if Ursula were much younger than José Arcadio Buendia because she is still sharp and active while he wastes away under a tree. Perhaps Márquez is trying to make a statement about imagination and reason as time progresses: as the world becomes more complicated with Western ideas, imagination and exploration fades away while reason becomes more and more confused with the newly-founded chaos in the world. Of course, I would not agree entirely with this statement, but that is the message I have interpreted thus far in this reading.
This part of the novel was really upsetting to me in terms of the characters' relationships with each other. There is a huge amount of incest between the members of the Buendia family and weird relationships between siblings or between children and their parents. I feel Amaranta is the worst of all of the characters, and I absolutely cannot stand her in the story.

When I was reading this book for the first time, I was unsure at this point in the story what her future relationships with Rebeca and Aureliano Jose would be like (as we are getting a pretty good idea in this part of the story). After the way she treated Rebeca in her younger years, I am actually really glad to see her end up alone.

Besides Melquiades, Pietro Crespi was my favorite character. In contrast to the Buendia family and the people of Macondo, he seemed so normal. I wonder if this is a glimpse into the outside world from what we are seeing in the rest of the book. To me, this is similar to the first part of the book when Jose Arcadio Buendia says, "Right there across the river there are all kinds of magical instruments while we keep on living like donkeys" (8). The introduction of and development of Pietro Crespi as a character at this point in the novel really caused me to sit back and wonder what is happening outside of Macondo. Up until this point in the story, I thought Macondo was really behind the times and disconnected from the rest of society.

(Looking forward: I still believed this right up until the end when Amaranta Ursula and her husband, Gaston, brought new technology and fashion back to Macondo from Europe, further solidifying my ideas that Macondo always was cut off from the rest of the world in the past and would be into the future.)
The first section of *Like Water for Chocolate* immediately initiates the feel of magical realism. The labor with Tita was onset by tears, amid the kitchen. This image of Tita being “washed into the world on a great tide of tears that spilled over the edge of the table and flooded across the kitchen floor” (6) may be foreshadowing the despair that will follow her throughout her life. Also, being born in the kitchen seemed to show that she had the calling to be a magnificent cook.

Tita also is able to form breast milk for Roberto, her nephew. Tita explains, “it wasn’t possible for an unmarried woman to have milk, short of supernatural act, unheard of in these times” (76). However, this story seems parallel to the Bible. Tita has become a “Virgin Mary” of some sort. Also, this could be disorder trying to put things back into order, since Pedro desired Tita, and ultimately she is the one who has the ability to nurture the child. This unnatural ability seems to bring her and Pedro closer.

Similarly, the soldiers parallel Mama Elena. They arrive at the ranch and capture most of the doves that Tita has had since birth. Just as Mama Elena took the opportunity to nurture Robert, the soldiers took away the opportunity to nurture the only living things left that she could. However, she finds one newborn pigeon left, and begins to nurture and devote an abnormal amount of time to the bird. She “placed the pigeon between her breasts to free her hands for the dangerous ladder...and her main interest lay in feeding the pathetic baby pigeon” (92-93). She replaces Roberto a pigeon, the only thing with a heartbeat that she can love.
Like Water for Chocolate has so far been a very easy read—light and entertaining, the cooking tales and recipes are woven into the story of the novel so well that I hardly notice when she switches from one topic to the other. The interrelatedness of the two subjects, the characters and the food prepared by and for them, is fun and refreshing, and I’ve found that I am really enjoying this book. It’s also very clear that this is a work of magical realism. The effects that the food has on the people in the book, from Gertrudis running off naked in a pre-orgasmic heat to the wedding cake that makes all who eat it weep, and other things such as ghosts and spirits etc. are all hallmarks of magical realism. The characters, though, are what make this novel.

My favorite character is Nacha. I like the steadiness that she provides for Tita and I respect her skills in the kitchen. My least favorite character is Mama Elena of course. I can’t fathom what kind of person would think that enslaving one of her children until her death is excusable. I don’t even understand why such a custom would exist! Wouldn’t the mother simply live with one of her children when she was too old to care for herself? I thought that was what the usual custom was, even back then. Mama Elena is a truly despicable person though. I can’t even think of one redeeming characteristic she might possess. Her constant griping at Tita is incredibly aggravating too; “it seemed not even after you knew that death meant no sympathy that Mama Elena’s genius was for finding fault” (Esquivel, 95). Even though it is revealed later in the book that Mama Elena had a love in her youth that she couldn’t have, much the same as Tita, it doesn’t excuse her behavior and downright awfulness.

Though Mama Elena is Tita’s mother, I will never understand why one person feels they have the right to dictate the life of another. Perhaps the book is an allegory for slavery, how unjust the practice is, especially if it is interfamilial. Tita’s fate seems to be decided for her already—I don’t know if she’ll ever get to be with Pedro.
"White Tigers" was a very interesting short story. The narrative style was similar to free verse almost, even though the story lines were obviously planned out. I enjoyed the story, but must admit that the transitions in some areas were confusing, especially the initial transition from what had seemed to be a medieval Chinese-era warrior tale to the semi-modern era and immigrant Chinese problems in America. The sudden emphasis on the worth of daughters and women was also jarring at first – I had caught the "you need to be strong and fight against your stereotypical and expected roles" theme at the beginning, but had no idea that it would take the harsh tone that it did towards the end of the story.

I really enjoyed some of her imagery in the beginning of the story, specifically the parts about the pearls and the dragon. My favorite passage out of this section was "I learned to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes. Pearls are bone marrow; pearls come from oysters. The dragon lives in the sky, ocean, marshes, and mountains; and the mountains are also its cranium." The idea of something so vast and unknown was interesting to me, and I wondered if the dragon was a metaphor for a religious sort of faith in the earth and what it’s composed of. The author referenced numerous animals and physical formations found on the Earth while describing the dragon, and it appeared to me that the dragon was either a metaphor for a spiritual bond connecting everything on our planet or was a metaphor for the strength and power of a people. The dragon could represent the thoughts, hopes, and dreams of everyone living in China.

If the dragon was unknowable, yet you were on and in and a part of it at all times, doesn’t it have to be something that you are part of, but not completely? Something that you are a part of but also completely unaware of at the same time. The dragon, described as impossible to see all of at once, resembles the frustrations and problems of the immigrant Chinese in America and the vast army accrued by the swordswoman at the same time. The dragon is China, and the people of China are the dragon, the people are the Earth and everything in it is connected.
White Tigers speaks to me about the power of words. After a brief example of a woman of power who “gave the world a new martial art” (19), she talks about how her mother used to tell her stories, and the effect that those stories had on her. It is obvious that she loved these stories, and she would let them completely envelop her: “I couldn’t tell where the stories left off and the dreams began, her voice the voice of the heroines in my sleep” (19), and “At last I saw that I too had been in the presence of great power, my mother talking-story” (19-20). Then, in the same way she used to hear her mother’s stories, she slips into a dream and tells us a modified version of Fa Mu Lan through her own eyes. She tells us this great, epic story about a woman who leads her own army of men and can do anything she wants to, but is still affected by words: “‘Girls are maggots in the rice.’ ‘It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters.’” He quoted to me the sayings I hated” (43).

In the next section she is back to talking about her own life. She talks about how much of a negative affect the words in her life could have on her, like being told she is a “bad girl,” or when her uncle would get her hopes up and then shout “No girls!” (47) at her and her sisters. She tells us the Chinese word for the female ‘I’ is the same as ‘slave,’ “Break the women with their own tongues!” (47). Not only do the women have to physically bind themselves (their feet) but they have to mentally bind themselves by calling themselves slaves! I was definitely disgusted when I read that.

She ends by telling us she can use words positively. “The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar” (53). Even by using the word ‘swordswOMan’ she is using her words to fight. Just like how Fa Mu Lan in her story could pull her sword out of the air, Kingston is saying she can pull her words from the air and use them in her battles. “The reporting is the vengeance...” (53). She can use her words in her revenge against the people who called her “bad girl,” or would say “all girls” in such a negative way. She told us her version of Fa Mu Lan so she could tell us that, with her words, she is just as powerful.
My favorite quote of this short story was "What price tolerance if the intolerant are not tolerated too" (92)? This idea just struck me as completely true. So often people preach tolerance of others' ideas and lifestyles, yet we refuse to tolerate those people who go against our own ideas. It really is a hypocritical thought process when people cannot accept that their ideas may be disagreed with. This also connects to the idea that "We, the public, are easily, lethally offended. We have come to think of taking offence as a fundamental right" (89). These two separate quotes go hand in hand when it comes to our own opinions. Once we formulate an opinion, we believe it to be true and often become offended once someone wishes to challenge our beliefs. We expect our opinions to be tolerated and accepted as a personal belief, but we fail to tolerate the opinions of other people. To put this more concretely, we can examine it in a basic argument. For example, abortion is something people often have a strong toward. Person A may feel abortion is morally wrong. He stands by his opinion and incorporates it into his moral character. Person B, on the other hand, may feel that abortion should remain a woman's personal choice. While both people expect their opinion to be respected, they do not always take it upon themselves to show respect toward the opposing party. Hence, they are refusing to tolerate what they view as intolerable. This scenario plays out in practically every moral debate known to man. We demand tolerance but so often refuse to give it to others. I just felt like the author really hit this idea right on and, I commend the author for recognizing our human error.
Beloved was truly an excellent work, worthy of every single bit of praise that it received. I agree with you that it is a novel requiring more than one read-through though – establishing a linear time-line for the book would be quite the surmountable task on its own, even without tackling the themes running through the book and its many many allegorical aspects. Once I got through the complex language, I fell in love with it, and would gladly read more of Toni Morrison’s novels. The end of the book was so poignant, so moving, I nearly cried while I was finishing it. Sethe’s downfall was an inevitability and a tragedy – never has a stronger heroine undergone such hardship in any other novel that I have read.

I do not have adequate time to fully flesh out this theory, but I think it can be argued that Sethe’s downfall was not the fault of Beloved, but the fault of those who shunned her for killing her baby. Their action (or inaction, however you take it) was what left Sethe and Denver alone in the house with the baby ghost, susceptible to its sadness and anger, when they could have rallied together as a community to help them be rid of it. Also, at the end, it is only when the townswomen come back to 124 that Sethe becomes completely insane and attempts to murder Mr. Bodwin – before that, she had been going crazy, but had had no reason to go outside and therefore no reason to attack another man. The women aren’t even thinking of Sethe as they approach the house; they’re thinking about themselves as “younger, stronger, even as little girls lying in the grass asleep” (258). The ringleader of this little group also is the most cold-hearted woman in town, and to think that she is attempting to help Sethe out of a sense of compassion is foolish at best. Hmm

Like I said, it’s difficult to flesh this out fully, but it appears to me that Beloved is simply a manifestation of the ire of the townspeople, come to fruition after a long time. Sethe was made into what the town thought she was, a batshit crazy woman not deserving the comforts of a social life amongst her peers. In the end though, Paul D brings some final peace to Sethe in telling her “You your best thing Sethe. You are” (273). When it comes down to it, I believe that that is the true essence of Beloved.

Great thoughts 20/0
Toni Morrison purposefully sets up the book so each character represents something meaningful. Sethe reflects the present, Beloved represents the past, and Denver represents the future. Denver, specifically, represents the future, because she is the future generations who will never experience slavery. Unlike Sethe, she will never have the past haunt her. Denver also serves a bridge that connects Sethe to the community, and with the help of the community Sethe is saved from Beloved’s parasitic ways. Ella, the leader of the women who rescue Sethe, brings out Toni Morrison’s point when it explains, “Ella didn’t like the idea of past errors taking possession of the present” (302). Beloved stands for the haunting past of slavery. Just as the past haunts Sethe, so does Beloved, and soon she begins to consume her.

The last chapter seems almost like a cadence from a distant voice. The phrase, “This is not a story to pass on” (324) seems like a warning. However, that seems to be the purpose of this book. Beloved passes on the hardships of slavery, and many of these memories have been forgotten because it is a very touchy subject. More importantly, I believe that Toni Morrison is trying to get us not to forget the past, but to not dwell in it either. The past must be remembered to keep us moving forward. The past has an impact on the future, so we must understand the past in order to understand our present, and to progress. In Beloved the past was resurrected, which was a painful process for the family members of 124, and can still be a painful process in today’s society.
Nathan Fisher

Journal 10

I must say I disagree with this article's assumptions about western culture dominating all others, and treating the Europeans as unanimous with that idea of culture. For one, many religious beliefs and ancient myths have fallen prey to and are lost from memory due to Christianity in Europe. On 89, the quote from Zamora and Faris, "-often non-Western cultural systems that privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, tradition over innovation," is insulting to the "Western" cultures that are often neglected and lumped into the whole: Druidism, Norse mythology, Greek gods and goddesses. It sounds to me as though they are saying that western culture cannot be a cross culture within itself and will always follow one mindset, that they cannot create a magical realist piece without having a heritage from distant areas such as African-European, Chinese-American. I agree with Amaryll criticizing Alejo Carpentier for, "attempting to appropriate a narrative mode in order to boost the status of a geographical location's literary tradition."

Magical realism does not just belong to one group or area, because we can argue the magical realism of any religion with a creation story or central figurehead. I mean long before South America was colonized, the actual man who is Buddha was alive, and did indeed give up his princely life, and the stories about him such as his birth from his mother's side are magical realistic. As for using it to be a literary tool or it coming naturally, it cannot be judged easily, for it may come naturally to someone in a very Western upbringing who looks at the world through a much different perspective. They are called artists for a reason.
Two summers ago, I traveled west across the United States, seeing the sights and national landmarks and having one final family trip before I went off to college. As I was out there, I drove through some Indian reservations and was absolutely appalled at the conditions there. Sherman Alexie’s portrayal of the reservations then did not strike me as overdone or harsh – his narration was a very accurate depiction of the absolute hopelessness that emanates from such places. There really was only one traffic light on the reservation I saw too, so I felt like I was reading about the reservation I had been to. It was a really eerie feeling of déjà vu, and helped me to connect to the characters in a way I’d bet is different than my classmates.

I noticed a few running ideas as I was reading, most notably the allusions to horse-riding, the notion that no one on the reservation is ever a child, that the reservation is a world outside of “our” (the white man’s) world, the importance of basketball, and the enormous problem drinking has had on the lives of the Native Americans. The theme that really stuck with me though was the idea that there “ain’t no children on a reservation” (Alexie, 50). The age of the Indians on the reservation is just as variable as it is in any population, but everyone there carries an old-ness with them that isn’t found in the outside world. The description of young James’ eyes in “Jesus Christ’s Half-Brother is Alive and Well on the Spokane Indian Reservation” really describes what I want to say the best – “he’s got eyes that are ancient and old and dark like a castle or a lake where the turtles go to die and sometimes even to live” (Alexie, 116). I think that Alexie is trying to convey the history carried by the Native Americans as a people. They’ve survived disease and destruction and terrorism on such a broad scale, it’s no wonder that they are all born old, but not old in the physical sense – old in a spiritual sense. This burden of knowledge seems to weigh them down at times.
I really enjoyed these short stories and wouldn't mind reading more of Sherman Alexie's works.

I thought he did a good job of getting his themes across without bogging his writing down. The magic in these works was subtle too, which I appreciated.
Courtney Sheets
Honors 390: Magical Realism
Weekly Journal

*Beloved: pg 210-275*

The novel took a unique approach to the idea of love. Many of the characters experienced some form of love in the novel, although their reactions are quite different. Numerous times the characters were reminded to not love anything or anyone “too much.”

Denver felt she had to warn Beloved to not get too close to Sethe. “Don’t love her too much. Don’t. Maybe it’s still in her the thing that makes it all right to kill her children. I have to tell her. I have to protect her” (206). I think Denver was trying to protect Beloved, her sister, because she loved her.

Sethe was also protecting Beloved and her other children because she loved them. The mother believed it was better to kill her children than to expose them to the atrocities that occurred at Sweet Home. Sethe thought that she did what she had to, “that what she had done was right because it came from true love” (251). She was protecting her children the only way she knew how, by ensuring they would never have to suffer through slavery.

Paul D was taught to never love anything because nothing was his to love. He resigned himself to loving few things, such as a single star and an aspen sapling. “[He was] so in love with the look of the world, putting up with anything and everything; just to stay alive in a place where a moon he had no right to was nevertheless there. Loving small and in secret. His little love was a tree” (221). Paul D loved the little things in life.
His heart was closed off, a small tin box. Sethe was able to open it, and he grew to love her.
A response to “Cross-cultural Variants of Magical Realism”

The genre of magical realism constructs a third dimension. The genre is neither entirely rational nor completely fantastical. Magical realism deals within the space between the rational world and the realm of fantasy. The article stated that the genre produces a “text which reveals the tensions and gaps of cultural representations” (97). Writers of the genre fill this gap.

Márquez and Morrison, among other writers, pull their concepts from cultural beliefs. One of the definitions provided at the beginning of the text stated that magical realism is an “amalgamation of a rational and an irrational world view” (83). By synthesizing cultural myths and folktales with cultural events and circumstances, minority cultures, those displaced by occupation and corruption of the majority culture, can express their overlooked perspective.

I found it interesting that even the writers themselves seemed unable to distinguish the differences between magic and reality. The article discussed Morrison’s uncertainty in the validity of slave myths. She recognized the importance of these myths and chose not to disregard them as silly. The article also quoted Márquez, “‘I am a realist writer … because I believe that in Latin America everything is possible, everything is real’” (92). Márquez used his belief in the magical to support his reality; that is, he used the folktales to support his perspectives.

Magical realism allows non-majority writers to bridge the social divide. The genre serves as a mouthpiece to voice overlooked perspectives. This third dimension,
containing both reality and fantasy, allows the writers to contemplate the individual
dimensions of reality and fantasy.

Excellent
Summary and
interpretation of the
article 70/20
Examples of Student Midterms
Midterm project Rubric:

A:
- Three – four pages that include an introduction with: information about the author.
- Also include analytical paragraphs about the story by expanding on the big questions we've been asking in class and journals, not summarizing the story. Includes properly cited quotes, and a conclusion.
- Works cited for information on author (no Wikipedia)
- Visual aid is interesting and helpful to the class, includes a picture of the author and relevant pictures relating to the story, student does not read off of a power point.

B:
- Three – four pages with slightly less than adequate information about the author.
- Analysis that asks good questions, but doesn’t quite connect them with the story. Includes cited quotes and a conclusion.
- Works cited for information on author.
- Visual aid is helpful though less interesting, including a picture of the author. Student uses visual aid somewhat as a crutch.

C:
- Two – three pages with cursory information about the author that's not really connected with the story.
- Analysis that asks surface questions and doesn’t cite adequately. Lacks “so what” and conclusion.
- Works cited either incorrectly done, or citing unacceptable sources.
- Visual aid is clearly a crutch for the presentation, but still contains pictures of author and relevant information.

D:
- Two – three pages with barely adequate information on author.
- Analysis tends toward surface questions and summarization of the story. Conclusion and “so what” absent completely.
- Visual aid is missing crucial elements, contains no picture of author and too much text.

F:
- Two pages with basic “Wikipedia” information on author.
- Analysis mostly absent, replaced by summary of the story. Asks only surface questions or none at all. Conclusion missing, no works cited.
- Visual aid is all text that is read by the student, or is missing completely.
The Distance of the Moon is an amazing and highly fantastic work by the notable Italian author, Italo Calvino. Calvino’s works reflect the variety in his upbringing through the clear assimilation of the magical and fantastic into the real and factual. Born in the Caribbean but raised in Italy, Italo Calvino finds this instance to be the “geographical instability that makes [him] forever long for somewhere else” and illustrates this longing within his many works (Calvino, 2). Calvino grew up in Italy during a time of great political upheaval and war and was born to scientifically-minded parents – these conflicts helped to define and shape him into the man that he came to be later in life. Calvino, in a short autobiography, states that “politics took up perhaps too great a part of the preoccupations of my youth” and that he “turned [his] back on what they (his parents) might have taught [him]” (Calvino, 3-5). In The Distance of the Moon a theme of rejection is clearly evident, paralleling the even stronger theme of perpetual longing, both of which are clearly drawn from the life of the author himself.

The protagonist of The Distance of the Moon, Ofwfq, tells of a time not long ago when the Moon came so close to the Earth that “it looked as if she were going to crush us” (Calvino, 439). The rest of the story is spent telling of the wonders of the moon and its closeness and of its inevitable drifting away from the Earth and assuming the place in the sky that it has now. The people in this book, all with nearly-unpronounceable names, row out to the moon on the distended tides caused by its closeness and harvest a special milk from it that they have dubbed ‘moon milk’ and which has the consistency of a grainy cream cheese. The main character speaks of this time of harvesting and frolicking about on the moon in happy and wistful terms, a longing for former days ever-present in the tone of the short story coming out chiefly in the descriptive paragraphs of the narrator. The two other principle characters in the story are the narrator’s deaf
cousin (referred to simply as The Deaf One) and Mrs. Vhd Vhd, the wife of Captain Vhd Vhd who heads the boats that row out to the moon. The narrator's interactions with these two characters reflect the relationship between the people of Earth and the moon and the Earth and the moon as separate bodies.

Ofw fq's interactions with Mrs. Vhd Vhd are the most apparent — it is clear from the start that the feelings he has for her lie more in the realm of lust than of love, for his first mention of her is the accidental "seizing of [her] breasts" when he attempts to jump back from the moon to Earth (Calvino, 443). Mrs. Vhd Vhd's love of The Deaf One and her eventual abandonment of Earth in favor of the moon and affection of The Deaf One brought about an interesting dynamic, one in which many different choices could have brought about many different outcomes. The affect of the choices made by the characters in his short story directly reflect the choices Italo Calvino feels shaped his own life irrevocably, such as his struggle deciding whether to live in Turin or Milan. In his autobiographical note, he states that his "choice of Turin certainly had its own reasons and was not without consequences. Now I have forgotten both reasons and consequences, but for years I told myself that if I had chosen Milan, everything would have been quite different" (Calvino, 6).

I found this section of his autobiography to closely parallel the choice of the narrator towards the latter end of the short story as he wavers between staying on the moon with his lady-love or returning to Earth, the place "that caused each of us to be that someone he was rather than someone else" and where he felt he truly had an identity and purpose (Calvino, 447). The theme of life-altering choice and the impact of one's decisions runs through the work of this author in a strong vein — Calvino clearly emphasizes the devastating effect of irrevocable choices on the narrator Ofw fq, paralleling the choices he made in his life that he feels bound him to a life
distinctly different from the one that he could have led. At the end of the tale, Ofwfq speaks of Mrs. Vhd Vhd on the moon with an anguished longing, comparing his devotion to her to the effect that a full moon has on a dog, his ululations and lamentations for her comparable to a choir of dogs howling adoration at the great white celestial body. The theme of choice in the story is most clearly delineated in this sequence of events, but there are other examples of this theme in other areas of the short story.

Ofwfq’s choice to return to the comfort of his identity on Earth may also be seen as a representation of Calvino’s political life growing up in an increasingly fascist Italy. The weakness of Ofwfq’s character, his necessity for an identity that is so closely tied to the place in which it was concocted, seems to me to ridicule those in Italy who joined with the Fascists simply because the Fascists identified themselves with Italy as a nation. How could one possibly rebel against one’s own nation and culture, from which so much of someone’s identity is derived? Ofwfq could have had eternal happiness with Mrs. Vhd Vhd on the moon had they both not been hung up on the unattainable – she, her love for The Deaf One, and he his need for the identity that he has on Earth. Ultimately, Ofwfq chooses the comfortable and the known represented by life on Earth while Mrs. Vhd Vhd martyrs herself to the moon and becomes part of “the object of that extrahuman love” exhibited by The Deaf One (Calvino, 447). Mrs. Vhd Vhd, choosing the ideal over the easy and known, encompasses the heart of the resistance in Italy – she would rather sacrifice herself to Italy and unite with what she considers to be its better form than stay on Earth, lying to herself about the state of things and forever longing for the now-unattainable. Her choice to stay on the moon forever is admirable, while Ofwfq’s cowardly retreat from his lunar orbit emphasizes man’s willingness to sacrifice what is beautiful and good and desirous in favor of what is comfortable and known and easy.
I feel it would be an impossible task to completely cover all of the themes in this one short essay. The curious nature of The Deaf One’s character, the importance of the milk gathered from the moon, the effect of the moon on the Earth as it cycles through advancement and retreat — all of these could occupy so much more space and time than I am capable of fulfilling at this moment. The distinct parallels between the choices made by the character’s in Calvino’s short story and the turmoil in Italy and his own life provide abstract examples of the effect of politico-social upheaval and internal discord on not only one person, but on an entire people. Calvino’s rich language also deserves analysis and accolades — I could taste the moon-milk as he was describing it and feel the scaliness of the moon’s surface. The ideas in this story that struck me most though were that of choice and consequence, and subsequent longing. In these themes, Calvino allows each reader temporary access to his soul. His accomplishments as a writer and as a person shine through the texts of his writings, and reading his story was a joyful experience I hope to repeat soon.
Calvino, Italo. The Distance of the Moon. n.d. 437-49.

Courtney Sheets
Honors 390
Midterm Project
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*The Old People* by William Faulkner

The short story *The Old People* was published in 1942 as part of William Faulkner’s novel *Go Down, Moses*. The story follows Faulkner’s literary theme of writing about the decline of the old south.

Faulkner was born on September 25, 1897. The future writer was the first of Murry and Maud Faulkner’s four sons. He spent most his life in a small southern town called Oxford, Mississippi. Faulkner came from a traditional southern family, which led him to write about racial tensions and other issues in the south (Padgett).

The literary legend never graduated from high school and did not receive a college degree, although he did study at the University of Mississippi for three semesters. At a young age, Faulkner began writing impressive poetry. It was during his youth that the poet met Phil Stone. Stone recognized Faulkner’s talent and became his literary mentor, providing the young man with encouragement, advice, and models for study (Frenz 35).

Throughout his career as a writer, Faulkner wrote about the decay of the old south. Most of his works took place in a fictional place called Yoknapatawpha County, which was modeled after the writer’s hometown. Faulkner’s novels examine issues that were prevalent in the south such as racial prejudice and race relations. He wrote over ten

In true Faulkner fashion, the short story *The Old People* emphasizes issues such as race and ancestry. The theme of blood, both that of people and that of deer, appeared numerous times throughout the story. The author used the concept of time to give the story a magically realistic feel.

*The Old People* was about the rite of passage one boy takes to become a man. In the story, Sam Fathers was an older man of mixed racial descent. This character had Native American, Negro, and white ancestors. The main character, a young boy, was white. The boy’s cousin, McCaslin, was also an important character in the story. *The Old People* was presumably set in the south not too long after slavery had ended. Several years pass during the span of the story. However, this is only apparent because the boy was seven at the beginning of the story and he had reached the age of twelve by the end. If it were not for the changes in the boy’s age, the shift in time would not be obvious to the reader.

This passage of time is interesting to readers because there are circumstances in the story where time seems to stand still, or shift back many years or forward a few years. In one instance, Sam told the boy about the old days and about people from days gone by. “And as he talked about those old times and those dead and vanished men of another race from either that the boy knew, gradually to the boy those old times would cease to be old times and would become part of the boy’s present, not only as if they had happened yesterday, but as if they were still happening, the men who walked through them actually walking in breath and air and casting an actual shadow on the earth they had not quitted”
This passage in the story is magical because readers can imagine these people that are long dead and gone walking the earth as if they were still alive and well. On the other hand, this quote is realistic because at one time these people actually did walk the earth.

Another example of Faulkner using time as a magically realistic concept was on page 227 of the reading, “He tried deliberately to decelerate the dizzy rushing of time in which the buck he had not even seen was moving…” This idea of slowing time down is supernatural because time occurs at a steady pace. It is also magical that time seems to be rushing by at a dizzying pace. However, this quote is also realistic because there are moments in life when time seems to stand still, slow down, or speed up.

One recurring theme in the story is blood. Although each person has blood running through their veins that is only theirs, Faulkner uses a person’s blood to represent their ancestors and all that their ancestors experienced. For example, when McCaslin explained Sam’s heritage to the boy, he said that Sam had “not only the blood of slaves but even a little of the very blood which had enslaved it; himself his own battleground, the scene of his own vanquishment and the mausoleum of his defeat” (220). This idea of a person’s blood being the same as their ancestors is magical because a person’s blood is unique to that individual, no one else has the same blood in his or her body. At the same time, the idea of someone sharing the same blood as family members before them is realistic because they received their body and their blood from the genetics that were passed down from their ancestors.

Faulkner also wrote about blood being different colors and running through people’s veins at different speeds and temperatures. One character, Boon, had Caucasian, Negro, and Native American ancestors. A quote that illustrates blood being a
color other than red was on page 221, "...although the blood had run white since and Boon was a white man, it was not chief's blood." The concept that blood is white or black instead of red is unrealistic because blood can only be red, it is the same color whether it is in a Negro, Caucasian, or Native American person's veins.

Later in the story, the boy imagined the blood of older people as being colder and moving slower through their veins. "The old men in whom the blood ran cold and slow, in whom during the intervening years between them and himself the blood had become a different and colder substance from that which ran in him and even in Boon and Walter" (226). This quote is supernatural because, for the most part, blood is the same temperature and runs at relatively the same speed in all people. Nevertheless, it is slightly realistic because when someone is about to die their blood may become colder and flow more slowly through their veins.

Finally, Faulkner used the blood of the deer that the boy killed to represent the boy's passage into adulthood. "He (the boy) pulled the trigger and Sam Fathers marked his face with the hot blood which he had spilled and he ceased to be a child and became a hunter and a man" (225). This rite of passage is realistic because different cultures use various rituals to represent a person's transformation from a child to an adult. The story quote is magical because the boy is only twelve years old, and shooting a deer does not typically make a boy into a man.

The short story The Old People was written by William Faulkner as part of the novel Go Down, Moses. The story is a prime example of a piece of magical realism literature. Faulkner used concepts such as time and blood to illustrate the magical realism genre.

My Weekly Journals
My Weekly Journals

Each Wednesday I record a reflection of the week’s classes. I give a basic overview of the activities and topics discussed as well as thoughts on my own teaching methods. This helps me to recall what kinds of activities worked well, which ones didn’t, and helps me to plan for better classes in the future. I also will be able to enjoy looking back on the whole experience after I am not so overwhelmed by being so close to the work now.
Week One

After my first two classes, I feel very confident and extremely satisfied with my class, and my skills so far in leading discussions. I have eleven students total, possibly twelve if one other girl decides to add before Friday of this week, and am enjoying getting to know them. Almost all of them seem willing to talk and share their ideas with each other, which I was nervous about beforehand.

The first day went quite well. We went around the tables and introduced ourselves, telling our majors and what we hoped to get out of the class. There's a variety of levels of previous knowledge, but all seem very interested in the topic and texts. There's also a very wide spectrum of majors, which I want to use to take advantage of.

We also went around and everyone gave what they thought was an example of magical realism to start a dialogue about the definition of the genre. I'm glad some of them came up with examples I had never heard of because everyone will be able to bring something new and fresh to the table.

The second day felt like my first real day of teaching since I actually lectured on some of the material they read in a packet about the troubles of defining the genre of magical realism. Dr. Mix helped out with the discussion also, and gave me the brilliant idea of starting the class by having them split up into groups and think up synonyms for "magic" and "real." This got them all thinking outside the box, and they came up with a lot of great creative words. From there, we talked about specific information in the packet and started to piece together how the genre has evolved, and what specific elements have to be present for something to be categorized as magical realism.

After that I talked for a few minutes about Gabriel García Márquez and Colombia to give them an idea of where some of the inspiration came from for One Hundred Years of Solitude. I put in the syllabus that as part of their participation grade, they each need to come to class every time with a specific quote and page number to share with the class that they thought was poignant or significant in some way, or that they had a question about.

They are also writing a one-page journal for every Wednesday over the reading for that week. Everyone except one person handed theirs in. The one who didn't thought we met three times a week and was going to have his ready for Friday, but he wrote it and sent it in later that day. There was also one absence, but she contacted me to let me know she's not dropping and will be back next week.

I did feel a couple of times like I had talked myself into a corner, and wasn't sure how to flow gracefully to the next topic. I'll need some practice with that, and Dr. Mix helped me out of those situations this time. Overall, though, I feel quite comfortable and confident speaking in front of a group and have enjoyed every minute of it so far.
Week Two

This week we only had class on Wednesday, so I was a little worried that the long weekend might have caused some to slack off or forget their journals, but everyone was on top on the reading, and I had a journal from everyone, including the two that didn’t have them last week. I started off this class by writing a quote up on the board from 100 Years of Solitude that I found poignant and having the discussion begin there.

“Because of his humanitarian feelings Aureliano sympathized with the Liberal attitude with respect to the rights of natural children, but in any case, he could not understand how people arrived at the extreme of waging war over things that could not be touched with the hand” (99). I thought this would be a good segue into talking about the deeper political leanings of this novel, as well as finding a place where the author’s true voice really comes through one of his characters. Others brought up more quotes that further supported the theme of extreme pride and the “downfall” from the Eden in the beginning of the novel.

We went from there into letting people volunteer to share the quotes they had each brought in. Three people had the same quote, but each had a different interpretation of it, so that sparked some good conversation. The whole class has really begun settling into a good dialogue with each other, not bothering with raising hands for the most part, which I think is good. I prefer the conversational tone of the discussions we’ve been having, and all I need do in these situations is make sure one person isn’t dominating the conversation too much.

I did feel like I was struggling a bit through the first half hour of this class. My brain felt scattered, and I didn’t have anything definite planned out in my mind before stuff came out of my mouth. But while they were working on a group activity, Dr. Mix leaned over and said that she thought this was the smoothest class yet and that I was doing a really good job. I certainly didn’t feel that way, but I trust her judgment and was happy to hear that a seasoned professor was happy with the dynamic of the class.

After the initial discussion of quotes, I talked for a few minutes about perspective and “putting on different lenses” with which to read the story. Several comments have come up both in discussion and in journals that are analyzing the story from the reader’s own perspective, but I want them to be able to get inside the characters’ and author’s minds and see the text and themes in a different way. So I had them divide up into four groups and write a one paragraph monologue about the appearance of a skyscraper in Macondo in the voice of one of four main characters. At the end, each group read their monologue. They were all so creative and I could tell they were really looking at the character from a different stance.

Lastly, I handed back journals and gave some general comments such as focusing on analyzing a bit more closely and making sure quotes are included.
Week Three

Well, since we had a snow day today, it'll be interesting next week to see how to play catch up. Monday's class went very well again. I planned to start getting them thinking about more big themes within the work that they will be able to take and apply to future novels and stories. How I did that was to put up charts on the board with "magic" on one side of the divide, and "realism" on the other, with a theme or bigger topic over each. The themes I came up with were "pride, time, incest, solitude, and ." They were a bit hesitant at first, and I think they just were a bit unsure about the format of the exercise and whether or not there was a "right answer." Towards the end of the activity the discussion opened up a lot more and we segued into quotes and general discussion for the day.

Once again, the discussion was very good. They're starting to go much more in depth with each quote and drawing some connections from earlier passages. At the very end of class, I felt like the conversation really took off and I wanted more time to let them go back and forth like they were. I need to figure out how to get them psyched up at the beginning of class instead of taking so long to get around to it.

Dr. Mix suggested that the first exercise might have intimidated them a bit because it seemed like I might have "the right answer" and they were hesitant to speak up. I'd like to come back to this exercise again, and maybe next time just lay out the frame work and let them come up with the themes and the examples. I thought it would be helpful to give them some examples of themes, but maybe I should loosen the reigns even more.

I've sent out an e-mail that due to the snow day, I'll collect journals on Monday, but that we're staying on schedule with the reading.
Week Four

This week we finished our first book, and I think all of us are ready and excited to move on. I also had the opportunity to teach by myself for the first time, and was very happy with the way that class turned out.

On Monday Dr. Mix had an interview she had to conduct from 3-4, so instead of coming in late and interrupting the conversation, she said that if she couldn’t make it on time, she would just leave it up to me. I said that would be fine and was pretty excited about fully stepping into my teacher shoes. We started off the class by getting into 3 groups. I had each group then come up with their own theme that they thought was important now that we were getting towards the end of the book, and do the same T-chart exercise that we did last week comparing the magical vs. the real elements of the theme and how they juxtapose and cooperate with each other. Then each group presented to the rest of the class and had the opportunity to “teach” each other about what they thought was most poignant. The three themes that came out of that day were death, polar opposites, and loss of innocence.

After that, I segued into a discussion about gender roles and how gender influences each of the characters and general attitudes of the novel. I asked them what kinds of gender stereotypes they saw in Macondo’s society, and how they compare to our own, as well as whether or not any characters broke traditionally prescribed gender roles and how that was played out. They all had really good examples and had a great discussion going at the end that I didn’t want to cut short. At the end of class, I let them talk amongst themselves about what they want to do during the three days I had planned for Whale Rider. I had suggested that we could still do Whale Rider if they agreed to get the book on their own, or we could do The Metamorphosis by Kafka, or we could do a day of power point and discussion of Magical Realism in visual art. It was decided that they wanted to do both Whale Rider and the art day, so we’re going to sandwich the art in between discussion days. I also had them pick out the short story they want to do for their midterm project out of the anthology, and have made copies.

Wednesday was our last day to discuss One Hundred Years of Solitude. I wanted to give them a chance to finish up their discussion on gender, and use that to segue into Like Water for Chocolate, which we start on Monday. Of course, I forgot to segue, and had to come back to introduce it at the end, but that’s ok. We went from there to talk briefly about religion in the novel and what kind of commentary, if any was being made and how it connected to gender.

After that, I split them into four groups and had them look at the cyclical nature of everything in the book. I gave them each a different theme/topic to discuss: love/marriage, time, human nature, and war/death. They all did a good job coming up with examples of how the characters and situations exemplified cycles, especially how at the end, we see the whole world and family tree come full circle and end. After that we wrapped up any final questions and comments, and I reminded them to please be on time to class on Monday, and sent around a schedule to see when we will be able to have an evening film showing of a magical realist film, which is becoming a very popular genre. Overall, a very successful week.
Week Five

This has been a very enjoyable week for all of us. We started a new novel: Like Water for Chocolate and everyone seems relieved to be reading something less convoluted and detailed than One Hundred Years of Solitude. While it is less confusing, shorter, and a much faster and easier read, we are finding that there is nonetheless just as much material to analyze. We spent Monday talking about first impressions, answering questions and discussing quotes that stood out. I gave a brief biographical sketch and a little bit of Mexican cultural background, such as machismo, the fact that Mexico is an almost exclusively Catholic, patriarchal country, and that women’s place has traditionally been in the home/kitchen. We talked a little about gender roles and how they’re played out in an almost exclusively female cast of characters.

After a little open discussion, I broke them up into five groups and had them write their own recipes for a different emotion, such as rage, curiosity, lethargy, rebellion, and pure contentment. They were very creative and came up with some very appropriate recipes based on the emotional and magical qualities we give to food in our own society. A couple of them had mentioned that it was kind of difficult to imagine what the food tastes like because they were using such local Mexican ingredients that we don’t have, so I compared it to the Japanese vs. American versions of “Iron Chef” on Food Network, so I told them to use ingredients that were more familiar to them.

For homework, I asked them to locate a recipe that had some sort of magical effect on them, be it a family recipe or something from their childhood. We also decided that Monday will be magical food day.

Wednesday I was teaching on my own again, and we had a very good discussion. Four people were out sick so we had a much smaller group. I passed out the midterm rubric and went over in more detail what they’re supposed to do for their paper and presentation. I’ve made up a detailed presentation rubric as well and will pass that out next week.

We went around the circle and shared our recipes, and they started to realize that all of their recipes had something to do with their families and a coming together to eat a meal. Comments were made also about our own American food culture and how it has changed to be a lot less magical, and consequently, a lot less nourishing. We did our usual open table quote discussion, and I decided to postpone the theme of power discussion until next week hoping everyone will be able to attend on Monday.

Journals keep improving and I’m so happy with the way this class is going, and assume from the engagement and lack of problems with people not doing their homework that they’re enjoying it too.
Week Six

This week was a really fun week. On Monday we finished our discussion of *Like Water for Chocolate*, talking about the ending, the format of the book, and why several of them felt that her ending was rushed and kind of scripted. Everyone brought in something homemade and we had a great feast, reminiscing once again on the nostalgic aspects of our recipes. I asked them to bring in a copy of their recipe so that I can put together a class recipe book. We finished up with one last group activity. I split them up into five small groups and they wrote short monologues from a different characters’ perspective of their opinion about the wedding that takes place at the end of the novel. They’re really very good at capturing the characters’ voices and using personality traits to add inflection to their voices. I’ve been impressed with that kind of activity.

On Wednesday, we had our first short story discussion of “White Tigers,” a chapter out of *Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston. They all said they enjoyed the story, but felt that it may not be strictly magical realism, but bordering on legend instead. I showed a youtube clip of the song “Be a Man” from the Disney movie *Mulan* and asked them to compare some of the specific aspects of the movie, since they’d all seen it before, to Kingston’s version. This opened up the discussion of gender and how gender roles in China are so vastly different from ours. I had asked the question “How did Disney ‘get it wrong?’” and they actually ended up convincing me to not be so hard on Disney and his versions of fairy tales’ endings. We’ve talked a lot about lenses and how to put on different sets and look at a text from different angles, and one of my students made the extremely accurate point that Disney had his own set of lenses that he was looking through. Another student is also in the fairy tale colloquium, and brought up the fact that a lot of fairy tales, morality tales, and legends are told in each culture in slightly different ways, so perhaps Disney is just retelling these stories from an American culture perspective. Some of them were more quiet today then normal, but I know a couple of them have been sick and have some personal things going on. The rest had a really good rapport going, and they picked out themes and made comparisons very well.

I was proud of myself that I figured out how to use the technology in the classroom, and plan to use more multi-media to engage them in comparative discussions. Next week we’re talking about two of Salman Rushdie’s short stories and three of Sherman Alexie’s.
Week Seven

This week was kind of a mixed bag. I feel confident now that I'm flying solo, but for some reason Monday was a very difficult day. We were discussing two short stories by Salman Rushdie, "At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers" and "The Prophet's Hair." I gave them a brief introduction and biography, then showed them a youtube clip about the fatwa still on Rushdie. I had really good results with the other youtube clip I showed last week for "White Tigers," so I thought this one would also spark lots of conversation. Several students were late to class, and somehow our chairs and seating configuration had everyone on one of just two sides of the table. We've kept it in a circle all the other times, which I feel facilitates better intimate discussions. This could have been a contributing factor, but I felt that all of the questions I was asking were not getting them to think about the stories at all. I e-mailed Dr. Mix about this, and she reassured me that it was probably just a bad day, it was Monday, raining, and for some reason it's hard to get students talking about short stories sometimes.

So for Wednesday, I planned to put them into small groups from the very beginning since they enjoy that kind of interaction. They've gotten used to working with each other on a more one on one basis, but still come together as a class when it's time to present and discuss more broadly. I was nervous because we read three short stories by Sherman Alexie, and I didn't want to try to spend an equal amount of time on each one and risk having them not say anything about one of them. So I gave them the chance to pick their favorite of the three stories we read and get into small groups to discuss themes, do another T-chart on the magical and the real, and then present to the class on their individual story. They enjoyed that activity a lot and had some really great discussion going by the end.

I also got some additional reassurance from them that I'm not coming completely from out of left field. I haven't really gotten the chance to get to know Amy, and she's often kind of quiet in class, but she came in first today and we chatted for a few minutes, during which she told me that she's been having fun and thinks that the other students really like the class too. When some other people arrived, Courtney asked why Dr. Mix had stopped coming, so I told them that she was letting me take over since this project is really my baby, and I had told her that I was comfortable enough doing it by myself. She'll still come back for some lessons that she's particularly interested in, like Beloved, or if I feel like I could use some extra help. They all seemed cool with that and several voiced the opinion that I was doing a great job and they thought it was really cool that I was their teacher.

Lastly, we voted on which film to watch on Friday evening. I had such a hard time finding a genuinely magical realist film that was obscure enough so that no one else had seen it, but I finally succeeded. We're going to watch A Day Without a Mexican and have pizza. I made cookies this morning, and it's a nice warm and fuzzy way to end this week. Midterm papers are due Monday, and presentations will go all of next week.
Week Eight

This week was pretty straightforward and easy on my part. Both Monday and Wednesday were taken up by midterm presentations. Each student was required to give a five minute presentation on the short story that they wrote a three to four page paper on, including information on the author, basic plot, and a brief analysis of themes and the magical realist elements. They were all very good, with very few exceptions of students who weren’t very comfortable speaking in front of a group. Everyone except one student made a powerpoint presentation to accompany their oral presentation; the one made a handout that was very well designed.

I have read through most of the papers, and they look pretty good. I gave two girls back their papers because I looked back through my attendance records and saw that they were absent on the day that I passed out the rubric, so their papers weren’t quite long enough. They appreciated the opportunity to revise. There’s been no more reading for this week, and we are all anticipating the first Monday after spring break when we will begin our discussion of Beloved by Toni Morrison.
Week Nine

This week I felt like I was able to get back into the swing of teaching and teasing the right kinds of questions much easier. Coming back from spring break was kind of difficult, and I know that some of my students didn’t quite finish all of their break reading assignment, but we still had a pretty good discussion. I opened the class by letting them ask questions or make comments on any part of the book they didn’t understand or really liked or whatever their first impressions were. I wasn’t getting much of a response from that, so I asked them to share some of their quotes. From there I was able to find out that even though they had read it and understood the words, Toni Morrison writes in such a subtly beautiful way that some of the finer details of the physical action were glossed over.

So then I decided that it would be beneficial for us to go through and tell each character’s story chronologically since we only get snips and pieces here and there. That raised a lot more questions about what actually happened in the book that we were able to get a good discussion going and I was able to answer a lot of questions since this is my third time through the book. From these questions and quoted passages, I started making a running list of some themes that we will make T-charts for later and discuss in greater detail.

At the end of the class I told them the historical background of the story of Margaret Garner. Some of them were surprised and a little shocked that this novel was based off of actual historical facts. I think that made the reading hit home much more for a lot of them.

On Wednesday I decided that we should continue with our telling of chronological stories in order to keep wrapping our heads around the action of the story. On the boards I drew a large square to represent each of: Sweet Home, including the barn; the transition to freedom; 124 pre-woodshed; the Clearing; the Woodshed; jail; and 124 post-woodshed. I asked for volunteers to go up and have the rest of them shout out events and characters present in each physical place and I think it really helped to bring all the separate story threads together. I had Austin take a picture of the board for my records since I wasn’t writing everything down.

I had a migraine during class both Monday and Wednesday, but I found that once I got going in some activity I was able to work through the pain ok, but I feel like it would be just as easy for me to lose my head in the haze and not have a very good class if these continue on days we have class.
Week Ten

This week was another successful discussion of a book that we’re all enjoying. Monday we finished up the exercise that we started last week. I had someone get up to the board and fill in the “124 post-woodshed” events and characters, and we talked some more about what happened chronologically since we had more information to fill in from the reading assignment. As we were going through the events people had more questions and significant quotes that they didn’t quite understand that I was able to help them walk through. I feel much more like a real teacher with this book because it’s so difficult the first time through. Since I’ve read it twice before, I’m still picking up on subtle details in the story and description that I’m able to point out to them to help them understand the beauty that is Toni Morrison’s writing.

After we finished the chronology, I divided them up into five groups and had them discuss the significance of a different color in the book. I asked them to come up with some connotations for each color, adjectives we commonly use with each, such as “green with envy” or “red passion” etc. We looked at red, pink, orange, green, white, and black, and they came up with some really good details that I hadn’t even thought of relating to each.

I’m planning on having another evening film showing, so we decided Monday on the date and time for that. I’m making this one a bit more required since I’m going to show Beloved and I want them to be able to see the visual portray of this book.

On Wednesday we spent a lot of time talking about community and religion and the role each plays in the lives of the characters. The women o 124 had been isolated for so many years that the absence of community has a stark effect on their lives. Several people had marked quotes they liked or had questions about, and we did another chronological breakdown of the series of events leading up to, surrounding, and following their run from slavery.

We looked at some similarities and differences between Baby Suggs’ preaching and the church experience of the blacks in Cincinnati. I asked them to pick out specific elements of the message and ceremony that were related to Christianity or other organized religions as we know them today. Then we looked at some of the differences and tried to talk through why they would be so different from Christianity. They had some really good thoughts about the role of women in a preacher’s role, the message that didn’t really include divine love or care about their lives, and why the format for worship was appropriate for this community.

After that we talked about the significance of birth stories both in the Bible and in the books we’ve been reading. I asked for volunteers who were familiar with the Bible to give us some examples of magical birth stories – we talked about Jesus, Moses, John the Baptist, Samuel, Isaac and Ishmael. Then I asked them to compare themes such as immaculate conception, prophecy, and magical/miraculous breastfeeding to our texts. We talked about Denver’s birth story, Tita’s prophetic birth in the kitchen and he ability to nurse her nephew as a virgin, the prophecy in One Hundred Years of Solitude regarding the first and last of the Buendía line. When we get into Whale Rider we’ll talk about Kahu’s birth also.

I asked Dr. Mix to come in and guest teach on Monday since she knows this book so well and loves Toni Morrison. I’m really pleased with how this discussion is coming along, and am impressed with myself that I’ve been able to tackle such a complex novel.
Week Eleven

Since Dr. Mix has taught Beloved before, I decided to ask her if she would like to come on one day and do a guest lecture. She said she would like to talk about the stream-of-consciousness chapters in the middle, and the last two pages. I enjoyed listening to her lead the discussion and took some notes on a technique that I haven’t used very much recently. She concentrated very closely on specific words and phrases in the text, whereas I have been talking about overarching themes and more broad ideas. I liked having the opportunity to concentrate on such a specific passage and plan to use this method with our last two novels.

Wednesday was out last day with Beloved and unlike One Hundred Years of Solitude, I think we were all a little sad to see this book end. It’s been such a rich discussion not only of themes and bigger ideas, but simply deciphering the action taking place from Morrison’s beautiful style. During the second half of class on Wednesday we put up a lot of T-charts on the board and discussed the intersections of the magic with the real not only in relation to just this book, but others we’ve read also. I see a great opportunity here to connect big themes like life/death, love, hunger, solitude, control/dependence, etc. across the entire semester. The students are still coming up with great ideas and pulling out specific examples from the text to back up the claims they make in their T-charts.

During the first half of class on Wednesday we talked about the article “Cross-Cultural Variants of Magical Realism.” After having read several Magical Realism works and holding onto the working definition that we’ve created, I wanted to revisit our original discussion on the definition of the term. Before I was able to start the activity I had planned, however, several of them put up their hands and wanted to comment on how frustrated they were by this article. I let them talk and asked them to justify their frustrations. Mostly they were tired of reading about people fighting over the nit-picky aspects of the term. I asked them then why they thought several of the authors we’ve read have denied being Magical Realism authors. The article states that Morrison, Kingston and others don’t want the baggage that goes along with it that came out of the 1990s debate.

I redirected their anger into the activity of drawing out our own words. I put the two words “Magical” and “Real(ism)” on the board and asked them to come up with several different verbs or adjectives that connect or push them apart. Words like conjunction, amalgamation, blending, opposition, and contrasting, among others came out as ways that we’ve put these two terms together to make one. From there I asked them again that if these authors do not want to be categorized as Magical Realist, what would we call them? Sarah made the point that she doesn’t have any problem defining them as Magical Realist because she doesn’t have all the additional baggage of the 1990s debate. That’s true for my students because they were all pretty much new to the genre when they entered my class. So I altered the question slightly and asked what types of keywords they would attach to each author’s work if we were going to do an internet search of the book. That helped open up some more ideas like supernatural, miraculous, mythical, legend, etc. that reinforced the idea that it’s been really hard to define Magical Realism, hence the huge debate they’re not fond of.
Week Twelve

I was very excited about this week because we started our second to last novel and I got to present my slideshow on Magical Realism in art. It was a little frustrating because several of my students' books still hadn’t arrived even though we decided to still do *Whale Rider* at the beginning of the semester. I guess I should have reminded them more often, but ultimately I guess it’s their responsibility. I asked them at the end of last week if they could share each others’ books over the weekend and everyone who was in class on Monday had the first assignment read. Some of my students have a lot of absences and I need to talk with a few of them to make sure that they're on track to not have their grade affected by missing too much class.

The discussion went well since the reading assignment was very manageable and everyone’s really used to the types of themes and discussion topics we’ve been doing all along. We talked about birth stories again and also creation stories and drew some parallels between the Maori and Christian traditions. I was very sick this weekend, so I cut class short by about ten minutes because I felt like I was getting a fever again and didn’t want to get anyone else sick. I also hoped that everyone would be able to get their books by next Monday’s class.

Wednesday went really well. I felt like I was lecturing more than I usually do since I had the PowerPoint and they hadn’t seen any of the material before to discuss it, but I think everyone enjoyed the show. I’ve heard from several people that they want to do something art-related for their final creative project and that’s exciting. I am proud of that slideshow and was happy to hear good comments about the pictures themselves that they were picking up on details that I hadn’t even seen. Some of the pictures also even brought out visual themes that we’ve seen in some of our texts.

I got a panicked e-mail from one of my students on Tuesday who was worried about not having her copy of *Whale Rider* yet and was worried about how to do her journal. I decided that it wouldn’t really be fair to require quotes and a good analytical reading of a book some of them didn’t have, so I decided to extend this journal to Friday at 5:00. I also needed to hear about everybody’s final project idea so that they have plenty of time to work on them and I can create a unique rubric for each of them so they know what I expect.

Friday evening I showed the movie *Beloved*. About seven people showed up tonight, which is up from four last time, so the pizza was worth it and everyone who showed up enjoyed the film. It was fun to see people’s reactions to the portrayal of Beloved since a lot of it was not what anyone had pictured in their mind’s eye while reading the novel.

Next week we’ll finish *Whale Rider* and start *The Alchemist*. I’d like to spend maybe Monday and half of Wednesday on Whale Rider since Monday was not the most productive and Wednesday was spent on art instead.
Week Thirteen

Monday was the last day for *Whale Rider*. Discussion started right away, so instead of leading into a specific topic with a general question, I let them go at it for a while and just told them to point me to quotes to back up their opinions about the story and the way in which it was told. Many of them thought the novel was a very easy read, and a couple even pointed out that it is sold as a book for young adults or children. I asked them if they thought this detracted from their experience of it. Just because something is an easy read doesn’t mean it doesn’t have lots packed into simple sentences to discuss. They agreed that it was an appropriate choice for a class on Magical Realism, but still thought that the surface topics were pretty simplistic.

We talked about the phrase “Let it be done” that is repeated at the end of most chapters and talked about the significance of prophesy and fate. Then Katie brought up a quote that pointed towards a bigger discussion of what a leader is. So I put the word “leader” up on the board and had them throw out ideas of adjectives and verbs to describe what makes an effective leader. Then we decided who from this novel and a couple others we’ve read who has been effective leaders. Then I asked them to extrapolate this story into the future and say what kind of leader they thought Kahu would be when she grew up, what kinds of obstacles she would have to face, and some possible solutions they could see her taking.

We went over a few more quotes, and I pointed them to the one of page 116 that I think is the perfect definition for Magical Realism, and also describes the Maori tradition of belief. This opened up a brief conversation about the place of religion and traditionally religious texts in the genre of Magical Realism.

For the last ten minutes of class I had them divide up into groups and write their own Magically Realist creation story for the state of Indiana, using our local traditions and some of their own family traditions. We ran out of time for them to present so I let them regroup for about five minutes at the beginning of Wednesday’s class and then tell us about how Indiana was born. They were all very entertaining, mostly to do with farming and corn, but very creative.

After that activity on Wednesday we began our discussion of our last novel, *The Alchemist*. This is one of my favorite books, and I think they’re enjoying it so far also. It’s a book that is going to spark a lot of discussion about the role of religion versus spirituality versus faith versus fate and predestination. I started off our discussion by having them throw out some themes that they’re already noticing may be developed further. Things like names/anonymity, fate, isolation and solitude, religion, flexibility of time, passage from childhood to adulthood, and being a bridge between two cultures and languages came up. We also talked about the significance of names and how only two characters so far have been named. Katie told us a bit more about the Biblical Melchizedek and I filled them in on the Spanish roots of the name Santiago.

The rest of the class was devoted to trying to get our heads around the concepts of fate, predestination, omens, and what it means to interact with the spiritual or divine. We haven’t quite decided if it’s a book about fate or about free will, and we were just beginning to grasp the differences between the terms and how the omens fit into the story when class was over.
Week Fourteen

Only six students showed up for class on Monday. Some of those who were absent informed me that they were not going to be there, but I was still a little disappointed with such a small turnout. To start out the discussion, I played part of the song “I knew I loved you” by Savage Garden and then asked the question whether any of them believed in love at first sight, and whether or not the meeting between Santiago and Fatima was legitimate love. Most people said they didn’t believe in love at first sight, but since it’s a story and the author gave Fatima a name in a book where only important characters are named, they came to the conclusion that she would be important.

Then I asked them to connect this idea of love at first sight, or not, to the concept of fate and how it’s been working in this novel. We still haven’t come to a conclusion about whether the characters, the story itself, or the author believes in fate and predestination, and I don’t think we will. We had another good conversation about what fate actually is, how it differs from predestination as it’s defined by different religious traditions, and what the omens are and where they come from. As we’ve seen from this genre and the other texts we’ve read, there is no polarization or definitive answer. Rather, the polar opposites meet somewhere in the middle. Just as Santiago has to watch the omens, but make his own decisions, it’s an amalgamation of the supernatural and the mundane.

Lastly, I asked them about the word “Maktub,” which appears in a slightly different form in Whale Rider. Someone compared it to the Christian “amen” – a way of finalizing a thought or decision. I asked them if the words themselves had power, or if someone who had grown up and never heard the word “amen” would have the same reaction to it as someone who grew up in a Christian culture. The general consensus was that they might because Santiago had never heard maktub until the crystal merchant explained it to him, but he assimilated it into his own vocabulary.

Almost everyone was in class on Wednesday, which was good because they filled out evaluations, and it was our last day of real discussion of text. Unfortunately I was not totally on top of my lesson plan because I attended a funeral right before our class and was very exhausted and distracted. I started them off with a group activity – in pairs I had them draw and/or write in the middle of a small square on the board what they thought actually appeared on the Emerald Tablet, which is the essence of the Master Work of the alchemists. There were some very creative and insightful responses, including a reference to the movie Kung Fu Panda, which teaches that “there is no secret,” so one group left their square completely blank. Others latched onto the idea that the gold was not the point, love was the only thing that mattered, and that everything comes full circle eventually.

After that we talked briefly about quotes from the last section, and I spent the last ten minutes of class asking them to do a “roses and thorns” assessment of the texts, not me. Overall it was a very positive response and several people said they read books that they would never have picked up normally, and that they were going to go seek out more Magical Realism to read this summer. Next week I’m showing the film Whale Rider and will be checking up on how final projects are coming along.
Magical Realism in Art Slideshow
Art Slideshow

For this slideshow, I tried to give a broad range of examples of Magical Realist Art. Beginning with a new definition of Magical Realism, I quickly began to understand that defining this genre within the visual arts is even more difficult than in literature. Drawing some of the same themes from the novels and stories I have read, I drew out some common themes in the images I was finding. The images in this slideshow were all taken from a basic Google search of various forms of the term “Magical Realism Art.”

While browsing I came across a book of collected Magical Realist art and bought it. It employs an even looser definition of the term than I suggest in my slideshow, and so I have selected only five images from it to include here.

After the definitions of Surrealism, Impressionism, and Realism, taken from the website Dictionary.com, I introduce the art critic Franz Roh who first used the term Magical Realism to describe paintings in Germany. Other critics have of course disagreed with him and created their own working definitions of what is considered realism, fantasy, surrealism, and Magical Realism.

The four main themes I talk about during the slideshow are:

- The blending of the industrial or human with nature to create a hybrid being.
- Emphasis on a child’s perspective on the world, which is markedly different than an adult’s.
- Having a definite line drawn in the image that separates the real from the fantastic, but having some sort of cross-over.
- Certain famous artists have used a blending of the fantastical and the real to better portray their own emotions and thoughts about the world in which they live.

In the book Imaginaire I, there is an overwhelming number of images that portray women in a mystical, magical way. They act as a bridge between the real world, nature, and fantasy.

I do not pretend to have put as much time into this subject as I have into the literature of Magical Realism, but I think that this is a fairly decent representation of Magical Realism in the visual arts. I enjoyed putting this together and hope that my students will enjoy seeing yet another aspect of this fascinating paradox.
Caprice Venise - 120 x 120 cm - Oil on canvas

Hommage à Salvador Dali - 130 x 97 cm - Oil on canvas

Hampe endormie - 130 x 153 cm - Oil on canvas
Carnival in Venice - Mische technique
Works Cited
Works Cited

Literary Texts:


Scholarly Articles:


Websites:


