



Summer Reading & Writing Assignment

The summer assignment for Honors Humanities and Theater consists of reading texts, watching films and videos, listening to selected songs, and writing four 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: Local Heroes – Billy Strayhorn: Something To Live For (late Sept. performance)**
 - **Reading:**
 - Various biographical and historical articles (on Moodle)
 - **Listening:**
 - *Lush Life* (YouTube playlist, on Moodle)
 - **The Big Idea:** During the first semester, we plan to attend the Pittsburgh Public Theater's world premier production of *Billy Strayhorn: Something To Live For*, a musical by Pittsburgh playwright Rob Zellers and CMU grad Kent Gash. This show is bound to be a type of love letter to a local hero, the music he made, and the Pittsburgh of days gone by.
 - **Essay Prompt:** What makes Billy Strayhorn's life and music a suitable subject for a stage musical? [2-3 pages].
- **Assignment 2: The Adaptation Matrix – Somewhere Over The Border (mid Oct. performance)**
 - **Reading:**
 - *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (the 1900 novel by L. Frank Baum, on Moodle)
 - **Viewing:**
 - *The Wizard of Oz* (the 1939 film, on various streaming services)
 - *The Wiz* (the 1978 film, on various streaming services)
 - **The Big Idea:** During the first semester, we plan to attend City Theater's Production of *Somewhere Over The Border* by Brian Quijada. This play is an adaptation of Baum's novel that focuses on the experience of Central American immigrants in the 1970's.
 - **Essay Prompt:** How do each of the two films adapt Baum's novel to their own purposes? [2-3 pages].



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- **Assignment 3: Ars Longa, Vita Brevis – *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* (late Oct. performance)**
 - **Readings:**
 - Excerpts from Bella Chagall's memoirs (on Moodle)
 - **Viewing:**
 - Selected paintings by Marc Chagall
 - **The Big Idea:** During the first semester, we plan to attend Quantum Theater's Production of *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* by Daniel Jamieson. Bella Chagall was her husband's soulmate and muse, and their love was often depicted in his work.
 - **Essay Prompt:** How do the selected paintings communicate Marc Chagall's love for his wife and for the life they built together? [2-3 pages].
- **Assignment 4: The Folkloric Frame – *The Flying Dutchman* (mid Nov. performance)**
 - **Readings:**
 - Excerpt from Heinrich Heine's novel *From the Memoirs of Herr Schnabelewopski* (on Moodle)
 - Full text of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (on Moodle)
 - Full text of Richard Wagner's libretto for his opera *The Flying Dutchman* (on Moodle)
 - **Listening:**
 - Iron Maiden's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (YouTube video on Moodle)
 - **The Big Idea:** During the first semester, we plan to attend The Pittsburgh Opera's Production of *The Flying Dutchman* by Richard Wagner. The legend of the Flying Dutchman began appearing as maritime folklore in the 18th century. Since then, it has become the basis of several story types, two of which are featured in this assignment.
 - **Essay Prompt:** Heine's and Wagner's version of the story are different from that of Coleridge and Maiden. Identify the important differences and the impact of those differences. [2-3 pages].

Each essay should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font. The essays should include quotations from the assigned texts when and where it is appropriate. Cite your quotations parenthetically in MLA style (include a works cited section). These essays must be submitted as separate files to Turnitin.com **by 11:59 PM on Tuesday, September 5, 2023.**

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 @hhwlt2024 to the number 81010 or go to <https://www.remind.com/join/hhwlt2024>



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