

# ENGLISH 105 MIDTERM ESSAY WORKSHOP NOTES

## I.

Below are two sets of notes from last week's workshops. Notice the differences between them. The first set of notes helps not at all. They have left out most of the details we spent half an hour generating. Notice the questions I pose after each entry in the first set of notes. The answers to my questions should be apparent from the notes, and they aren't.

### **Inman's Adventures with Women**

Maddy teaches Inman that women can be self sufficient. (*What is it that she does or says that indicates to him that women can be self-sufficient? What kind of self-sufficiency does she teach him that women are capable of? What were his former ideas about the topic? Does Maddy's existence hint at the kind of woman that Ada may become in Inman's absence? How? In what ways?*)

Ada sees that Maddy has stretched Inman's definition of women and he learns to trust them. (*What kind of trust in women does Inman have after his time with Maddy? How much can he trust them? With what can he trust them? Does he trust Ada and Ruby in new and different ways after his return?*)

Sarah shows Inman that she can be extremely independent and stand up for herself when needed. (*How does Sara's independence differ from that of Maddy's self-sufficiency? Ask the above questions of this observation, and take careful notes on your responses.*)

Inman learns how to show compassion without crossing boundaries. (*From which woman does he learn this? Or does he learn different kinds of compassion from each? Different boundaries from each?*)

## II.

Notice that, because it preserves the specificity and variety of the details we generated, the second set of notes is much more useful. Notice also, however, that there's a fair amount of repetition, of overlap, from one entry to another. My revisions, in parentheses, rearrange this material - as I remember it, anyway - into a more useful set of notes. For the moment, I'm leaving out any reference to Odysseus.

1) Maddy: she was a hermit with goats and independent and when Inman was helped by her he showed that he was dependent on her. This is because he was hurt and hungry and needed rest and that all laid in the hands of Maddy. She gave him foods,

medicine, rest, shelter, and emotional support. It showed Ada that Inman loved her more because she broke down and spilled his guts to women and that he could depend on her as much as she would depend on him. Maddy also shows that she doesn't need a man around to be able to survive and doesn't have neighbors. Maddy also makes him feel vulnerable, which he has never felt before. This is important for love because if you can show emotions then it's not true love.

*(Inman lies wounded, unconscious, and chained to several dead bodies. Maddy frees him, drags him off, shelters him in her own cabin, medicates and feeds him, then tells him that everyone has a purpose - just as if people were seeds, excrement, etc. Inman has never in his life depended on someone so totally. Maddy, in contrast, depends on nobody. Her cabin is hidden in the forest. By choice, she has no neighbors. Her goats provide her with meat, milk, hides, and company. The forest provides her with medicine. Her thinking - her idea about everything having a purpose - provides as much of a link as she needs to the life around her. The way she lives reminds Inman how vulnerable he is. He even confesses his fears to her - something he's done to no one else. His relationship with Maddy convinces Ada that Inman has learned that he can both depend on and confide in a woman.)*

2) a. Sara: she is a widow that has a baby and lives on her own. She shows him that he can trust himself around women and not do anything with them, but comfort them in dire need. Ada can trust him in any situation and that is a major component in love to make it last. Sara doesn't really trust man in the first place, but can see innocence in Inman's eyes that she feels she can trust him as well. Odysseus never trusted women he was always fooled into staying with other women that he didn't have as strong of love because that isn't showing trust to Penelope. With Sara Inman also shows that he can respect women even when everyone else is raping and pillaging women; he shows respect for her and only comes in and eats when it is approved by her. With Maddy he also respects her in the fact that once she brings him in, he could have taken advantage and stole from her but he only accepted what was given to him. This would show Ada that he respects people and women in particular, which is also a big part of showing love for one another. Also Inman undergoes a lot of danger for Sara with the Yankees come because he respects her and doesn't want to see her be mistreated. Odysseus never respected women ever women he met pretty much he stayed with for many years and had intercourse with them.

*(Inman's relationship with Sara, on the other hand, convinces Ada a) that Inman is faithful to her, and b) that he understands the difference between consolation and sex, and c) that he can intuit the feelings of a vulnerable person he's never met before, and d) that he is brave and crafty enough to defend that person against three angry, desperate Union soldiers.)*

3) Both Sara and Maddy show limits to what they will tolerate or do for him and other people. Maddy for instance gave him shelter and food, but after one night he was sent on his way; she pushed him to leave. This is much until Odysseus when he would stay at places for years at end. With Sara she will only take so much when it comes to her baby and if you pass that limit she will stop at nothing to get revenge; as she did when she killed the Yankee for not covering up her baby in the cold.

*(Inman's relationships with the two women suggest something else as well. Each woman, he learns, lives within a certain set of limits. Neither can be pushed beyond her limits. Despite her conviction that everything has a purpose - even we suppose, the Civil War - Maddy never once considers returning to the male world that has wounded Inman. Sara's limits appear in a different way. Although Inman is willing to let the last Union soldier escape - he was the least guilty of the three, right? - Sara coolly takes aim and drops the guy. )*

### **Inman's Adventures with Men**

1) Reverend is trying to kill a slave that he has gotten pregnant.

Inman puts himself in danger by stopping him.

Inman might have been captured by the home guard

or the reverend might have fought back.

Inman makes sure that the reverend does not repeat these actions by taking the

Reverend into town and tying him up.

This shows that Inman cares about the well-being of women and is capable of loving Ada as more than property.

2) When Inman meets Junior he shows that he respects women and cares about fidelity.

He shows respect by respectfully declining and not ridiculing Junior's wife when she puts herself in a vulnerable position by trying to have sex with him. He also shows that he means well by the fact that he wants to leave the house as opposed to the Reverend who wants to stay.

Remember, whether you're using the material we generated in class or using material you generated on your own, you have to take notes in a very detailed fashion if you hope to write an effective essay. Why? Because your grade will depend on two factors: 1) the quality of your argument (i.e., on the specificity and variety of the details you bring into it); and 2) the quality of the sentences in which you express it.