

	(20-18)	(17-10)	(10)	1-7
Organization The essay is organized with a strong introduction that includes a clear thesis statement. Well-developed and organized sections (scholarly article, style, theme) and a clear conclusion. Poetry explication (after conclusion) is clearly connected to novel.	✓			
Focus The essay is on topic and consistently holds the reader's attention with well-chosen examples. Avoids vagueness and summary. Appropriate transitions between ideas.	✓			
Development The essay is supported with specific and relevant evidence. Ideas are original and reflect a confident and clear understanding of the topic. Includes sufficient textual support (from appropriate sources in addition to the novel) throughout. Critical article and poem are taken from credible websites.	✓			
Sentence Fluency and Word Choice Essay expresses ideas with effective use of a variety of sentence structures. Demonstrates accurate use of language in a clear and lively manner. Incorporates appropriate and precise word choice. Audience awareness is evident, and it is not awkward.	✓			
Form and Conventions The essay is typed: MLA heading, creative title, 12 pt font, Times New Roman, single-spaced, one-inch margins on all sides, page numbers in top right-hand corner of each page, bold headlines for each section. Sections adhere to lengths stated in original requirements. Minimal errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and other elements of grammar. All sources are cited by MLA standards both within the essay and in a Works Cited section after the poetry explication.		✓ length of intro, a copy of grammar issues, citation irregularities		
TOTAL				

(95)

* Present tense

Lauren Essary
Mrs. Willner
AP Literature and Composition
30 April 2014

So Close, Yet So Far: Emotional Isolation in *Mrs. Dalloway*

Introduction

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, published in 1925, breaks into new literary territory that includes fragmented plot lines, ever-changing points of view, and a myriad of other apparent discontinuities that make up the Modernist literature era. This period in literature was marked by experimentation with form and expression, working to fulfill the motto "make it new." The style of the novel is highly impacted by the effects of World War I, an event that plays a major role in Woolf's depiction of key characters. Another influence on these depictions would be Woolf herself, a woman born in 1882 to an upstanding literary family in London. Although she was well-educated and well-connected, Woolf had a dark upbringing that affected the rest of her life. Until her suicide in 1941, Woolf suffered from bouts of depression and struggled with bipolar disorder, conditions brought on by her older brothers' sexual abuse and exacerbated by the death of her father when she was a young adult. The influence of Virginia Woolf's own battles with depression and mental disorder are confronted in the book through overt themes relating to sanity versus insanity. This discussion can be seen through the overlapping story line of Septimus Warren Smith with Mrs. Dalloway's comparatively tame day of party planning and contemplation. Over the course of the day, Mrs. Dalloway is forced to confront her own frivolity and the apparent dullness of the high society life she had chosen for herself, while Septimus is chased down by society's conformity disguised as help. The interplay of these two story lines takes place in London, a city whose attributes play a large role in the progression and characterization that take place in the novel. The large population in the city coupled with the bells of the clock tower, which not only delineate time in the story, but also provide a sense of continuity across the characters' lives, are extremely important to the novel. Woolf uses these elements to tell a story of emotional isolation in the face of so many social and physical connections, which she explores through metaphor and repetition. To aid in the characterization of the several characters that play major roles over the course of the novel, Woolf uses stream of consciousness, a technique that illuminates the thoughts and emotions that the characters experience, as well as shows events through their unique perspective. This style choice combined with the employment of free indirect discourse illustrates the characters' disconnect from each other and creates the sense that the reader is privy to the innermost thoughts of the character that are never uttered aloud. Woolf's style choices make up one of the predominant themes in the novel: a keen sense of isolation amongst the characters created by their individual experiences and introspective natures. In the novel, Woolf illustrates this theme of emotional disconnect by giving the reader insight into the minds of the individual characters and how they view their own inability to communicate effectively with each other, as well as their unseen influence on other's lives.

brief intro to author, text
background
good on time, author

segue to connect to novel
brief plot
lonely plot
summary
setting

style

theme/thesis

* Can divide into # or keep in big chunk - up to you

excellent, but a bit under - full pg

*lots of textual evidence -
note different
author for in-text 2
citations *summarize*

Scholarly Article Analysis

*organized into diff. pts
*explain article's position, agree and/or disagree w/ evidence & support

Sidonie Blanks's discussion of *Mrs. Dalloway* highlights the isolation experienced by Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus, as well as analyzes the oppression that forces the characters away from intimacy. The article begins with an outline of the characters' oppression by and participation in societal institutions. Blanks comments that "Clarissa is a woman both victimized by patriarchal oppression and participatory in the oppression of others through her position within London's upper-class" (Blanks 3), while Septimus is "defined by masculine systems but without access to the privileges Clarissa's wealth affords her" (3). The idea that Clarissa and Septimus are isolated from others by societal oppression is certainly appealing, but Blanks' assertion that other minor characters in the novel "invade the 'privacy of the soul'" (5) best explains the lack of intimacy between the characters. Blanks ventures that "Clarissa's 'hard' persona... stems from an encounter with an oppressor" (6), particularly Peter Walsh and, later, Miss Kilman. I agree with Blanks' assertion that Clarissa's decision to marry a safe man, like Richard Dalloway, "ultimately [coincided] with Peter's intrusion on her sexual privacy" (6), which came when he interrupted her kiss with Sally, "the most exquisite moment of her life" (Woolf 26). Blanks continues by saying that the passage when Peter interrupts Clarissa's dress mending "[characterizes] Peter as the oppressive force that tries to make [Clarissa engage sexually with men]" (Blanks 6). While I had not considered the inherent sexuality in Peter's actions, Blanks makes a convincing argument that "his male privilege blinds him to the realities of Clarissa's experience as a woman" (6). Miss Kilman plays a similar role of wishing to force her own sense of superiority on Clarissa as she plays out a fantasy "about achieving 'a religious victory' over Clarissa" (7).

In Septimus' case, Dr. Holmes and Dr. Bradshaw are "unambiguously labeled as oppressive and cruel...inhuman in their merciless silencing of people like Septimus" (8). I particularly enjoyed Blanks discussion of Dr. Bradshaw's "divine proportion" (Woolf 73) and "Goddess...Conversion" (74), analyzing the religious nature of the language he uses as "[paralleling] that used to describe Miss Kilman, who is also guilty of the crime of conversion" (Blanks 8). It is clear through these two representations that Woolf sees religion as an oppressing force, isolating individuals from their own sense of self. Outside of the two doctors, Blanks asserts that the war developed manliness in Septimus and "society's expectations of masculinity [destroyed] his ability to express his emotions" (8), leaving him unable to "convey his reality to anyone" (8).

* Don't use this on a question use your own analysis

The most interesting part of Blanks' article is her discussion of style's influence on the "mysterious, symbolic, and relentlessly reinforced" (11) connection between Septimus and Clarissa. Specifically, Blanks remarks on the repetition of the phrase "Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more" (Woolf 101) in both the scene preceding Septimus' suicide and Clarissa's final moment of clarity. However, Blanks points out that "Septimus' heart and body together proclaim 'fear no more,' while Clarissa remains divided in that declaration, [highlighting] Septimus' greater unity of being throughout the narrative" (Blanks 11). Blanks' assertion furthers the idea that Septimus truly overcame his struggle with oppression, and it is interesting that this event is the catalysts for Clarissa's realization. They were both able to break away from social oppression and the emotional oppression that they had experienced throughout the entirety of the novel.

excellent use of direct textual evidence throughout

Style Passage

“So he was in their power! Holmes and Bradshaw were on him! The brute with the red nostrils was snuffing into every secret place! ‘Must’ I could say! Where were his papers? the things he had written?”

She brought him his papers, the things he had written, things she had written for him. She tumbled them out on to the sofa. They looked at them together. Diagrams, designs, little men and women brandishing sticks for arms, with wings – were they? – on their backs; circles traced round shillings and sixpences – the suns and stars; zigzagging precipices with mountaineers ascending roped together, exactly like knives and forks; sea pieces with little faces laughing out of what might perhaps be waves: the map of the world. Burn them! he cried. Now for his writings; how the dead sing behind rhododendron bushes; odes to Time; conversations with Shakespeare; Evans, Evans, Evans – his messages from the dead; do not cut down trees; tell the Prime Minister. Universal love: the meaning of the world. Burn them! he cried” (Woolf 107),

11
poor
Septimus?
So sad.

Discussion of Author’s Style

This passage from *Mrs. Dalloway* is from one of Septimus Warren Smith’s sections, particularly right before his suicidal escape from social conformity. Although this is a rather short excerpt, the elements of style evident in one of the last windows into the Warren Smiths’ lives are apparent and influential throughout the whole of the novel. The three most prevalent aspects of style in this passage are elongated syntax, free indirect discourse, and stream of consciousness narrative.

very nice
understanding
of structural
importance

The elongated syntax that is evident throughout the course of *Mrs. Dalloway* plays a major role in Virginia Woolf’s characterization. This style choice makes up most of the inner monologues that are so important to the novel’s development and allows the readers to follow the speaker’s state of mind and to compare the many thought processes that are evident in the story. In this passage in particular, the elongated syntax apparent as Septimus looks through his papers, not only makes it seem as if he is jumping manically from one random scribble to another, but that he is unable to separate “the map of the world” from the “zigzagging precipices with mountaineers.” The semi-colons used in these listing sentences put sane, if not a little strange, writings, like “conversations with Shakespeare,” on the same level with nonsensical ideas, like “how the dead sing behind rhododendron bushes.” This element only serves to further Septimus’ break with sanity, as the reader sees that he is not able to separate the normal from the illogical. While these long, listing sentences can be noted as Septimus trying to latch on to something in his own personal spiral downward, he has difficulty finding meaning in his own writings. In this particular section, the lists lack any continuity or progression of thought, only adding to his lack of control in the final scene.

excellent
analysis

Free indirect discourse plays a major role in the novel, creating a confusion about what is said and what is not said from the very first line. Mixed in with occasions of direct and indirect speech, Woolf’s use of free indirect discourse helps construct the personal and public personas that are at odds with each other throughout the novel. This aspect plays an important role in the passage because, by not delineating what is said and what is thought, Septimus’ break from

separated 7"
H to
intro, each
diff device
then connect
as a whole

*style : theme ^{sections} will probably be longer than a page

reality becomes more apparent. The reader is also forced into the situation of not understanding what is real and what is the product of Septimus' insanity as his thought process breaks apart into hysterics. The lack of any clear dialogue pulls the reader further into Septimus' mind where his own thoughts are not clearly broken from what he is speaking.

The most important aspect of style apparent in this section is stream of consciousness, which is used throughout the novel from every perspective. This writing style provides the reader with a view inside of the characters' minds, allowing him to glean characterization not from lengthy description but from the characters' own personal thoughts. In this passage, stream of consciousness style gives the reader a look at Septimus' unstable perusal of his papers, as well as the unstable nature of the work he had been creating while he slowly broke away from reality. The reader gleans most all the information about the character through this stream of consciousness style from either the particular character's perspective or through the eyes of the other characters. As in Clarissa Dalloway's case, the reader learns about much of her past through the eyes of Peter Walsh, who provides a somewhat unreliable story when taking into account his personal involvement with Clarissa. In Septimus' case, the reader learns a lot about his own situation through the thoughts of his wife, a woman whose care for her husband is seemingly distracted by her sorrow over her own loss.

Septimus Warren Smith's suicide is perhaps the most jarring moment in the entirety of the novel, and Virginia Woolf's style choices only serve to support the distress that is clearly evident in his last few moments. Through the use of elongated syntax, free indirect discourse, and stream of consciousness narrative, the reader is offered a window into the breakdown of Septimus' thought process. These elements of style can be seen throughout the novel as Woolf attempts to depict the differing elements of the characters' public and private personas in relation to their inability to clearly communicate their own personal thoughts and feeling.

Explication of the Theme

Mrs. Dalloway presents a single day that encompasses the struggles and personal developments occurring in the lives of several, intertwining characters. It can be gleaned through a lack of formal characterization and a subordinate plot line that Woolf's real goal in the novel was to present a commentary on time and human connection. The dichotomous theme of emotional isolation and loose connections is seen through each character in a unique but binding way.

Although Clarissa Dalloway is clearly the protagonist in this story, the theme can be most clearly seen through Septimus Warren Smith. His venture to war and back, as well as his constant fleeing of "human nature" (Woolf 69), clearly separates him from the rest of society even as he lives in the tumultuous and populous city of London. His involvement in the war sets him apart from Mrs. Dalloway's high society, which is evidently unaffected by the events of World War I. The post traumatic stress that Septimus experiences after his time as a soldier leads to his main conflict in the story: his inability to conform to what his peers find socially acceptable. Septimus noticed his deficiency, "[congratulating] himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably" (Woolf 64) when his friend died, but realizing with increasing alarm that "The War had taught him" (64) not to feel. This makes his situation of emotional isolation the

main argument

Note analysis of the passage & the work as a whole.

good, but would have liked to see more detail about evidence

most noteworthy, because not only is his the most severe case, but he is aware of his own situation. ✓ exactly

While Septimus feels isolated because of his traumatic experience, other characters, such as Richard Dalloway, are isolated because of their inability to communicate and connect with the people around them. Woolf exploits this theme of isolation by showing the loose, imperceivable threads between seemingly unrelated characters. By illustrating the effects of these connections, Woolf proves that no one is completely isolated even though their personal interactions are base and unfulfilling. Richard Dalloway walks home after his lunch with Lady Bruton intent on telling his wife he loves her, but when the occasion finally arises, "he could not bring himself to say he loved her; not in so many words" (86). Like the flowers he gave her, "first bunched together; now of their own accord starting apart" (87), so were Mr. Dalloway's affections, separating into concern masked as an afternoon nap, unable to be expressed completely. These communication barriers make the characters fear that they alone must face the obstacles of the world, unaware that they are bonded by their self-imposed, emotional solitude. In the case of Mrs. Dalloway and the Warren Smiths, they share a connection throughout the whole novel, seeing the same strange occurrence on the street, hearing the same bells ring throughout the city, but their affect on each other is not truly realized until the mention of Septimus' recent suicide ruins the entire evening for Mrs. Dalloway. ✓

This final overlap of story lines is also where Mrs. Dalloway is forced to face her own solitude; a solitude created not by her lack of human connection, but her inability to be her true self. As she looks out of the window at the end of the story, party in melodramatic shambles and personal ties hitting her from every side, she realizes that she does not pity the poor man who committed suicide, but actually "felt somehow very like him" (Woolf 135). It is glaringly obvious that she too feels like she has escaped a horrible fate, a life of proportion, as it were. This assertion is only made more clear in the last sentence of the novel: "For there she was" (Woolf 141). It is interesting that this remark comes from Peter Walsh, because he is both responsible for providing the reader with Clarissa's back story and unintentionally pushing her into the life that she lives. ✓

Lonely, but he is interesting
very well-written

Good use of
textual support
but he could
w/ citation
format

Conclusion

Mrs. Dalloway explores the oppression and isolation that is inherent in the class and gender systems of society. Over the course of the novel, Septimus and Clarissa explore their own struggles with their individual emotional isolation and are forced to come to terms with themselves and those around them. In the context of World War I, Clarissa gained her emotional clarity from the sufferings of a low class veteran, similarly to the way that the upper class in London kept their sovereignty through the hard work of lower class men. Although Woolf considered Mrs. Dalloway to be morally worthy of the clarity she gained through Septimus' suicide, the class privilege inherent in the rich gaining from the poor speaks to the time period in which the book was written.

This era was also indicative of modernist literature, which was affected and had an effect on Virginia Woolf's work. The stream of consciousness style coupled with free indirect discourse

plays a large role in conveying the theme of the novel to the reader. Without the view into each character's mind, the reader would not be able to glean the characters' complete inability to communicate effectively, or their inner turmoil over their own lives. The differing perspectives that the reader is privy to plays a large role in Virginia Woolf's illumination of varying sources of oppression within societal institutions.

The emotional isolation experienced by the characters is a universal feeling that can be understood even now. The revelations that Mrs. Dalloway has about herself are relatable, and the forces that Septimus feels pushing at him from all sides can be felt by anyone. While Septimus' experiences with madness cannot be compared with any trivial trouble, the ideas that are forced upon him can be related to any societal expectation, even something as simple as a teenager's anxiety over fitting in.

Poem

In a Dark Time
By Theodore Roethke

1 In a dark time, the eye begins to see,
I meet my shadow in the deepening shade;
I hear my echo in the echoing wood--
A lord of nature weeping to a tree,
5 I live between the heron and the wren,
Beasts of the hill and serpents of the den.
What's madness but nobility of soul
At odds with circumstance? The day's on fire!
I know the purity of pure despair,
10 My shadow pinned against a sweating wall,
That place among the rocks--is it a cave,
Or winding path? The edge is what I have.

A steady storm of correspondences!
A night flowing with birds, a ragged moon,
15 And in broad day the midnight come again!
A man goes far to find out what he is--
Death of the self in a long, tearless night,
All natural shapes blazing unnatural light.

Dark, dark my light, and darker my desire.
20 My soul, like some heat-maddened summer fly,
Keeps buzzing at the sill. Which I is I?
A fallen man, I climb out of my fear.

global connections

✓ nice connections

connections to our time or the time period of the novel

connect essay / shifts in culture

✓ will choose!

connect to something outside of paper?

epilogue

The mind enters itself, and God the mind,
And one is One, free in the tearing wind.

epilogue

Poetry Analysis

Theodore Roethke's poem, "In a Dark Time," asserts that there is a transparency of self in the darkness of a personal upset. Through the use of caesura, rhyme scheme, and imagery, Roethke is able to present a speaker that reaches a moment of clarity concerning the universe and his place in it.

Caesura is used to show the speaker's struggle with his plunge into self-exploration. Although he finds his "shadow pinned against a sweating wall" (Roethke 10), he pushes against his own fears to delve deeper into "Which I is I?" (21). Roethke points out that moving past these obstacles and "[climbing] out of [ones] fear" (22) is necessary to gain glimpses of ones true self.

The rhyme scheme in the poem is ABCADD, which is an important aspect of the speaker's fall into darkness and his struggle to gain perspective. In each of the six line stanzas, it appears as if there is no rhyme scheme at all until the final two lines, which provide a sense of unity. However, it is clear that the speaker and Roethke himself are struggling to maintain some control in the face of slant rhymes like "despair" and "fire," and "soul" and "wall" (7-10). While the rhyme scheme reinforces the author's point that "in a dark time, the eye begins to see," it also intensifies the speaker's own conflict.

Roethke employs imagery to provide the reader with a visual of the speaker's journey through his dark time and evokes images of nature to describe his place in an unclear world. In this poem, the soul is described as "A lord of nature weeping to a tree" (4) a nobility fallen from grace and forgotten, clearly separate from the speaker. He continues to say "My soul, like some heat-maddened summer fly, / Keeps buzzing at the sill," (20-21) as if its very existence is an annoyance asking to be recognized.

Similarly, the characters of *Mrs. Dalloway* must deal with the annoyance of their souls distracting them from their day-to-day lives. Mrs. Dalloway, in particular, seems inconvenienced by sinking into her own "profound darkness," (Woolf 134) at her party. However, this moment of darkness, as in the poem, is the moment that she is offered clarity about herself in the novel. Another stark connection can be drawn to Septimus and how his mental instability brought on a better, if not scattered, understanding of the world around him. Particularly, the line, "What's madness but nobility of soul/ At odds with circumstance?" (Roethke 7-8) evokes Septimus' own situation: a soul at odds with human nature. Septimus' breakdown allows him to have true clarity in his life and in his battle with societal pressures, which coincides with the major theme behind Roethke's poem. Roethke's line "I climb out of my fear" (22) parallels well with Septimus' musings to "Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more" (Woolf 101). Both the speaker and Septimus find themselves "free in the tearing wind" (Roethke 24) at the end of their falls into insanity. It is interesting to note Roethke's imagery of the soul as "a cave" (11), because Woolf often used that metaphor when describing how the intricate lives of her characters

connected throughout a story. These "caves" are explored by the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* in their own contemplations, but, like the poem, the characters seem unsure about what exactly it is they are finding and what it means.

beautiful explanation
- connections

background
novel
scholarly article
poem

Works Cited

"The Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain." *The Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Apr. 2014.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. N.p.: Snowball, 2014. Print.

Banks, Sidonie. "Septimus' and Clarissa's Transcendent Communication in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*." *The University Scholar* 7.1 (2010): 3-11. Web. 30 Apr. 2014

Roethke, Theodore. "In a Dark Time." *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 01 May 2014.

Wow. This is definitely
one of the best I've read
so far. Really passionate, well-
written, well-developed, confident
analysis throughout. Your hard
work is very impressive and
it means a great deal to me. :)