



Summer Reading & Writing Assignment

The summer assignment for Honors Humanities consists of reading several texts, watching several films and videos, and writing three short essays, one for each group of works. These assignments are designed as preparatory work for some of the shows and other encounters we will have during the first semester of this course.

- **Assignment 1: The Folkloric Frame – *Rusalka* (September performance)**
 - **Reading:**
 - *Undine* (the 1811 novella by Friedrich de la Motte Fouque, on Moodle)
 - “The Little Mermaid” (the 1837 fairy tale written by Hans Christian Andersen, on Moodle)
 - *Rusalka* (the libretto written by the poet Jaroslav Kvapil for Antonín Dvořák’s 1901 opera, on Moodle)
 - **Viewing:**
 - *The Little Mermaid* (1989 film, streaming on a number of services)
 - *The Little Mermaid Live!* (2019 TV musical, streaming on Disney +)
 - **The Big Idea:** During the first semester, we plan to attend the Pittsburgh Opera’s production of *Rusalka*, a work that is part of a much larger tradition of mermaid tales. All five of the works in this assignment are adaptations of the same core narrative, which itself is much older than de la Motte Fouque’s novella. When a work is adapted, we must always pay attention to what has been changed and, more importantly, what impact those changes have.
 - **Essay Prompt:** Taking de la Motte Fouque’s *Undine* as the source text, what do each of the four later adaptations bring to and take away from their source? [2-3 pages].

- **Assignment 2: The Adaptation Matrix – *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (October performance)**
 - **Reading:**
 - *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (the 1915 novel by John Buchan, on Moodle)
 - **Viewing:**
 - *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (the 1935 film, on YouTube and Moodle [via public domain])
 - *The 39 Steps* (the 2013 game, via YouTube walkthrough posted on Moodle)
 - **The Big Idea:** During the first semester, we plan to attend the University of Pittsburgh Theater Department’s production of *The 39 Steps*. This novel, written at the beginning of the First World War, is commonly credited as one of the earliest and most influential of the “man-on-the-run” thriller archetype.
 - **Essay Prompt:** Taking Buchan’s novel as the source text, how does each of the adaptations change key aspects of the novel to fit its respective medium? [2-3 pages].



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- **Assignment 3: Muses and Metamorphoses – Hadestown (November performance)**
 - **Readings:**
 - The story of Orpheus and Eurydice in Plato’s *Symposium* (370 BCE), Virgil’s *Georgics* (29 BCE) and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (8 AD) (all excerpts on Moodle)
 - *Sir Orfeo*, a late 13th c. poem in Middle English, translated by J.R.R. Tolkien (on Moodle)
 - *The Song of Orpheus*, a special edition of the 1989 DC comic *Sandman* (on Moodle)
 - **Viewing:**
 - *Moulin Rouge!* (2001 film, available on Hulu and other streaming services)
 - *Orpheus Leading Eurydice from the Underworld* (1861 painting by Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, on Moodle)
 - *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1893 sculpture by Auguste Rodin, on Moodle)
 - **Listening:**
 - “Don’t Look Back” by She & Him (2008 song, on Moodle)
 - “Talk” by Hozier (2019 song, on Moodle)
 - **The Big Idea:** The story of Orpheus and Eurydice has inspired well over 100 published works in a variety of media over the past 2500 years.
 - **Essay Prompt:** Using Virgil and Ovid as the source texts, how do these adaptations act as a commentary on the timelessness of this myth? [2-3 pages].

Each essay should be 2-3 pages, single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font. The essays should include quotations from the assigned texts. Cite your quotations parenthetically in MLA style. These essays must be submitted as separate files to Turnitin.com by 11:59 PM on Tuesday, August 30, 2022.

Any problems, questions, or concerns should be brought to me as they occur so that I can address them speedily.

If you haven’t done so by now, enroll in the class on Moodle and Remind:

Text @hhwlt2023 to the number 81010 or go to <https://www.remind.com/join/hhwlt2023>



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