

Reading Project: Year 5

In our reading project we are going to discuss some of the most famous novels of English and American literature. All the novels in this project require careful reading beyond the plot level. For a full understanding you will have to read between the lines and find the symbolism and allusions of the texts. In order to see these hidden beauties always read with a pencil in your hand and mark any interesting or odd passages in the margin. Discuss your selections in your readers' conferences.

Step 1: Choosing a novel

Visit Amazon.com in the internet and find the five books in our project. Read the brief plot summaries and some readers' comments, then choose the novel that interests you most. You need not order them at Amazon. All of the books are available in Graz.

The Books:

John Steinbeck, *The Pearl*

George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*

J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*

Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*

Step 2: Getting Started: (Reading Diary)

Read the first chapter of your novel and write a 10-minute entry in your reading diary. Please take your reading diary very seriously. Go beyond the plot level and write about all your thoughts, associations, questions...(Check your handout "What is a reading diary?" for further instructions.) Write a second entry into your reading diary after you have read the first half of your novel, and a third one after finishing.

Your reading diary and your marginal notes in the book will be used as a basis for discussion in your readers' conferences. These notes will also help you remember your reflections later (for Matura preparation for example).

Step 3: Readers' Conferences and Workshop tasks

1. Work in your group and share your reflections and questions. Read each other's diaries and try to answer each other's questions. Ask your teacher for help in case of disagreements or open problems.
2. In each readers' conference choose 10 vocab. items that you would like to remember and write them into your vocab book.
3. Do the workshop tasks carefully and collect all the tasks in a folder.

Step 4: Preparing the Presentation

Choose one or two of the presentation tasks (see separate handout). Distribute the work load evenly among the group members and design an interesting, well-rounded group presentation.

Copy your contribution for all the group members + one for your teacher.

Step 5: Presentations

Groups present their novels.

Peer-evaluation and feedback of the presentations + Assessment and feedback from teacher

Step 6: Project Folder

Organize your project folder and hand it in for final assessment. Hand in your reading diary.

Book Presentation

For our final presentations of the reading project choose one of the following tasks. Each student in your group must do a different task. Discuss which of the tasks are most meaningful in connection with your novel. Choose tasks that complement each other so that the class gets a full picture of the main themes, symbolism, background and style of your novel.

- Short biography of the author
- Present an alternative book cover and blurb (and print out all the covers and blurbs available at Amazon.com). Discuss the symbolism of these covers.
- Character portraits of the main characters. (You might want to use the *character profiles* handout. Adding a picture will make your portraits even more realistic.)
- Present the historical and cultural background of your novel. (Use visual aids)
- Write a newspaper article reporting an important incident in your novel.
- Write a poem or song-lyrics that might be used in a film or radio-play of your book.
- Act out a scene of your choice.
- Prepare a "bubble sheet" (A3 poster) where you collect important quotes from your book.
- Identity bags: Bring a bag full of objects that are somehow important to the main character of your book. Show them and explain their relevance.
- Design a board game or quiz to be played in class.
- Choose your favorite scene and imagine how it would be shown in a film. Draw a film storyboard.
- Find a painting or other work of art that deals with one of the main themes in your book. (Choose a painting that reflects the symbolic and metaphorical level of your book, rather than a painting that shows the setting of your story.)
- Road signs: Identify a few symbolic items in your book and draw them like "road signs". Consider the shapes and colors of road signs and make use of their symbolism. Explain the meaning of the symbol on the back of your sign (50 – 100 words).
- Alternative idea: If you have an idea of your own contact your teacher about it.

Additional ideas for the readers of *Animal Farm* and *Brave New World*

- Present the basic principles of propaganda and advertising (use visual aids)
- Give a propaganda speech about any topic of your choice. Then explain the methods you have used.
- Present to pros and cons of genetic engineering (use visual aids)

The Old Man and the Sea

by

Ernest Hemingway

Introduction On the surface this novel just talks about an old man fishing. When digging deeper you will find interesting ideas about manhood, childhood and the pursuit and achievement of excellence.

This novel is an allegory, a book that tells one story while it seems to tell another.

Allegory, fictional literary narrative or artistic expression that conveys a symbolic meaning parallel to but distinct from, and more important than, the literal meaning. Allegory has also been defined as an extended metaphor. The symbolic meaning is usually expressed through personifications and other symbols. Related forms are the fable and the parable, which are didactic, comparatively short and simple allegories.

Questions Answer the following questions in your group.

- Do you know anyone who is truly excellent at some activity? How do they act when they are doing whatever it is that they do? How are they different from other people?
- What have you learned from your father? How did he teach you? What would you like to learn from him?
- Do you think pride is a good or bad thing? Have you ever been proud of something you have done?
- Think of the great athletes or other stars that you have seen perform? What makes them proud? How does this change them?

Writing In what way is Santiago different from the other fishermen? (Collect details as you go along.)

Answer the following questions. Working with a partner is o.k. as long as you both write down the answers.

The Old Man and the Sea, pp 1-50

Writing How does the old man think of the marlin he has hooked?

The Old Man and the Sea, pp 50 - 75

Writing Santiago has a slightly unusual view of nature and God. Explain his view and give a few examples from the novel.

The Old Man and the Sea; 75-100

Read the final section of the novel and answer the following questions.

1. When did the shark pick up the scent? Hemingway describes the shark as beautiful” as well. Why? What is the old man’s attitude when he sees the shark?

2. Look at the paragraph where the shark bites into the fish. What is the sentence structure

of all of those sentences? Why would Hemingway do that? What won't Santiago do after the shark attack?

3. Why does he wish that it was all a dream? What emotion doesn't the old man show? Why?

4. Complete the quote: "A man can be destroyed _____" Put the quote in your own words. Is this an optimistic quote? Explain. Can you think of anyone you know or have seen that this quote would apply to?

Writing Describe this last fight in the darkness, between Santiago and the sharks.

How do the sharks finally come for the fish?

How does the old man try to fight them off?

Why does he fight?

After the fight, the old man has a strange taste in his mouth. What is it? What does that imply?

What does the old man feel when he is beaten?

What has beaten him? (be careful)

Why did he never know what beaten meant?

Look at the earlier quote "A man can be....." Is that still true for Santiago?

What happens to the old man as he walks back to his cabin?

These accidents are another allusion. Who else fell, while carrying a large wooden thing?

How long was the Marlin?

How long must Santiago's boat be?

What was incredible about the last fight?

Why is Manolin crying?

Why does he want the sword?

The novel ends with a scene with the tourists. What do they mistake the fish for?

Do the tourists understand what has happened?

How is Santiago sleeping at the end of the novel?

Will he live? Explain.

The Old Man and the Sea: More Questions

Introduction These questions will help you to understand the novel even better.

Questions Work in your group and discuss the following issues.

- What mistake did the old man make? Is that mistake a “sin”?
- One critic has said that Santiago’s biggest mistake was in leaving Manolin home. Discuss and explain this.
- In the logic of the novel, did the sharks attack for a reason?
- There is clearly a difference between good sharks and sea animals and bad sharks and sea animals. What is that difference?

Take that comparison to people. Who are the good people in the novel and who are the bad ones?

- How is this story similar to Hemingway’s life?
- Who do you know that is a Nantucket Santiago? She/he does not need to be a fisherman, obviously.
- Imagine Santiago had a different occupation? Describe what one of his days would be like?
- How else could this novel end, and still be true to itself?

Hemingway Biography

	Read the information about Hemingway's life and complete the biography sheet.
Hemingway's Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Birth and location • Why that is important? • Early years and goals • World War I • First works, Paris • Success and marriage

- World War II
- Making Money, losing friends
- Critical Grief and the Hemingway Man
- One last book
- Awards
- Death

The Old Man and the Sea; Writing Project

The Assignment	Choose one of the following topics for a writing project.
	Write a letter: Old Man – to a good friend or Write Manolin’s diary after the old man has come back or Write a short article for the local newspaper, reporting the events. Write about 2 A-4 pages (12pt, 1,5 linespacing)

For extra credit:

A Clean, Well Lighted Place

Introduction This story was written much earlier in Hemingway's career, before he became Papa and a legend in his mind. Like the novel we just finished, it also deals with an old man and "nothing"?

Reading Read the story and answer the questions below.

Other Questions In your group, answer the following questions.

- What is the "nothing" that the older waiter and the old man are afraid of?

Where did Santiago find this same nothingness?

What did Santiago do in the nothingness?

- What does darkness symbolize in this story?

How do the older characters deal with darkness here?

How did Santiago deal with darkness?

- What is the religious attitude of this story?

How is that different from Santiago's?

- What are the verbs in the first paragraph?

Why is that?

For extra credit

Pool Shark

Introduction The following article, taken from the Atlantic Monthly, illustrates the world of the Pool Shark. This world is not at all unlike Santiago's

Pool shark Read the following article and answer the questions.

We feel ambiguous about the pool shark. We praise his skill and condemn his dishonesty. After all, he commits the sin that Americans are least inclined to forgive--duplicity. He isn't what he seems to be. And yet, because the shark preys upon hubris--a human weakness that Americans particularly abhor--he is the sort of miscreant we tolerate or even encourage.

At a recent New England Nine Ball Championship, where a \$100 entry fee bought me the opportunity to be humiliated by two pros (after you lose once, you get a second chance--a process called double elimination), I met a pool shark named Tom, a Boston Irishman still relatively young, although he had been a pool player for twenty-five years, and had three times been New England champion. Tom and I hit it off right from the start. When I invited him to my home for an afternoon of pool, he said he'd be happy to come. Naturally, Tom did not try to hustle me. He didn't need to. I knew immediately--he broke and ran out a game of eight ball--that he was a great player. At first I thought I wouldn't mind losing; after all, what chance did I have? And yet after I'd lost seventeen games in a row, I felt sick with frustration and anger.

Eventually Tom and I talked about what is required to be a successful pool shark other than the ability to shoot an exquisite game. Tom said that first and foremost a shark needs a good night's sleep--every night, no matter how late he gets in. "Call any real player before noon," Tom said, "and see what happens." (I did, and I got Allen Hopkins, one of the best American players of the past twenty years, out of bed.) "Nothing affects the eyes like sleep--the lack of it," Tom said. "And in pool the eyes are everything."

"What about glasses?" I asked. "What about the guy who doesn't see too well? Can he ever get to be good enough?" I wear glasses.

"Glasses are a burden," Tom said. "You have to train yourself to ignore what you see over them when you're down low to shoot." But one of the best shooters in the country, Bill "Chickenman" Dunsmore, wears glasses so thick you'd call him handicapped. "The human mind's a wonder," Tom said. "It compensates for all kinds of things. A guy with glasses, with less than twenty-twenty vision, learns to shoot at the right part of the fuzzy ball. It may even be an advantage not to see long shots too clearly. Seeing too clearly encourages the shooter to be overprecise, to aim his stroke, making it an act of will rather than a function of a well-trained body." I had difficulty believing Tom's notion that poor vision could be an advantage, but I thanked him silently for the agreeable illusion.

Another component of hustling, Tom said, is the equipment. And part of the "equipment" is the appearance of the shark himself. First of all, he must be clean-cut: short hair, no moustache, no beard. He must be dressed conservatively. In town he must dress like a businessman in leisure clothes; in the country he needs to look like a hick, a hayseed. Most important, he must learn and adopt the sucker's barroom style, which says in every intonation of voice, every gesture (such as the way he handles his money--confusedly, carelessly paying for his drinks with crumpled bills, ignoring his change), that he's out for a good time.

The shark needs the right pool cue--what pros call a Sneaky Pete. Available from most of the big-time manufacturers, the Sneaky Pete looks exactly like an ordinary one-piece cue except for a thin,

almost indiscernible line at the joint where its two pieces screw together. But it is custom weighted, tipped, and balanced for the shark's game.

The shark usually enters a bar with the shaft and the butt of the Pete already screwed together. The chances are slim that anyone will notice this, because the shark arrives just as the steady drinkers have become competitive, which is around 10:00 P.M. in most bars.

For a while the shark stands at the bar, holding his cue, buying beers for himself and, occasionally, for the guys near him. He drinks steadily and looks over at the table while he drinks, appearing anxious to shoot.

Now and then, when a decent shot is made, the shark feigns excitement. "Hell of a shot," he says to the bartender, who of course hasn't noticed. Then the shark turns to his drinking friends, shakes his head, and says loudly enough to be overheard, "Wow, they've got some good shooters around here." Then he buys another drink.

Eventually the shark is coaxed by his newfound buddies to put his quarters on the table--to be next up to shoot. By this time of night one player has taken possession of the table. More often than not this player, having won many drinks as well as a couple of hundred dollars, is contemptuous and cocky, and ready to be had.

The shark will never approach the evening's champion with a challenge. Nothing about a shark must even hint at his true ability or his intent. He must appear a gregarious dupe, ready and willing to be embarrassed and to call it fun.

The first question the shark asks is "What are the stakes here?" This takes the betting out of the personal range. It becomes a circumstance of the table that night. The night's big winner will always inflate the wager. If he's been playing eight ball for five dollars a rack, he will claim he's played all night for ten. At first the shark balks at playing for such a sum. He chalks up his cue. He considers.

Perhaps the most important skill a shark has is the ability to imitate a novice's game. A novice has predictable and readily identifiable mannerisms, which the shark has practiced until they are second nature. First of all, a novice talks--before, after, and sometimes even during his shooting. Second, when a novice thinks he's shooting well (he has sunk two or three balls), he moves quickly around the table to position himself for the next shot. This is to say, "Now I'm playing for real." Finally, the stroke of a novice is short, stabbing. And on a difficult or a crucial shot his body contracts and sways as he aims. His grip on the butt tightens; the cue tip moves from side to side.

The second strategy, patience, is as necessary as haste. The more a champion loses, the quicker his game will become. He will express, through his rapid, nervous play, the desperate urgency that is creeping into his heart. This is the time when the shark does all his fussing at the table: he will discuss his shot aloud, with himself or with one or two onlookers. Between shots he always needs a sip of beer.

The shark has one great advantage over a bar player. The shark has trained in a poolroom, on a regulation table nine feet by four and a half feet. The usual bar table is only seven feet by three and a half feet. The difference the size makes is phenomenal. To the shark, no shot on a seven-foot table is a "long" shot. And the short balls are child's play. Just seeing that little table, with its bigger pockets, its forgiving banks (a ball can hit the rail a diamond above a pocket and still go in), gives the shark all the confidence he needs. He believes he can make any shot on this table. And usually he can.

Success for the shark means two things: first, he must win two or three hundred dollars, or two or three thousand--depending on where the games are played--for a night's work. Second, he must never have let the champion know that he, the shark, is the better player. His success must seem to

be all luck, a consequence of the champion's own, easily forgivable mistakes. If the shark accomplishes this, he can return to the bar again and again, and reap a harvest from whoever is the big winner that night. By losing occasionally, the shark can acquire and maintain a reputation for being "just a lucky guy." The worst mistake a shark can make is to allow himself anger: to be so offended by the idiocy, the rudeness, the egotism, of his opponent that he gives in to the temptation to show off.

I thought that being a pool shark sounded wonderful. But how many players can achieve the perception of a psychotherapist, the self-discipline of a monk, and the skill of a general surgeon? "Just a few," Tom said. "Just a few."

Questions Answer the following questions fully. Use another sheet of paper.

1. What sin are pool sharks guilty of?
Pool sharks prey on hubris. What is hubris?
2. What does the phrase "broke and ran" mean?
3. What are the requirements for a pool shark?
What is an "Sneaky Pete"?
Why is it called that?
4. How does a shark act in a bar?
Why?
What would happen if, for instance, he were to screw his stick together in the bar?
5. Why are beers so important to the Pool Shark?
Why can't he be cocky at the table?
6. How does a novice act around the pool table?
7. How does a Pretender act around the pool table?
8. Why must the shark lose?
9. In order to make money, what must the shark do with the Champion?
Why would the author use the opposition of "haste" and "Patience."
Stylistically, the author has given up using names, but rather uses types.
What is the effect of that?
10. Why will a shark win in a bar, more often than not?
11. What is success to a shark?
What causes failure?
12. What qualities are necessary in a pool shark?
Is loneliness one of them?

Writing Compare the hunting of the pool shark to the hunting of any other hunter, be it human or animal. How are they the same?