

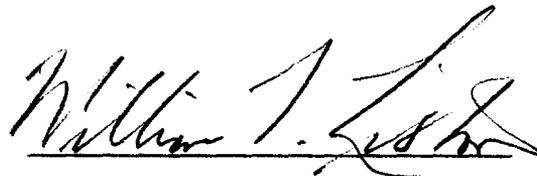
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES SUPPLEMENT THE CLASSICS:  
HOSTAGE LITERATURE

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

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Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

May 1986

Graduation Spring 1986

The Symbionese Liberation Army kidnapped Patty Hearst, granddaughter heiress of the newspaper millionaire William Randolph Hearst, in February 1974. Miss Hearst was to be released in exchange for an SLA-demanded food program for the poor in San Francisco. Surprisingly, Hearst converted to the thinking of her captors and joined in the SLA crusade. Months later, she was captured and jailed for armed robbery performed in the service of the SLA.

At Uganda's Entebbe Airport, pro-Palestinian skyjackers held 105 hostages for nearly a week in July 1976. Israeli commandoes rescued the terrified captives in a daring military movement, thwarting the strategies of Uganda's president Idi Amin Dada.

Early in 1977 Anthony Kiritsis, a former West Point gun instructor, marched into an Indianapolis mortgage company which had recently foreclosed on his loan and seized Richard Hall, a member of the family which owned the company, at the point of a sawed-off shotgun; he then moved Hall to an apartment which he claimed was wired with explosives. Kiritsis calmly demanded that the mortgage company remove the loan foreclosure from the company records and issue a formal apology and that the police grant a guarantee of immunity to Kiritsis in order to achieve Hall's release. After 63 hours of captivity, Kiritsis released Hall.

Amid strong Iranian demands on the U.S. to hand over Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, who was in the U.S. seeking medical assistance, Iranian terrorists seized the United States Embassy in Tehran--replete with a large group of Americans--in November 1979. As 444 days passed, the captivity of the 52 hostages who remained in Iran became a plight for all Americans; we awaited their release which occurred on January 20, 1981.

A Vietnam veteran, Jay W. Stader, held six hostages at the newspaper offices of the Muncie Star in Muncie, Indiana, for 90 minutes on November 4, 1981. This siege was, according to Stader, a protest against the veterans' deprivation of a hero's welcome home in contrast to the warm welcome given to the returning Iranian hostages.

A wave of terrorism, particularly kidnapping and hostage-taking, increasingly plagues our cities, our nation, and our world. Various incidents ranging from the SLA's kidnapping of Patty Hearst to the hostage hold-up at the Muncie Star offer illustrations of just how far hostage

terrorism reaches. It is a rare week for the newscaster or journalist who does not cover a hostage crisis which demands local, national, or international attention. The frequency of such hostage crises startles us; plainly, we hardly recuperate from one hostage incident when we turn our attention to the strategy of another: a common, even repetitive, occurrence. The students know what's happening; they have the opportunity to view it on television--as the news bulletin interrupts the Bill Cosby Show--or hear it blasted over their jammer--as the d.j. intrudes into the fadeout of "Manic Monday." But why should this topic of terrorism spark my secondary English teacher interests? How does an awareness of hostage terrorism affect the study of literature in my English classroom?

To explain, I offer an illustration of the trial-like inquiry which I (and the bulk of English teachers) face: as students plop in a survey literature class, they demand, "Why do we have to learn this stuff? Why can't we read something that's not ancient?" Unless the classroom climate is truly atypical, cries and questions of "why do we have to read Crane's The Red Badge of Courage or Emerson's 'The American Scholar'?" burst out at the slightest hint of a reading assignment. Given this stance--this dislike for the "classics"--I offer an alternative avenue of study to appeal to student interests. While I certainly do not advocate abandoning the classics, I suggest taking a look at some

material which deals with exciting, contemporary hostage events, which has literary value, and which also stems from literary roots in early colonial literature--hostage literature.

It would be a misconception to assume that hostage incidents are manifestations solely of the 1970s and '80s: primitive hostage events can be traced back within the realm of U.S. history to the literature of colonial America in the form of captivity narratives. These narratives (a distinct genre worthy of study) are abundant, detailed descriptions of early pioneers' capture by Indians. The significances of captivity narratives are that in addition to relaying the hostage ordeal, they act as testimonies indicating cultural, historical, and theological interests. Study of these early hostage accounts fosters an awareness of such concerns; certainly, study of captivity narratives would enhance a cooperative study of other colonial literature or a cross-disciplinary study of colonial history. A captivity narrative which serves to illustrate the duality of a narrative--literary value as well as an undercurrent of beliefs and pertinent concerns--is The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson.

During the years of King Phillip's War, many frontier settlements were plagued by Indian attacks. These relentless attacks culminated in bloody battles, deaths, and the capture of many survivors. One such attack in

Lancaster, Massachusetts, on February 20, 1676, resulted in the capturing of several hostages, including Mrs. Mary Rowlandson. Her captivity lasted seven weeks and five days, throughout which the Wampanoag Indians relocated twenty times, or made twenty "removes." After intense suffering and agonizing in the Indian wilderness, Mrs. Rowlandson recorded a realistic description of the events of her captivity and eventual release. Printed in 1682, Mrs. Rowlandson's narrative consists of an authentic account of the hostage ordeal which tried her Puritan faith in God. She rationalizes her captivity, believing that it is a sort of spiritual test; Mrs. Rowlandson believes that by divine mission God has meant for her to be taken hostage--to live with savages and be at their mercy. This captivity remains a first-hand testimony (in journal format) of Mrs. Rowlandson's Puritan spirit.

Classroom study of The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson may occur on multiple academic levels. The most obvious course of study is to attend the narrative as a purely historical piece of hostage literature--identify persons involved, dates, historical impact, etc. Captivity narratives provide a one-sided stance toward the capture; not much insight can be gained into the captors' motives. But there is more than historical fact to glean from Mrs. Rowlandson's account--it is not a mere statement of her capture. Rather, the content

of the narrative lends itself to student discussion of deeply valued Puritan beliefs, the reliance on such beliefs, Mrs. Rowlandson's behavior as a hostage, and the extent a captivity effects a personality change. Another possible avenue of discussion is to compare the narrative to the contemporary realm. A discussion of symbolism works appropriately with this account because Mrs. Rowlandson journeys symbolically throughout her captivity. Mrs. Rowlandson's heavy reliance on her Puritan faith progresses from innocence (before captivity) to the fallen state of man--e.g., Mrs. Rowlandson abandons her precise Puritan table manners and grapples, frantically, for the meager Indian food rations--(empathy toward the captors) to eventual rebirth (release). The symbolic journey requires critical reading from skillful high school students. Colonial hostage material certainly abounds with opportunities for multiple avenues of classroom study .

Several pieces of hostage literature provide appropriate, refreshing material for advanced students: the concepts, structure, and style demand sophisticated students. Classroom study of advanced hostage literature (whether it be fiction or non-fiction, essay or case study) refines reading skills as well as cognitive skills and comprehension. In addition, issues such as conflicts between cultures or political squabbles surface with discussions of hostage literature. Often, captors' motives

and hostage responses offer psychological appeal to the advanced reader. For example, hostage literature might lead the reader to evaluate the importance of language choice in the dialogue of negotiation procedures which achieve a hostage release (is it effective...is it efficient...how might it be improved?) or examine the effects of hostage trauma on an individual.

A fictional hostage novel which represents high-interest material for an advanced reader is Soul Catcher by Frank Herbert. Herbert creates a story of a college-educated Indian from the University of Washington, Charles Hobuhet, who assumes his ancient Indian name, Katsuk, and reverts to the lore of his ancestors in order to escape from the modern white world. As Katsuk, Hobuhet holds conversations with various elements of nature--particularly a bee and a raven--according to ancient lore and eventually determines that he is the chosen redeemer of the entire Indian nation. At this point, it is clear that Hobuhet is psychologically unstable. As expiation for the injustices dealt to his civilization, Katsuk takes David Marshall, 13-year-old son of an Undersecretary of State, from an elite summer camp as a hostage to be sacrificed in an ancient ceremony. David journeys with Katsuk through the wilderness, watching the disintegration of a rational man and surviving on the simple provisions of nature. To conceal his young hostage, Katsuk commits a murder and

rejects pleas to surrender from his fellow Indians; Katsuk focuses only on his sacrificial mission. Yet David influences Katsuk's behavior--Katsuk begins to care for David, trying to please his victim. David's endurance capabilities capture Katsuk's respect. In a tense final ceremony to carry out the ancient rites, Katsuk kills David; moments later the search party finds Katsuk cradling the dead child.

Soul Catcher provides fertile ground for classroom study: basic plot, theme, and characterizations; ethnic/cultural awareness study; and the examination of style and format. The plot and characters strongly appeal to the students' needs to identify with characters. Herbert weaves a journey of turmoil--the destruction of Katsuk's psychological stability as well as David's progression toward death. Students will initially hate and fear Katsuk for his assault on David. But as David grows attached to Katsuk (because of his dependence on Katsuk for his survival in captivity), the students will become less hostile to Katsuk and might experience hints of a phenomenon known as the Stockholm Syndrome--a situation in which a victim feels empathy for a captor--which was coined as a result of a hostage incident in Sweden in 1973.

The Stockholm Syndrome is particularly relevant when studying this novel. Details of the original incident best explain the coining of the phrase. Jan-Erik Olsson, an

escaped Swedish convict, marched into the main office of the Sveriges Kreditbank, one of the largest banks in Stockholm, and took several hostages. During the captivity which lasted six days, Olsson became affectionately attached to one young woman, developing an intimate relationship (which remained unconsumated). After the hostage release, both victim and captor were questioned: both admitted the developed affection and intimacy. The woman maintained that she strongly relied on her captor; Olsson declared that he would not have harmed the hostages because he had become too fond of them. In Soul Catcher, the dependence relationship between David and Katsuk parallels the fondness which develops between victim and captor who experience the Stockholm Syndrome; David relies on Katsuk for survival, while Katsuk, in turn, cares for David.

Classroom instruction might follow several avenues with Soul Catcher. Discussions on the various issues of hostage-taking, victim response, and the Stockholm Syndrome are topics obviously suggested in the novel. A secondary teacher might choose to explore the Indian culture's attention to ritual as well as the history of Indian injustices; a teacher might direct study to the removal of Indians to reservations or the lack of Indian voice in minority movements. It seems to me that Soul Catcher is also an appropriate piece of literature to demonstrate how content is realized through precise dialogue, vivid

descriptions of actions, and format. Herbert initially alternates the perspectives of captor and victim with chapter divisions. But after Katsuk's capture of David, Herbert stops his alternation pattern and begins to insert intrusive paragraphs which interrupt the flow of action to provide essential information about Katsuk and the captivity--relevant portions from Katsuk's college anthropology papers, David's parents' reactions, and police negotiation tactics. The format is complex, but it achieves a multi-perspective view on this captivity. The secondary teacher should preview Soul Catcher for offensive language and sexual explicitness--David has a passionate encounter with a tribal woman--which might rouse objections from students, parents, or administrators.

While much of the primary hostage literature is written at the moderate-to-difficult reading level, several works fall into the high-interest, easy-reading category. Commonly, students who require easy reading material flinch at the blah, simplistic nature of most Dick-and-Jane-see-Spot literature which is supposed to nurture their faulty reading skills. I maintain that contemporary literature--hostage literature--tends to attract students. This perhaps holds most true with easy-reader students.

From a smattering of hostage literature, Killing Mr. Griffin by Lois Duncan illustrates easy reading material on the topic of hostages. Duncan weaves a highly complex story

of five teenagers who strike out against their strict English teacher, Mr. Griffin, by kidnapping him. Mark, the maverick of the group, coerces and manipulates the remaining four students to capture Mr. Griffin in order to remove him to a hideaway and torment him. Mr. Griffin must beg for his freedom, admitting his unfairness as a teacher. But the plans fail--Mr. Griffin dies of a coronary attack because he does not receive his nitroglycerin pills on schedule. After the death of Griffin, the five cover up their deed with alibis and false information. But guilt breeds paranoia; someone will eventually leak the truth. To conceal the initial crime, Mark coerces additional deceitful actions (false alibis and perjury), commits a murder, and attempts to destroy the weakest group member.

The students will like the five characters who possess qualities with which they will identify; the setting could be any high school. Students will recognize Betsy Cline, the high-strung cheerleader who is honored simply because the group includes her; David Ruggles, the class activist who holds a student council office and participates in various organizations; Jeff Garrett, the athlete who makes the grades in order to play basketball; and Sue McConnell, the academic "brain" who acts as the group's conscience. Like the characters in Breakfast Club (a movie every teenager has viewed), the five lively characters appear

mismatched in personalities and backgrounds; yet they work together to form an intriguing story.

While somewhat intricate, the plot of Killing Mr. Griffin can be easily followed. Duncan keeps details to a minimum throughout the flow of the story; plenty of dialogue (especially between Sue and the other four) keeps the pace naturally powerful. The secondary teacher should examine Killing Mr. Griffin before class assignment for offensive language and the presence of psychological turmoil.

The reading of Killing Mr. Griffin prompts discussion of good versus evil, manipulation of good (yet immature) people who are mesmerized by an influential person to act criminally, and irrational behavior of a psychopath. The opportunity to nurture critical reading skills involves asking the basic knowledge-recall questions as well as fostering comprehension (compare/contrast the five students' behaviors) and analysis skills (what would you do if...?). Killing Mr. Griffin is an emotive piece of literature--it will elicit strong student response and opinion.

#### **PRIMARY READING MATERIAL**

The following annotated list of primary hostage literature provides preview information to give secondary teachers some initial direction in choosing hostage readings. Certainly, this is only a sampling of the vast body of materials available on the hostage subject.

- Behan, Brendan. "The Hostage." Theatre Workshop 1958. Set in a shabby Dublin boarding house, the play dramatizes the plight of an English soldier who is taken hostage as a retaliation for an Irish Republican who is sentenced to hang. (Preview for offensive language and sufficient background in knowledge of Anglo-Irish relations; fiction).
- Harbert, Mary Ann. Captivity. New York: Delacorte Press, 1973. Harbert's testimony of her 44-month survival as a prisoner of the Red Chinese.
- Mazer, Norma Fox. Taking Terri Mueller. New York: Hearst Corporation, 1981. Thirteen-year-old Terri Mueller remembers life only with her father, yet something isn't right. Terri discovers that her father had kidnapped her from her mother after a divorce, and her mother is alive. (Moderate reading level; fiction).
- Mazer, Norma Fox, and Harry Mazer. The Solid Gold Kid. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1977. Derek Chapman, son of a multimillionaire, is kidnapped along with four other teens by a couple who demand a ransom. The five experience mental and physical torment as they await their outcome. (Preview for offensive language; easy-reading; fiction).
- Peckham, Howard H. Captured by Indians: True Tales of Pioneer Survivors. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1954. A compilation of tales of captivity from 1676 to 1864.
- Rardin, Susan Lowry. Captives in a Foreign Land. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984. Six American children of various ages and backgrounds are taken hostage by terrorists who are appealing for U.S. nuclear disarmament. The six become strongly interdependent as they survive in a foreign land. (Preview for offensive language; high-interest suspense; moderately easy-reading; fiction).
- Vanderbeets, Richard, ed. Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973. Various primary works of captivity narratives spanning from 1642 to 1836.

## SUPPLEMENTAL SELECTIONS

Shelves abound with reference material, essays, case studies, and psychological research on hostage situations. Consulting The Reader's Guide or The New York Times Index will lead the secondary teacher to hundreds of articles on various hostage incidents; in addition, researching hometown newspaper libraries might lead to the study of local incidents. The following books contain material to be used as background resources for the secondary teacher as well as sources from which to pull essays and case studies on topics ranging from how hostage-takers view their terrorism to the hostages' view on surviving captivity.

Bolz, Captain Frank, and Edward Hershey. Hostage Cop. New York: Rawson, Wake Inc., 1979. A candid account of the New York City Police Hostage Negotiating Team and its leader, Frank Bolz; discussion of hostage incidents in which the team has been involved.

Crelinsten, Ronald D., and Denis Szabo. Hostage Taking. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1979. Results from an international seminar on various approaches to the common concern of hostage-taking; discussion of prevention and control of hostage incidents as well as actual case studies supporting a theory (or theories) on hostage negotiation.

Jenkins, Brian M., ed. Terrorism and Personal Protection. Boston: Butterworth, 1985. Various authors discuss the threat of terrorism (hostage-taking, kidnapping, assassination) of an individual. The discussion is targeted at people who are highly probable candidates for terrorism attempts.

Mather, George F. Hostage: Police Approach to a Contemporary Crisis. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1977. A review of accepted techniques and procedures for police hostage negotiations; possible police approaches and hostage responses are outlined.

- Miller, Abraham H. Terrorism and Hostage Negotiations. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1979. An examination of the ways captors manipulate hostage situations and the responses of negotiating teams; discussion of policy on hostage situations and the considerations for policy establishment.
- Miron, Murray S., and Arnold P. Goldstein. Hostage. New York: Pergamon Press, Inc., 1979. An explanation in laymen's terms of hostage psychology and negotiation procedures; description of various hostage incidents--Hearst, Kiritsis, and Hanafi Muslim cases.
- Moorehead, Caroline. Hostages to Fortune: A Study of Kidnapping in the World Today. New York: Athenum, 1980. A study of hostages taken for ransom or political reasons; particular historical cases (e.g., the Lindbergh case) are described.
- Ochberg, Frank M., and David A. Soskis. Victims of Terrorism. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1982. A study concentrating on the victims of a hostage situation--their behavior, reactions, and their aftermath problems.
- Schreiber, Jan. The Ultimate Weapon: Terrorists and World Order. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1978. An examination of the targets of terrorism (nationally and internationally) and the power of terrorist tactics.

#### AUDIO-VISUAL SUPPLEMENTS

Our television newscasts and motion pictures provide an ample supply of media coverage to hostage situations. In addition to the listed selections, various television episodes (particularly police programs such as Cagney and Lacey or Hill Street Blues) increase the number of available materials. These episodes seldom have intrinsic literary value, but they may be tools with which the secondary teacher can move students into the reading of hostage literature. Naturally, some of these programs may glorify

actual negotiation procedures, but selected episodes are worthwhile for viewing. The students, in addition, will be able to add to the list of movies that they have seen which deal with hostages.

### Filmstrip

Hostages--Iran: terror, torment, tension. New York Times Co., 1980. Produced by Vincent J. Amato Productions. Presentation of political situations leading up to the Iranian hostage crisis; includes filmstrip guide and discussion questions.

### Video Tape 3/4"

The Press Held Hostage. Creator Michele De Mardon. Ball State University, 1981. Exploration of media's responsibilities and involvement in a hostage crisis; presentation of Tony Kiritsis' mock news conference with comments from Indianapolis broadcasters. (Preview for offensive language).

### Special Report Program

Hostage. ABC Television Network, January 30, 1978. Examination of various hostage situations.

### Motion Pictures

Dog Day Afternoon. 1975. In this comedy based on a real-life hostage situation in Brooklyn on August 22, 1972, Al Pacino portrays one of two captors who negotiates with the police outside his hideout for the release of his hostages. Pacino, as Sonny, early on asserts why he is holding the hostages--to obtain money for a sex-change operation for his boyfriend. (Preview for sexual explicitness and offensive language).

White Nights. 1985. Mikhail Baryshnikov and Gregory Hines portray two dancers held captive in the Soviet Union. Depicts procedures for escape and release. (Preview for offensive language).

### News Transcripts

To further illustrate journalistic/media techniques, a teacher can locate printed newscasts transcripts in television network indexes. For example, from CBS News Index:

"Essays on Past American Hostage Incidents" (CBS Special Report). January 20, 1980, p.59.

"Hometowns Welcome Returning Hostages Back Home" (CBS Evening News). January 31, 1980, p.5.

## COMPOSITIONS AND PROJECTS

While individual works of literature teem with ideas for compositions and projects, teachers can offer comprehensive compositions and project assignments which foster interesting classroom activities. I suggest several possibilities for compositions and projects below; these ideas might be useful to springboard the students to other compositions and projects.

### Compositions

Students keep a journal as a response to a hostage situation scenario. They imagine activities, feelings, and emotions over their time of captivity.

Using a hostage scenario (easily accomplished--pattern after an actual case, changing names, etc.), student explains his process of resolving the situation as a negotiator--his considerations, view of situation, orders of operation, procedures, and assessment/evaluation after the mission.

### Projects

Characteristic Quality Test--assessment of qualities which best describe a hostage, a hostage-taker, and negotiator. Students choose from lists of 60 characteristics the qualities they think best describe each of these three kinds of people. (Available in appendix A of Hostage by Murray Miron and Arnold P. Goldstein).

Pictured Situations Test--cartoon sketch which requires the student to complete the cartoon dialogue. Given the particular cartoon sketch, the student completes responses to another character's comments; students must exercise language skill and accurate word choice. (Available in appendix A of Hostage by Murray Miron and Arnold P. Goldstein).

Following an explanation of the intentions involved in hostage incidents--expressive purposes (to display a captor's power and significance) or instrumental motives (to attain what will personally or politically benefit the captor)--the students examine various case studies and analyze the intention of each incident.

#### **CROSS-DISCIPLINE POSSIBILITIES**

The study of hostages does not need to be confined solely to the English classroom. Two or three teachers might consider a cooperative effort in order to teach the subject.

#### **Hostage Crisis Coverage in Media**

A journalism teacher might lead students to examine the media coverage of hostage incidents with particular emphasis on debating the responsibilities of the media, considering the jeopardy of hostage reporting (media hype), and establishing guidelines and limitations. Hostage crises certainly produce abundant publicity; the media inevitably become involved in hostage situations in a variety of ways. While the media provide commentary on the hostage situation, the media also publicize the hostage-taker's demands (often arousing public passions) and describe the judicial consequences--the trial and sentences--of the arrest of the captor. The media must determine the limitations of news reporting. Do the media sensationalize the facts? Do they judiciously cover the hostage event? Should the media take a role in the negotiating procedures by directly contacting the hostage-takers? What type of communication among hostage-takers, media, and negotiators might best resolve a hostage crisis?

#### **History of Hostage Situations**

The history/social studies teacher could provide historical and political information to the students as well

as guide discussion on the implications of hostage incidents. While the historical motives for hostage-taking differ (ransom, politics, love), hostage-taking and kidnapping have plagued victims throughout the centuries. Responses to hostage-taking have also varied: punishments of such crimes in medieval history were bodily severe--mutilation, branding, hanging--while twentieth-century American government, acting under the Lindbergh Law and the Federal Kidnapping Statutes, enforces varying prison sentences in all cases in which the victim has been released unharmed. The history teacher might direct an interesting study of the evolving laws which govern hostage/kidnapping incidents.

### Hostage Psychology

The psychology teacher will find many possibilities for hostage study: exploration of motives and reasonings of captors (whether they be personal, expressive, instrumental, or political reasons); the responses and readjustment of hostages after their release; the Stockholm Syndrome and its effects; and the captors' perception of their goal accomplishments. Victims of hostage crises and their captors often experience stress, a flare of survival instincts, and apprehension--after the siege has ended. The issue of captors who plead temporary insanity as the reason for the taking of hostages (as with the Kiritsis case) rouse strong student opinions and discussion. The exploration of both victim and captor responses offers interesting material for classroom study.