

The Lost Cause Letters: 20th Century Literary Renderings of the Old South

Argument

In this endeavor my first task is double: on the one hand I propose a return – from our now 21st century viewpoint – to some classics of mid-20th century American literature, such as William Faulkner and Margaret Mitchell, with their world-famous books of 1936: *Absalom, Absalom!* and respectively *Gone with the Wind*. My focus is on the (mock)epistolary side of these two novels. I will also employ the 1939 Hollywood cult-movie, for the students to better grasp the fine levels of irony in this artistic approach of a most painful historical moment, i.e. the American Civil War (1861-1865).

On the other hand, I intend to inspire my students toward a meditation upon some echoes of the Lost Cause still lingering within the Southern mentality, as depicted in some short-stories about the post-bellum clash between generations. Here we will concern ourselves with two exquisite short-stories: one by Flannery O'Connor "Everything That Rises Must Converge"/ "The Artificial Nigger" and the other one by Eudora Welty, "A Worn Path."

The third section of this course will be about two celebrated literary renderings of 20th century New Orleans: the play "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams and the novel *The Moviegoer* by Walker Percy.

Requirements

"Read, read, read" (William Faulkner) & DO NOT (even try to) CHEAT! Plagiarism can be quite easily discovered, thus leading to your utter failure.

Attend at least 75% of the classes.

Write two essays, on two different themes suggested by the **Reading List**, the **Bibliography**, and the class debates.

Your final grade shall be provided by an average result of my evaluation of your entire activity.

Proposed Themes of Discussion

Week 1: A general introduction to our main concerns in terms of themes, authors and literary works for study.

Week 2: Letters in *Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner

Week 3: Letters in *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell

Week 4: Students' debates and essay-plans presentation

Week 5: The clash between the generations in Flannery O'Connor's short-stories

"Everything That Rises Must Converge" and "The Artificial Nigger"

Week 6: The clash between the generations in Eudora Welty's story "A Worn Path"

Week 7: Students' debates and essay-plans presentation

Week 8: New Orleans in the play/film "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams

Week 9: New Orleans in Walker Percy's poetic novel *The Moviegoer*

Week 10: Students' debates and essay-plans presentation

Week 11: "Gone with the Wind" – the Hollywood cult-movie

Week 12: "A Streetcar Named Desire" – the Hollywood cult-movie

Week 13: Students' debates upon the two classic movies

Week 14: Conclusions, opinions, dilemmas

Reading List

William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*

Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*

Flannery O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must Converge", "The Artificial Nigger"

Eudora Welty, "A Worn Path"

Tennessee Williams, "A Streetcar Named Desire"

Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer*

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