

2018-2019 Summer Reading Assignment

Modern Drama and Literature of New York

All students enrolled in Modern Drama and Literature of New York for the 2018-2019 school year must complete the following summer reading assignment and bring in annotated texts on the first day of classes: 10 September 2018. The annotations completed over the summer will prepare you for a writing exam, which will take place during the second cycle of the 2018-2019 school year. Texts will also appear on their respective final exams in January (Modern Drama) and May (Literature of New York). The materials provided below, as well as your texts and annotations, should be kept all year, and be readily accessible when asked to provide them.

Required Literary Texts:

- *The Baltimore Waltz*, a play by Paula Vogel (Modern Drama)
- *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, a novella by Truman Capote (Literature of New York)

Required Supplemental Materials

- Notes on both the play and the novella, provided below. Read the notes provided before reading the texts. Use this information to assist you with your annotations.
- *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, the 1961 film directed by Blake Edwards. Watch the film after reading the novella. Go back into the novella while watching the film and add to your annotations the major changes made to the plot and the main characters.
- "Moon River," a song by Henry Mancini and Johnny Mercer. Use this song to better understand the changes made for the film version of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

The Baltimore Waltz

LITERATURE IS NOT CREATED IN A VACUUM

- Paula Vogel was born in Washington DC in 1951 to Stephen—a Jewish advertising executive, and and Phyllis—a secretary for the USPS. She has two brothers—Carl and Mark.
- She was primarily raised by her mother after her parents divorced. Her mother moved them from apartment to apartment throughout Washington and Baltimore.
- Vogel's foree into drama began in high school where she worked as a stage manager for school theatre productions.
- Vogel received her BA from Catholic University, but left Cornell while working on her dissertation for her PhD. She returned to Cornell to teach soon after, and went on to teach and run theatre programs at both Brown and Yale.
- In 1988, Vogel's brother, Carl, died of AIDS. Though Vogel had produced some plays already, she was still relatively unknown until her breakthrough tragicomedy *The Baltimore Waltz*—a play about the AIDS epidemic inspired by Vogel's brother and their last days together—hit the stage in 1992, for which she won and Obie Award.

- Vogel said of all writing, "In every play, there are a couple of places where I send a message to my late brother Carl. Just a little something in the atmosphere of every play to try and change the homophobia in our world." Vogel, too, came out as a lesbian when she was a teenager.
- Vogel said of her plays, "My writing isn't actually guided by issues.... I only write about things that directly impact my life." Vogel adds, "If people get upset, it's because the play is working."
- Vogel continues to be an active member of the theatre.

THE PLAY

- *The Baltimore Waltz* is a tragicomedy, which is a play that stirs us not only to pity and fear, but also to laughter, structured as a series of comic vignettes underlined by tragedy.
- The story was inspired by Vogel's final days with her brother, Carl, before he lost his battle with AIDS. Carl asked Vogel to go on a joint excursion to Europe, which Vogel could not do at the time, something she later regretted. The play is a story about a brother and sister who appear to be taking a European trip together.
- In every printing of the play, Vogel includes a letter her brother wrote her after a bout with pneumonia, as he was the inspiration for the story. She, too, dedicates the play to Carl.
- The female lead of the play, Anna, is searching for a cure for her terminal disease—the fictitious ATD, or Acquired Toilet Disease contracted from using toilets in the elementary school where she teaches. (This disease is a parody of AIDS.) Knowing her life is soon going to end, Anna allows her passion to drive her, thus turns to a life of promiscuity as she awaits death. This story, however is not what it seems, as the characters actually never leave a hospital room in Baltimore, Maryland where Anna's brother, Carl, is the one dying from a terminal illness.

CHARACTERS

- **Anna:** A thinly veiled alter-ego of Vogel herself, Anna is the sister of Carl.
- **Carl:** Inspired by Vogel's brother, Carl.
- ***The Third Man/Doctor:*** This actor plays every other role in the play. "The Third Man" is a reference to the film-noir classic of the same name, which Vogel alludes to throughout the play.

SYMBOLS

- The Stuffed Bunny Rabbit
- ATD
- The title also has symbolic meaning. Be able to explain.

MAJOR THEMES

- Escapism—Fantasy vs. Reality
- Ghosts—can we ever escape our past?
- Promiscuity vs. True Emotional Affection/Connections
- Denial and Grief

Breakfast at Tiffany's

LITERATURE IS NOT CREATED IN A VACUUM

- Truman Capote was born in New Orleans in 1924 as Truman Streckfus Pearsons.
- Capote's mother, Lillie Mae, was a small-town girl, while his father, Arch, was a charming schemer. The two did not particularly take a hands-on role in the upbringing of their son, leaving him often in the care of his mother's relatives in Monroeville, Alabama. This caused serious issues of abandonment.
- In Alabama Capote met and became friends with acclaimed novelist, Harper Lee. The two balanced each other perfectly—Capote being the sensitive one who was picked on for being wimpy, Lee being the tough tomboy.
- In 1932 Capote moved in with his mother full time after divorcing Arch, moving to New York City, renaming herself Nina, and remarrying Joe Capote. Capote's mother was often cruel to him and insulted him for his effeminate tendencies, though his stepfather, (who adopted Truman,) tried to be a stable and caring role model for him.
- During his education in Manhattan, some of Capote's teachers noted his promise as a writer.
- In 1939 Capote and his family moved to Greenwich, Connecticut temporarily before going back to New York. It was then Capote fell into a group of other teenagers who would spend time smoking, drinking, going to local clubs, and traveling into the city so they could sneak into popular night spots, including the Stork Club and Café Society. This rebellious nature escalated as his mother's drinking problem escalated.
- Capote began his writing career as a copy-boy for *The New Yorker* as a teenager, though despite his best efforts, he could not get any of his work published.
- Capote first achieved success through his short stories. He was first published in *Mademoiselle* and then Harper's *Bazaar*, gaining him entrée into the New York Literary World before finally publishing *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.
- Capote spent much of his later years focusing more on his celebrity—throwing Black and White Balls—and his addiction. This lifestyle strained his relationship with longtime lover Jack Dunphy, and eventually caught up to him physically when, in 1984, Capote passed away.

THE NOVELLA

- Published in 1958, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is a novella about a country girl turned café society girl named Holly Golightly. Café Society was a nightclub in Greenwich Village that Capote used to frequent, and the term later came to refer to the "beautiful people" of cities such as New York, Paris, and London. These people spent their time carousing publicly and lavishly in popular nightclubs.
- The story takes place in 1943 New York City and is told through the first-person narration of an unnamed narrator. He lives in the same brownstone as Holly and becomes fascinated with her lifestyle the more he gets to know her.
- Holly, as a café society girl, has no job. She is able to maintain her lifestyle by spending all of her time with wealthy men who take her out on the town and shower her with lavish gifts and money. Capote notes that Holly is not a prostitute, but rather what he calls "an American geisha"—a Japanese woman trained in music, dancing, and the art of conversation to act as a companion to men. In order to keep this lifestyle she has become accustomed to, Holly hopes to one day marry one of these rich men.
- Holly is said to have been inspired by a compilation of different women in Capote's life—including on this list are Dunphy's ex-wife, Joan McCracken, and Capote's mother.

THE FILM

- The 1961 film is a loose adaptation of Capote's original novella. When watching the film, your main focus will be to identify the major differences between the two.
- Capote had originally wanted Marilyn Monroe to play Holly, but the role was given to Audrey Hepburn. Although the role has become iconic for Hepburn—her style still being mirrored today—Capote was disappointed in the actress's portrayal of his protagonist. As you read the novella and then watch the film, see if you can hypothesize why Capote would have been so disappointed. What was “wrong” with Hepburn's portrayal? How might Monroe's portrayal been closer to Capote's Holly?

CHARACTERS

- **Holly Golightly:** Protagonist and NYC implant society girl, formerly named Lulamae Barnes. Her character is quite different in the film. Be able to identify the differences and be able to discuss how the actress choice may have affected this change.
- **The Narrator:** Unnamed character that lives in the same brownstone as Holly. He becomes fascinated by her lifestyle. Holly refers to him as “Fred” because he reminds her of her brother (who is in the military). Note that in the film the narrator's character is given a name—**Paul Varjack**—and with that an identity outside of just storyteller. Be able to explain why he has a name in the film, but not in the novella. (In the film, pay attention to the name of his only published book and how it connects to Holly.)
- **Joe Bell:** A bartender who has a soft spot for Holly in the novella.
- **Mr. Yunioshi:** Fellow tenant in Holly's brownstone, he is a photographer for a popular picture magazine. His character is seen much more in the film, and his portrayal by Mickey Rooney exposes the prejudice against Asian characters in Hollywood.
- **Sally Tomato:** A New York mobster who pays Holly to visit him in jail. (Also know his lawyer, **O'Shaughnessy**.)
- **OJ Berman:** Holly's former talent agent; calls her a “real phony.” (Know what that means.)
- **Madame Spanella:** Tenant in Holly's brownstone; she seems to have a strong dislike for Holly in the novella. She does not appear in the film, so the role she plays in the novella is transferred to another character. Be able to identify who takes her place.
- **Doc Golightly:** Holly's much older husband who took both Holly and her brother in after the death of their parents.
- **Mag Wildwood:** Fellow socialite, model, and occasional roommate of Holly's.
- **Rusty Trawler & Jose Ybarra-Jaegar:** Wealthy men on whom Holly sets her sights. One of them she becomes engaged to. Know who they are and the changes in her relationships with them in the novella and the film.
- **2E:** The narrator's “decorator.” She appears only in the film. Be able to analyze what her addition does to the story and how her addition reinforces the differences in the relationship between Holly and the narrator/Paul.

SYMBOLS

- The Narrator's apartment key Note the differences in this symbol between the novella and the film.
- Holly's card
- The birdcage (novella) vs. the typewriter ribbon (film)
- St. Christopher Medal (novella) vs. the Cracker Jack ring (film)

- “Cat”: Holly’s cat. Note the differences in the novella and film and how symbolism exemplifies the plot changes.
- Lipstick, dark glasses, and masks
- The songs Holly sings. Note the songs are different in the novell and the film.

MAJOR THEMES

- Isolation—the double-edged sword of both desiring isolation and fearing it. At times it can protect, at other times it can destroy, much like New York itself. Each side will be examined.
- The American Dream—obviously with each story it takes on a different form, so examine its place here.
- Superficiality and materialism in relationships vs. real emotion and love.
- Ghosts—can we ever escape our pasts?
- Freedom vs. Confinement.

Moon River

COMPOSED BY HENRY MANCINI & JOHNNY MERCER

Moon river, wider than a mile
I'm crossing you in style some day
Oh, dream maker, you heart breaker
Wherever you're goin', I'm goin' your way
Two drifters, off to see the world
There's such a lot of world to see
We're after the same rainbow's end, waitin' 'round the bend
My huckleberry friend, moon river, and me
Oh, dream maker, you heart breaker
Wherever you're goin', I'm goin' your way
Two drifters, off to see the world
There's such a lot of world to see
We're after that same rainbow's end, waitin' 'round the bend
My huckleberry friend, moon river, and me

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- Johnny grew up in Savannah, Georgia. Memories of its waterways lead him to the title “Blue River,” but that the title was already in use. He finally settled on “Moon River. Much later, a large river inlet in Savannah, near where Mercer lived, was renamed “Moon River” in his honor.
- As a child, Mercer picked huckleberries (like wild blueberries) in the summer. To him, the berries had a personal connection with a carefree boyhood, strengthened by association with Mark Twain's character Huckleberry Finn. The implication was that Holly Golightly, who was actually of hillbilly stock, and Huckleberry Finn might well have been friends, if ever they had met. (This also relates to Capote's description of Holly's “prairie” songs.)
- The president of Paramount Pictures wanted to remove the song from the film, but Audrey Hepburn “told him firmly that it would be over her dead body.”
- Five hundred known recorded versions of the song now exist, including Frank Sinatra. After Hepburn died in 1993, her own original track was released for the first time.