

Illuminating Literature:
Characters in Crisis
Textbook SAMPLE

 Writing with
Sharon Watson

Illuminating Literature: Characters in Crisis textbook SAMPLE | 2

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Companion books in this series are available in paperback or digital versions:

Illuminating Literature: Characters in Crisis, Teacher's Guide

Illuminating Literature: Characters in Crisis,
Quiz and Answer Manual

Illuminating Literature: Characters in Crisis, Novel Notebook

Download the FREE Novel Notebook at

<https://writingwithsharonwatson.com/illuminating-literature-characters-in-crisis-gateway/> .

The coordinating versions of books students read in this course are available for purchase at <https://writingwithsharonwatson.com/illuminating-literature-characters-in-crisis/> .

Meet the Author



Sharon Watson is the author of [*Jump In*](#), our popular middle school course. She was forced to retire from homeschooling after 18 years when she ran out of her own children, but her love of teaching permeates her writing and literature courses. Sharon’s popular course [*The Power in Your Hands: Writing Nonfiction in High School, 2nd Edition*](#) is based on her sought-after writing classes and is the sequel to *Jump In*.

Let her practical textbooks **teach writing for you**, in paperback or digital format:

- [*Jump In*](#)
- [*The Power in Your Hands: Writing Nonfiction in High School, 2nd Edition*](#)
- [*Writing Fiction \[in High School\]*](#)



Teens enjoy the relaxed way they learn **literature** with Sharon’s Illuminating Literature series: [*Characters in Crisis*](#) and [*When Worlds Collide*](#). These unstuffy courses **prepare** your teens for college literature courses, **equip** them for the rest of their reading lives, and **reveal** the secret power of the author to influence their minds and hearts.



Coordinating versions of the literature read in this course:

<u>Title and Author</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>ISBN</u>
"A Jury of Her Peers" by Susan Glaspell <i>Frankenstein</i> by Mary Shelley	in the textbook Dover Publications	0-486-28211-2 or 978-0-486-28211-4
<i>Silas Marner</i> by George Eliot	Dover Publication	0-486-29246-0 or 978-0-486-29246-5
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> by Shakespeare	Dover Publications	0-486-28272-4 or 978-0-486-282725
"A White Heron" by Sarah Orne Jewett	in the textbook	
"The Garden of Forking Paths" by Jorge Luis Borges	link provided in the textbook	
"Haircut" by Ring Lardner	link provided in the textbook	
"The Lady, or the Tiger?" by Frank Stockton	in the textbook	
"Of the Passing of the First-Born" by W. E. B. Du Bois	in the textbook	
"A Child's Christmas in Wales" by Dylan Thomas	link provided in the textbook	
<i>Sense and Sensibility</i> by Jane Austen	Dover Publications	0-486-29049-2 or 978-0-486-29049-2
Biography/Autobiography	student's choice	
<i>The Hobbit</i> by J. R. R. Tolkien	Mariner Books	978-0-547-92822-7

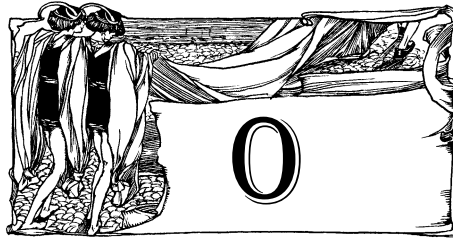
The coordinating versions of books students read in this course are available at WritingWithSharonWatson.com/illuminating-literature-characters-in-crisis.

Why use the coordinating versions? Chaos ensues when some students do not have the suggested version of each book. Students who use books from the library or from home are lost as we turn to specific pages and passages because the material in their books does not appear on the same pages as in our books. They spend so much time trying to keep up that they become frustrated and learn less than their peers do. Avoid this disaster.

Students reading the stories from a tablet will be able to keep up if they know how to use the Search function.

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Start Here

Lesson 1

The Fun and Confusion of Literature

Literature. Do you love it? Dread it? Or do you plow through it because you need the credit?

Welcome to a year of reading insightful, illuminating literature. You'll be reading the books, play, and short stories below as we concentrate on characters and their crises. In addition, we'll be exploring literary terms and the devices authors use to influence your heart and mind. Here's the list. Ever read any of them before?

"A Jury of Her Peers" by Susan Glaspell

Frankenstein by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Silas Marner by George Eliot

Much Ado About Nothing by William Shakespeare

An Assortment of Short Works:

"A White Heron" by Sarah Orne Jewett

"The Garden of Forking Paths" by Jorge Luis Borges

"Haircut" by Ring Lardner

"The Lady, or the Tiger?" by Frank Stockton

"Of the Passing of the First-Born" by W. E. B. Du Bois

"A Child's Christmas in Wales" by Dylan Thomas

Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen

A biography or autobiography of your choice

The Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien

To add to the fun and confusion of reading literature, your opinion and someone else's may differ widely concerning a story you've just read. For example, here are some real reactions by students to *The Invisible Man* by H. G. Wells:

- It was just odd, it moved slowly, and I never truly connected with the characters.
- Strange (in a good way)
- A little disturbing
- Thrilling and scary
- Didn't seem very realistic
- Action-packed and fun

You might be in for some lively discussions this year!

Your Opinion

Finish the following statement by checking as many boxes below as apply to you.

The last time I read a novel, short story, or play for class, I . . .

- fainted.
- gobbled it up and asked for more.
- would have liked it better if I could have understood it.
- wondered what it had to do with me and my life.
- faked my way through the story.
- enjoyed watching the author at work.
- lost the book.
- wished the teacher or course had selected a different story for me to read.
- recorded interesting passages in a notebook for future reference.
- became discouraged by the worldview or message of the author.
- had trouble believing the story because something in it did not ring true.
- fell in love with the story.
- met some new friends in the characters.
- asked why everyone had to die in the end.
- recommended it to a friend.
- tried to guess the ending.
- dreaded the day when the teacher would ask about the theme or symbols.
- lost interest because nothing happened until two-thirds of the way through the story.
- learned something important about life.

- was so moved or grabbed by the story that I'll never forget it.
- thought of another book I'd rather read for class.
- wondered why I was wasting my time and energy reading about someone who is not real.
- loved the style of writing, figurative language, and word usage. Fantastic!

What other options would you like to add to this list? Jot them down here:

Grades

No course would be complete without grades. Though there will be some variety in the points given in each chapter, here are the basics of what you'll be graded on:

- Online "Yes, I read it" quiz, graded online (1-10 points)
- Online literary terms quiz, graded online (1-10 points)
- Participation in opinion survey online (1-10 points)
- Quality of participation in class discussion (1-20 points)
- Successful completion of lessons and assignments (1-20 points)
- Successful completion of an activity (1-10 points)
- Finishing the novel, play, or short story (1-20 points)

Your Novel Notebook

As you read each book or short story in this course, you will be referred to your Novel Notebook where you'll answer questions, complete worksheets, or record what you liked or didn't like about the story.

To download the free, colorful Novel Notebook with all the questions and worksheets in it, go to WritingWithSharonWatson.com/illuminating-literature-characters-in-crisis-gateway. Have it ready before you read the first story.

This Course's Philosophy

Are these books sacred? No.

Do some people treat the classics as sacred? Yes. And by “sacred,” I mean “Don’t change a word. It is *perfect* the way it is. You are a troglodyte if you didn’t love this book.”

I get it. I really do. If I love a novel, I want everyone to love it, too, and can feel peeved if others do not love it as I do. After all, it spoke to me. Something powerful in it hit the right spot in me, and the story resonated with my life, maybe even changed my life in some way.

And then someone comes along and has no appreciation for it. And then I am not happy.

Here’s the truth about any book you read in this course or in any literature course: These books are written by flawed humans who struggled with—or gave in to—sin and their sin natures, who may or may not have been Christians, whose stories may or may not agree with the truths written in the Bible but reflect some redeeming truth and are, therefore, worth reading.

While literature can be uplifting and spur us to greatness, it also can be a disturbing reflection of our fallen state, sometimes even presenting the need for salvation of sorts without offering any, or suggesting a form of salvation forbidden to us. Hold the stories—any stories you read—up to the light of the truths you find in the Bible. Albert Camus, an atheist author, wrote, “A novel is never anything but a philosophy put into images.” Discover the philosophy hidden in the events and examine its premise in the context of Bible truths. Be an aware reader.

Enjoy the books, find pleasure in them, pick them apart, find the flaws in thinking and worldview, ponder changing a passage or an ending, learn from them, copy out favorite passages and try to imitate them, and love or hate the characters.

No matter how you choose to view literature, dig out the nuggets of truth and appreciate the things that make the selections classics.

You may surprise yourself if you read some of these books years from now. Ones you like today you may find dull then. Ones you fall asleep over may be suddenly full of interest. Your perspective will have changed because of your life experiences and your season of life.

“A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say.”
— Italo Calvino, *The Uses of Literature*

Why Read Literature?

Why can’t you just read the books you like and count that as literature?

Good question.

Most of the time, when you read what you like or read popular fiction, you may enjoy the story so much that you do not pause to take a deeper look at it. What is its artistic value? What figurative language, irony, symbols, or lyrical language has the author used, and how do these devices reflect and amplify the theme?

What issues is the author raising, and what is she saying about them? Do we agree or disagree with the author's basic premise? Do we see ourselves in the story? Do we see the person we do *not* want to become?

What truths about life are embedded in the characters and plot? What poignant insights?

As writer Azar Nafisi puts it, "What we search for in fiction is not so much reality but the epiphany of truth."

Maybe the important factor is that for literature you have guides—a teacher and a textbook. These guides are akin to docents in an art museum who reveal secrets behind the works of art, pointing out a dog that becomes a symbol of happy domesticity, showing a hidden figure that angered the artist's patron so much that the artist had to run for his life, explaining that a certain color meant something specific to the original viewers, or elucidating the reason for a saint's square halo instead of a round one.



Modern writers are standing on the shoulders of literary giants. Studying works of literature shows you where ideas come from and inspires your own work. For instance, did you know that Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* and *The Lost World* owe a debt to Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*, or that C. S. Lewis might never have created Narnia if he hadn't read such works as George MacDonald's *Phantastes*?

Reading and understanding literature decodes messages that otherwise would remain frustrating mysteries. As an example, many sea-going adventures contain a character who, metaphorically, has an albatross hanging around his neck. This strange word picture makes no sense until you read Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in which you'll find a man wearing the large bird around his neck as penance of a sort for shooting it and bringing bad luck on the crew.

Frankly, if someone would be your museum guide and walk you through the popular fiction you read, pointing out the powerful writers' devices and insights, you might be able to say you are studying literature. On the other hand, you would miss the history, depth, and treasures that are your literary heritage today, to say nothing of the amazing characters and stories as well.

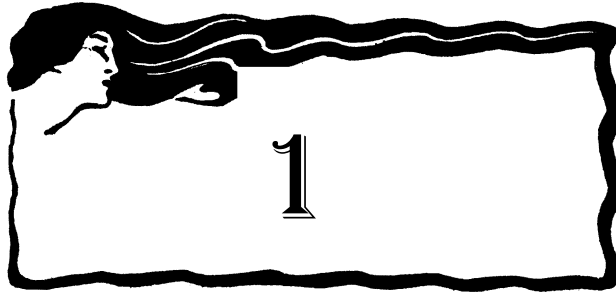
The terms **literary classics** or **the classics** refer to short stories, novels, poems, and plays that have not been written recently but have stood the test of time. In your

opinion, what book written recently will be a literary classic in fifty years? Write your answer here:

Some of the books in this course were written over one hundred years ago and sometimes fail to interest modern teens. Here are a few reasons why this may be true:

1. Older novels were written for adult readers and focus on adult problems, themes, characters, and events.
2. Books for teens today have to have a teen as the main character. Children or adults as main characters do not interest many modern teen readers. In addition, today's books for males have to have a strong male lead; books for females have to have a strong female lead. Literary writers and those of a different era are not concerned with this in the slightest.
3. Many older books don't begin *in media res* ("in the midst of things"). They may begin *ab ovo* ("from the egg," meaning "at the very beginning") and take a loooong time to build up to the story's main action and excitement, which leads us to the next point . . .
4. Readers of other generations did not have TVs, radios, social media, cell phones, or the Internet. Life was lived at a different pace, and they appreciated a good, long story to entertain them.
5. Our language is changing; today's readers may find the words and sentence structures (**syntax**) of older classics difficult to understand or wade through.
6. Visual images accompany many communications today. It is hard for written words to feed a modern mind that is used to a diet of animated or still images.
7. Add your own reason why older books might be dull or difficult for you or other modern readers:

You don't have to *like* the story; you just have to *read* the story. Try to identify why you are not connecting with it, if that is the case. This will give you more patience with the book and will make you a smarter reader.



A Jury of Her Peers

Before You Read the Story

Lesson 1

Before we get into our first story of the year, I'd like to ask you a strange question: Do you think it is acceptable for a wife to kill her abusive husband if it is not in self-defense?

Please write your answer here:

Okay. Now on to less life-threatening things . . .

Suggested Reading and Homework Plan

Below is a four-week plan that will make it easy for you to complete all the tasks in this chapter, including reading the short story.

Use the boxes to check off assignments as you finish them, if you wish.

Week 1:

- Complete lessons 1-2.
- Hand in your Investigate! assignment from lesson 1. Your teacher will tell you when this is due.

Week 2:

- Complete lesson 3 (read “A Jury of Her Peers”) and lessons 4-5. Complete the pages in your Novel Notebook for “A Jury of Her Peers.”

Week 3:

- Decide on one activity and begin work on it. You’ll find the list of activities at the end of this chapter. Your teacher will tell you when this is due.
- Complete lesson 6.
- Hand in your activity and sing a song of freedom.

This is the end of the sample.