



FEMINISM AND STRONG FEMALE CHARACTERS

Unit of Study by Julia Wheatley

English 112B

Dr. Warner



INTRO

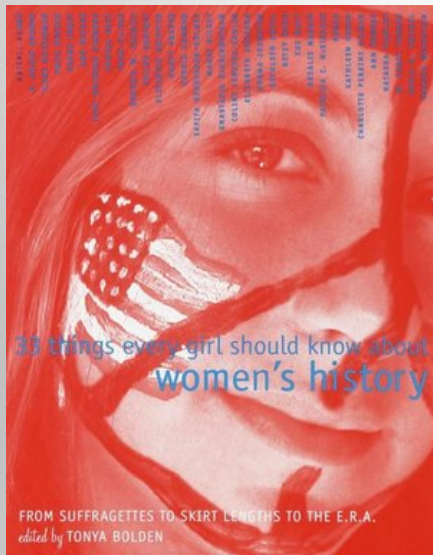
❖ I am going to play a video for you guys. While you watch, please think about:

- ❖ Who has the power to change government?
- ❖ What historical evidence do you see in the video?
- ❖ How can you relate it to your own life?
- ❖ Who are the strong characters?

PARODY OF LADY GAGA'S “BAD ROMANCE”

- ❖ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYQhRCs9IHM>
- ❖ Women received the right to vote in the 1920s, but to this day, we are still fighting for equal rights in the work world and at home.
- ❖ This unit could be taught in parallel with a unit on strong male characters in literature.

HISTORICAL NONFICTION



❖ *33 Things Every Girl Should Know About Women's History: From Suffragettes to Skirt Lengths to the ERA* by Tonya Bolden

- BarnesandNoble.com says this book includes poems, photographs, essays, and letters from different authors. Historians, a librarian, and nonfiction writers added to this book about women from the 18th century to the present.



Rosie the Riveter

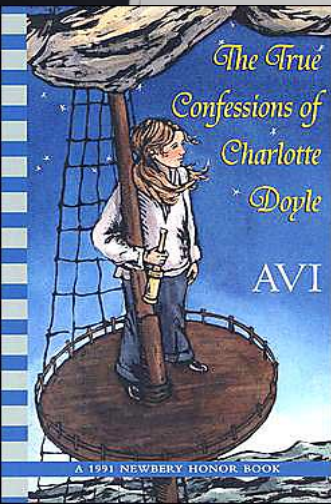
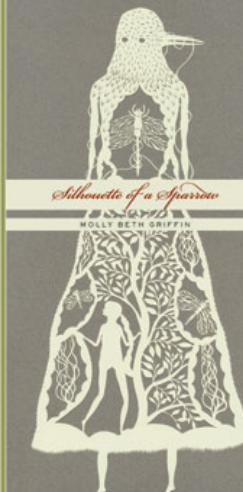
HISTORICAL FICTION

❖ *Silhouette of a Sparrow* by Molly Beth Griffin

- Amazon explains this book about a sixteen-year-old girl in 1926 named Garnet Richardson. She was sent to a lake resort to escape the polio epidemic in the city. She is expected to marry a boy and settle into middle-class housemaking but instead she breaks away from oppressive rulers (like her father's cousin). She finds a job in a hat shop and has a secret relationship, breaking away from expectations and being her own, strong, independent woman.

❖ *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* by Avi

- Charlotte Doyle, the main character of this story, boards a boat travelling from England to America. She is the only passenger on the ship and learns how to be a strong, independent woman. There are no other women around. She is only thirteen-years-old and makes this trip on her own successfully. While aboard, she learns the duties of being on the ship and works with the captain to survive the adventure.





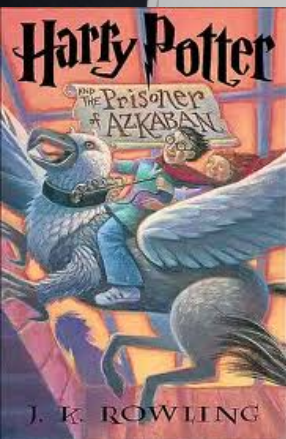
FICTION

❖ *Riding Freedom* by Pam Muñoz Ryan (Historical Fiction)

- Charlotte Parkhurst was a young girl in an orphanage. She hated her life there and needed to break away. The only way she could do this successfully is to dress as a boy. She fakes her own suicide and runs away, disguised as a young boy. She successfully becomes a stable boy and works with her love- horses.

❖ *The Hunger Games* by Suzanna Collins (Science Fiction)

- Katniss Everdeen is the current representational archetype of the strong, independent woman. She stands up for her sister and takes her place in the games. She fights against the other characters in the dome and displays strength and power throughout the whole story, finding her the winner of the Hunger Games.



CANONICAL WORK AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY REALISTIC FICTION (FROM CLASS)

❖ *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson

- Melinda Sordino is a strong female character who overcomes rape and patriarchal pressures to stay quiet. She finds her voice and speaks up, finding strength in herself.

❖ *After the First Death* by Robert Cormier

- Kate Forrester never gives up against Miro. She fights for the lives of the children and she does not lose herself in fear. Instead, she stays strong and tries to escape and save the children.

❖ *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J. K. Rowling

- Though Harry Potter is the main character, Hermione Granger is a strong, intelligent woman throughout the novel. She helps Harry in all of his endeavors and maintains knowledge beyond the other characters.

OTHER GENRES

❖ Drama/Plays

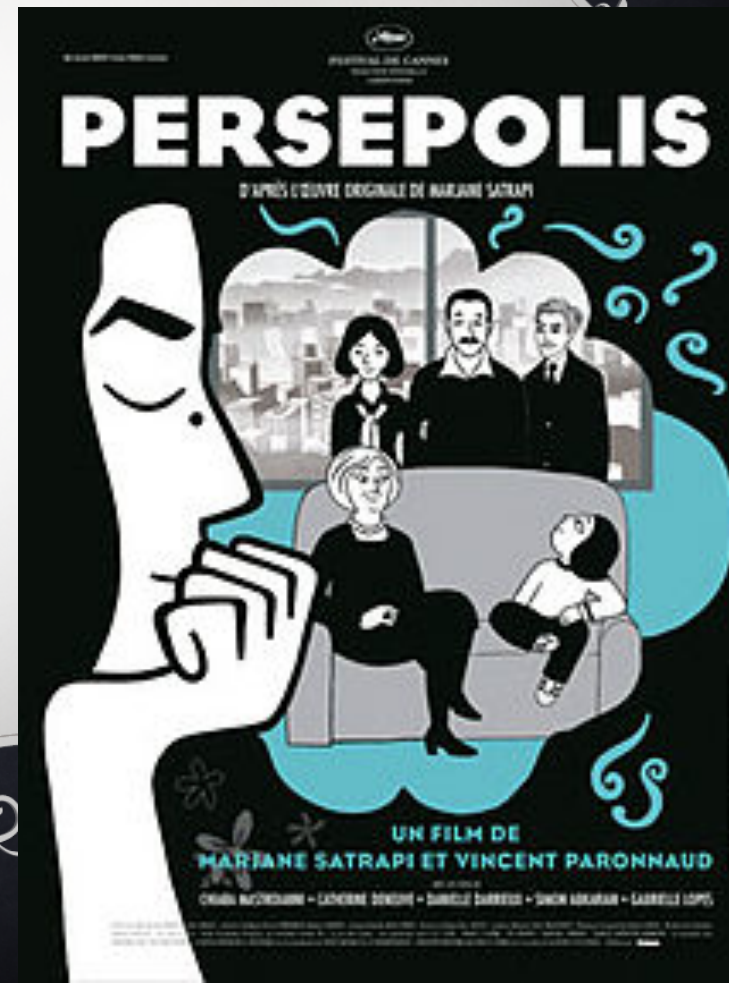
- *The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare
 - Katherine, the shrew in the story, is a strong woman, which none of the men approve of. She is contrasted with her sister, Bianca, who is supposed to be the idealized woman (who gives in to patriarchal power). The play shows Katherine's battle against Petruchio, but he eventually persuades her to give in to him.
- *The Vagina Monologues* by Eve Ensler (FOR MORE MATURE AND WITH GUARDIAN APPROVAL)
 - The play is a combination of monologues about what life as a woman is like. It includes descriptions and explanations of topics like love and rape. All of the monologues surround the female organ as strength and power for all women.

A UNIQUE
REVERSE

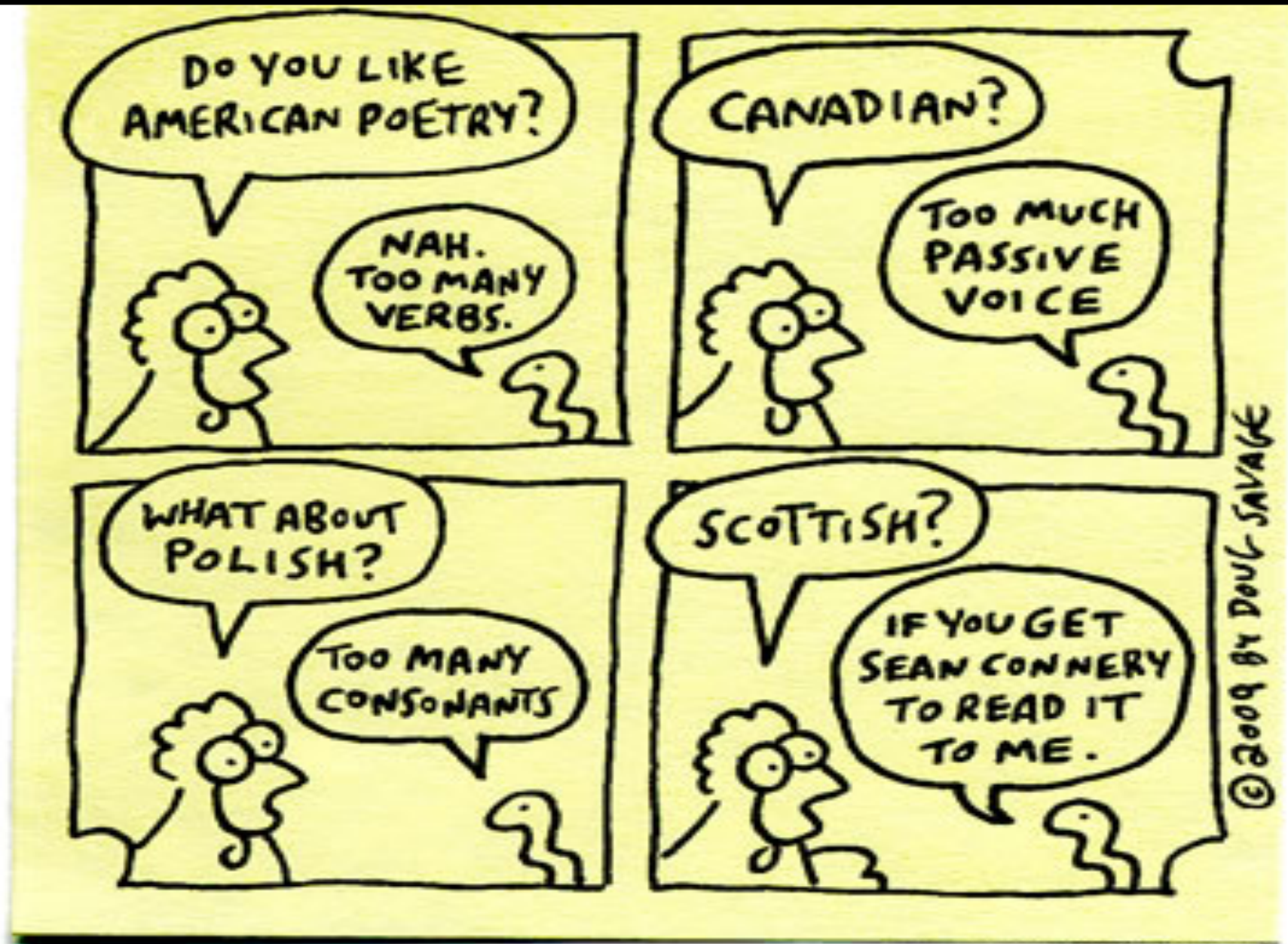
OTHER GENRES

❖ Graphic Novel

- *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi
 - This novel tells the story of the author (called Marji) growing up in Iran. This can be combined with the historical nonfiction and historical fiction books to show the history of another area. Marji stood up against government in Iran as she learned her true feelings about life.



BREAK TIME



OTHER GENRES

❖ Poetry

- Alice Walker (author of *The Color Purple*)
- Maya Angelou
 - “Phenomenal Woman”
- Marge Piercy
 - Book of poetry in 1980 *The Moon is Always Female*



MARGE PIERCY

❖ The Woman in the Ordinary

The woman in the ordinary pudgy
downcast girl
is crouching with eyes and muscles
clenched.

Round and pebble smooth she effaces
herself
under ripples of conversation and

debate.

The woman in the block of ivory soap
has massive thighs that neigh,
great breasts that blare and strong arms
that trumpet.

The woman of the golden fleece
laughs uproariously from the belly



PIERCY CONTINUED

inside the girl who imitates
a Christmas card virgin with glued
hands,
who fishes for herself in other's
eyes,
who stoops and creeps to make
herself smaller.

In her bottled up is a woman

peppery as curry,
a yam of a woman of butter and
brass,
compounded of acid and sweet like
a pineapple,
like a handgrenade set to explode,
like goldenrod ready to bloom.

WORKS CITED (PICTURES)

Avi. *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. Digital image. *Through the Looking Glass*.
Web. 22 Nov. 2012.

Bolden, Tonya. *33 Things Every Girl Should Know About Women's History: From
Suffragettes to Skirt Lengths to the ERA*. Digital image. *Barnes and Noble*.
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Ryan, Pam Munoz. *Riding Freedom*. Digital image. *Lauren's Literature*.
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WORKS CITED (PICTURES CONTINUED)

Savage, Doug. "World of Poetry." Cartoon. *Savage Chickens: Cartoons on Sticky Notes*. 21 Apr. 2009. Web. 24 Nov. 2012.

Sorensen, Aja. *Rosie the Riveter*. Digital image. *Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park*. National Park Services. Web. 20 Nov. 2012.

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Griffin, Molly Beth. *Silhouette of a Sparrow*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2012. Print.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Riding Freedom*. New York: Scholastic, 1998. Print.

Satrapa, Marjane. *Persepolis*. New York: Pantheon, 2003. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Ed. Thomas Goddard Bergin. New Haven: Yale UP, 1954. Print.

Julia Wheatley

English 112B

Dr. Warner

November 27, 2012

Unit of Study Explanation

Suffragettes fought for women's right to vote, but this did not create equality for all. Many people are not aware that women are still fighting for equality throughout employment and other areas. My unit, though expansive (meaning it could be taught over an entire semester), explores different strong women throughout different literature genres. This is also done to keep students interested. The opening for the unit is a Youtube clip because this is something to intrigue teenagers. It is a parody of one of Lady Gaga's songs. Since she is popular as a strange, pop icon right now, the students should recognize right away what song is being imitated.

From this point, the students would do an expansive view of how important strong females are. After discussing the historical content of the video and how it relates both fictionally and nonfictionally the women's rights, they will cover other texts in multiple genres, starting with historical nonfiction. This gives facts and a better understanding into the history of women's rights. From there, the unit moves into historical fiction, to show real life events or real people with fictionalized details to further the stories. The unit will continue through genres, passing through science fiction and landing on contemporary realistic fiction. Here, they will read multiple books that we have read in English 112B and will discuss the strong female characters throughout. After this center focus, they will move out of this genre and will look briefly at plays (including, of course, Shakespeare). A graphic novel will be included to show different types of reading—and the movie versions will be equally discussed to show how involved media is. The unit will conclude with

poetry and will encourage the students to do their own creative writing about women's rights or strong female characters.

Hopefully the different genres will create opportunities for each student to find what they like to read most. Two of my favorite books growing up were *Riding Freedom* by Pam Munoz Ryan and *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* by Avi (which are both included in this unit of study). I never realized that these are both historical fiction novels. I always thought they were completely made up, but now realize that they are based off of true people. I now understand that historical fiction is my favorite genre. I hope that by creating a unit that explains not only the literary resources emphasizing women's right but also the different genres available to teens, I will help students better understand what resources are available to them along with educating them about the history of the women's movement.

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- Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999. Print.
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Information from Slides:

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Rosie the Riveter/Feminist Symbol

- ❖ Rosie the Riveter poster was made by US government to entice women to do war work.

Historical Fiction

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Marge Piercy

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