

Reading journal

Literature



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GOES HERE! WORLD LITERATURE- Reading Journal The Arabian Nights

Anonymously Written TRANSLATOR Husain Haddawy PERIOD 8th Century

CONTINENT / CULTURE

India and Persia

THEME / CONTENT (2 examples)

Deception

The theme of deception is eminent throughout the story. The good characters have to deceive or outwit the evil ones in order to win and live. Shahrazad has to deceive King Shahrayar by telling him tales and postpone their endings in order to prolong her life and save other women from being put to death by the king. In the same way, characters such as the merchant in Shahrazad's story of the Merchant and the Donkey have to deceive and outwit the demon in order to save his friend, the merchant from the demon's deathly hands. The donkey also deceives the ox by telling him to disobey their master, and so does the witch who curses her stepson and turns him into a bull.

Evilness/Wickedness of Women

The women in the story are mostly depicted in a negative manner. The first wife of Shahrayar and the woman imprisoned by the beast betray their men by sleeping with other men. This picture of women makes them look not just ill-mannered but even bestial. Likewise, the wife of the merchant who knows the language of the animals is also wicked. She is too capricious in that she can sacrifice the life of her husband just to know the secret conversation between the donkey and the ox. Moreover, the wife of the merchant who turns her husband's mistress into a deer and his son into a bull is also evil. She has had the mistress killed, without the merchant's knowledge that the <https://assignbuster.com/reading-journal-essay-samples-2/>

deer is actually his mistress. Likewise, she wishes to have the son butchered while he is disguised as a bull. Although some of the women in the story are wicked and use their cleverness to get what they want, other women like Shahrazad uses her wisdom for the good and safety of others.

VOCABULARY (3 examples)

1. Vizier

From the Prologue, “ The king summoned his vizier and bade him go to his brother.”

The vizier in the Arabian culture pertains to a civil officer. In the story, the vizier plays a big role in bringing the women to King Shahrayad. He is also responsible for bringing his own daughter to the king, but Shahrazad’ wisdom and intelligence make the vizier a good father to his two daughters.

2. Flayed

“ His side was lacerated and his neck was flayed” (1060).

The term, “ flayed” is repeatedly used to describe the wound that the donkey suffers from when he tries to fool the ox. Flayed means skinning or removal of the skin from the body.

3. Consummated

“ I took her to the boat, spread the bed for her, and consummated our marriage.” (1071)

This term means to complete something. Based on the way it is used, it means to complete the marriage or fulfill one’s marital obligations.

LITERARY TERMS (2 examples)

Irony

Irony is a statement uttered to mean the total opposite of what is meant. The writer of the story uses irony in the conversation between the donkey and

the ox. The donkey advises the ox, “ Next time, when they bring them (fodder) to you, don’t eat or even touch them, but smell them...” This advice could make the ox suffer greatly because seeing him behave this way could make the shepherd think that he is dying, thus the donkey’s advice is an irony to mean the total opposite of how the ox should behave.

Symbolism

Symbolism is a literary device that makes use of an object to represent an abstract idea. In the story, the woman imprisoned by the beast collects the rings of the men who made love to her. The rings not only function as a remembrance from the men but representation of the hundred times the woman has won her freedom without the knowledge of the beast.

READING JOURNAL QUESTION (3 examples)

1. I really like this idea because...

I really like the idea of lady Shahrazad to stop the king from killing the women who sleep with him. The woman is very cunning and full of wisdom. Her stories are also great although most of them are unrealistic. I believe that in fact, it is the element of magic that makes her story interesting. For example, the demon in the first part makes the story appear unique because the villain is not just another human being but a supernatural being. Moreover, there is irony in the way the demon gave the merchant one year to bid his families goodbye. Furthermore, the element of surprise is really convincing, thus it makes the king want to hear more of the story night after night.

2. I really don’t understand this part...

I do not understand the verse that the merchant utters to plead for the demon’s pity and forgiveness. He recites a verse with the first two lines, <https://assignbuster.com/reading-journal-essay-samples-2/>

saying, “ Life has two days: one peace, one weariness,/And has two sides: worry and happiness.” These verses are used to lecture to the demon that he has to accept the death of his son but I find them weird because instead of asking forgiveness and pleading, the merchant is giving a command to the devil to just accept what has happened.

3. This section makes me think about/because . . .

The section where King Shahrayar’s first wife goes with other slave women to have sex with slave men makes me think about the image of an Arab women in the ancient times. I strongly disagree to the way the women are pictured in this part of the story because from what I learned, Arab women are chaste. Their men respect them and they are not as wild as the women in the story. It is possible that the writer features them as wild women in order to build a strong foundation or basis for Shahrayar’s later decision. Nevertheless, it is still disgusting to read a story where women are pictured in this way. Good thing, the wisdom and cunningness of Shahrazad serves as a way to compensate the flaw of the women in the beginning.

GRAPHICS

A watercolor painting of an Arab woman by John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) The painting shows the mysterious image that the Arab women in the story projects. Arab women are clothed in long silk gowns, covering their whole body, including half of their faces. However, behind the long dress is the restless heart that longs for freedom and power.

LINKS

<http://www.enotes.com/arabian-nights-criticism/arabian-nights>

This link, which appears on enotes.com is very helpful because it provides the historical background of the work. Mainly, it traces the roots of the story <https://assignbuster.com/reading-journal-essay-samples-2/>

and offers an analysis and literary criticism. Based on this link, One Arabian Nights has been critically acclaimed by literary critics and historians alike for its structure and representation of culture and behavior of the Arab people.

2. http://books.google.com.ph/books?hl=en&lr=&id=XrtwI5hQ7ZUC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=arabian+nights+psychological+criticism&ots=vacxnZZo0T&sig=TYmQfTzjEuVahTfQKOU9C09n_AI&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

This link leads to a book by Yamanaka and Nishio, titled, “The Arabian Nights and Orientalism.” Reading the book results in a better understanding of the Arabian culture as seen in the text. The link also gives readers some idea on how the Arabian Nights later affected the literature of the East and West, thus emphasizing the richness of the Arab culture.

LITERARY CONNECTION

The story relates in some way to the English ballad titled, “Ballad of Lord Randall.” Just like some women in the story, the woman in the ballad is a picture of an evil or wicked woman who wants to overpower the man by poisoning him. In the story, we see some examples of wicked women. This image of women is totally different from those portrayed in Spanish, Black American or Asian literatures where women are too submissive to their husbands.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

The experiences of the characters are too far from mine because I do not have to struggle or suffer the consequences they have to go through.

Nevertheless, I can still relate to Shahrazad in the way she convinces her father to give her to the king as a wife. Like her, I would always insist on what I want even though it could mean hurting the feelings of my parents.

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However, as I read the story, I did not realize it right away that I am somewhat like her. I even thought that she is silly for thinking of giving herself as a sacrifice. Thus, when I read the story, I sympathize with the old vizier for having a daughter like her, not knowing that I could be worse in the way I treat my parents.

Works Cited

Sargent, John Singer. Arab Woman. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Web. Painting. 6 February 2012.

The Arabian Nights. Trans. Husain Haddawy. New York: Norton & Company, 1990. Print.

Yamanaka, Yuriko and Tetsuo Nishio. Arabian Nights and Orientalism. NY: IB Tauris and Company, 2006. Print.

YOUR NAME GOES HERE!

WORLD LITERATURE- Reading Journal

TITLE

Oedipus

AUTHOR

Sophocles

TRANSLATOR

DATE / PERIOD

436-426 BCE

CONTINENT / CULTURE

Europe/Greek

THEME / CONTENT (2 examples)

Deception

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Quest for Identity

The theme of “ the quest” is very common in literature. This pertains to the search of the hero for his/her real identity. In this quest, the hero like Oedipus meets obstacles and triumphs to find the real meaning of his existence. In the play, Oedipus achieves his goal of knowing his roots but he ends up in tragedy because of the hard facts that he discovers.

Courage and Heroism

Oedipus demonstrates courage and heroism in the story as he answers the riddle of the sphinx. By doing this, he saves his very own people from the plague caused by the villain. Likewise, he shows courage in fighting enemies, but unfortunately killed even his own father.

VOCABULARY (3 examples)

Oracle

“ As Apollo’s oracle has just revealed to me.” (30)

This term is repeatedly used in the play and is a key term to unlock the secret of Oedipus. According to the Free Dictionary by Farlex, an oracle is an authoritative or wise statement or prediction. Much of the story has been anchored on an oracle. Before Oedipus is born, there is already an oracle that he will kill his own father and marry his own mother. At the end, when the oracle is revealed, Oedipus makes use of it to guide his judgment regarding the plague in his kingdom. The presence of the oracle in the play shows the tradition of the Greeks to honor the words of the elders and believe in astrology or other paranormal beliefs.

Plague

The term plague is another key term that is used throughout the play.

Thebes, the kingdom of Oedipus, is plagued by a monstrous sphinx. Even

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though Oedipus is able to answer the riddle of the sphinx, he still observes his people suffering from the plague. A plague is a calamity that is believed to be caused by God to punish the people. As reflected in the story, the Greeks believe that plagues are caused by someone who should be perished or punished in order to free the land from the suffering.

Decree

“ I charge you then, submit to thy decree.” (398)

This term was used by Tiresias while talking with Oedipus. As used in the statement, a decree is an order but on a general note, it can also mean a law or a regulation in a land or territory. In the play, Oedipus is eager to find out who killed the former king, his father. In his eagerness, he tries to accuse Tiresias of being a conspirator. This maddens Tiresias and forces him to give a hint to Oedipus that he the latter is the real killer.

LITERARY TERMS (2 examples)

Irony

The use of irony is relevant throughout the whole story. Everything becomes ironic when Oedipus pursues the killer of his own father. The term irony usually means a statement that means the opposite of what is said. In the play, Oedipus pronounces statements like,

If by any chance

he proves to be an intimate of our house,

here at my hearth, with my full knowledge,

may the curse I called down on him strike me! (284-287)

It is truly ironic that a man would curse himself. If Oedipus only knew the truth, he will not utter the above statement and will not find out the real cause of the plague. Instead, he will just perish himself, which he does at the <https://assignbuster.com/reading-journal-essay-samples-2/>

end of the play.

Metonymy

The use of metonymy is also seen in many parts of the play. Metonymy is a literary device that makes use of a part to mean a whole. In particular, the term, “angry heaven” and “alien soil” are metonymies that appeal more to the senses than direct terms such as “angry god” and “another country,” respectively.

READING JOURNAL QUESTION (3 examples)

1. This section is particularly effective because . . .

The part where Oedipus is cursing the murderer of Laius is particularly effective because it makes him look foolish and prepares the audience for the tragedy that will befall on him. Oedipus may win the hearts of the audience as he answers the riddle of the sphinx. However, we cannot erase the fact that he kills his own father too. Moreover, the part where he accuses Tiresias shows his disrespect for the elders, which is contrary to the tradition of the Greeks. Thus, it becomes reasonable for him to end up in tragedy.

2. The character I most admire is ____ because . . .

The character I most admire in the play is Tiresias because even though he knows all the truth about Oedipus, he does not reveal it to the people, despite the sufferings in the land. This shows the people’s respect for the king. Had Oedipus not accuse Tiresias of being a traitor, he would still not reveal the secret and probably die without telling anyone. Many of us do not possess this characteristic. We are usually eager to tell secrets and reveal ideas that may even harm other people. In the play, Sophocles is telling us that a wise person should know when to speak and when to seal their lips.

3. What character did you dislike and why?

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I really dislike Jocasta, the mother of Oedipus. For me, she is an irresponsible mother. It does not appear to her throughout the play that Oedipus is her real son. I also do not believe that she is still capable of bearing Oedipus a child when Oedipus is already in his adult age. Likewise, I cannot see the reason why she should sleep with him given their age gap. Moreover, I think she is a weak woman because she cannot fight for her right to be queen and reign without a king, which I believe is possible.

GRAPHICS

This picture shows an Greek theater. The theater clearly shows that the audience is gathered around the stage to let everyone watch the scene in the middle the seats are elevated from the ground and those who are at the upper levels can still see the whole stage.

LINKS

<http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/oedipus/facts.html>

This link provides a brief summary and analysis of the play in simple language. The play is in poetic form, thus it is quite difficult to read. Good thing there is a website that gives a scholarly summary of the chapters and lines of the play.

<http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0901/oedipus.htm>

This link gives additional information about the play. It focuses on the historical background of the play, and the literary development during the time the play was written.

LITERARY CONNECTION

The character of Oedipus Rex highlights the incestuous relationship between Oedipus and Jocasta. This idea of the son being in love with his mother is duplicated in Electra, another play by Sophocles, which shows the deep

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affection of a daughter to her father, Agamemnon. However, unlike Oedipus who kills his own father, Electra does not kill her mother Clytemnestra but plots her death along with her brother, Orestes.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

The experience of Oedipus is too far from mine because I am not a king and I do not have any incestuous feelings for my father/mother. However, I can say that I can connect with Oedipus in the way he feels about his fate. There are times when I question God or my parents for my misfortunes. I tend to blame others for mistakes that I, myself did. I guess it is a human instinct to do that and think that others are the cause of our misfortune but I hope that I will not end up like Oedipus, not having enough wisdom to handle the pressures of life.

Works Cited

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The Oedipus Plays. Sparknotes. 2012. Web. 2 February 2012.