

LIVING DIALOGUES



REFLECTIONS ON LIFE AND LITERATURE
FROM THE STUDENTS OF ENG 102
ENGLISH LITERATURE, SPRING 2017
OIKOS UNIVERSITY
OAKLAND, CA

VOL. 01

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EDITORS' NOTE

The class emphasized the importance of students reading literature and reflecting on their own experience. The way the class read was to create “living dialogues” between the text and the reader. The focus was on what the text said and the response of the student to the text.

Jong Kir's Mission Story

Last August, I made a plan to go on a mission trip with my friends to a village on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico, Arizona. We talked about the trip, and planned what we could do for the local community and Navajo children.

My friends and I prepared our trip with a long period of prayers and discussion. It took us about a month to plan our services to see what we could do for the kingdom of God in the Navajo village. We

were glad that preparations prior to visiting the village seemed to work out smoothly as we planned.

A month later, we headed to Navajo. We started driving at night, and it was very difficult to follow along the navigated roads...(continue from page 02)

Sophia's Movie Review

In the small town of Endora, Iowa, Gilbert Grape is a traditional worker in a small-town grocery store. He lives with his own family, two sisters, younger brother, and his mother.



Gilbert Grape's life is busy caring for his brother Arnie, who has a developmental disability. Gilbert takes care of Arnie all the time, even when he is working. Gilbert's mother, Bonnie Grape, gave up on life after her husband hanged himself in the basement 14 years earlier... (continue reading from page 07)

Healing through Soccer and God On a Navajo Mission Trip

by Jong Kir Go

Last August, I made a plan to go on a mission trip with my friends to a village on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico, Arizona. We talked about the trip, and planned what we could do for the local community and Navajo children.

My friends and I prepared our trip with a long period of prayers and discussion. It took us about a month to plan our services to see what we could do for the kingdom of God in the Navajo village. We were glad that preparations prior to visiting the village seemed to work out smoothly as we planned.

A month later, we headed to Navajo. We started driving at night, and it was very difficult to follow along the navigated roads because the ways along the trip were very unfamiliar and sometimes dangerous due to large trucks passing by. It was a nerve-wracking and dark, overnight ride.

After traveling for 13 hours, we arrived at Navajo. On the first day of arrival, we discussed our plans and worshiped God with the Navajo children. It rained on the second day, and it turned out that there was miscommunication between the local missionaries and the children about our plans, so few children came to our meetings. We were very frustrated, but we tried our best to accommodate the activities to the children who came to us.

We conducted our planned interviews and evangelism activities with our children, and in the afternoon we played soccer, which was our main plan.

The third day was Sunday, so we worshiped with the people of Navajo and served lunch with the food we prepared for the local community. In the afternoon we taught football to the children with the last soccer mission.

Through the last football sessions, I had many thoughts about missions. I realized that missions are not all about perfect plans, but even broken plans can bring healing and completion through the works of God.

Nurturing experiences that we had with Navajo children solidified my faith, and seeing children with emotional and spiritual wounds being healed through enjoying football motivated me to pursue my passion for teaching football.



Entering
Navajo Indian
Reservation

How a Blessing Changed My Life

By Ethan Lim

I'd like to tell the story about the time I came to the United States for the first time. Many international students may have had same experience as me. The hardest part of living in the U.S. was that I had to adapt to a new environment and cultural differences. First of all, it was so hard to do something while speaking in a second language like English. For example, it was difficult to buy a new car to go to school, to find a house to live in, to apply for school to study and so on. Also, I was homesick and missed friends a lot. I was not doing so well. I felt so frustrated and depressed.

As a result, I was thinking about going back to Korea all the time. However, fortunately, I had a friend who I trusted, and we talked together about my situation, I asked him what else I could do to live better in this new environment. After he heard about my problems, he suggested that I could go to church with him.

"Going to church might make you feel much better than now, even though you have no faith in God," he told me. When I heard that, I didn't trust him, and I ignored his suggestion. Unfortunately, my feeling grew worse and worse, so I reluctantly went to church with my friend. I will never forget that moment when I entered the church for the first. Its atmosphere was so warm and welcoming.

Everyone was so friendly even though they never had met me before. I felt like they were very close relatives or family. After attending the church on Sunday, I began to feel better and better during the week.

I was meeting new people and listening the pastor's sermon. My daily life was changing little by little. The sermons changed my negative thoughts into positive ones. I'd never actually heard that kind of preaching before, because I was not Christian. I was so surprised and became impressed with every single sermon. It was like giving me a new life and a chance to think about life in a new way. For example, I always blame myself for coming to the U.S. "Why am I here?" I thought. I thought I couldn't do anything without fluent English while I lived in the U.S. But that was not true.

I realized that I'm a happy person in California. I could experience many new things, in like meeting Americans and traveling around. Somedays, when I came home, I felt relieved and relaxed. A positive mind made it easy to adapt to living life abroad. Now I'm doing very well in my new life with God. I recognize there is nothing to worry about.

My Baby: Big Happiness and Big Responsibility

By Oracha Thima

I really want to tell you about my baby. His name is Matawin Matthew Thima. His Thai nickname is Nammon, but everybody calls him Matthew or Matt. He was born on September 27, 2015. He is 18 months and 28 days old now. He looks like his father, and he does not look like me. He got his eyes from his father. He has light skin color like me. He is a tall kid for his age because he is only 19 months, but he wears three-year-old kid's clothes already. There are so many things that I would like to say about him.

First, his birthday is very funny because he was born in the same month as his father and on the same day as mine. His father was born on September 17, 1985. My birthday is January 27, 1985. His birthday is September 27, 2015

Second, he has started talking a lot now. He always repeats all the words that people use in speaking to each other, especially the last word of the sentence. For example, if I say, "I am going to sleep," he will remember and say, "leep." He can say nam, which means water in Thai. There are many other words that he can remember and say out loud: grand-ma, grandfather, papa, mommy, go, car, shoes, wear, elephant, horse, dog, cat, etc.

Third, he loves to eat by himself with his spoon. He will cry if you do not give him a spoon because he knows everybody has to use utensils to eat. Sometimes he has to grab his food by his hand and put it on his spoon to eat. It looks funny, but I'm very happy to see his development. He knows how to solve the problem because little kids can't control their hands correctly yet.

Fourth, he loves to run around and play all days nonstop. It's very funny because my mom and I always try to count how long that he spends sitting down and resting. It's never more than 10 seconds. He only stops running around when he sleeps.

Finally, I love to say to him, "I love you, my little monkey." After he came to my life since pregnancy, he changed my life a lot. He brings me big happiness and big responsibility. I still have a lot more stories to tell about him that happen in our life that I can't tell now. But the only thing that I love to say now: "I love you, my baby, you are my life."

The Sad Story of Lumyoug

By Nita Kaboonkum

For our class, we read the story, *The Lost Decade*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald about an alcoholic named Mr. Louis Trimble. He lost a decade of his life because he was “taken drunk every which way drunk,” as he said. Then he lost his memories for 10 years.

When I read this story, it made me feel like he had a terrible time and lost everything in his life for 10 years. What a waste time for him! In my experience, I don’t know any alcoholic people in my life, but Fitzgerald’s story reminded me of a popular story in Thailand called “Lumyoug”. “Lumyong” is the name of a beautiful woman. After she gave birth to her son with her first husband, she started to drink alcohol, because her mother gave her a shot of alcohol to drink every day. Her mother thought it would take care of her physical health and blood and make Lumyong beautiful.

Since then, she became an alcoholic. At the end of story she lost everything in her life. She lost family, lost her house. Then she died. This movie made me feel bad and so sad. However, I can learn from the experience of this movie.

I have learned that alcoholism is very bad. It makes you waste money, lose relationships, and other important things in your life. In some cases you become unconscious in your life like Louis Trimble.

My Terrible Experience with Racism

By Harry Jin

My story is about racism. One time, an elderly Korean man in military clothes walked in front of the African-American man, and he said, “Go back to your country. This is not Africa. I don’t want to meet you in my country. Go away!”

I was very shocked. I went to my parents, and I told them what I had seen.

“Maybe he was a soldier in the Vietnam War,” my mother said.

That was my first experience of racism. When I was in high school, my English conversation teacher was a Mexican man named Arroyo. He was very nice guy and liked to play soccer during every lunch break. He played soccer in the field. But one of my friends who hated people with different skin colors said to him in Korean, “Dirty Mexican. Every Mexican is so lazy and dirty so that they were conquered by the white man.” I was very upset.

“Hey, mind your language,” I said to him. “Racism is very terrible. You are being like a savage.”

“Mind your business, hypocrite,” he said to me. “N---ers and Mexicans are the true savages. They should be enslaved like in the 18th century.”

I was very upset with him, but Arroyo said: “I know what he said. But I do not care about him, because it is not true.”

After that experience, I do not judge people by what their looks are like. Racism is very old-fashioned and terrible.

How I Learned to Be Careful in San Francisco

By Oratai Chansri

Last year, I had an experience in San Francisco. I would like to tell everyone that when you walk around a BART station or street by yourself, you should be very careful.

This experience taught me to be more and more careful when I walk by myself and to pay attention to the people who stand near to me. Before you use a BART station, when you wait for a train to come, you should beware of people around you and stay in the place that is safe for you. After my experience, I don't want to come back home late.

I had been in California for about two years. I had moved here with my husband to learn English. My school was in San Francisco, so I usually took BART from my home in North Berkeley to the Montgomery station and transferred to the bus to attend my language class, which finished around 6:30 pm. That evening, I went to hang out with my friends after class and I got to BART around 10 pm. I entered the Powell Street station by myself, and at that time there were not too many people waiting. I usually stand near a group of people and look around the area to make sure I'm safe.

This time, a guy walked up to me. He was bald, but seemed normal in normal clothes and was clean. I saw him holding an open book in his hand. He looked like he was reading the book, but he was walking at the same time. Then he bumped into my shoulder and tried to hug me!

I moved away to a new area and near a crowd of people and a much larger guy who looked strong. I stood and looked at him all the time because I was afraid and felt unsafe. Suddenly, the same guy followed me and walked up and stood near me and tried hug me again. I said loudly: "Hey! What are you doing?" He ran away and hid behind a pillar.

Then he walked away and tried to bump into another woman and tried to hug her too. I thought he was mentally ill or tricky, because he only bumped into women.

I checked the time on the board for when the train would come. "I thought to myself: When it comes, I will feel safe because trains are crowded." Then I saw that he walked into another train that came to our station.

"Oh my God," I thought. I worried that he attack me again. But I saw him walk past my train to another train and take off for the next station. I felt safe again.

I think my story can help everybody take care about yourself. When you stay alone you should check around the area and the people around you.

***Beauty and the Beast:*
Don't Judge Others**

by Seung Youb Baek

The lesson of the movie, “Beauty and the Beast,” is that you don't judge a book by its cover. Everyone thought the Beast was evil, and they feared him. Only Belle got to know him and realized that he was misunderstood.

At first, Belle was scared of the Beast, but after she was forced to spend time with him, she learned that he was lonely. After a while, she enjoyed spending time with him. She realized that just because the Beast looked scary, this didn't mean that he really was. In the end, despite how he looked, she fell in love with him, and they were happy.

In *The Intern*, the Old Teach the Young How to Live

by Taeyoung Lim

My meaningful movie is *The Intern*. There are two main characters in this movie: Jules who is a young woman and CEO, and Ben who is 70 years old and is hired as an intern at Jules' company. Jules doesn't like old people like Ben, even if his personality is good. So Ben must wait for her direction for a few days. Finally, they talk, and Jules admits her indifference toward Ben, but she also needs various types of advice from him.

This story impressed me because when I was worried about my future, my friends recommended that I watch this film. Honestly, I didn't even know what to do in the future with my life. After this movie, my thoughts changed a great deal. I saw that Ben was continuously challenging himself even at the age of 70. Generally, it seems to me that many old people retire from their job and enjoy the rest of their lives with leisure time, such as golf, gambling, and drinking alcohol.

I started to think about myself more. I want to become a citizen of the United States. So I have to learn English and about American culture. I'm trying to speak in English with my girlfriend and my friends, even though my English is not good. I'll work in my future company, also try hard, and be sponsored by my company.

The lesson that I learned through this movie is to try hard for my dream.



Reflection on O. Henry's
The Gift of the Magi

by Joonhee Lee (Daniel)

The Gift of Magi is a short story written by O. Henry. In the story, Jim and his wife, Della, are a couple living under financial difficulties. On Christmas Eve, Della only has \$1.87 in her hand and is desperate to find a good gift for Jim. So she cuts her precious, beautiful hair for \$20 and buys a platinum watch chain for Jim's pocket watch that he inherited from his grandfather. Della runs home and prepares dinner, satisfied with perfect gift for Him.

Jim comes home unusually late and stops as he sees Della with short hair. Della admits to Jim that she sold her hair to buy him a present. Jim gives Della an assortment of hair combs used to hold up long hair, now useless for her short hair. Della shows Jim the watch chain, and Jim admits to her that he sold his watch to buy her combs. Jim and Della are left with gifts that they cannot use immediately, but they realize that their love towards each other is priceless.

The narrator ends the story by comparing the couple with the Magi in the Gospel according to Matthew who brought gifts to Jesus on the day he was born. In the short story, Della and Jim made the biggest sacrifices among their possessions to buy each other a worthy Christmas gift. However, whether they could use the gifts

or not was insignificant because gifts, in their nature, are not meant to be necessarily useful.

Gifts are an expression of gratitude, love and care towards the receiver. In the Biblical story of the Magi, they did not bring any toys or baby-related products that Jesus could use in his infancy right away. Instead, they brought gifts that were considered very precious to Magi themselves. The Magi brought gold, frankincense and myrrh; gifts that represent the Magi's admiration to Jesus' kingship and priestly roles to come in this world. The gifts were expression of the Magi's hope, the kind of hope only Jesus' kingdom can bring into this world.



The gifts that Jim and Della received also gave themselves hope. One day, Della's hair will grow back. Perhaps one day, Jim will be able to afford a watch that goes along with the platinum watch chain that Della gave him. The new watch could be a new heirloom. Della and Jim were not aware of these things, however, because they were not worked up about not being able to use their gifts immediately. They were aware of the nature of their gifts as things that can last longer than their current hardships, just like their love; they were wise. They would be foolish if they were upset about how they could not use their gifts right away and not realize how precious their love is. The gifts that they exchanged showed they were not only the wisest, but also the most hopeful too.

The Desire for Freedom in *Rip Van Winkle*

By Rana Baek

In the story, *Rip Van Winkle*, Rip lives with his wife in a village. He is a gentle guy, but his wife nags him because he doesn't have a job. So he leaves the village and goes into the mountains with his dog Wolf. He sees and enters an amphitheater. In the middle of the amphitheater, men were wearing strange clothes, playing a game called ninepins. When Rip approached, the men stopped playing, stood up and watched them strangely. Rip's fear was growing.

At that time, the strange men drank liquor quietly, and Rip drank the liquor. Gradually, Rip's fear settled down, and he started to drink a few more sips of the alcohol and eventually fell asleep. He woke up after drinking the liquor and worried about his wife for making excuses.

I think in this story, Washington Irving, the author, shows a double image of the main character. Positively, his character is good, and he is a good neighbor, but on the negative side, it shows his incompetence and irresponsibility as a patriarch. This shows that he is a simple person who lives easily in the world. But he concentrates more on his positive side than his negative side and seems to be rather enthusiastic about his free, emotional nature. He is a friendly figure, resembling my aspiration for freedom and peace in times of oppression.

Love Helps Gilbert Grape Save his Inner Life

By Seung Chan Baek

Gilbert lives a boring life every day. He has an affair with a neighbor's wife, and Gilbert, who is trapped in a frustrating framework, does not deny it. The main difficulty for his family is the tremendous weight of their mother. Gilbert's life with the family is so bizarre that it is difficult to explain, and he is not satisfied with his life.

Becky, a camping girl, is staying in Endora with her grandmother, because their car is broken. She accidentally sees Gilbert, and she feels good about his pure heart. Gilbert is also attracted to Becky. She is a girl of the same age, and they have a pure love and want to save each other's inner life. Gilbert starts thinking more about what he wants to do. He thinks about how to take care of his brother and his mother, but also he decides to keep the relationship with Becky.

When I watched the movie, I saw the image and the feeling of someone with a boring life. Every day is monotonous, but Gilbert fulfills his responsibilities. He takes care of the whole family, but he is a little tired of that kind of life. His family cannot be denied, because he is a nice, pure young man. Maybe this sense of responsibility was like a shackle that he wanted to escape.

“What’s Eating Gilbert Grape?”

by Sophia Lung

Begins

In the small town of Endora, Iowa, Gilbert Grape is a traditional worker in a small-town grocery store. He lives with his own family, two sisters, younger brother, and his mother.

Gilbert Grape’s life is busy caring for his brother Arnie, who has a developmental disability. Gilbert takes care of Arnie all the time, even when he is working. Gilbert’s mother, Bonnie Grape, gave up on life after her husband hanged himself in the basement 14 years earlier. Bonnie spends almost all of her time on the couch watching TV and eating. Her weight becomes over to 500 pounds, in this condition that makes her more ashamed for herself, to their children in the same feelings. Bonnie, is unable to care for her children on her own because she is morbid obese, Gilbert has taken on the responsibility of repairing the old house and looking after Arnie, who has a habit of climbing trees and the town water tower, while his sisters Amy and Ellen do the rest. The relationship between the brothers is both caring and protective, as Gilbert continually enforces the “Nobody touches Arnie” policy. Every summer season, the town is visited by a traveling group of campers in their recreational vehicles. In this year, Gilbert meets Becky, a young woman who is traveling with her grandmother. Becky’s lifestyle and attitude are totally different from Gilbert’s. Becky is used to many open ways, and she being to open and change Gilbert’s thinking and life attitude. She looks like did something to set Gilbert free. In the same time, the family is looking forward to Arnie’s 18th birthday. At one point, Gilbert leaves Arnie alone in the bath tub, and spends time with Becky watching sunset.

When he returns home, he finds Arnie still in the bath tub following his order in morning, Gilbert felt guilty, and his family is angry with him. When Arnie climbs to the top of the town’s water tower, the police arrest him after being rescued, cause his mother. Bonnie hasn’t left the house for seven years, laughing and gawking voice from the townspeople as she goes to the police office. After, Arnie tried to run away again to avoid taking a bath, and Gilbert finally snaps and hits Arnie several times. Gilbert feels guilty and appalled at himself, he runs out without any word. Arnie also runs out and goes to Becky who takes care of him for the evening before his sisters picked up him. After some soul searching aided by Becky, Gilbert returns home during the birthday party to make amends to his family for running out and to be forgiven by Arnie which, with only the slightest hesitation, forgives him. Then Gilbert apologizes to his mother for his behavior and promises that he is not ashamed of her and that he will not let her be hurt any more. She admits to Gilbert that she knows what a burden she has become to the family, and he forgives her. He introduces her to Becky—something he had been reluctant to do earlier. Following Arnie’s 18th birthday party, Bonnie climbs the stairs to her bedroom for the first time since her husband’s suicide. When Arnie later tries to wake her, he discovers she has died. The children, not willing to let their mother become the joke of the town by having her corpse lifted from the house by crane, empty their family home of possessions and set it on fire. A year later, Gilbert describes what



In Gilbert's life he always takes care of his brother Arnie, because he thinks that is his job. At one point, Gilbert says "Someday I hope Arnie lives and someday I hope he dies." In this situation, he needs to ignore his feeling, his personal time and when Becky asks him, "What's do you wants?" Gilbert doesn't know what is he really want. When Gilbert leaves Arnie in the bath tub, his mother is very angry and tells him "You've got to do better!". This means he has the heavy responsibility of his brother. Gilbert is locked himself in his life environment, unconscious his of spirit, like he has locked himself in a cage. When he met a girl, Becky, who asked him "What do you want? For you, just for you." The girl's thinking, lifestyle and attitude are different with Gilbert. Becky used many ways to open Gilbert's thinking and life attitude. She looks like did something to set Gilbert free. In the end, Gilbert's mom, Bonnie, made them ashamed and depressed so her children didn't, know how to change and to express their emotion to their family. When Gilbert decides to burn the house down, he frees himself from the cage that and locked up his life, spirit and feeling.

The story of this movie is meaningful to me because of my experience. Two years ago, I arrived in America as an international student in a language school. I was 30 years old, and I thought I just wanted to study and improve my English. I closed my mind against making friends and talking to people. I focused on study and taking care of my father's business. In my mind, I was afraid and nervous. To me, American life is unfamiliar and strange. I also had to ignore my feelings and thoughts, because I really missed my friends, family, and my job in my hometown, Taiwan. In the language school, the director talked to me many times. She told me that, I needed to open my mind to stay here. She said "Sophia, your life not just for studying English. You can't live like this." I tried to make friends in school and in my father's restaurant in Mountain View. I wished I could be myself as I was before in Taiwan. I wanted to be who I am. After some time, the classmates, the teachers and the customers became my friends. I started to mention on my new life in these processes. When I started to open my mind, and try to enjoy and join my life with my environment, I felt much better than before. Right now, I can enjoy everything in America, not just escape these changes from my life.



The Lesson of *Eternal Sunshine*: Good Relationships need Care and Respect

By Minlee Lee

In this movie, *The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, two characters, Joel and Clementine, fall in line on a trip on a train to Montauk, N.Y. Later, Joel is stunned to discover that his girlfriend Clementine has had the memories of their tumultuous relationship erased. Out of desperation, he contacts the inventor of the process, Dr. Howard Mierzwiak, to have Clementine removed from his own memory.

While Joel is asleep in his bed during the night, the hospital people come and start the treatment. During treatment, Joel realizes that he does not really want to erase memories of her and tries to run away from her dreams. But he is asleep and the therapists do not know his mind and the treatment keeps going on.

As Joel's memories progressively begin to disappear, he begins to re-discover his earlier passion. From deep within the recesses of his brain, Joel attempts to escape the procedure. As Dr. Mierzwiak and his crew at the company Lacuna, Inc. chase him through the maze of his memories, it's clear that Joel can't get Clementine out of his head.

There is a second story within this story, also about lovers at Lacuna who try to erase their memories. Mary, a receptionist at Lacuna, has a crush on Dr. Mierzwiak, and they have an affair. However, when Dr. Mierzwiak's wife finds out about it, Mary agrees to erase her memories of her time with the doctor.

The movie returns to the story of Joel and Clementine. They meet again on the train. Maybe they will get back together, but they are disappointed with each other when they hear each other's bad words when they were being treated at Lacuna. At the end, they repeat the breakup, and the movie ends with disappointment.

This movie has a lot to suggest to me. As I watched this movie, I became more serious about my relationship. We have a lot of relationships with people, and we are hurting each other and living in a dizzy world. However, as Mierzwiak, the old doctor, and Mary, the receptionist, eventually meet, I think we see that a relationship is not a one-sided relationship between each side as determined by the environment or by various reasons.

There are so many hard times and difficult times due to human relationships as we live. The message of this movie has comforted me. If you are more caring and respectful to each other, you can keep a good relationship.



LIVING DIALOGUES

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Spring 2017

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