

HUM 3306: History of Ideas--The Age of Enlightenment to the Age of Anxiety  
Fall 2007/ Prof. Harvey

See Midterm Instructions sheet for full instructions. Here is a sample passage and response from another course (not using a book in our class): note how the response places/interprets the passage in the larger context of the text from which it is taken:

The Passage:

"When the sun was dropping low, Antonia came up the big south draw with her team. How much older she had grown in eight months! ... She wore the boots her father had so thoughtfully taken off before he shot himself, and his old fur cap. Her outgrown cotton dress switched about her calves, over her boottops. She kept her sleeves rolled up all day, and her arms and throat were burned as brown as a sailor's. Her neck came up strongly out of her shoulders, like the bole of a tree out of the turf. One sees that draught-horse neck among the peasant women in all old countries."

The Response: (144 words)

After her father's suicide, Antonia takes on his aspirations by laboring on the land, putting aside her own dreams. She does "man's" labor by necessity, and there is no room for Victorian notions of decorum or femininity. Jim seems in awe of this exotic immigrant girl who puts her heart and soul into all she does, who increasingly becomes to him, with her mixture of innocence and experience, an earth-mother type figure. She is both exotic and real with a warmth and light that is unique. The earth-mother image connects with other images that associate Antonia with the vibrant fields, a set of pastoral descriptions that promise fertility and renewal--in place of images of cold and death (her father's frozen corpse, the grisly wolf scene). Her father was alienated as an immigrant, but Antonia, without losing her ethnic background, merges with the land.

**MIDTERM QUESTIONS**

1. Again, if he would give his nuts for a piece of metal, pleased with its colour, or exchange his sheep for shells, or wool for a sparkling pebble or a diamond, and keep those by him all his life, he invaded not the right of others; he might heap up as much of these durable things as he pleased; the exceeding of the bounds of his just property not lying in the largeness of his possession, but the perishing of anything uselessly in it. And thus came in the use of money; some lasting thing that men might keep without spoiling, and that, by mutual consent, men would take in exchange for the truly useful but perishable supports of life. . . . But, since gold and silver, being little useful to the life of man, in proportion to food, raiment, and carriage, has its value only from the consent of men- whereof labour yet makes in great part the measure- it is plain that the consent of men have agreed to a disproportionate and unequal possession of the earth- I mean out of the bounds of society and compact; for in governments the laws regulate it; they having, by consent, found out and agreed in a way how a man may, rightfully and without injury, possess more than he himself can make use of by receiving gold and silver, which may continue long in a man's possession without decaying for the overplus, and agreeing those metals should have a value.
2. Secondly: I answer, such revolutions happen not upon every little mismanagement in public affairs. Great mistakes in the ruling part, many wrong and inconvenient laws, and all the slips of human frailty will be borne by the people without mutiny or murmur. But if a long train of abuses, prevarications, and artifices, all tending the same way, make the design visible to the people, and they cannot but feel what they lie under, and see whither they are going, it is not to be wondered that they should then rouse themselves, and endeavour to put the rule into such hands which may secure to them the ends for which government was at first erected, and without which, ancient names and specious forms are so far from being better, that they are much worse than the state of Nature or pure anarchy; the inconveniencies being all as great and as near, but the remedy farther off and more difficult.

3A. [ANSWER EITHER A or B] To the honour of humanity, I knew several gentlemen who managed their estates in this manner; and they found that benevolence was their true interest. And, among many I could mention in several of the islands, I knew one in Montserrat whose slaves looked remarkably well, and never needed any fresh supplies of negroes; and there are many other estates, especially in Barbadoes, which, from such judicious treatment, need no fresh stock of negroes at any time. I have the honour of knowing a most worthy and humane gentleman, who is a native of Barbadoes, and has estates there This gentleman has written a treatise on the usage of his own slaves. He allows them two hours for refreshment at mid-day; and many other indulgencies and comforts, particularly in their lying; and, besides this, he raises more provisions on his estate than they can destroy; so that by these attentions he saves the lives of his negroes, and keeps them healthy, and as happy as the condition of slavery can admit. I myself, as shall appear in the sequel [i.e. in another chapter of Equiano's memoirs], managed an estate, where, by those attentions, the negroes were uncommonly cheerful and healthy, and did more work by half than by the common mode of treatment they usually do.

3B. In short, the fair as well as black people immediately styled me by a new appellation, to me the most desirable in the world, which was Freeman, and at the dances I gave my Georgia superfine blue clothes made no indifferent appearance, as I thought. Some of the sable females, who formerly stood aloof, now began to relax and appear less coy; but my heart was still fixed on London, where I hoped to be ere long. So that my worthy captain and his owner, my late master, finding that the bent of my mind was towards London, said to me, 'We hope you won't leave us, but 'that you will still be with the vessels.' Here gratitude bowed me down; and none but the generous mind can judge of my feelings, struggling between inclination and duty. However, notwithstanding my wish to be in London, I obediently answered my benefactors that I would go in the vessel, and not leave them; and from that day I was entered on board as an able-bodied sailor, at thirty-six shillings per month, besides what perquisites I could make. My intention was to make a voyage or two, entirely to please these my honoured patrons; but I determined that the year following, if it pleased God, I would see Old England once more, and surprise my old master, Capt. Pascal. . . .

4. [I would like you try to complete Frankenstein so you can answer this response; however if you have time management issues, you may skip this response and respond to both of the Romantic poems in response #5 below instead]. "How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favorable eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion. Believe me, Frankenstein: I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me, what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing? they spurn and hate me. The desert mountains and dreary glaciers are my refuge [now]."

5. For this you have the option of interpreting one of two Romantic era poems.

Do either A: Provide a mini-interpretation of the poem that is about a bird. Read the caution for "B" below.

Or do B: Below are a set of lines from one of the Romantic poets you've been reading. Basically, you should just provide a mini-interpretation of the poem, but try to emphasize the key lines below. And try to fit the poem into the larger context of the "history of ideas". This passage gives you wide latitude; please, please resist looking up interpretations on the internet. I've read them all, and will know if you are cheating (I hate giving warnings like this; but plagiarism is a real problem, so I have to!).

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul;  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things....

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.